

The RAVSAK Journal



The Jewish Community Day School Network  
רשת בתי ספר קהילתיים

# הידעון

HaYidion

אניבתשס"ט • Spring 2009

## Israel & Zionism Education



# About THE COVER:

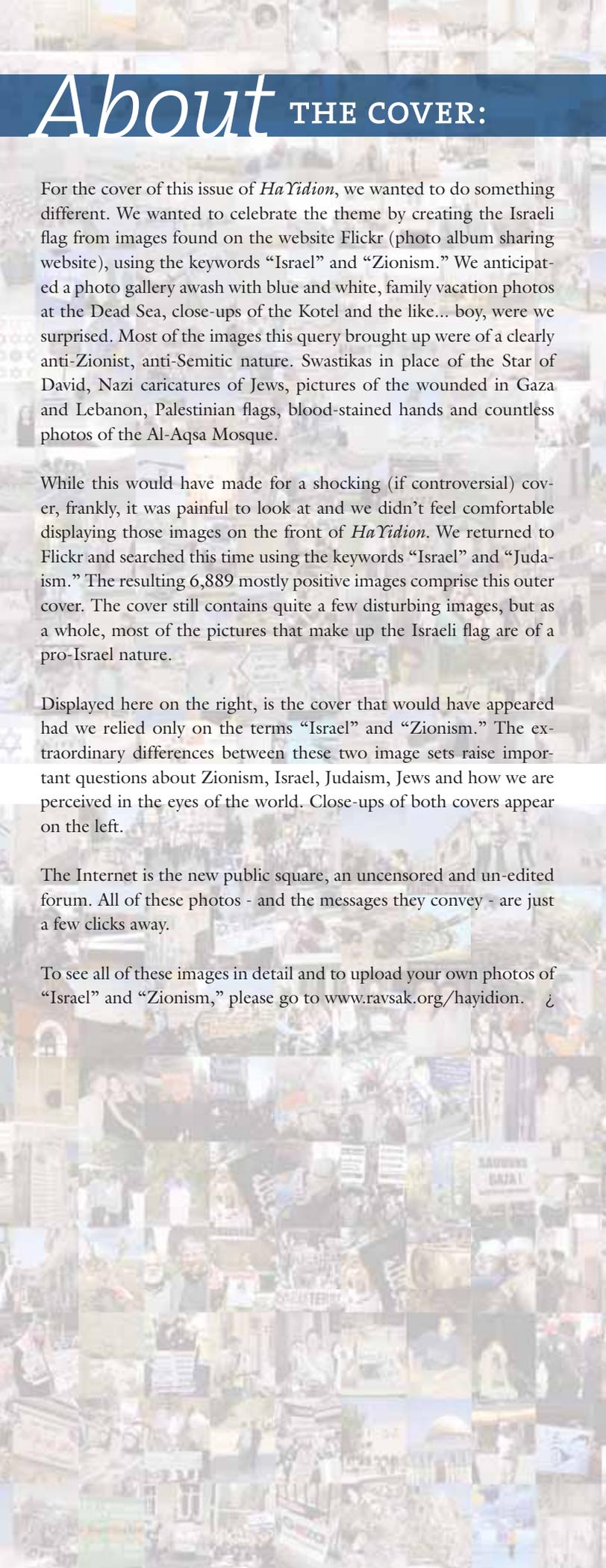
For the cover of this issue of *HaYidion*, we wanted to do something different. We wanted to celebrate the theme by creating the Israeli flag from images found on the website Flickr (photo album sharing website), using the keywords "Israel" and "Zionism." We anticipated a photo gallery awash with blue and white, family vacation photos at the Dead Sea, close-ups of the Kotel and the like... boy, were we surprised. Most of the images this query brought up were of a clearly anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic nature. Swastikas in place of the Star of David, Nazi caricatures of Jews, pictures of the wounded in Gaza and Lebanon, Palestinian flags, blood-stained hands and countless photos of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

While this would have made for a shocking (if controversial) cover, frankly, it was painful to look at and we didn't feel comfortable displaying those images on the front of *HaYidion*. We returned to Flickr and searched this time using the keywords "Israel" and "Judaism." The resulting 6,889 mostly positive images comprise this outer cover. The cover still contains quite a few disturbing images, but as a whole, most of the pictures that make up the Israeli flag are of a pro-Israel nature.

Displayed here on the right, is the cover that would have appeared had we relied only on the terms "Israel" and "Zionism." The extraordinary differences between these two image sets raise important questions about Zionism, Israel, Judaism, Jews and how we are perceived in the eyes of the world. Close-ups of both covers appear on the left.

The Internet is the new public square, an uncensored and un-edited forum. All of these photos - and the messages they convey - are just a few clicks away.

To see all of these images in detail and to upload your own photos of "Israel" and "Zionism," please go to [www.ravsak.org/hayidion](http://www.ravsak.org/hayidion). ז



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אביב תשס"ט • Spring 2009



## Israel & Zionism Education

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## HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

is a publication of RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network. It is published quarterly for distribution to RAVSAK member schools, associate members, and other Jewish and general education organizations. No articles may be reproduced or distributed without express written permission of RAVSAK. All rights reserved.

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Please contact Marla Rottenstreich at marlar@ravsak.org or by phone at 646-496-7162.

## RAVSAK

120 West 97th Street  
New York, NY 10025  
p: 212-665-1320 • f: 212-665-1321  
e: info@ravsak.org • w: www.ravsak.org

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Many of the articles for this issue were written during Operation Cast Lead in December-January. Where these articles describe the hostilities in the present tense, we decided to leave the writing as is to retain the sense of immediacy and urgency conveyed by the writers. —the editors

# From the Editor

by **BARBARA DAVIS**

ONE of the speakers at our recent RAVSAK conference noted, “Things are bad. But we are Jews, we’ve seen worse.” His optimism based on pessimism is quintessentially Jewish. It reminds me of a joke making the rounds in Israel: A group of elderly, retired men gather each morning at a café in Tel Aviv. They drink their coffee and sit for hours discussing the world situation. Given the state of the world, their talks are quite depressing. One day, one of the men startles the others by announcing, “You know what? I am an optimist.” The others are shocked, but then one of them notices something fishy. “Wait a minute! If you’re an optimist, why do you look so worried?” The first man replies, “You think it’s easy being an optimist?”

But as our recent San Francisco conference proved, being together in difficult times can be uplifting. And reading this issue of *HaYidion* will likewise prove inspiring. It examines the pedagogical complexities involved in teaching about our homeland while living in the Diaspora. It brings a multitude of diverse theoretical and pragmat-

ic approaches to bear on a challenging and complex theme. It will raise your spirits as you contemplate the diversity that underlies what we do in the Jewish



**DR. BARBARA DAVIS** is the Secretary of RAVSAK, Editor of *HaYidion* and Head of School at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, NY. Barbara can be reached at [shds@twcny.rr.com](mailto:shds@twcny.rr.com).

community day school world as well as the unity that sustains and nourishes us all.

Israel was founded on hope. Hope was the theme of our recent presidential election. Hope and a belief in a brighter future sustain us all in our educational enterprises. This issue of *HaYidion* will help reinforce your optimism and your commitment to Israel, to our people and to our future as surely as spring follows winter.

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## RAVSAK and iCenter: High-Tech Israel Education

RAVSAK, in collaboration with the iCenter, Israel Education Resource Center, will launch an intensive teacher training program this spring for on middle school educators to empower classroom teachers with skills, tools, knowledge and the dispositions requisite to imparting meaningful Israel and Zionism education while serving as a link between classroom learning and student action. Educators, alone or in pairs, from up to 18 Jewish community day schools will participate in a fully funded 2-day training workshop that will:

- Explore the core issues related to Israel and Zionism education
- Explore a body of Jewish sacred texts which attend to matters of Is-

rael and Zionism education

- Focus on Israel Interactive, a multimedia educational tool for day schools
- Connect Jewish community day school educators from across North America with the resources of the iCenter
- Provide educators with a full year of support and guidance as well as peer mentoring and networking

As a direct result of this program, the iCenter and RAVSAK, together with Israel Interactive, will reinvigorate Israel and Zionism education in Jewish community middle schools, inspiring lasting cultural change while laying the groundwork for a national network of Israel and Zionism educators in Jewish schools.

“Israel and Zionism education, which predominantly resides in short-term projects and seasonal events, could one day emerge as a core subject in Jewish community day schools,” says RAVSAK Executive Director Dr. Marc Kramer. “Schools and educators need training, resources, guidance, and professional networks in order to bring about this substantive change in curriculum and school culture. This partnership with the iCenter will help bring this vision one step closer to reality.”

Participation is open to middle school Israel educators in RAVSAK member schools. To apply for this program, please contact the RAVSAK office at [info@ravsak.org](mailto:info@ravsak.org) or 212-665-1320.

# From the Desk of Susan Weintrob, RAVSAK President

**T**HE RAVSAK conference has always been a storm's haven for so many of us. Intensely busy in our professional lives, here is a time that we meet friends, find new solutions and forge a sense of community with our fellow practitioners and trustees.

This year is the same in that sense, and yet I heard from everyone that, despite how busy our lives were before, somehow we have added many more layers—more worries, more duties, less resources.

Our RAVSAK conference framed this crisis differently. With the inspiring keynote addresses from Alex Pomson and Jonathan Cannon, we all saw that the door had opened for us to see a more creative and a newly defined framework for twenty-first education. Here was an opportunity that we not only could take—we must take.

Inspiration and vision need foundations, and we also heard from speakers who offered us the specifics of how to keep our vision flourishing. From workshops on special needs to data keeping, from a one-day economic summit to a “Yom Iyun,” a program of teacher development that drew 130 teachers from the Bay Area, we questioned and listened and learned together.

The ripple effects in my own school were immediate. One of my fifth grade teachers was inspired by Fran Urman's workshop on feedback. At our next staff meeting, she arranged to create a “professional dilemma” and for all of us to listen and respond in a wonderfully defined manner described by Urman. We felt we had moved to another level professionally. A kindergarten teacher wanted to share her enthusiasm for Larry Kligman's presentation of Daniel's Pink's book *A Whole New Mind*. Ten of us are meeting at lunch to read and discuss it together.

Professional practice is always difficult and needs support. Our conference gives

us an intellectual and social high that is then supported by our colleagues and our strong professional staff, led by Marc Kramer, whom I applaud more than ever. While many other organizations cancelled their conferences, ours was the largest RAVSAK conference ever.

One of our school families, mother and children, recently went through a formal



*Susan Weintrob is the President of RAVSAK and the Head of School at the Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School in Foster City, CA. Susan can be reached at [sweintrob@wornickjds.org](mailto:sweintrob@wornickjds.org).*

conversion. The Jewish husband had not requested this, but as the mother wrote in her talk after immersion in the mikvah, “The soul needs a home.” In turbulent times, we search for economic stability; our souls also need nourishment. At the conference, we found resources for both.

*Bivrachah,*

Susan

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*The Executive Committee and Staff of RAVSAK wish you a*

*Happy Passover*

## Corrections to the Winter 2008 Issue

On p. 3, the location of the Hebrew Day Institute was listed incorrectly. The correct location is Rockville, MD.

On the contents page and on p. 16, the name of one of the authors, Dr. Susan Wall, was twice printed in error as Dr. Sharon Wall.

On p. 34, the system of stars was given in the wrong order. The first item, “Performance is exemplary,” should be listed as 4 Star, the next item 3 Star, etcetera.

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# Indicators for Successful Israel Engagement

by ALEX SINCLAIR

WHAT do we mean by high quality Israel education and engagement? Many thinkers have in recent years urged us to stop thinking about Israel through what Cohen and Liebman (“Israel and American Jewry in the Twenty-First Century”) call the “mobilization model,” in which Israel is primarily seen as in need of both financial support and political advocacy. In the past, this model may have worked: the “narrative” of Israel was that of a despised but heroic David surrounded by a series of genocidal Goliaths, a refuge for Jews ejected from the third world, and a country struggling with enormous economic problems, in need of every penny from abroad that it could muster.

Today, even in these trying times of war in Gaza, that narrative is, at best, misleading and incomplete. Yes, Israel is faced with external threats, but it continually shows itself able to face these on a military level. Meanwhile, its streets ring out with more cellphones per capita than America, its cultural scene flourishes, and its shekel is one of the world’s strongest currencies. Israel today faces problems, to be sure, but these are very different problems: how a Jewish capitalist-consumerist country deals with increasing gaps between rich and poor; how a Jewish democratic state integrates non-Jews in its midst; how an Israeli Judaism battered by decades of secular-religious divide might recover to become an inclusive and pluralist civil religion; and how Israel, in conjunction with its neighbors, can solve the pressing ecological pitfalls faced by this highly-populated, polluted, waterless region.

Alongside these problems, in the arenas of culture, economics, film, sport, thought, retail, food, wine, and more, Israel thrives and inspires. It is a society of stark contrasts, which bounces between elation and depression within the space of hours. It is a country which is one minute bursting with pride, and the next minute hiding its face in shame. The narrative of Diaspora Jews’ relationship with Israel today must take all these diverse, wonderful, difficult, painful, fascinating, frustrating, enriching, evolving complexities into account.

In terms of philosophy, vision, and worldview, an increasing majority of American Jewish educators and thinkers are “buying into” this new narrative, or some version of it. But we haven’t yet done the work required to figure out how to *concretize* that narrative into educational practice. What does this new approach to Israel education and engagement *look like in practice*? Are we perhaps guilty of the Justice Potter

Stewart definition: “I know it when I see it”?

Makom, an independent “think-practice-tank” housed within the Jewish Agency, whose goal is to re-imagine contemporary Israel education and engagement, is currently working on the development of a set of “Israel indicators”: desired outcomes for Israel engagement and education. My work for Makom in this area builds on my involvement over the past several years with the Melton-AVI CHAI Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks proj-



Dr. Alex Sinclair is a lecturer in Jewish Education at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He can be reached at alexsi@jafi.org.

ect. One thing that we learned from this project (which several RAVSAK schools have taken part in) is that great things happen when we ask schools and teachers to:

- a. think about their **vision** of Jewish education
- b. **concretize** that vision more clearly in specific learning **outcomes**
- c. construct their **curriculum, instruction and assessment** around achievement of those learning outcomes.

The identification of Israel engagement indicators, though, is more complex than in Bible. In Israel education and engagement, perhaps more than most other subject matters, *content and process are intimately and deeply connected*. Israel in-



The narrative of Diaspora Jews' relationship with Israel today must take all these diverse, wonderful, difficult, painful, fascinating, frustrating, enriching, evolving complexities into account.



dicators therefore need to do two related but separate things:

- Describe the desired knowledge, understandings, dispositions, activities, and skills of learners in various contexts of Israel engagement. (This first step is similar to work done in state-mandated standards or in the Melton AVI CHAI Bible standards project.)
- Suggest programs, activities, events, lessons, exercises, etc. (either real and documented or imagined and potential) that might serve as models and exemplars for successful Israel engagement. (This step is not usually done in other standards-based curricular work. However, in Israel engagement, *it is critical to give a new vision of concretized practice as well as desired outcomes of that practice.*)

Naturally these two areas should be complementary; one should infuse the other. By thinking about standards and indicators descriptive of ideal learners, one is pushed to reconceive what kinds of learning activities might enable them to achieve such indicators. Conversely, by exploring documentation of exemplary

activities, one begins to get an inductive picture of what learners exposed to such activities would become.

Here is a snapshot of where Makom's thoughts on these indicators currently stand. We have formulated four standards:

### 1. Arts and Culture

Members of Jewish communities will be proactive consumers of Israeli arts and culture, making myriad and diverse connections between Israeli arts and culture and their own Jewish lives and identity.

### 2. Travel

Members of Jewish communities will travel to Israel at several stages in their lives, on trips that enable them to experience and converse with the multivocal, enriching, diverse, complex, and beautiful, yet sometimes frustrating, difficult, and painful reality of contemporary Israel.

### 3. Religion

Members of Jewish communities will infuse their local religious experiences, cer-

emonies and practices with references to, dialogues about, and interactions with both ancient and modern Israel.

### 4. Education

Members of Jewish communities will learn about, converse with, and make personal meaning through engagement with Israel's past and present, through a wide variety of prisms, including (but not limited to) the political, artistic-cultural, social, linguistic, military, and religious.

As standards, these represent ideal, overarching learning outcomes that we hope will be achieved by learners. It must be stressed that these are initial thoughts only, and that many of the conversations we are initiating with various partners in the field will help us to edit or expand this list of four.

In addition to the work on the overarching standards themselves, we are beginning to explore what particular benchmarks or indicators within each standard might look like. In other words, within each of these overarching realms, what particular behaviors, attitudes, skills and knowledge would we wish learners to be

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able to demonstrate? And what kinds of activities are involved in this educational enterprise?

One interesting insight emerging from this work is that many of the outcomes we set for ourselves in Israel engagement and education appear to raise significant and complex questions about where the Jewish day school fits into a systemic educational endeavor to have young Jews achieve such outcomes. For example, the arts and culture standard presents particular challenges for formal educational systems. Take iPods. Surely it should be a desired educational outcome that our students have Israeli music loaded on their iPods? Under the arts and culture standard, then, we state, as one of our suggested indicators, “Student loads his/her iPod with at least 20% Israeli music.” We may quibble over numbers, but the gist of this indicator is hard to reject. How, though, does a day school create curriculum—and we’re almost certainly talking here about the hidden or informal curriculum—that brings students to the achievement of this indicator? And how on earth does it assess the indicator—confiscate every student’s iPod for 24 hours and run a diagnostic test?!

Take another example, from the realm of travel. One of our tentative indicators reads, “Student contrasts political, social or cultural opinions held by at least three different Israeli friends/acquain-

tances.” Again, this seems *prima facie* to be a laudable, desirable, and compelling educational outcome, appropriate for a high school setting. But again, it begs several questions about the day school’s role in enabling students to achieve it. What about students who have not visited Israel; who don’t know any Israelis? How do we get our students to interact with diverse groups of Israelis using new media technology? What is the range of areas in which we might seek to have our students explore different opinions? What resources does the school or teacher need to enable students to learn, explore, experience, process, think, analyze, and conclude this kind of task? At least in this example, assessment seems more straightforward.

Furthermore, identification of compelling indicators might create complex educational tensions for a day school. As I noted above, in addition to student learning outcomes, we believe that this indicators project must also suggest concrete ideas for programs and activities that are in line with this new narrative of Israel education and engagement—for example, “a semester-long social studies research project identifying one of Israel’s greatest environmental challenges and evaluating the top three currently debated solutions to solve it.” Such a project feels much more suited to a formal educational context, perhaps at a grade 8 or 9 level. It has the ring of serious but creative project-based learning. One can quite easily imag-

ine the kinds of resources that students would need access to, the pedagogies that one would employ to have them work in small, interdependent groups, with individual students developing expertise in order to come together and collaborate on a public presentation of findings, and the sort of statements that one would write in a scoring guide or rubric in order to give students a sense of what proficient work will look like.

A project of this nature would encourage integration across other areas of the curriculum, develop students’ independent research skills, and demand high levels of writing sophistication. It would, however, require a school to give up or radically transform a whole semester of its social studies program. How many schools are ready to make that kind of commitment? How can we build up the political constituency within a day school community to enable this kind of curricular transformation?

Creating a rich set of indicators for successful Israel education and engagement is one of the most important tasks for the field of Jewish education right now. Makom is actively seeking partners in the field to collaborate with us in this process. If we succeed, we’ll no longer be grappling in the dark for our definitions of success: we’ll know exactly what we mean when we talk about good Israel education. Then we’ll be able to actually go and do it. ז



## Focus on the Future

One could argue that concurrent with and perhaps resultant from Israel’s contemporary challenges there has been a major question as to how non-Orthodox day schools attend to Israel and Zionist education. Whereas once this was considered an “easy” subject to teach, today day school educators find themselves at-sea as to how to portray Israel and Zionism in school and how (if at all) to foster life-long commit-

ments to and love for Israel in their students.

In light of this dilemma, RAVSAK, in collaboration with the iCenter, will soon host and facilitate a focus group of day school leaders in service of better understanding the needs and wants of Jewish day schools. We will gather 12 educators (4 heads of schools, 4 Judaic directors, 2 Hebrew directors/instructors and 2 Israel educators) for a day-and-a-

half of facilitated conversation with the express desire of better understanding of how Israel/Zionism education unfold in schools.

An executive summary of the focus group is planned and will be made available to member schools.

For more information, please contact Dr. Marc Kramer at [mkramer@ravsak.org](mailto:mkramer@ravsak.org) or (212) 665-1320.

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# What Works in Israel Education

by **KENNETH W. STEIN**

**I**N teaching history, the most difficult task remains creating context: catapulting students back into a different time frame and having them disregard their contemporary historical perspective. The goal is to “witness” history as it unfolded, not as it concluded.

How do you teach students to comprehend the multiple virtues of Jewish nation building? My answer: documents.

A clear understanding of Israel’s essence unfolds the core questions that generate the answers that led to the Zionist national identity and then to Israeli success. The documents explicate the story.

The essence of Zionism is Jews taking destiny into their own hands. Among other factors, the Jewish drive to acquire land, grow their population, build infrastructure, earn political power, develop an economy, and express self-determination led to the establishment and sustenance of the Jewish State.

## Keeping Focused on Big Issues, Big Questions

Below are half a dozen core statements and questions which guide learners to a deeper understanding of the driving concept of the Zionist endeavor. They are embedded in Israel’s national anthem, as *lehiyot am chofshi be’artzeinu*, “to be a free people in our land.”

*There is a Jewish inner core; it is peoplehood.* What connects the Jewish people through time? What are those values, customs, symbols, and traditions that welded Jews together before they returned again to Eretz Yisrael in the 19th century?

*Some Jews chose to take destiny into their own hands.* How did failed civic emancipation, virulent and subtle anti-Semitism in the 1800s, combine to cultivate the rebirth of Jewish nationalism? Who were these early audacious practical and political Zionists? How did they crystallize together, sometimes in contentious ways, to gain great power endorsement during and after World War I? Why did the Zionists switch from Great Britain to the United States as a primary focal point for support of a Jewish state?

*Zionism was a dynamic, varied, and contentious movement.* How did Jews manage their differences to create a nucleus for a state before the Holocaust? How did Arab fragmentation and dysfunctional politics benefit Zionist aspirations?

*Israel succeeded in 1948 because it had leadership, made strategically critical decisions, befriended great powers, and had endless supplies of perseverance.* How did Jews organize to build and lobby to create and sustain the state? Where did they sacrifice personally and ideologically for the good of creating a state?

*For sixty years Israel has preserved Jewish identity and security.* How did the Zionists fashion a democratic state and protect the state’s national interest by making decisions that were at times collabora-



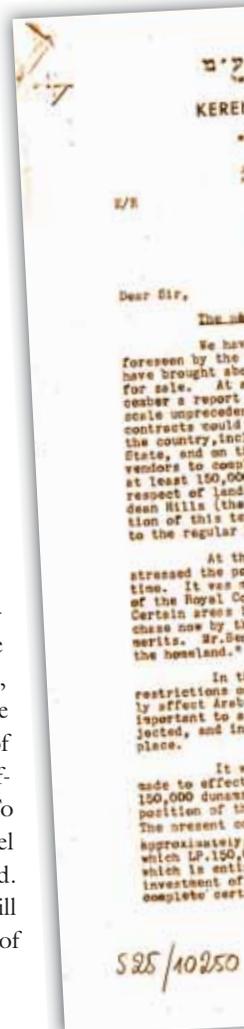
*Dr. Kenneth W. Stein teaches modern Middle Eastern History, Political Science, and Israel Studies at Emory University; is the president of the Center for Israel Education; and has taught more than 1000 pre-collegiate Jewish teachers a better and deeper understanding of modern Israel. He can be reached at [kstein@emory.edu](mailto:kstein@emory.edu).*

tive with friends, and at others, unilateral and pre-emptive? Where did the Zionist enterprise not reach its objectives of providing equality for all its citizens and equality for all its Jewish citizens?

*Israel is a focal point for American Jewish identity.* How did it become so and where is that relationship headed? Where is American Jewish identity or Jewish identity in America with or without Israel? Has not Zionism and belief in Israel slowed down Jewish assimilation into the greater American social landscape?

## Employing Primary Sources

When learners are offered a window through which to glimpse history, as it actually happened, they better contextualize the situations and perspectives of the time. Primary sources offer the critical perspective. To this end, the Center for Israel Education’s website ([israeled.org](http://israeled.org); debuting May 2009) will include an online repository of



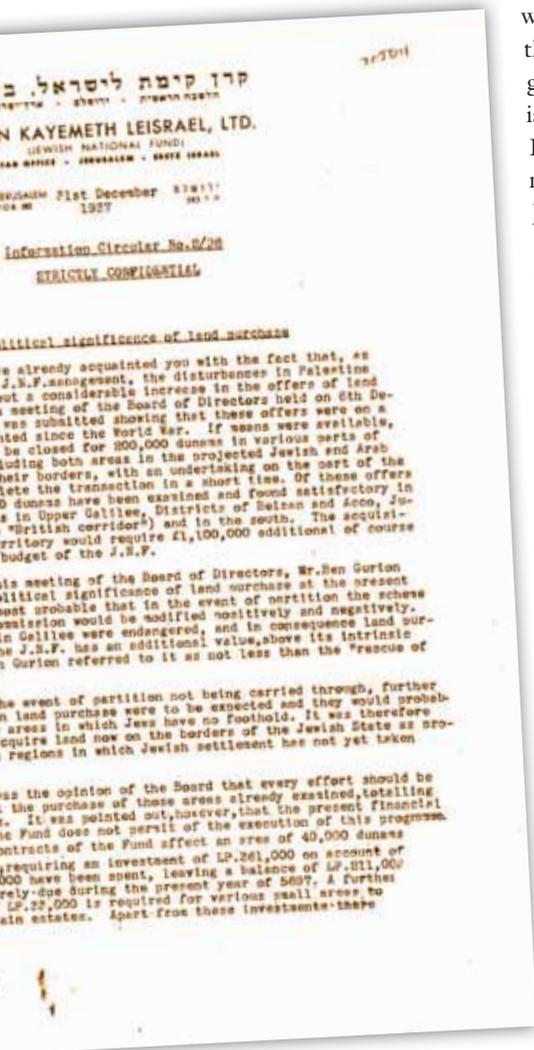
primary sources selected from the most revealing archives, bibliographies, memoirs, and historical compilations. For example, we have a December 1937 letter—the original is housed at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem—which details a pivotal meeting of the Jewish National Fund Directorate. It reads:

As foreseen by the JNF management, the disturbances in Palestine have brought about a considerable increase in the offers of land for sale. At a meeting of the Board of Directors held on 6th December 1937 a report was submitted showing that these offers were on a scale unprecedented since the World War. If means were available, contracts could be closed for 200,000 dunams [50,000 acres] in various parts of the country, including both areas in the projected Jewish and Arab State, and on their borders, with an undertaking on the part of the vendors to complete the transaction in a short time. Of these offers at least 150,000 dunams have been examined and found satisfactory in respect of lands in Upper Galilee, Districts of Beisan and Acre, the corridor to Jerusalem, and in the south.

This letter reveals the ironic conflict Zionists faced: they had limited money available for land purchase, but virtually endless offers to buy land from Arab vendors all over Palestine. At the meeting, Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion advocated that purchasing of a particular area of land had strategic consequences—be it in the upper-Galilee to

secure the northern border with Syria, around Acre as the backwater to the strategic Haifa port that the British fleets were using for the Iraqi-Palestine oil terminus; in the “corridor,” the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv Road, or in the south, in the Negev—and was critical. The letter depicts how Zionists made land-purchase decisions based on strategic value and shows why and how Zionists legally purchased vast amounts of land, decades before the state was established.

Documents as primary sources leave lasting impressions on students and teachers alike. They teach historical context. The teacher needs to know the learning outcome. Provide the right document with the right questions. The result is intellectual ownership. *z*



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# Forging a School's Vision for Israel Education

by **GORDON BERNAT-KUNIN**

**I**n *After Virtue*, communitarian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre makes a case for a narrative understanding of who we are. Imagine a man standing in front of his house with a tool in his hand. To the question, “What is he doing?” one might respond: “Digging,” “Gardening,” “Taking Exercise,” “Preparing for winter,” or “Pleasing his wife.” In order to understand what the man is doing, we must understand where he comes from (origins), where he is going (telos), and the values and virtues which guide him. Likewise, a meaningful understanding of a school’s Israel education program requires an understanding of its guiding assumptions, its larger purposes, and its primary values and virtues.

## Vision

At the Milken Community High School in Los Angeles, the vision of Israel education is built on four big ideas:

### A. There Is No Intimacy Without Identity

An American Jew in Israel is often challenged to define and justify the unique mission of Jewish life in North America. We approach this challenge with a fundamental premise which has equal significance for North American Jews in their relationship with Israel and in their relationship to American society at large. As Brandeis professor Joe Reimer once put it: There is no intimacy without identity. In order to be in a relationship, one needs to have an identity of one’s own and one needs to be able to be alone (as opposed to lonely). It goes without saying that such an approach vigorously rejects the notion of *shvilat HaGolab* (the negation of the Diaspora). Israel cannot fill the void of American Jewish identity. What it can do is complement, refine, and make American Jewish identity more whole.

### B. Israel Education, American Jewish Education, and Covenantal Jewish Education

American Jewish identity and Israel are two parts of a larger whole. American Judaism and Israel can be represented as two overlapping spheres with realms of commonality and distinctiveness. One significant task of learning about Israel involves comparing and contrasting the nature of the Jewish enterprise there and here in order to discern complementary and conflicting challenges and purposes. The overlapping spheres of American Jewish and Israel education are encompassed by a larger third sphere, which we will call Covenantal Jewish education. This sphere contains the master narrative of the Jewish people, its origins, history, values, texts, and goals,

and how to apply the sources of halakhah (law) and aggadah (lore) to the burning moral, spiritual, and intellectual issues of the day.

### C. The Distinctive Missions of American and Israeli Judaism

Consider two Zionist challenges which come from radically different voices in contemporary Israeli society. A. B. Yehoshua, one of Israel’s leading secular



*Rabbi Gordon Bernat-Kunin serves as Rabbinic Director at the Milken Community High School in Los Angeles and develops day school educational leadership initiatives for the Shalom Hartman Institute. He can be reached at [gbernat-kunin@milken.school.org](mailto:gbernat-kunin@milken.school.org).*

authors, argued before the centenary of the American Jewish Committee in 2006 that in the Diaspora, Jewish identity is a garment to be taken off or put on as one wishes:

Jewish values are not located in a fancy spice box that is only opened to release its pleasing fragrance on Shabbat and holidays, but in the reality of dozens of problems through which Jewish values are shaped and defined, for better or worse. A religious Israeli Jew also deals with a depth and breadth of life issues that is incomparably larger and more substantial than those with which his religious counterpart in New York or Antwerp must contend.

From a very different place on the Israeli spectrum, Rabbi David Hartman, a religious Zionist philosopher who has built profound bridges between Israel and North America, argued in “Israel and the Rebirth of Judaism”:

I cannot participate in the building of a Jewish community by only assuming responsibility for the private sector. If I do not feel responsible for the moral quality of the army or for the social and economic disparities in my society; if I do not agonize over how to exercise power while retaining moral sensitivity, or if I do not feel responsible for a political system which fosters widespread apathy and alienation, then I am still living spiritually in the Diaspora despite my residing in Israel...Because Jews govern an entire society, the responsibilities of each Jew extend beyond the circumscribed borders of the home and the synagogue.

Diaspora Judaism can be deprecated as a removable garment and the synagogue compared to a “city of refuge.” Before responding, let us acknowledge several unique features of Judaism in Israel: political sovereignty, the organic rootedness of culture, history, language, and land, and the existential responsibility of belonging to a people with a shared fate. Now we can ask: what is the unique challenge, opportunity, and mission of Judaism in North American?

In his essay “The Blessings of Assimilation in Jewish History” (1966), Dr. Gerson Cohen employs Ahad Ha’am’s distinction between *chikkui shel hitcharut* (competitive imitation) and *hitbolelut* (assimilation): Whereas the latter leads to the disappearance of the Jewish people and its distinctive culture, the former enables the healthy appropriation of new forms and ideas for the sake of growth and enrichment. American Judaism’s religious, cultural, and intellectual creativity requires living within and apart from American civilization, utilizing prosperity, power, and freedom, and creatively adapting or “Judaizing” American virtues, such as democracy, pluralism, egalitarianism, and pragmatism. Just as Judaism has integrated and interacted fruitfully with a multitude of majority host cultures in the past, the American-

Jewish experiment involves working out what can result from the exceptional encounter between Judaism and American civilization.

Competitive imitation requires constant engagement and vigi-

**Israel cannot fill the void of American Jewish identity. What it can do is complement, refine, and make American Jewish identity more whole.**

lance wherein Jewish identity can be compared to the semi-permeable membrane of a cell. For the cell to survive and thrive, it must cultivate what is vital within, absorb salutary elements from outside, and filter out what is destruc-

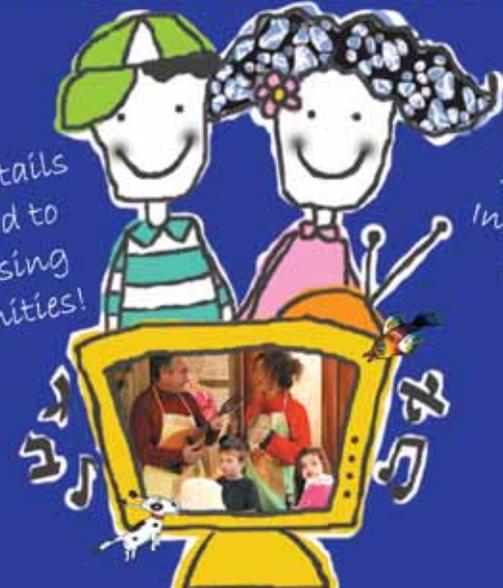
tive or even distracting and benign. The freedom of America provides room for variegated forms of Jewish ideology and practice and a degree of self-awareness which are less likely to emerge within the majority culture of Israel.

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[CONTINUED ON PAGE 50]

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# Putting the Ideology Back Into Israel Education

by ALICK ISAACS

**A** GREAT deal has happened in the short time that has elapsed since I first agreed to write this piece. Then again, not everything has changed. The big question—How should we deal with “Israel” in Jewish education?—remains as it was. However, it seems to me that the particular context that makes this question acute at this time is now suddenly redefined both by the ascendance of a new administration in Washington and by the “war” in Gaza.

The question of Israel education is not simply a curricular one. Neither is the issue pedagogical in the narrow sense. The problem with Israel education—and there is a problem—is not defined by any special difficulty teachers may have coming up with interesting or creative ways to teach about Israel. Accessing information is easy, and quality essays, thoughtful op-eds, evocative movies, books and poems are everywhere to be found by any teacher with a little curiosity an Internet connection and a mouse. If there are problems of the pedagogical/curricular sort, they are neither unique to Israel education nor intrinsic to it.

So what is the issue? Why is it that I so often encounter the “Why Israel?” question? Why do educators feel the subject requires special justification? What is it about the place of Israel in Jewish education that does not simply speak for itself? I guess there is more than one answer to this and I doubt that there is an answer good enough to simply put the question to rest. But I do think there is something to be said for pointing out what must surely be one of the biggest issues especially at this time—the conflict.

Historians insist, and I believe they are right, that the State of Israel was born of an ideological movement that began in Post-Enlightenment Europe. In other words, they correctly insist that the State of Israel was and is the accomplishment of Zionism and not of the Shoah. As such Israel was the realization of an ideal, the concretization of a vision, the semi-utopian solution to a “Jewish question” that was fully articulated long before Hitler was born. Given this analysis, it seems almost unavoidable that at some stage along the way someone is going to notice that the State, even with its virtues as a safe haven for Jewish refugees, is an inevitably deconstructing force that calls into question the validity of its mythical progeny.

It might sound odd, but what I am suggesting is that the foundation of the State of Israel, rather than simply being the crowning moment of Zionist history, was in many ways the greatest of threats to the future plausibility of the Zionist idea. The materialization of Israel in reality effected a transformation and a metamorphosis that no dream of the sort that makes education easy can survive. At the same time,

Zionism with its naively utopian formulae poses a relentless threat to the Israel that is. It looks at the State, as it were, over the rims of its half-mooned spectacles and lets out an agitated sigh.

My point is that the question of Israel education is difficult, not because educators need to choose between teaching the myth and the reality, but because the



*Dr. Alick Isaacs, who teaches at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University and is the Director of the Advanced Bet Midrash at the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, has just completed a book entitled *Prophetic Peace* which, following upon his experiences as a combat soldier in the Second Lebanon War, reevaluates the place of peace in Jewish thought. He can be reached at [msaliki@mscc.huji.ac.il](mailto:msaliki@mscc.huji.ac.il).*

confusion caused by the co-existence of an ideology with its realization is blinding. This combination obstructs our capacity to honestly evaluate Israel’s standing in the world today, and hence its purpose in Jewish education is equally hard to divine.

I should add at this point that, in my view, this genuine confusion is only compounded by the widespread instrumentalization of Israel in Jewish education as part of the overwhelming effort to keep the next generation of Jews Jewish. “How can we use Israel to connect the next generations of Jews to their heritage?” is the wrong question to put to Israel in this time of confusion. The reverse effects of this strategy—the ones we tend to blame on CNN—are surely obvious. We invite the young generation to identify with a concrete reality that they have every opportunity to evaluate negatively for themselves and expect them to embrace it as if it were an unequivocally optimistic dream come true.

It is ironic, but the Zionist movement that

came to give an ideal answer to the question of Jewish identity has inadvertently been responsible for inventing a society that is implicated—right or wrong, fairly or no—in one of the greatest scandals of our time. The Jewish State is perpetually embroiled in a conflict that is chronically eroding away its moral fiber while the enduring impact of Israel’s foundational idealism allows many to take comfort in ideological conceptions of political reality that isolate the “loyalist” view of Israel from the rest of the world. Today’s Zionists (and I count myself among them) are forced to stand alone against a hostile world convinced that nothing has really changed since the dark days of Crusades and blood libels because it is a law of nature that “Esau will always hate Jacob.” This is ideology gone wrong. Ideology is abused when an establishment uses it to justify, rather than to change, its ways. Ideology is only plausible when it broadens our view of the future, not when it narrows our understanding of the recent past.

The challenge of Israel education as I see it is therefore the challenge of unravel-

ing the confusion between ideology and reality in order to begin the search for a new ideological purpose that Israel’s future can “stand for” in American Jewish life. If the point hasn’t been made clear enough...I propose we start by thinking ideologically and educationally about peace. By this I mean peace as a dream that we seek to fill with Jewish content and reinvigorate with Zionist Jewish meaning. Today’s “Jewish question” that the war in Gaza has once more made acute is: What does peace mean in Judaism? What did peace mean in the unfulfilled dreams of the great prophets, rabbis and Zionist thinkers of the past? What should it mean across the Jewish world today? How can we as educators ensure that our heritage yields as rich an answer to these questions today as it once did to such classical Zionist questions as “What is Jewish sovereignty? How does Jewish history look if we tell it as the story of a nation?”

The educational coherence of teaching about Israel’s present reality in a curriculum for Jewish education will come

from a clearer sense of purpose about our ideological dreams for Israel’s future. We need not fear criticizing Israel’s part in its own wars any more than classical Zionist education feared its critical evaluations of Diaspora Jewish life. But these critiques must leverage a hopeful imagining of a future in which our tradition’s commitment to peace—like its dreams of self-determination 100 years ago—are finally given their day in history.

Just as Zionism encompassed various visions of what Jewish sovereignty would look like and stand for, a starry-eyed educational and ideological commitment to Israel’s peaceful future should stimulate vigorous debate about Judaism’s understanding of peace. The concept itself is far from simple and its meanings in Jewish texts are extremely varied. But the multi-vocal reconsideration of peace in the face of the unique historical challenges that the State of Israel faces today is the ideological opportunity of our time and, in my view, the cause that can give renewed purpose to Israel education throughout the Jewish world. i

*The Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education (AMIIE) is dedicated to engaging teens and helping them discover, explore and embrace their connection to the heritage, culture, and land of Israel. AMIIE works together with Day Schools and community groups to customize their Israel experience bringing Israel’s living history into the hearts, minds and souls of all that attend.*



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# Overcoming Media Bias in Telling the Story about Israel: A Primer

by **GARY KENZER**

**Y**ou click on any news .com and notice a hot new development in the Mideast. How should you go about analyzing the news report? There are certain questions you can keep in mind that may reveal underlying bias. For example:

- Are acts of violence directed against civilians termed “terror”? If not, does this conform to the media’s policy regarding other areas of conflict around the world?
- In reporting violence, is the sequence of events clear, as to which side was attacked and which side retaliated?
- Is sympathy being elicited for one side of the conflict, through the portrayal of its victims in humanizing terms (e.g. including personal information like the victim’s name, age, familial relationship, or profession)?
- Though both sides blame each other for perpetrating the violence, is one side portrayed as the more violent aggressor?
- Are the perpetrators of violence described in passive or active terms?
- Does the media attempt to give justification for an act of violence—e.g., for reasons of poverty, frustration, or national liberation?
- Are suicide bombers and collaborators included in Palestinian casualty counts? Are casualty counts expressed unqualified, or is a distinction made between combatants and civilians?
- Is “equal time” granted to both sides of the conflict, or is one side given preferential treatment—hence lending more weight and credibility to that side’s position?
- When one side makes a claim, is the other side given a chance to refute, or does the claim stand unchallenged? Does one side usually “get the last word”?
- Does the media quote dissenting or extremist opinions within each camp, or does the media only quote moderate voices that parrot the leadership’s line?
- Does the headline skew the story by failing to identify which side was the aggressor and which side the victim?
- Photos and captions: Are these pertinent to the story, or do they diverge from the main story and garner out-of-context sympathy for one side or the other?

## Seven Violations of Principles of Media Objectivity

*With the media playing such an important role in Mideast events, here are some tools to ensure that you’re more than just a passive player in the process.*



**Gary Kenzer**, National USA Executive Director of HonestReporting, has been in Jewish communal services for well over 20 years and has lectured nationally at educators conferences. He can be reached at [gkenzer@honestreporting.com](mailto:gkenzer@honestreporting.com).

Since the outbreak of violence in the Middle East with the Second Intifada and the wars in Lebanon and in Gaza, much concern has been raised about media bias. And as is becoming painfully clear, a key aspect to the Mideast struggle today is the manipulation of media to influence public opinion.

Why is the media biased? It could be they are intimidated by Palestinian strongmen into covering only the “positive” side, while Israeli democracy permits more open coverage of the Israeli position. Or it could be that it’s more exciting to root for the underdog. Or it could be that the world applies a double-standard of morality to Israel.

How can readers discern the truth between the lines? Listed are common methods employed by the media—intentionally or not—to influence public opinion. By being aware of these methods, we can avoid becoming a pawn in the media war.

### Violation #1: Misleading Definitions and Terminology

*By using terminology and definitions in a*

way that implies accepted fact, the media injects bias under the guise of objectivity.

Example: The *New York Times* subtly altered its reference to the Temple Mount, which unbiased historians have always acknowledged was the site of two Holy Jewish Temples. In apparent deference to Palestinian leaders who claim that no Jewish Temple ever stood on the Jerusalem hill toward which Jews have prayed for millennia, the *Times* began appending the phrase to include “which the Arabs call the Haram al Sharif.”

Then, a few weeks later, the *Times* referred to “the Temple Mount, which Israel claims to have been the site of the First and Second Temple.” It was no longer established historical fact, but a mere “claim.” Then, in a subsequent article, the *Times* described Israeli troops as having “stormed the Haram, holiest Muslim site in Jerusalem, where hundreds of people were at worship.” No mention whatsoever of its status as the “Temple Mount” or the single holiest Jewish site.

### Violation #2: Imbalanced Reporting

*Media reports frequently skew the picture by presenting only one side of the story.*

Example: The media presents a speaker from one side of the conflict that merely ratifies the opposing view-



**A key aspect to the Mideast struggle today is the manipulation of media to influence public opinion.**

point. For example, under the guise of “balanced reporting,” the media is fond of quoting Michael Lerner, a California rabbi who called Prime Minister Barak’s policies “racist” and “oppressive,” referred to the IDF as “barbarous” and “brutal,” and accused Israeli citizens of perpetrating “classic Russian pogroms on Palestinian civilians.”

### Violation #3: Opinions Disguised as News

*An objective reporter should not use adjectives or adverbs, unless they are part of a quotation. Also, the source for any facts and opinions should be clear from the report, or alternatively it should be stated that source is intentionally undisclosed.*

Example: A *Los Angeles Times* editorial cartoon depicted an Orthodox Jew praying at

the Western Wall, with the stones of the wall forming the word “hate.” The caption read: “Worshipping their God.”

In defense, *L.A. Times* artist Michael Ramirez pointed out that that a second man in the cartoon (who was sprawled on the ground and much less noticeable) was actually a Moslem praying. Unfortunately, the kaffiyeh which would identify him as a Moslem is practically invisible. Furthermore, Ramirez was unable to explain why

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 53]

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# Becoming Student Advocates for Israel

by **ETHAN HAMMERMAN**

**A**DVOCATING for Israel is really important. Building up a strong support base at home is the only thing that can solidify support for Israel abroad. Now, especially after the crisis in the Gaza Strip, it is important to show others the truth behind the dark proceedings precipitated by Hamas's relentless barrage of rocket fire into southern Israel.

The Israeli cause is an incredibly hard one to fight for. In America, a country of underdogs, it is natural to root for those being oppressed rather than the perceived oppressors. Due to a solid working knowledge of media manipulation, the Palestinians are able to plant the spotlight squarely on the Israelis for torturing them and ruining their way of life rather than on their own leaders for attacking Israeli civilians.

As a young advocate for Israel, I have been taught many important methods of Israel advocacy, and how to best persuade those who are undecided on the issue to join the Israeli cause. For the past year, I have been a part of the Write on for Israel program, when, once a month, I make the hour-long commute from Connecticut to New York City and listen to eminent speakers and participate in workshops regarding Israel advocacy. Through this program, I have also been a part of the AIPAC Policy Conference as well as a delegate to the AIPAC Schusterman High School Seminar this past November. All of these opportunities have taught me different ways to be the most effective advocate possible for the state of Israel.

The most important aspect of being an effective advocate is to know your audience. I cannot stress this point enough. At the leadership seminar, I was able to be part of a question-and-answer session with many Israeli advocates. At one in particular, we were asked to formulate one main argument for American support of Israel. Many students came up with cogent and solid arguments to state their case that utilized cold-hard facts and logic rather than conjecture and fantasy. However, some others, especially private school students, based their arguments around religious connections to the land and God's promise to the Jewish people. These are not effective arguments for advocating, because all of those who could be swayed by that will already be on your side. Your goal is to fortify your ranks by recruiting from the middle, not piling on to what you already have.

There are many alternatives that get the Israeli point across better than resorting to the Bible. Logic, for example, and appealing to nationalism rather than religion, are two of the main methods for arguing strongly in support of a cause and convincing others to join it. Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East. So, if the United States is supposed to stand up for democratic ideals, it has to support Israel. Israel has one of the highest levels of freedom of the press in the world. So, since the United States is a

major proponent of freedom of the press, it is necessary to support Israel in all of its actions. Arguments like these, which focus on things that all Americans hold dear, are perfect for any audience when advocat-



*Ethan Hammerman, a senior at Westhill High School in Stamford, Connecticut, is a member of the Write On for Israel journalism program, funded by the Avi Chai Foundation.*

ing for Israel. There are some other arguments that should only be used in certain situations. For example, when speaking to a right-wing crowd, it may not be a bad idea to mention Israel's liberal gun rights. However, that is not the best topic of interest to discuss with a more left-wing crowd. Instead, why not focus on the liberal gay rights Israel offers its homosexual community? Knowing one's audience is integral to convincing others of your point.

Another important factor of advocacy is legitimization and the power of positive persuasion. In terms of arguing points, it is best to focus on positive and productive aspects rather than negative and argumentative ones. Positive arguments tend to be more prudent for convincing those in the center of the Israel spectrum to come over to your side. More often than not, people look for reasons to join a cause rather than shun it, and the great thing about Israel is that there are so many reasons to support the cause of her native people. Focusing on the positives can be the foundation of the best possible persuasive arguments. For example, instead of talking about the wars that Israel has gone through to maintain their ownership of the land, why not use more human interest related anecdotal evidence of Ethiopian and Soviet

Jews who came to Israel in order to find better lives for themselves and their families? It utilizes basic human pathos in order to prove its point, and is beautiful in its pure simplicity. Unlike network news, in advocacy, positive information is always better than negative information.

Thus far, I have given you a lot of information in terms of how to convince others of your belief. Well, what about in a debate situation? In this case, there is an easy-to-remember method to use. It is called the ARM method, and it is a perfect way to win over anyone in a heated debate. First, you **agree** with the posed contention, especially if it is particularly negative. Face it, your opponents may know some basic facts. If they are correct, acknowledge it. However, **reframe** it in a different light. Make it seem like it was necessary for Israel. No matter how negative, any situation can be strongly legitimized. Finally, have a strong **message**. This serves to bring your argument home, and completely stave off the attack.

Here's an example of the ARM method at work.



**The argument:** Israel killed many civilians in the attacks on Gaza.

**Agree:** "That is true. Unfortunately, Israel did kill many civilians in the Gaza attacks."

**Reframe:** "However, one must remember that, unlike most military organizations, Hamas operates within civilian populations. They were the main target in this case, and it was necessary to attack them."

**Message:** "The goal of the state of Israel

is to bring peace for all Israelis and Palestinians, and a major component of this is to end Hamas's reign of terror in Gaza."

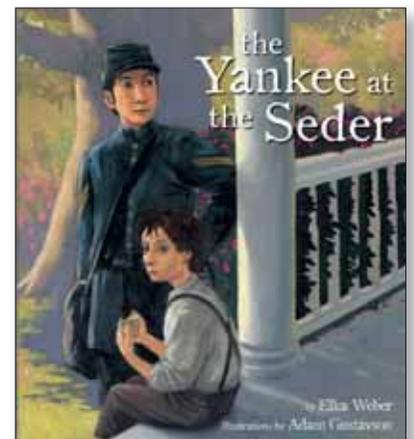
I hope that this short introduction to Israel advocacy will help you take up arms in the battle for Israel. Even if you don't join Tzahal, you can still be on the front lines in another crucial war, the war of public opinion. Israel needs to be defended, and I hope that with this new information, you will be ready to defend, and teach others to defend, Eretz Yisrael. ז

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# The Challenges of Attracting Israelis to Our Day Schools

by PAUL SHAVIV

ISRAELI emigrants<sup>1</sup> are now a significant part of every Diaspora community, in some places accounting for 25% or more of the local Jewish population. It has been extremely difficult to recruit them into the Jewish Day school system. Why?

TanenbaumCHAT (Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto) has been working on this issue for some time. The Vaughan region, north of Toronto, is the site of our northern campus and a very fast-growing Jewish area. We estimate that perhaps 30% of the Jewish population consists of former Israelis. Our Grade 9 intake survey shows that around 12-13% of our students have one or two Israeli parents. But many of these are children of one Canadian-born and one Israeli-born parent, with the Canadian-born parent (themselves often Day School graduates) bringing the child into the Jewish educational system. We have far greater difficulty in recruiting from the local “Israeli-Israeli” community. There are serious barriers.

Some of the targeted recruitment<sup>2</sup> initiatives we have made to Israeli parents include:

- extensive advertising and features in the local Ivrit newspaper (results: negligible);
- printing and circulating of material about the school in Ivrit (results: negligible);
- extensive advertising in Ivrit on the local Israeli cable TV channel (results: negligible);

1. This article deals with born-in-Israel Israelis who have emigrated from Israel, and their children. It does not include emigrants from the FSU who may have transited through Israel, but whose Jewish and cultural identity remain Russian. They are a distinct group, whose attitude to Judaism, Jewish community and Jewish schools is just as complex, but different. Similarly, I am aware that this article considers “Israelis” as a monolithic group, which they are not. For example, Israelis who are more traditional gravitate to more traditional Jewish schools, and seem to be at ease in those environments. Other immigrants—South Africans and South Americans, for example—are much more familiar with the Jewish Day School system and hence more comfortable with it. I am grateful to a number of colleagues and friends here in Toronto, particularly Rabbi Eli Mandel, for their comments on a draft of this article.

2. To give some background: TanenbaumCHAT is a very large, pluralist community high school. We have over 1,500 9-12 students, co-ed, on two parallel campuses. We are very well-known in the Toronto area; our northern campus is a sparkling, new, fully-equipped facility; and we have a very high level of Ivrit in the school. In recent years our annual recruitment of new students has been 400+, including 70%-80% of all Grade 8 students in the local day schools. In addition, Canada is a country that encourages immigration, and is a prime destination for Israelis.

- attempts to “reach out” to local Israeli cultural and community organizations (results: negligible and often resulting in antagonistic and tense exchanges);



*Paul Shaviv—himself an Israeli citizen—is the Director of Education at TanenbaumCHAT in Toronto. He can be reached at [pshaviv@tanenbaumchat.org](mailto:pshaviv@tanenbaumchat.org).*

- and, this year, recruiting some Israeli “Parent Ambassadors”—like the majority of those Israelis who do indeed send their children, satisfied parents—who were asked to personally “reach out” to potential parents and invite them to the school (results: disappointing, although there may be some more work to be done).
- For the last year we have employed a part-time Ivrit- (and Russian-) speaking “Recruitment Coordinator” to direct these efforts.

Why is this experience so difficult?

Originally, I saw this as a conceptual-cultural issue. After dozens of meetings, interviews and conversations with Israeli parents and potential parents, I identified a set of cultural-emotional-Jewish barriers that had to be overcome before attracting these parents and students into TanenbaumCHAT. They include, but are not limited to:

1. **The majority-minority issue:** Israelis are used to living as a Jewish majority. They have no concept of

what it is to live as a minority, or the effort or “investment” needed to preserve identity and culture. (“We don’t need Jewish schools; we speak Ivrit at home, and that’s enough.”)

2. **Israeli vs. Jewish:** They see their identity as national, and not in any way religious. Diaspora Jewish education is almost entirely designed to relate to Jewishness as fundamentally—although not exclusively—religious. In multicultural Toronto, some Israeli parents are far more comfortable seeing their children as the “Israel contingent” in the public schools—relating to other ethnic / national minorities—than as relating to the Jewish community.
3. **“Jewish” means “ultra-Orthodox”:** Aggravating this, many Israelis bring with them acrimonious baggage from the *dati-chiloni* (religious-secular) conflict in Israel. They see the word “Jewish” (as in “Jewish School”) as meaning “religious,” and “religious” as meaning *charedi* (“ultra-Orthodox”). They

have no concept of the broader, more tolerant Jewish options of the Diaspora.<sup>3</sup> Israeli parents ask me questions like “Do you teach secular studies in your school?” A major issue is the convention of boys wearing kippot in Jewish schools. “My son will never be forced to wear a kippah.” Even though I explain that in our school it is as much a sign of ethnic identification as it is a religious act, it is a major barrier for many.

4. **Private education; and “Israelis don’t have to pay”:** Private education is almost nonexistent in Israel. Israelis do not understand that Jew-

3. Rabbi Eli Mandel perceptively commented that the non-Orthodox character of many Jewish schools actually confuses and even alienates them, and they regard the schools as representing something inauthentic. Like the shul that they don’t go to, the school that they refuse to send their children to should be strictly Orthodox as well. In support of this comment, it should be noted that the only synagogue group that seems to have success in connecting to the Toronto Israeli population is Chabad.

ish schools are private, and have to charge tuition fees. “We’re Israelis—we don’t have to pay” is a frequently heard declaration. The request for fees (however great the offered reduction) also runs counter to their perception that Diaspora Jews are very rich: “If the local Jews want us to send our children to Jewish schools, they should pay for us!” They also are puzzled that in Israel many institutions are free gifts to local Israelis by Diaspora communities, but here they have to pay for them. Unless the family has an unusually longer-term perspective, for “new arrivals” focusing on jobs-housing-education, the choice between free public schooling and the more complicated, fee-paying Jewish school option seems a “no brainer.”

5. **Jewish identity as a stigma:** They often believe that attending a Jewish school will stigmatize their children. “Will my child be accepted at university if s/he has gone to a Jewish school?” Unfamiliar with

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North American religious and ethnic pluralism, they see Jewishness as a barrier to becoming Canadians (or Americans).

6. **Guilt:** The conflicted feelings among some Israeli émigrés about leaving Israel generates complex, irrational and often highly defensive emotions in their relationships to all things Jewish in the Diaspora.

And so on. A recurring scenario is the family that decides not to send their child to TanenbaumCHAT in Grade 9 (“We speak Ivrit at home”) but reappears three years later when their son/daughter has forgotten their Ivrit, has no interest in going back to visit Israel, and no longer wants to socialize with Jewish or Israeli friends.

What is the root cause of these feelings? Are they the outcome of sophisticated differences between Israeli and Diaspora conceptions of Jewishness and Jewish identity? Is this an echo of the historic battle of *Sbilat ha-galut* (negation of the Diaspora) in classic Zionist ideology? Is this an Ahad Ha’am-type conundrum, over which we should agonize, philosophize and hold conferences and seminars?

During a recent visit to Israel, I concluded that there is a far simpler explanation—namely, the image, or non-image, of Diaspora Jewish life portrayed in the Israeli media (and the Israeli school system).

Readers of the Ivrit newspapers or viewers of Israeli television will know that there is virtually no reporting of Diaspora Jewish life, with three exceptions: anti-Semitism, Jewish millionaires, and bathetic features about “The last Jew left in...”.

The portrayed image of Diaspora Jews is primitive in the extreme. The same is true of Diaspora Judaism. Non-Orthodox streams of Judaism—even Modern Orthodox streams of Judaism—have

complained for years that although they constitute a majority of North American Jewry they are ignored or misrepresented in the Israeli press. (The situation in the Israeli English-language media is rather better, but no Israelis read them.) Likewise, anecdotes abound of the lack of knowledge of Judaism or Diaspora Jewish life by political or cultural leaders of Israeli society.

An Israeli coming to live in, say Toronto, expects to meet Jews cowering from the threat of anti-Semitism, unorganized, groping for Jewish identity and without civic status. This generates some or all of the following reactions:

- Meeting the highly organized, self-confident, very active community is a shock.
- The concept of positive Jewish identity is incomprehensible to them.
- They continue to identify as “Israelis” (not surprisingly), but this includes a perception that although they now live in the Diaspora they are still designated recipients of UJA funding.
- Some feel bewildered that the ideological model of Israeli “identity superiority” over the Diaspora Jewish variety is not assumed by everyone they meet. According to this model, the Israelis are immune to assimilation, while the Diaspora Jews are on the verge of disappearing. In practice, among the communities of Israeli émigrés, the reverse is often the case.

Further, Israelis who have a negative view of any Jewish ritual or belief cannot understand the established place that Judaism and Jewish culture occupy in western society. (“Why would a university recognize a credit in Jewish studies?”) Non-intellectual variants on this are puzzlement on the enthusiastic marketing of kosher food by non-Jewish supermarkets, the readiness of non-Jewish manufacturers to have their products carry kosher certi-

fication, and the provision of kosher food to Jewish employees or business associates at corporate events.

So they have no concept of what Jewish life or Jewish community means, and hence cannot understand (or justify) the existence of Jewish schools, which they sometimes characterize distastefully as “money-grabbing exercises” by the local Jewish community.

Is there an answer to this?

One answer that we are considering is establishing an “Israeli option” in our Jewish Studies program that would offer a curriculum apparently more attractive, and less threatening, to the local Israeli population. This might incorporate “Ivrit for Israelis,” Tanakh taught in a more Israeli tradition, and other nuanced courses. There are numerous practical, logistic, ideological and other problems associated with this, but it seems to me to be on balance an idea worth trying. It is not different from the solution suggested by Nachman of Bratslav to the problem of the prince who thought he was a turkey. To those who respond that this would be a “change of values,” you are correct. Where our current system is clearly not engaging with 30% of our population, out-of-the-box thinking is needed.

But if we do not find a way of connecting with this population, we will continue to see the paradoxical tragedy that the moment they move out of Israel, the products of Israeli society have the least resilient Jewish identities of any Jewish group in the free world. Were this to be so, it would bear out my long-held thesis that “Israel is at one and the same time the most<sup>4</sup> Jewish place on earth and the least Jewish place on earth.” ז

4. “The most” by land, language, calendar, popular culture, history, concentration of Jewish learning, population etc. “The least” because, as discussed above, it has few, if any, of the properties that define Jewish community life as we know it, beginning with minority status and all that stems from it.

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# Israel Studies and the Hebrew Language

by VARDIT RINGVALD

THE dissection of the relationship between Hebrew language and Israel studies in Jewish day schools reflects the ongoing conversation among foreign language educators about the relationship between the teaching of a target language and the teaching of a target culture within the foreign language classroom.

The goal of teaching foreign languages has evolved. Today, effective foreign language teaching is measured by whether learners reach a level in which they are able to function in the target language in real life situations. The goal of foreign language educators is for the majority of their students to become independent users of the target language. For example, whenever students encounter an authentic situation in the language, whether spoken or written, that they have never heard or seen before in their language classroom, they will be able to comprehend it and converse or present in the target language such that native speakers who are not accustomed to dealing with non-native speakers will understand the language learner with no difficulty.

Let me frame this through an example. Last summer I taught an intermediate language class. My students came to the program in order to improve their language skills. Their goal as intermediate level learners was to become advanced users of Hebrew by the end of the summer, which included refining their linguistic abilities, improving their understanding of how to analyze verbs, and acquiring higher level vocabulary. They wanted to master all these skills in order to become true users of the language; they wanted to be able to interact in Hebrew with Israelis and with Israeli culture.

In order to enable them to fulfill their goals I carefully chose authentic texts that demonstrated how the language “behaves” in real life settings. We skimmed the linguistic components in the text and discovered that in order to truly understand the intention of the writer we had to be able to decode all of the cultural clues and understand the assumptions within the text. For example, in order for the students to truly understand what was going on in a passage from writer Haim Gouri I had to explain the dynamic of the grocery store experience in Israel, what מילואים (the reserve army) is, when and why for many years there was a radio program named “המדור לחיפוש קרובים” (*Searching for Missing Relatives*), and so on.

There is no doubt among language educators and policy makers that in order for foreign language learners to achieve the aforementioned goals they need to become well versed in the culture of the target language. This connection between language and culture is embedded and well articulated in the national standards for foreign languages in the United States:

Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language oc-

curs. (*Standards for Foreign Language Learning*, published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

With this in mind, language educators are seeking best practice to enable learners to achieve these goals in the classroom environment. There is a wide consensus among language educators that the ideal way to teach the target culture is by simply teaching the target language. In other words, the language itself is the best source for enabling learners to internalize the cultural



*Dr. Vardit Ringvald is Professor of Hebrew and Director of the Hebrew and Arabic Languages program at Brandeis University, Director of the Brandeis University-Middlebury School of Hebrew, and Senior Academic Advisor for Hebrew at the Center. She can be reached at [ringvald@brandeis.edu](mailto:ringvald@brandeis.edu).*

knowledge, and the best vehicles for this are authentic materials. “Authentic” sources are material created by native speakers to communicate messages to other native speakers. Hence, they automatically include “higher level culture” taken from the cultural canon such as important literary works, art, and music that are embedded in the social, the political, and the historical context of the given society, as well as “lower level culture” that come from the daily life of the people in the target language, such as food, clothing, popular songs, and holidays, for instance.

Many language educators express the conviction that not only are language and culture intertwined, but that language is the ultimate representation of the culture. The definition of culture created by the National Center for Cultural Competence states that culture is “an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, be-

liefs, values, costumes, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.”

Elizabeth Peterson and Bronwyn Coltrane from the Center for Applied Linguistics write, “This means that language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture.” They explain the implication for developing curriculum: “Thus, the culture associated with a language cannot be learned in a few lessons about celebrations, folk songs, or costumes of the area in which the language is spoken. Culture is a much broader concept that is inherently tied to many of the linguistic concepts taught in second language classes” (*ERIC Digest* Dec 2003).

While the role of culture is on the minds of language educators, the question is whether the role of language is on the minds of culture educators. Or, to be more specific in our case, do Israel study teachers need to view Hebrew as key for their learners to understand Israel in the same way that Hebrew language teachers should understand the importance of understanding Israeli culture for the success of their students?

In essence Hebrew language educators and Israel studies educators rely on a certain shared knowledge base for success. In the case of Hebrew teachers, understanding Israeli culture supports the goal of helping their learners to become true users of Hebrew. In the case of Israel study educators, the same understanding is necessary for their students to gain a true grasp of Israel. This still leaves us with the question of whether Israel studies educators need Hebrew as part of their curriculum. While it is true that students can learn about Israeli culture without knowing Hebrew—studying facts, reading literature in translation, and learning about current events in Israel from English newspapers—this absence would prevent them from being immersed in the culture. The learning goes on at arm’s length, and as in language learning, there is a difference between “learning about” the language versus achieving

proficiency and being able to function in the language.

If we wish our learners to become more than just knowledgeable about Israel and Israeli culture, helping them, in addition, to immerse in it and understand it from inside out, we definitely need to use the Hebrew language to make it happen.

To accomplish this, Israel educators need to consider exposing their students to a variety of authentic texts ranging from daily news to poetry, from movies to popular songs. They need to be able to expose them to authentic experiences whether they are holiday celebrations or living with constant security threats. Their goals should be to



help their students to be able to read between the lines and synthesize what they know about the society and identify with it. In other words, the same way Hebrew language educators should aspire to make their learners independent users of the language in real life settings by immersing them in the culture of the target language in the language class, Israel study educators need to aspire to make their learners develop an insider’s understanding of Is-

raeli culture.

If indeed the goal of Israel study is to help enhance students’ true connection to the culture, and the culture is revealed through the language, then Hebrew needs to play an important role in the Israel study curriculum.

Some practical advice:

When teaching about Israel try to group your learners according to their Hebrew level.

In each thematic unit include authentic materials in Hebrew according to the students’ level.

Try to expose your learners to a variety of authentic texts.

Utilize techniques taken from the Hebrew language classroom such as role play, meaningful memorization, listening and reading comprehension activities in order to immerse the learners in the learned topic.

Use your Hebrew language educator in your school as a resource.

# Israel in Our Schools

WHAT programs and opportunities enable students in RAVSAK schools to have meaningful encounters with the people, life and culture of Israel? *HaYidion* received a variety of responses, from sister-school programs and remarkable centers in Israel to shlichim and periodicals that bring Israel to our campuses. These pieces not only describe their programs but also consider what makes them effective. Perhaps they will inspire fresh ideas for bringing Israel to life for your students.

## Advice to a *Shaliach*

by **GALIT CRAMMER BAR-TUV**

You come highly motivated, full of ideology; some of you think you have all the answers to the problems of the *golah*. Then you fall into a community or a school that is already well established, with strong feelings about Israel and about their Jewish identity. It only takes a short period to realize that your current plans are irrelevant for these people. Instead of teaching, you learn from them. Instead of being strong, you are taken care of. Then you wonder, what is my *shlichut* (mission)?

I would like to share some of my thoughts on this question based on my five years as a *shlichah*. To begin with, you must respect all the different ways of observing Judaism and loving Israel that you encounter. You have to observe, absorb, and learn about the community you are serving: Who are the leaders? What is missing in this specific community? What are its needs? What are the community's expectations from you as a *shaliach*?

Introduce yourself; do not leave it for others. Because you have the title of *shaliach*, community members will approach you with ideas and issues about Judaism and Israel. Be gentle; they are not asking you to change their life. Identify appropriate areas in which you can contribute, and try not to step on others' toes. But when you have a good idea, go for it! Contact key organizations such as the Federation and the Jewish Agency; be informed about upcoming lectures, relevant rallies and other events. In these ways and more, be part of the community. Remember that you are an Israeli, but Israel is not yours alone. Look for positive forces and talented people in your community and plan long term programs and special events with their help.

I do not want to disappoint you, but the above does not describe the most important part of the *shlichut*. In fact, most if not all of those roles can be fulfilled by others. So we return to the opening question: What is my *shlichut*?

You really bring to the *shlichut* an authentic Israeli's ground and air; you bring yourself—your personality, your beliefs, your family, your questions, your worries, your life experience, and your love. Israel is part of your biography and identity; when you bring yourself to the community, you bring Israel as well. Your community will see Israel through you. More important than any event or program you may plan is who you are every day. Do your best, make true friends, be honest and gentle, be yourself. That is your greatest contribution as a *shaliach*.

*Galit Crammer Bar-Tuv is a Hebrew teacher at the Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy in Merion Station, Pennsylvania. She can be reached at [gcrammer@jbha.org](mailto:gcrammer@jbha.org).*



# Twinning Project with Israeli School

by IRIT KUBA

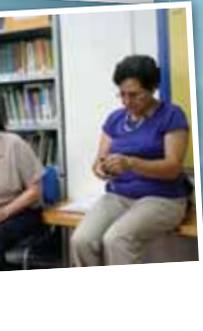
*“This week was the best week of school I’ve ever had because this week the students from our twinned school in Israel came to our school and our houses.” (Wornick 7th grade student)*



Israel has been a significant part of our school culture and programs since we joined the Israel Education Initiative “Twinning Project” and twinned with The Hebrew Reali School in Haifa, Israel. Our relationship, or as we call it, our Peoplehood program, is based on the Israel-Diaspora relationship and emphasizes the importance of each community to one another.



During the years our relationship with the Reali School has grown from simple exchanges of holiday greetings to dual curricular units taught in parallel at both schools. Our Middle School students exchange a monthly newsletter, respond to topics in our mutual blog, and recently began using a virtual city where they can meet, leave messages and post video clips. During the 8th grade Israel trip our students spent time with the Reali students, experiencing their daily life at the school while being hosted by Israeli families. While in Israel, Wornick faculty studied and worked with their counterparts at Reali to create a vision



and curriculum together.

But the peak of our relationship with Reali occurred when the Wornick community hosted the first students’ delegation from Reali. 24 students and 5 teachers who have been in contact with our Middle School students and teachers during the past two years came to spend a week with us, learn about Jewish life in the Bay Area, and advocate for Israel. Reali and Wornick students traveled to San Francisco, performed community service, talked about Jewish peoplehood and spent a weekend retreat together.

*“I personally think that the week with the Reali School was the best week of my whole life. It opened many new doors of opportunity and friendships. I think that whoever thought of connecting us with the Reali School is a genius. This made my life better and I am sure lifted the souls of all of my peers. I learned so much from these kids and made friendships that will last a lifetime. Even though I am already religious, they made me want to be as much as a Jew as I can. They made me proud of my culture and loooooooooove Israel. I am forever grateful to the students of the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa.”*

*“My grasp of Judaism changed much. When we had a debate in groups, their ideas made me wait and think. I learned that these*

*amazing friends from across the world are not much different than me.”*

*“I learned about the people from Israel and Israel itself. The Reali visit strengthened my sense that Israel is the Jews homeland and it is always welcoming to Jews in the Diaspora.”*

The Twinning Project allows us to create a sense of unity between Israelis and American Jews based on reciprocity and person-to-person relationships. Klal Yisrael is not limited to Israel and the United States; therefore, the Peoplehood Program of the schools now includes the Jewish day school of Istanbul, Turkey.

The *mifgashim* (encounters) strengthen our students’ Jewish identity, create a strong sense of belonging and unity, build meaningful experiences and provide our community with the opportunity to connect to the state of Israel and its people on a very personal level, gaining strength from Klal Yisrael. ז

*Irit Kuba is the Israel Coordinator at the Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School in Foster City, California. She can be reached at [irit@wornickjds.org](mailto:irit@wornickjds.org).*



# An Encounter with the Elderly in Israel

by **AMY WASSER**

Entering into our ninth year of Israel trip programming, the Hillel School of Tampa will once again visit Lifeline for the Old, Yad LaKashish. Together with our traveling partners from B'nai Shalom Day School

of Greensboro, North Carolina, each year we bring our students to this unique institution in the heart of Jerusalem.

Founded many years ago by a woman named

Miriam Mendilow, Lifeline

opens its doors to elderly citizens who would otherwise have nowhere to go.

The beauty of this organization is that they not only welcome them, but they

teach them a new trade to make the seniors feel useful and creative. Inside the stone walls of this enclave you will find former teachers, bus drivers, doctors, and lawyers painting, doing ceramics, binding old books, making talitot, sewing, and numerous other crafts. Not only do they learn these new skills, but they do them amazingly well. My home, as well as those of many others I know, is filled with beautiful items sold in the Yad LaKashish gift shop.

By bringing our students here we allow them to see that Israel, like any other country, must take responsibility for its elderly. We want the children to see Israel from more than just a tourist perspective, to understand that ordinary people live here and must be cared for. In addition to our visit, a group of the students stay and help the seniors with their tasks. Al-

though we are never as talented as they, it is a wonderful multi-generational activity. When we are fortunate to have a student who speaks Russian or Yiddish, there is great excitement when they can converse with someone who came from Eastern Europe. Usually we get by with Hebrew and the conversations are just as rich.

The people who work at Yad LaKashish always welcome our groups warmly, and this will remain an important part of our trip.

*Amy Wasser is Head of School at Hillel School of Tampa, Florida. She can be reached at [wasser@hillelschool.com](mailto:wasser@hillelschool.com).*



# Newspaper Opens Door to Israel

by **TAMARA DAVID**

The value of studying a foreign language is well documented: children who study a second language have higher scores on standardized tests, demonstrate increased mental flexibility, creativity, divergent thinking and higher order thinking skills, develop a sense of cultural pluralism and have an improved self concept and sense of achievement. In the context of a Jewish community day school, the study of modern Hebrew produces all these results and many more: increased identification with the State of Israel, greater pride in being Jewish, and the ability to function

with greater ease and fluency when they travel to Israel.

However, finding up-to-date and relevant materials that appeal to a contemporary North American Jewish community day school student is no small task. As a teacher of middle school students, I found few reading materials that were age appropriate, current, and employed Hebrew as a living language, rather than having a biblical or haggadic focus. Then I discovered *Yanshuf*.

*Yanshuf* is a biweekly Hebrew language

newspaper published in Israel, which contains stories about news, politics, sports, and culture written by journalists in conjunction with Hebrew teachers and educators. This combination is what makes the publication work as a pedagogic tool. The topics are of interest to young people because they capture events that take place in the world and in Israel.

*Yanshuf* is colorful, its language is easily understandable, and it supplies additional

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 44]

# Living with Israelis

by HARRY SINOFF



Herzl/RMHA has developed a new model for promoting relationships between our students and Israel. It is really a simple idea: our 10th grade lives for 6 weeks in the Environmental High School on Midreshet Ben Gurion. While their Israeli peers are in classes, our students have ulpan, or if their Hebrew is adequate, they attend regular high school classes. After classes our students are folded into the high school extracurricular activities and spend their free time with Israeli peers.

You can imagine the dramatic effect of this program on Hebrew language improvement. Equally profound are the deep and enduring relationships that result. The isolated, beautiful setting conduces to socializing and excursions into the desert for entertainment.

Students from the first two cadres to go on the program are still in regular contact with their Israeli friends via email, Facebook, instant messaging and telephone. Our students have visited with their Israeli friends and the Israelis have visited here. We are eager to discover what happens to the relationships when the Israelis go off to the army and our students go to university.

The students' quantum leap in Hebrew language skills allows us to offer a course in which the language of instruction is Hebrew. This is the second year of such a course: Critical Questions Facing Israel. There is strong interest on account of both the content and the fact that it gives students another forum in which to speak Hebrew. If only we had a geometry teacher who spoke Hebrew!

The most recent cadre returned at the end of December and is still high from the program. No one can better express their relationship with Israel and Israelis than the students themselves. Here are some excerpts (from our lowest Hebrew section); I have translated from the Hebrew.

Mia writes:

*I met Israeli kids. I now have many Israeli friends and I want to see them when I return to Israel...I love going to my school but I am very homesick (אנחה) for Israel because I love the land and the people (אנשים).*

Rivka writes:

*When I return to Israel I want to see my friends from the high school on Midreshet Sde Boker (another name for Midreshet Ben Gurion). I want to see new things. I*

*feel good in Israel.*

Although the Hebrew might not be sophisticated, the emotions are crystal clear: the beginning of a long-term relationship with Israelis and Israel. ז

*Rabbi Harry Sinoff is the Director of Judaic Studies at Herzl/RMHA in Denver, Colorado. He can be reached at [hsinoff@dcje.org](mailto:hsinoff@dcje.org).*



# Much Ado About Something: Clarifying Goals and Methods of Israel Education

by **ALEX POMSON** and **HOWARD DEITCHER**

JEWISH day schools are very busily engaged in the work of Israel education. In fact, there may be no other area of day school education where there is so much activity, as the advertisements in this journal attest. There are new curriculum packages, many professional development opportunities for teachers, and no lack of short- and long-term experiences available in Israel for both students and teachers. We suspect that much of this activity is intended both to address the widely discussed disconnect between American Jewish youth and Israel, and to bolster elements in the students' Jewish identities. We ask: how well conceived and how coherent is all of this work?

These are the questions at the heart of two ongoing studies being conducted by the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with support from The AVI CHAI Foundation, and The Jim Joseph and Schusterman Family Foundations. Over the last six months, members of our research team have been pursuing leaders of liberal and Modern Orthodox schools in North America to learn how their schools go about the work of Israel education, and where they see their challenges and successes. With survey data collected from almost 150 schools, with nearly 80 different sets of curricula analyzed, and with intensive qualitative research underway at a sample of 16 schools across the continent, we hope to complete the most comprehensive examination yet of Israel education in North American day schools.

Our research will wrap up later in the spring. For the moment, we can share some preliminary findings and offer some first thoughts about what we're learning.

## Differences Between Orthodox and non-Orthodox

Modern Orthodox and non-Orthodox day schools go about Israel education in profoundly different ways. (By referring to non-Orthodox schools we group together community, Conservative and Reform schools, since there doesn't seem to be a statistical difference between these streams in relation to Israel education.) To provide some examples: non-Orthodox schools are 50% more likely to run some kind of trip to Israel for their students; they're more than twice as likely to use commercially produced curriculum to teach about Israel, rather than rely on school-developed efforts; they're half as likely to employ Israelis on short-term contracts as either teach-

ers or informal educators; and they're almost twice as likely to run professional development about Israel education for their faculty.

Each of these differences could be explored at greater length since they reflect



*Dr. Alex Pomson is a senior lecturer at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University. He can be reached at [apomson@mssc.huji.ac.il](mailto:apomson@mssc.huji.ac.il)*



*Howard Deitcher is a senior lecturer at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University and a faculty member at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Jerusalem. He can be reached at [mshoward@mssc.huji.ac.il](mailto:mshoward@mssc.huji.ac.il)*

what may be a significant cultural difference between the schools. Given the constraints of space here, we focus on one of these differences and what school leaders tell us about it: the Israel trip. This detail sheds much light on the larger picture.

## A Dependence on Israel Trips

Non-Orthodox schools are not only much more likely than Orthodox schools to provide Israel trips for their students, they also view the role of these trips in sharply different ways. When we asked schools that provide Israel trips to identify which of their programs has greatest impact on their students' connection to Israel, 85% of the non-Orthodox schools

identify the trip. This is not unreasonable: the trip is a high cost program that in a short space of time provides students with an experience of great emotional intensity. When we asked the same question to Orthodox schools, only 30% of them point to the trip. We find this difference striking.

To explain further: The 70% of Orthodox schools (and the 15% of non-Orthodox schools) that don't mention the trip refer instead to programs that celebrate significant moments in the Jewish calendar. They point to the relationships students develop with Israeli faculty, and in a few instances they identify aspects of the curriculum that have impact over time. In these schools, it seems, the Israel trip may be a peak experience, but it is not an exceptional or irreplaceable one. The two or four weeks in Israel (or one semester for some high schools) do not loom large over the other four, seven or twelve years of day school education.

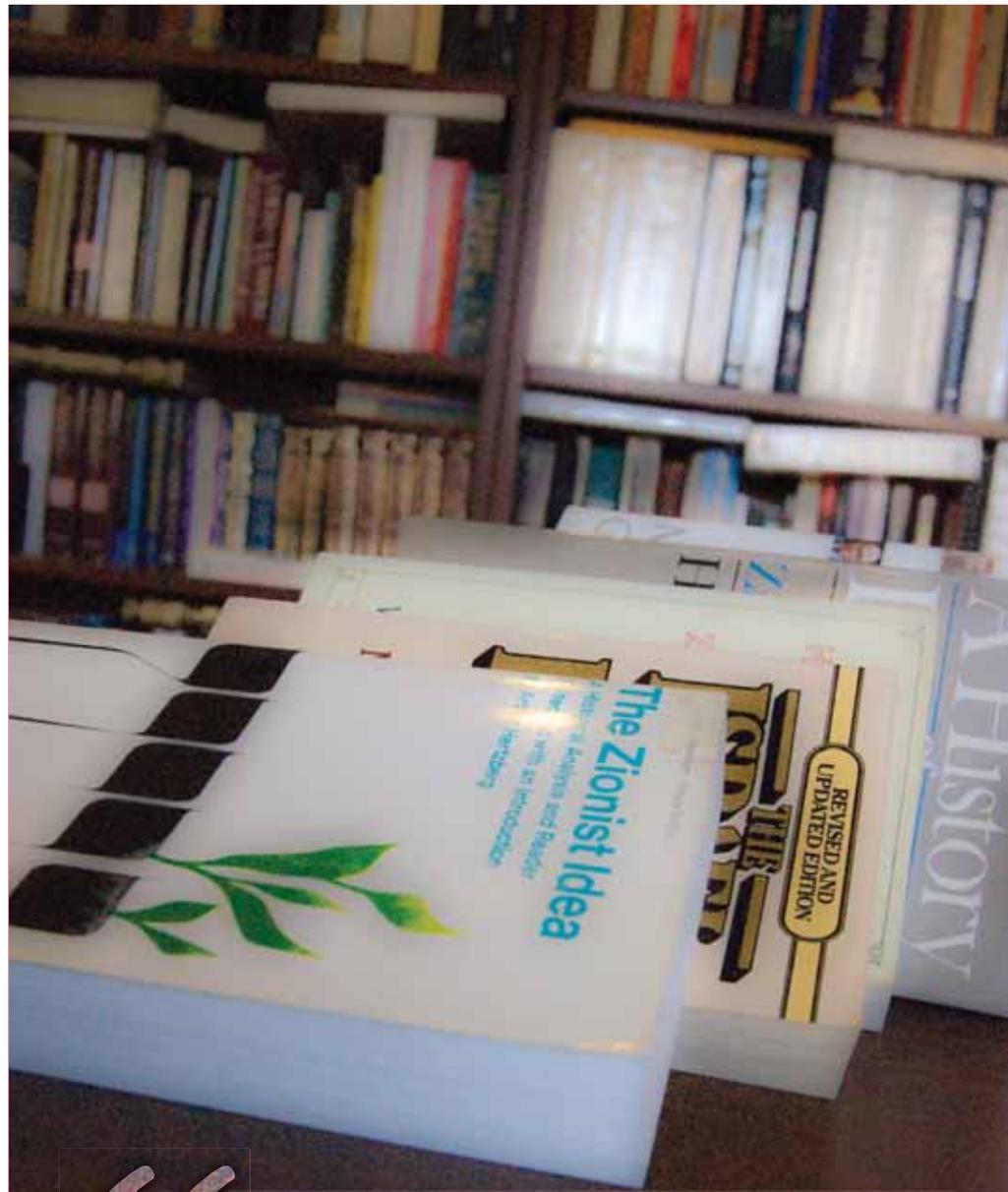
We wonder what conclusions to draw from those schools where the trip is so important. Is this because their students would not otherwise visit Israel? Does the difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox schools therefore reflect not an imbalance in the schools' programs but in their students' Jewish lives? We won't know for sure until we complete our qualitative research. But for the moment we can say that, in either case, we're concerned that in non-Orthodox schools so much comes to rest on such a brief educational experience. One might have thought that the great educational strength of day school education comes from its drip-drip effect, from the fact that, over time, students are socialized in to a covenantal Jewish community and have an opportunity to wrestle with Jewish ideas and concepts. It seems, however, that when it comes to Israel education, many schools depend on a short-sharp-shock, much as Birthright Israel does; and in these financially challenged times their dependence on such high cost and experientially brief interventions seems increasingly perilous.

### **An Emphasis on Enculturation rather than Instruction**

In relation to one feature of Israel education, non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox schools are very similar. When they reflect on where they have the greatest impact on students, the great majority of school leaders point to programs and interventions that occur outside the classroom spaces where their students spend the bulk of their time. For the non-Orthodox, it tends to be the Israel trip; for the Orthodox, it is those special

programs and experiences they provide during the course of the year or the relationships children develop with Israeli personnel in the school. When we look closely at the materials that schools use in the classroom—and at this stage in our research, we have looked only at the materials developed by commercial publishers or not-for-profit organizations such as the Jewish Agency or local Boards of Jewish Education—we find that these materials tend to be heavily skewed towards what we call an “experiential” rather than

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When it comes to Israel education, many schools depend on a short-sharp-shock, much as Birthright Israel does.

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a “cognitive” perspective, that is, they emphasize their relevance to the students’ lives and experiences rather than focus on abstract concepts or academic content.

These findings lead us to wonder whether in the field of Israel education we are witnessing what our colleague Isa Aron (following Christian educator John Westerhoff) once called a paradigm of “enculturation” rather than one of “instruction.” Enculturation constitutes the broadly conceived task of introducing children into a set of values and norms, and initiating them into a culture and its commitments. Instruction is a more narrowly conceived task that assumes the child’s pre-existing commitment to a culture and society. It is concerned with helping children acquire knowledge of the ideas and skills that society values. Enculturation, Aron argued, is advanced by providing young people with well conceived and positive Jewish experiences; instruction occurs typically within the walls of the classroom in an interaction between the teacher and learner.

We sense that when it comes to Israel education, schools are engaged in enculturative work. Both non-Orthodox and Orthodox schools are seeking to culti-

vate commitments and inculcate values by providing students with formative experiences. They don’t seem ready to assume that students’ commitments are firm enough that as educators they can focus on instruction. This is no small matter, since historically schools have been sites for instruction rather enculturation; instruction is what most teachers are trained to do. Perhaps that’s why so many schools are inclined to sub-contract the work of Israel education to providers of Israel experiences. These providers are much better prepared to provide enculturative education.

### A Search for Coherence

When we asked schools about their greatest challenges, we have been struck again by the similarity between Orthodox and non-Orthodox schools, despite the differences in the balance of their practices. To put it succinctly: Orthodox and non-Orthodox schools seem equally uncertain about how best to translate their commitments into practice. A minority—just one-third— employ an individual to coordinate the work of Israel education, even though Israel education occurs in so many different settings and at so many different times. Many schools are plagued by doubts about what kinds

of age-appropriate outcomes they should seek when their students are emotionally and geographically distant from Israel. As the head of a community high school put it:

The major challenge we face regarding Israel education is, To what purpose? Is our Israel education program designed to serve as [a series of] building blocks to a culminating experience of the senior trip? Is our Israel education designed to provide our students with tools to deal with anti-Israel sentiment on college campuses? Should our Israel education be designed to make the “gap year” part of the school’s culture? Is there a way to make Israel education and going to Israel part of a means of rejuvenating Jewish life on our school campus upon their return?

Such uncertainty is not surprising given what we have described above. Israel education is a congested field. Schools feel an obligation to be active in it, and they’re being bombarded by new programs and interventions that promise to serve them well. We hope that, by the time it is completed, our research will help bring coherence and clarity to an endeavor that it is evidently central to the self-understanding of North American day schools. ז



## Re/Pre Makes New History in Day Schools

It has been a busy six months for teachers in Re/Presenting the Jewish Past’s first cohort of schools. Teachers from Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, Chicagoland Jewish High School, The Frisch School, Gann Academy, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy and Tannenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto have all been meeting regularly in their school teams revising and reflecting on the changes they have implemented to the teaching of Jewish history in their schools’ curriculum.

Beth Tfiloh Dahan has successfully launched a new course for ninth graders

that functions as a “Jewish Social Studies” course, which they had time to work on during the 2008 summer workshop. Teachers at TanenbaumCHAT are exploring a possible change to the tenth grade medieval Jewish history course, a move from a chronological to themes-based approach. Chicagoland, Frisch and Hyman Brand have all taken on coordinating the integration of Jewish history into the general history curricula, while the Charles E. Smith team has revised and implemented changes to their American and European Jewish history courses, as well as continued to coordinate the curricula across departments with their chair of the history department. Finally, members of the his-

tory department at Gann are planning to create their own textbook, possibly one that will be available online.

These are all exciting developments. Change, while a buzzword these days, takes time—especially in schools. We are thrilled at the accomplishments of our partner schools and are looking forward to welcoming team members to our mid-winter gathering next month at New York University.

Recruitment for our second cohort is well underway. If you are interested in participating, please contact Yona Shem-Tov, Coordinator of Education and Outreach, at [yshemtov@ntjhistory.org](mailto:yshemtov@ntjhistory.org).

PROJECT



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**Arthur W. Fried,**  
*Chairman of the Board of Trustees,  
The AVI CHAI Foundation*

# Israel Studies on the American Campus: A Hard Transition

by **ARIEH SAPOSNIK**

**I**SRAEL Studies—an academic field that was all but non-existent a few years ago—has emerged in recent years as a rapidly growing (and evolving) field in American universities. The circumstances of its growth reflect the fault lines inherent in the field. The appearance of Israel Studies programs, chairs, and visiting scholars has, to a large extent, been the product of intense activity by donors concerned with Israel’s image on American campuses. While this has been a welcome development, it has also created a certain tension in some areas between the concern and interest of the donor organizations and individuals on the one hand and the academic demand for disinterested and dispassionate research and teaching on the other hand. And if this is true on the institutional level, it is in many respects a reflection of the kinds of dilemmas faced on a personal level by scholars whose research and teaching focuses on Zionism and Israel.

It is a truism, of course, to point out that the things we choose to study and the career paths we set out upon say a great deal about who we are and how we see ourselves. But when it comes to teaching about Israel, the lines between academic pursuit and identity politics, or identity-searching, can often be particularly blurred. Few scholars of Israel Studies come to their work free of ideological allegiances and often deep emotional commitments of one variety or another. One often wonders if many of the historiographical (and other) debates between scholars of differing stripes—“Zionist,” “post-Zionist,” “non-Zionist” historians, sociologists and others—aren’t at least as much about differing emotional experiences and attachments as they are about documents, data, and the ways in which we read them.

Some of the most difficult challenges involved in teaching about Israel and Zionism on American college campuses stem from precisely this tension between commitment and detachment. These challenges, I think, are different from those posed by teaching about Israel in Jewish primary and secondary schools. Israel Studies on the university campus differs in some fundamental respects from the teaching of Israel and Zionism that takes place in the context of Jewish day schools or other Jewish educational frameworks, and these differences are rooted to a large degree in the different balances that are struck in each of these frameworks.

Indeed, the differences may at times make the two seem not only entirely separate enterprises, but in fact almost clashing ones. If the Israel encountered by students in Jewish schools is, for the most part, an integral part of the Jewish identity these schools seek to foster—and to make attractive and inviting—those same students will often have

a considerably bumpier encounter with a sometimes unfamiliar-looking Israel that they will encounter at the university. Added to this is also the fact that at the university many of my students—in many cases, a majority—are not Jewish. For them, then, my job is not about teaching Jewish identity and transmitting Jewish memory. But neither is it about that with my Jewish students.

Some degree of dissonance often becomes evident at the level of even the most fundamental premises. In teaching about Zionism, for example, I have often found one of the most difficult challenges to be conveying to American students—Jews and non-Jews—the very notion of a national (not



*Dr. Arieh Saposnik is the Jess Schwartz Assistant Professor of Hebrew Culture at Arizona State University and the author of *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine*. He can be reached at [arieh.saposnik@asu.edu](mailto:arieh.saposnik@asu.edu).*

religiously based) definition of Jewishness that lies at the root of the Zionist idea. But the clash of sometimes inconsistent images of Israel hardly stops there. The Israel of academic texts, after all, is not all about heroism and unequivocal valor. The tensions between “religious” and “secular” Jews in Israel, rooted in Zionism’s contested Judaisms (indeed, the often virulent rejection of traditional Judaism, in some leading versions of Zionism), can come as a shock to some American Jewish students and can be difficult to understand and to accept.

Jewish students, in fact, often arrive in the college Israel Studies (or Jewish Studies) classroom assuming a certain advantage, especially if they have benefited from a relatively extensive Jewish educational back-

ground. At times, they are proven correct. At others, they end up facing greater challenges than students with little or no background, since learning is often preceded for them by a difficult and even painful un-learning. If a good part of the task of the Jewish school is to construct and transmit Jewish *memory*, in other words, the task of the university Israel Studies classroom is to teach *history*—and the two often share a coexistence that is uneasy at best.

Complicating this further, I myself, like many of my colleagues, have to contend with a similar tension in our research and teaching (and in our lives). Being a historian does not liberate one, after all, from being a “rememberer.” Memory and history *do* somehow exist side by side in our psyches, and negotiating the tensions between them is not always an easy task even for those of us who spend years—and make our livings—doing just that. As an Israel Studies scholar and teacher who often benefits directly from the interest donors have in improving Israel’s image on campus, moreover, what is my obligation to that agenda, and how can I balance it with my commitment to disinterested research and teaching?

Part of what is at stake, of course, is how we understand the purpose of teaching about Israel at an American university. As I see it, there are a variety of sound academic reasons why Israel Studies does have a real claim to a place in the American academic landscape. Israel is not only contested, controversial and always deemed newsworthy, but stands at one of the focal points of some of the most volatile crossroads in world politics, with an impact far beyond its near invisibility on most maps of the world. From my own perspective as a student of nationalism, Zionism—the creation of a Hebrew national culture (not to mention a modern Hebrew spoken language), and the creation of the state of Israel—is a fascinating human story that sheds important light on questions whose importance is hardly deniable in a world in which we still draw our maps (political, social, cultural) largely along the lines of nation-states. Zionism and Israel, moreover, are particularly striking illustrations of what was a



At times, Jewish students end up facing greater challenges than students with little or no background, since learning is often preceded for them by a difficult and even painful un-learning.

dramatic transformation of Jewish life over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a time in which “the Jewish question,” as it was once known, was indissolubly bound up with the question of modernity itself, with its promise and anxieties. If one of the goals of a university education is to train students to think and to progressively sharpen and hone that thinking, I see my own role as one of complicating and nuancing my Jewish and non-Jewish students’ understandings of Israel, its place in the Middle East and in the community of nations, and its position in the geographical and chronological span of Jewish life.

Israel Studies at the university, in other words, is not about promoting Jewish identity and identification with Israel, nor is it about doing *hasbarah*, advocacy on behalf of Israel. It is, in other words, about “history” rather than “memory.” Why, then, should it garner the support of donors interested in improving and promoting Israel’s image on campus, or of parents sending their children off to college after graduating from a Jewish school? Here, I think, the point where the interests of memory and of history, the goals of teaching Israel on a university campus and in the Jewish schools might at least partially converge. A

number of organizations now seek to prepare students to counter anti-Israel claims they may hear on campus. What is often missing from this type of training is one simple ingredient: a deeper understanding of Israel’s history that is rooted in a solid base of knowledge, thought and analysis; and a familiarity with Zionist thinking and ideas as well as the concrete course of action taken by the Zionist movement—along with the many dilemmas, quarrels, and debates—to make those ideas reality.

Helping students to acquire an understanding of Israel as neither a mythical land of heroic Ari Ben-Canaans nor a scheming den of malevolence as it is indeed presented at times on some campuses is, in the end, the best service educators can provide both to their students and to Israel’s sometimes strained image. Venturing (hopefully not too perilously) from history into the realm of memory, I might even suggest that this is in itself a fulfillment in some sense of the central Zionist hope of “normalizing” the Jewish people—creating for the Jews a literal and figurative soil on which, as a “normal” people with a land of its own, they will be free to work out their own daily concerns with their social gaps, economic challenges, political divisions, and cultural successes and failures.

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# Israel Education Is... Identification and Commitment

by **ANNA KOLODNER** and **JONINA PRITZKER**

**I**n January 2009 Israel is fighting in Gaza to defend its citizens from rocket attacks launched by Hamas. At the same time, anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment stoked by the situation in Gaza is accelerating throughout the US and Europe. We see virulent anti-Israel demonstrations calling for the destruction and isolation of the Jewish state. Hamas supporters accuse Israel of “genocide” and “war crimes.” Supporters of Israel and Jews everywhere are on the defensive against a well organized and well funded opposition that dominates the media, negatively influencing public discourse. The confluence of these events exposes the vulnerability of our educational system, yet defines the elements which must be rebuilt, our sense of Jewish peoplehood, identity, and connection to Israel.

The need for Israel education for Jewish children and adults is enormous. The cold, hard fact—reinforced by everything from academic studies to the low turnout at pro-Israel rallies—is that Israel today is not central to the lives of many American Jews, and with each generation the sense of distance increases. Just as Judaism itself has become voluntary for Jews, a lifestyle or a hyphenated identity to be blended together with other concerns or beliefs, Israel is just another item to be picked up from the smorgasbord and accepted wholly or partially, or simply rejected. There is a long trail of literature which seeks to explain how things have come to this. Much of it reflects a failure of Jewish education over many years, but from this failure flows an opportunity.

How can Israel be made central again to Jewish children and adults? In an age when educators, Jewish and otherwise, are called upon to do more with the same or fewer resources, the challenges are daunting. The first obstacle to overcome is to understand Israel as a non-ideological Jewish case. Whatever one’s level of approval or agreement with Israeli policy or conduct, Israel is home to 40% of world Jewry and thus represents a substantial portion of the world Jewish future. Simply on that basis alone, it is central to Jewish life. Meaningful understanding of Israeli history, life and culture is therefore a requirement for all Jews everywhere. It must be infused with a sense of ownership and pride in our people, our land and our history. Without a widespread commitment to Israel at the very core of Jewish education we are swimming against the tide. Rabbis, educators, communal leaders, and funders have to get on this same page.

The second challenge is to recognize that Israel education cannot be limited to children.

There is a natural tendency for parents to want their children to go beyond their own levels of knowledge and achievement. But as with many aspects of education, Israel education cannot be achieved by children learning in isolation. For children, learning about Jewish history and the lives of fellow Jews cannot succeed without adult reinforcement, and often parallel learning is needed. Adult education is an integral



*Dr. Anna Kolodner is Executive Director of The David Project. She can be reached at [ak@davidproject.org](mailto:ak@davidproject.org).*



*Rabbi Jonina Pritzker is Educational Initiatives Manager of The David Project. She can be reached at [jp@davidproject.org](mailto:jp@davidproject.org).*

requirement not only for reinforcement but for its intrinsic value. The sad fact is that too many Jewish adults are woefully uninformed about Israel, the Middle East conflict, and frankly, about Judaism. Adult education about Israel is not intended to produce any given ideological outcome, on the right or the left, but only a higher level of knowledge, more intelligent discourse, and a greater degree of empathy, than is currently on display among American Jewish adults.

Much of American Jewish life has followed an inner-directed course, where education has been pursued for the sake of individual development and personnel success. This

path has come at the expense of a more outer-directed course, in the sense of inculcating commitment to the Jewish community. The individualistic focus has been partially counterbalanced by the vague notion of *tikkun olam*. But as worthy as this impulse is, there is often nothing particularly Jewish about the outcome or even the impulse – it could be as easily cast as doing good deeds in the name of the Golden Rule. But Israel education offers the opportunity for Jews to reconnect with their own community and to become active in support of that community. Becoming educated means becoming involved, and as a result developing a sense of responsibility toward fellow Jews. It may even mean taking up the challenge of community leadership.

Israel education must begin as early as possible. The positive results of introducing Israel in elementary schools have been demonstrated repeatedly. Whether in day schools, congregational schools or yeshivot, modern Israel is a natural complement to Jewish history and religious studies curricula. Emphasis on the physical dimensions of the ancient and modern land makes the connection between the past and present something living and real. Israel should permeate the classroom through pictures and maps and symbols. Showing

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 45]

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# The Dimensions of Time in Israel Education

by EZRA KOPELOWITZ

**T**HERE are at least five dimensions in which Israel is part of the educational experience at a Jewish school: the (1) aesthetic/decorative, (2) ceremonial, (3) conversational/interactive, (4) curricula and (5) school management dimensions. To think strategically about the development of “Israel education as a discipline,” we need first to describe all five dimensions and then ask a prescriptive question: How should educators incorporate these five dimensions into an overall strategy for Israel education?

## **Aesthetic/Decorative**

Here Israel is part of the decorations and aesthetic that marks a school as a Jewish institution. In almost all Jewish schools one sees Israeli flags, maps and pictures of Israel on walls. One might also hear Israeli music piped over the intercom system or see Israeli newspapers in the school library, among other possible examples.

From the perspective of the sociology of time, within the aesthetic/decorative dimension Israel appears as a constant presence that “is simply always there,” in a seen but often unnoticed fashion. The question is less to the presence of Israel but rather the intensity of the use of “Israel as background.” For example: Do Israeli flags and maps appear in every classroom? Is the flag flown in front of the school?

In a survey of community day schools belonging to the RAVSAK network in the United States carried out by this author in 2005, 96% of the schools surveyed reported maps and 91% Israel flags hanging in the school. Of the schools that do fly the Israeli flag 74% have a flag hanging in every classroom. In other words, walk into a classroom in the vast majority of RAVSAK schools and you experience the symbolic presence of Israel. The map of Israel has less of a presence than the Israeli flag. Maps are hung by 69% of the schools only in their Jewish studies classrooms. Thirty percent hang a map of Israel in every classroom in their school.

## **Ceremonial**

In contrast to the continuous or constant presence of Israel as a decorative or aesthetic dimension of life in a Jewish school, ceremony is cyclical in nature. Ceremonies in schools mark periods of time that normally last from moments to days, in which people step out of the routine experience of everyday life and briefly enter into a different “communal” sense of reality. The ceremony occurs at regular and expected intervals. It is a moment out of everyday routine, which is taken for granted in the sense that people expect it to happen, but normally requires tremendous work and preparation for successful execution.

The most prominent example is the Israel Independence Day ceremony. In the

RAVSAK survey, 100% of schools reported holding an Israel Independence Day ceremony. For a few hours once a year the school community leaves aside regular classroom learning and shares a common ceremonial experience that connects them as a community to Israel. In some schools the Israel Independence Day ceremony also serves as a jumping board for a larger integrative experience in which the amount of flags, maps and pictures increases within the school, and classroom learning and other informal



*Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz is CEO of Research Success Technologies, a company specializing in data management solutions and research for Jewish cultural and educational organizations. He can be reached at [ezra@researchsuccess.com](mailto:ezra@researchsuccess.com).*

educational activities are devoted to Israel prior to and after the ceremony.

Other ceremonial activities directly related to Israel include 70% of schools who hold a Yom HaZikaron (Remembrance Day for Israel’s fallen soldiers), 65% who hold a Tu BShvat Seder, and 30% who participate in an annual Israel Day parade. 100% of schools also report that there are special occasions in which their students sing HaTikvah, with 45% of the schools reporting that the Israel national anthem is sung daily, with the majority limiting the singing of HaTikvah to schoolwide assemblies. Another significant ceremony is the Israel trip.

## *Conversational/Interactive*

A third, relatively uncommon dimension in which Israel might be experienced in a Jewish school is through conversation or interactive social activities. The key difference between a ceremony and a conversation is that the latter is unpredictable and

dynamic. Whereas in a ceremony interaction is scripted and all know their role and what to expect, in a conversation or open-ended interaction participants are never quite sure what will occur. “I state my opinion and wait for your reaction and the conversation builds from there.”

In contrast to the aesthetic/decorative and ceremonial experience of Israel which is regular in either a constant or cyclical sense, the conversation represents an unstable experience of time that is closer to the experience of everyday life as it is actually lived outside of school. The individual needs to develop a sense of self to participate successfully in a conversation—to develop an opinion or set of skills that can be applied to help the conversation move forward. The test of an individual’s opinion or skills is immediately felt in the reaction of others: “Are they impressed? Do they offer a counter opinion, or do they simply dismiss the credibility of what I just said?”

To what extent is Israel discussed in the classroom in an open-ended fashion that allows students to form independent opinions and put them to the conversational test? Are there other types of significant interpersonal interactions that involve Israel? For example, in the RAVSAK survey 47% of schools reported encouraging their students to participate in programs that enable a connection to students in an Israeli school or to Israeli youth in general. The question of course is to the quality and intensity of the interaction between the American and Israeli students in these programs. If a school sponsors a video conference with an Israeli school, is there an opportunity for debate and argument, or is it a polite ceremony in which teachers maintain strict control over the event? Likewise, on an Israel trip is there time for students to interact with their Israeli peers in structured educational situations that allow for significant exchanges of opinions and opportunities for peer-learning? Or do they spend their time sightseeing but never entering in significant debate that brings each student to critically examine his or her personal connection to Israel?

## Curricula

Within the school, knowledge and experience is compartmentalized into disciplines with a curriculum for in-class and out-of-class education that will ensure the accumulation of knowledge and skills needed to master a particular discipline. In this sense, Israel is like math or science. A curriculum assumes a linear or cumulative experience of time. If the curriculum for a particular discipline is followed, each semester represents progress. A student becomes more knowledgeable in the areas germane to the particular discipline.

Through the teaching of Hebrew and history, and in some cases current events, Israel receives an honorable place in the educational curricula of community day schools. However, the question of which topic to emphasize in an Israel education curriculum is less interesting than the manner in which a lineal/cumulative concept of time that is central to the development of curricula might be integrated with the constant, cyclical and unstable conceptions of time that are present in each of the other three dimensions of Israel education. The secret to success in Jewish education is to bring all four conceptions of time into a coherent whole, in which each

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 44]



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# The Dimensions of Time in Israel Education

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43]

complements and strengthens the other.

One example, given above, is the class trip to Israel. On one hand, the trip is first and foremost a pilgrimage ceremony. Students and teachers leave their everyday world and venture forth as a group to the religious, nationalist and cultural center of the Jewish people. During this time away, the Jewish group dimension becomes central and integrative in a manner that is very difficult to achieve in a regular school day when the majority of time is given over to math, science, sports and other secular subjects. However, the successful school trip also includes non-ceremonial aspects: time for debate and argument, developing personal relationships with Israeli peers, and studying Israel-related topics in-class prior to the trip and after returning from Israel. Finally, pictures from the trip and other paraphernalia related to the trip become part of the aesthetic/decorative environment back at school.

## Organizational Management of Time

The reality is that integration of all four Israel dimensions into a coherent whole is the exception rather than the norm in Jewish schooling. The reason has to do with the management of time at a school.

To integrate the different dimensions of Israel into the overall economy of time within the school requires a tremendous amount of thought and attention. In contrast, the easiest and most traveled path is to divide and conquer. Each discipline is developed independently of the others. Each ceremony has a team responsible for implementation. Each school trip is taken as an event unto itself. No one need raise their head to look beyond their immediate responsibility and examine the contribution of the particular activity to the school's larger Jewish mission.

In order to integrate the different dimensions of Israel, time must be taken out of the otherwise busy staff schedule for the express purpose of getting people who specialize in a particular area to open themselves up to the work of others. For this to happen, the head of school and in many cases the board must also back the initiative. Time = money. Without necessary resources the larger commitment to producing an integrated Jewish experience at the school, of which Israel is a part, will not happen.

## Israel Education Should Be Integrative and Holistic

A rich Jewish life is by definition an integrative and holistic experience. An active

Jew is constantly exposed to aesthetic/decorative, ceremonial, conversational and curricula dimensions of the Jewish experience and moves between them in a taken for granted way. Time for an active Jew is a rich experience.

Unfortunately, many schools impoverish the Jewish experience of time at their institutions. The first sin is the distinction between secular and Jewish topics. The second sin is the distinction between in-class and out-of-class education. The third sin is a distinction that often occurs between Jewish studies and events and trips that are related to Israel. The result is to create compartmentalized encounters with Jewish culture and knowledge, which are relevant only to the particular educational experience and divorced from the larger life experience in any coherent way.

Jewish education is only relevant to Jewish life to the extent that a student can break out of a particular ceremony or classroom experience and use the knowledge and skills elsewhere in situations that are part of the larger flow of life. How can Jewish education be systematically organized in the Jewish school to reflect the larger joy of living a rich Jewish life that we see amongst active and committed members of the Jewish community? Israel education is part of this broader discussion. ז

# Newspaper Opens Door to Israel

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30]

Hebrew-English vocabulary to further facilitate reading. The articles are short enough to hold the reader's attention and long enough to provide great topics for discussion. Unlike the readings commonly provided for Hebrew students, *Yanshuf* deals with up-to-the-minute happenings in the world of technology, the arts and science that interest students. Riddles, crosswords and other activities provide further language experience, including interactive ones such as a worldwide vote on the "Seven Wonders of the World" that occurs online. Additionally, articles are written without vowels, something not found in more traditional books.

As a Hebrew language teacher, I find it a useful venue for questions and answers, oral and written expression. Sometimes the students generate questions about the articles and sometimes the teacher. The benefit of using this source is that it provides stories that do not need background information, as do more traditional or religiously-based stories. Creating questions and answers based on its articles has the ancillary benefit of enabling students better to understand the testing process, a skill transferable to other subjects.

*Yanshuf* is the more advanced level of two newspapers published by Good Times publishing group, based in Je-

rusalem. *Bereshit* is a simpler version, published with vowels, dictionaries alongside the text and accompanying exercises. Another component of this learning modality is HebrewToday.com, a website that supplements the print editions. For aural practice, an accompanying CD presents the materials read by a native Israeli. Having these authentic contemporary materials to enrich intermediate Hebrew language instruction is a true bonus. ז

*Tamara David is a Hebrew teacher at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Syracuse, New York. She can be reached at shds@tw-cny.rr.com.*

# Identification and Commitment

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41]

that Jews in ancient times and Jews in the present practice Judaism, its laws, customs and morality, in Israel, the setting where Judaism was born animates and reinforces the message of Judaism's timelessness. It states forcefully that Israel was, is, and will always be the pivot around which Judaism revolves. Moreover, modern Israel is a thriving multicultural society, where Jews of all colors and from all nations are joined together to live. Whatever their backgrounds and individual customs, their Judaism is united through Israel. These are lessons that adult Jews should learn alongside their children.

Giving children (and adults) a sense of pride in their culture and in Israel is vital. But high school students face different challenges. More complex information and the development of critical thinking skills are necessary. For Israel education, the challenge is to solidify the Jewish identity and to keep Israel as a central part, whatever the student's denominational background. The challenges facing students who articulate a position in support of Israel on many college campuses are daunting: open hostility toward Israel among faculty members and well organized and vocal opposition among students. Israel education and strong Jewish identities are necessary to prevent this potentially corrosive environment from tearing away the Jewish foundations of young people.

The moral and political complexities of Israel and the Middle East conflict are inevitable and must be addressed head on in any high school curriculum. The discussion must include Israel's creation, Arab and Jewish refugee crises, and the human rights issues that result from the denial of the Jewish right to a sovereign state. Israel is not always correct in its policies, but its existence cannot be negated nor does it rest on the acquiescence of others. The goal is for students to learn to stand up for Israel with confidence, skill, and facts in hand, to cultivate pride as Jews and as educated adults in its accomplishments, and to develop the willingness to lead others. These can only be achieved through an approach that is honest, that once again incorporates adults, and that works in tandem with the many other programs which provide trips,

organize events, and create a holistic experience at whose center is Israel.

In all this, teacher training is vital. Teachers are already called upon to do too much, but effective materials, well-run workshops, and supportive administrations will go a long way to easing the

speakers and materials, is also vital. Without continuity and demonstrated support from Jewish organizations, Jewish students will be unable and unwilling to sustain who they are and speak up for Israel.

In the wake of financial scandals that have shaken the Jewish community and faith in



**Just as Judaism itself has become voluntary for Jews, Israel is just another item to be picked up from the smorgasbord and accepted wholly or partially, or simply rejected.**

problem of putting Israel at the center of the Jewish curriculum. The David Project has had some success in this area, providing an integrated curriculum for Jewish high schools and middle schools. For college students, we have found that ongoing support once they get to college, with training,

its organizations, and the larger economic climate, the instinct to cut back and focus on core concerns is strong. But these crises should force us to reexamine our priorities. Putting Israel and Jewish identity at the center of the Jewish community's priorities would be one positive outcome.



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# Celebrating Israel's Complexities Through the Arts

by **ROBBIE GRINGRAS**

**U**NDER the weight of an ominous, foreboding soundtrack, the shooting cars begin to slow to a halt. We are looking down on a highway from a bridge, cars gradually coming to a standstill with no construction in sight. It is nighttime. The picture is grainy, dark, and the headlights streak the screen. Images are overlain, such that as the cars slow down, they leave a blur behind them. Ghostlike. And one by one the car doors open, and the drivers step out. They stand in silence.

It is a scene from the stunning video art piece by Yael Bartana, *Trembling Time*. *Trembling Time* is no essay about Israel's Memorial Day, Yom HaZikaron. It is not a historical explanation of the traditions of Yom HaZikaron, it draws no explicit comparison with North American Memorial Days, nor does it explain or contextualize the way in which all comes to a halt with that terrible siren. It is an Israeli piece of art. It is multivalent. It says many things all at one time. And it packs a huge emotional punch.

What are we as educators to make of something like this? Why on earth would we work with something so powerful, so uncontrollable as the arts, when dealing with a subject so powerful and uncontrollable as Israel?

For Israel is uncontrollable. The history books aren't finished, and the story isn't over. The curriculum would seem to be expanding and complicating itself as the days go by: which aliya story are we telling now? How can the infinite complexity and dynamism of the latest Russian aliya be summarized? The festering sore of the Moroccan aliya, still felt to the third generation, explained? School twinnings and partnerships with Israel are supremely valuable when managed well, but the people-to-people approach is still overwhelmed by current affairs: Is a video conference with Sderot students fully sufficient to tackle all the complexities of the Gaza offensive?

With so many difficulties, why on earth make it more difficult by throwing the arts in the mix?

Some of us may choose to avoid the tough stuff, and stick with the old textbooks. Some of us may work with the arts—but we'll make sure that we "tame" the experience as much as possible. We'll study the words of the song but not listen to the blazing music, or we'll learn context for a week before reading the poem, or we'll hurriedly switch to structured discussion with the fluorescents bright the moment the disturbing film has ended. Without necessarily intending to do so, we strip

away the passion and the beauty of the art, leaving only another "text." As Susan Sontag archly observed over 40 years ago: "Interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon the arts."



*Robbie Gringras is the Artist-in-Residence for MAKOM (www.makom.haaretz.com and www.makomisrael.net). He can be contacted at robbieg@jafi.org.*

It may be that a more useful approach would be to engage with the Israeli arts for what they are: one of the most aesthetically appropriate forms to engage with Israel. Good contemporary Israeli arts are powerful, dynamic, complex,



**As writer, broadcaster and musician Kobi Oz once said: "I don't want Israel to be a normal country like any other. I want it to be special!"**

emotional, and full of inspirational energy. Just like Israel itself...

The words to Etti Ankri's hit song of a few years ago, "Millions," can read as a searing political poem about the gaps between rich and poor—harrowingly relevant these days: "And there are millions like me rolling around the streets / Mortal folk / With no money—not worth a dime / Today it's me / Tomorrow it's you / No money—not worth a dime." It is only in listening to the gentle half-reggae rhythms of the song itself, or even watching the video clip as this beautiful woman rides around the streets of Israel on the back of a wagon smiling and strumming her guitar, that we can appreciate how the song is far more than just a text. It is complex, self-contradictory, full of love and rage. Like Israel.

The rising star of Israeli pop music in 2008 was Alma Zohar. Her latest hit, berating what seems to be an inattentive and cruel friend, rocks to the chorus line: “Know who you are, / Know from whence you came/ and whither you will go, / and before whom you will give an accounting...” The words of the Ethics of the Fathers roll to a reggae beat in a personal, secular context. What more do we need to enter into the complex relationship between modern-day Israel, its textual roots, and the Hebrew language? The song is not intended as an interpretation of the ancient text. It is, in the formulation of Simon Parizhsky, not a *perush* (interpretation) of the text, it is a *shimush* (use)—and this has value, too. In a sense, we might say that Israeli everyday life involves ancient text and in so doing interprets it as well.

Too often we have looked for the familiar and the comfortable in Israel. We choose

to build connections through that which is known. Perhaps in so doing we establish an unobtainable expectation: That life in Israel is just like anywhere else! As writer, broadcaster and musician Kobi Oz once said: “I don’t want Israel to be a normal country like any other. I want it to be special!”

Israel is special, in all sorts of complicated and even painful ways, and the arts enable us to celebrate this. The TV series *Merchak Negi’ah* (*A Touch Away*) brings us closer to Israel precisely through its difference. A twist on Romeo and Juliet, it places a newly-immigrant secular family from Moscow next door to an ultra-Orthodox household in Bnei Brak. Through excellent acting and delicate writing the series shows us—all audiences—not that we are all the same, but that we are all different and the same in all sorts of fascinating ways that a piece of art can portray as unified.

At MAKOM, the Israel engagement think-practice tank for the Jewish Agency, Jewish communities, and the Jewish world, we invest all our energies in discovering the unifying celebration of complexity and difference. On the one hand we need to be able to express our love and support for Israel and delight in its existence. Yet on the other hand we need to allow ourselves to acknowledge and work to repair its flaws.

If in its first few decades of existence, Israel needed to be “hugged,” now we need to enable our students to both hug *and* wrestle with Israel—sometimes both at the same time. Operating from this paradigm of “hugging and wrestling,” we work at empowering educators and community leaders through compelling materials, workshops, seminars, and consultancy. The arts are just one of our areas of concern, but for me, one of the most fascinating and promising. ז



## Israel Action Items

In response to Operation Cast Lead and the ongoing conflicts facing Israel, Rafi Cohen, our graduate intern, has compiled a list of activities that schools and students can do today to express their support for Israel.

1. Have your school issue a statement supporting Israel in the student newspaper, monthly newsletter, or community newspaper.
2. Monitor and respond to local media coverage by writing letters to the editor and/or calling the news director.
3. Solicit statements from people in your school, city, synagogue, or any other prominent personalities, and include these statements in your school’s publications.
4. Write a letter to your Member of Congress ([www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/](http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/)) or to President Obama ([president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)).
5. Stay informed about Israel by frequently checking either of the following websites: [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com), [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com), [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org), [www.jrep.com](http://www.jrep.com), [www.israelinsider.com](http://www.israelinsider.com), [www.israelnationalnews.org](http://www.israelnationalnews.org), [www.ynetnews.com](http://wwwynetnews.com).
6. Blog for Israel: Start your own online log or notepad. [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
7. Learn more about Israel at [www.standwithuscampus.com](http://www.standwithuscampus.com).
8. Identify a cause or an organization to which your school can relate, such as Birthday Angels ([birthday-angels.org](http://birthday-angels.org)) or Yad LaKashish ([www.lifeline.org.il](http://www.lifeline.org.il)).
9. Plant a tree in Israel through [www.JNF.org](http://www.JNF.org).
10. Dedicate 3-5 minutes daily to reciting a prayer for Israel or a chapter from Tehillim.
11. Share an experience you had traveling to Israel or otherwise connected to Israel.
12. Come up with your own list of Israel Action Items (and share them with us please!). Aish.com suggests seven ([www.aish.com/jewishissues/jewishsociety/7\\_Ways\\_You\\_Could\\_Help\\_Israel.asp](http://www.aish.com/jewishissues/jewishsociety/7_Ways_You_Could_Help_Israel.asp)).

# Creating a School Culture of Israel Education

by ANNE LANSKI

ONE of the most powerful dimensions of Israel for me over all the years has been its all-encompassing nature. A true relationship with Israel isn't one casual date: it's an all-embracing roller-coaster, a perpetual romance. Visiting Israel, and even more living there, is a total entry into a gripping twenty-first century souk of people, fragrances, sounds, ideas, accents, beliefs, and garb.

The city's overflowing with crates of grapes and plums  
Cherries hold court for all the market to see.  
The setting sun is pink as peach fruit  
Who could truly loathe  
This Mediterranean city stoned  
Like a mooing estrus cow

(Dahlia Ravikovitch, "Stretched Out on the Water")

Living in Israel is 25 hours a day of diverse, inverse, converse experiences of coming together, splitting apart, babbled languages, shared Hebrew, painful shrapnel, raucous weddings, unbearable loss, and sublime births. And somehow it all holds together.

So how does one educate the young about this *symphonie fantastique*? It is a formidable, near impossible task. Textbooks diminish the experience by putting bindings and covers on it. Curricula make it "another country," something to "learn about," rather than an incomparable experience to undergo. History lessons turn it into a museum, rather than real people who live and breathe.

The standard school by its inherent nature—walls, halls, classrooms, subjects—has problems with Israel education. Parochial Jewish schools often have exacerbated problems because they frequently need to begin with a denominational ideology rather than a shared living experience.

One of the places I have always imagined as most ripe for a new approach to Israel education is the community day school. As I understand these institutions, the word "community" is central to its being. It is not simply a multi-denominational house of learning, but a shared *kehillah*—a collective with diversities, contradictions, similarities, and conflicts. Communities are related to cultures, and the best schools are those that teach not by transmitting facts into empty heads, but rather by shaping a total culture breathed in by young souls who are thirsty for air that is full of life. In such institutions, the "teaching" is done by the culture that has been created.

So I would like to think that the community day school is the ideal setting for a new all-embracing comprehensive Israel education. What might such an education look and feel like?

It would be permeated by the sound of Hebrew. Hebrew is the music of Israel and once a person and a school has Hebrew in the air, it is re-creating Ben Yehuda Street or Ibn Gabirol abroad. Community schools could be the new frontiers of a true Hebrew culture.



Anne Lanski, Founder and Former Executive Director of Shorashim, is now serving as Founding President of the iCenter (Israel Education Resource Center). She can be reached at [anne@theicenter.org](mailto:anne@theicenter.org).

Community schools rooted in culture are remarkable arenas for the presence of the music, arts, film, painting, and customs of a very contemporary Israel which at the same time is strikingly shaped by traditional antecedents. It is a celebration of cultural vibrancy and diversity. The community school would seem to be the ideal setting for perpetuating this legacy.

Israel is people—and community schools offer the promise of legitimizing diverse people beliefs, behaviors, foods, accents, and views. The community school, as much or more than any place, could be the North American home of the *mifgash*, the meeting of Israelis and North Americans. Community schools are ideal venues for student exchange programs. They are exciting arenas to examine the possibility of innovating with teacher exchanges between Israeli and North American educators. Community schools could become one of the central purveyors of new integrated Israel experience trips built into the life of the school—and maybe return trips by Israeli classes in years to come.

So my dream about Israel education isn't confined by units, books, programs, or

texts. It is as broad and limitless as going to Israel is. True Israel education will begin when we aspire to create a culture of Israel experience in the total culture of educational institutions. It seems that there is no better potential educational framework for such a culture than the community school, which seems to share many core value exemplified by Israel today. The new ICenter established by the Shusterman Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation is aimed at trying to re-define Israel education and stretch it beyond its narrow confines. It is looking for individuals and educational frameworks—schools, camps, youth movements and more—that are interested in taking this new journey together.

As the ICenter sets out on its path, it invites RAVSAK and its schools to consider traveling on this path with us:

Jewish travel. As it is written: “I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, From whence cometh my help”: not a hike to see a tall mountain in All its glory. Nor a climb to rejoice in the vista of



Nature  
But a hike with a purpose...

(Yehuda Amichai, “Jewish Travel”)

It is time for us to set out on a new journey to make Israel today sing and come alive for our young. You are invited to join us in this quest. ז



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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15]

described above, this fits into the school's vision of the graduate at large. That vision, which frames so many realms of the school's initiatives, from the way it structures advisory to the way it selects its valedictorian and salutatorian, is broken up into three integrated realms—Torah (learning), Avodah (Spiritual Practice/Jewish identity), and Gemilut Hasadim (Ethical Action)—which together frame and foster a balanced, capable, committed, responsible Jewish human being.

Below are the critical dimensions of our Israel graduate, which reflect the above three foundations and fit into what our graduate knows, feels, and does.

**Knows:**

Possesses a working knowledge of Hebrew, Israeli history, geography, politics, philosophies of Zionism, and Jewish texts (Biblical, rabbinic, midrashic, literary-cultural...).

Exercises critical and integrated thinking in understanding Israel as a complex

multicultural society.

Articulates Israel's historical, religious, and political significance in relationship to larger Jewish and American contexts.

**Feels:**

Possesses an expanded sense of curiosity, wonder, connection and personal maturity.

Feels mutual responsibility for and belonging to a people and a nation.

Feels a sense of interdependency with Israel, i.e., that she needs Israel and Israel needs her.

**Does:**

Continues to learn about Israel as an integral part of her Jewish identity.

Engages in extended study in Israel before, during, and after college.

Builds lifelong relationships with Israelis.

Demonstrates loving commitment and caring criticism towards Israel.

Participates as an active player rather than a spectator in building Israel and America.

Articulates how Israel fits into her larger vision of American Jewish and Covenantal Jewish identity.

Contributes to an active Israel culture on campus.

**Practice**

At this point, Milken's programming consists of the following initiatives which are designed to concretize the commitment of our mission "to foster a deep connection to Israel":

**A. Nofim**

We are collaborating with master Israeli educator Rachel Korazim on a spiral, interdisciplinary 7-12 curriculum, focusing on Crossroads צמתים – (Grades 7-8), Sites and Sources – מקום ומקור (Grade 9-10) and

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Scene and Society **הכרה וסביבה** (Grades 11-12). The curriculum integrates cutting edge technology, geography, history, social sciences, arts and politics with a wide range of Jewish texts. Currently, we are engaged in the creation, experimentation, and refinement of units within Crossroads which are designed “to build the core narrative of the connections between the people and the land of Israel throughout the ages and across the landscape.” A critical dimension of this program involves intensive staff development in Israel for a significant portion of our school’s faculty.

### B. Tiferet Fellowship in partnership with Alexander Muss

Milken will send 60 second semester tenth grade students to the Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education. The Muss program provides students with a powerful intellectual and experiential connection to the land, living history, and people of Israel. Our program contains a significant *mifgash* component with Israelis.

### C. Shalom Hartman Institute Advanced Israel Seminar: The Challenges and Opportunities of Statehood

This year, we will initiate a culminating program for seniors in which Tiferet students return to Israel to focus on critical contemporary issues facing Israel. Amongst the issues are Borders and Security, Minority Rights, Religious Diversity and Pluralism, State and Religion, Social Justice, Industry and Economic Growth, Israel and World Jewry. The seminar will contain text study with leading experts in each field, on the ground exploration of current successes and failures in each area, and workshops on translating learning into leadership training.

### D. Other Programs

In addition to the above programs, Milken engages in a number of other formal and informal Israel programs, including an eighth grade exchange with Lady Davis in Tel Aviv (as part of the Los Angeles-Tel Aviv Partnership), a summer high school exchange program with Shevach Mofet in Tel Aviv, science partnerships

and competitions at the Technion and the Weitzman Institute, AIPAC, and training programs in public speaking. Furthermore, Israel education takes place in our ninth and tenth grade integrated World/Jewish History courses, Jewish Studies courses, and our required Senior Seminar on Israel.

A final word about vision. Our Israel programming is designed to be integrated in nature and developmental in complexity. At the end of our program, we are looking for students who are, in the words of Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum, producers and not merely consumers of Judaism. Classroom and experiential Israel education should deepen one’s American Jewish and Covenantal Jewish identities. By sending more and more students to Israel at the end of tenth grade, we work to immerse them in the history, land, and people of Israel so that they can engage in and construct Israel

and America’s present and the future.

During the sixtieth anniversary of the State of Israel, congregations across North America sponsored numerous cultural and political Israel events. While many of these events were no doubt highly edifying, a different vision for North American Zionism would highlight educational process rather than events. In this vision, congregations would develop five or six ongoing American-Israeli working groups in which participants engage in a process inspired by Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman’s conception of “society building.” In this vision, Americans bring their experience and expertise to collaborate on critical social, political, environmental, cultural, spiritual, and educational issues facing both Jewries. A significant achievement would be to prepare our students with the capacity, commitment, and responsibility to take on leadership roles within these society-building settings.

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# SuLaM Alumni Shabbaton

*On Friday night, SuLaM alumni from the past four years gathered for a delicious Shabbat dinner. While the food was outstanding, the memory from the evening was how deeply SuLaM has touched so many people from so many different backgrounds. The Jewish journeys of the various participants and mentors are powerful and will most certainly continue to have a huge impact on communities all over the country.*

- Dean Goldfein

*The Shabbaton was a wonderful “time away” from the world and an opportunity for the cohorts to come together in an intimate setting. Learning together and davening as a group was stimulating and uplifting. It was helpful to hear each other as we studied and prayed and begin to appreciate the individuals within each cohort. By the end of the Shabbaton, the camaraderie was tangible, and the entire group seemed one very grateful and exceptional chavurah.*

- Shelli Lavender

*The combination of beautiful surroundings, the warmth of friends and colleagues, and the experience of a first class scholar-in-residence, created an unforgettable Shabbaton experience. It was of great personal satisfaction to see the Sulamites reacting with awe to a traditional Torah scholar and pious Jew such as Rabbi Saul Berman.*

- Rabbi Tzvi Berkson

In advance of the RAVSAK conference, an unprecedented event took place. Thirty-four educational leaders from community day schools in three countries and four time zones, representing most of the participants in SuLaM’s two cohorts thusfar, came together to partake in a SuLaM alumni Shabbaton. This exceptional opportunity, just as Project SuLaM in its entirety, was made possible by the generosity and vision of the AVI CHAI Foundation.

For busy school heads and administrators whose energies are extended in so many directions, the Shabbaton provided the occasion for intellectual development and spiritual replenishment, along with the program’s customary delicious food and sumptuous surroundings. Sulamites were treated to the magnificent teaching of a scholar-in-residence, Rabbi Saul Berman, who has had a long and distinguished career as a scholar of Judaism, a social activist, and a pulpit rabbi. A passionate speaker with brilliant insight, Rabbi Berman delivered several talks during the Shabbaton all bearing upon a common theme: “Maintaining Tradition in a Time of Change.” Participants left not only personally inspired, but also the recipients of new lenses through which to view TaNaKH and Jewish rituals.

Along with new learning, Sulamites made new friendships and renewed old ones through conversation and shared experience. For the first time, they took ownership of tefillah: they volunteered to lead sections of the service, and under the initiative of Nora Anderson and Shelli Lavender, they became a *kehillah kedoshah*, a community of prayer. As threads of connectivity bound participants together over the course of the Shabbaton, it became clear that SuLaM is the perfect microcosm of the RAVSAK network as a whole.



# Overcoming Media Bias

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19]

the chosen venue of “hate” was the Western Wall, a site sacred only to Jews, which has never been a place of Moslem prayer. (Following reader protest, the *Los Angeles Times* altered its cartoon, deleting the unique Herodian frame around the Western Wall stones, to make it look more like a generic wall.)

## Violation #4: Lack of Context

*By failing to provide proper context and full background information, journalists can dramatically distort the true picture.*

Example: A BBC photo depicts two Palestinians, hands tied behind their backs, and kneeling on the ground. Standing over them is an Israeli soldier with a rifle pointed at their heads.

There is no context identifying this photo, just the benign caption “Tension has been high around the Jewish settlements.” But who are the Arabs in this photo? Did they just murder Jews in cold blood? Or were they innocently buying bread at the local market? BBC does not say. And why is the soldier pointing the gun? Is he guarding dangerous prisoners until reinforcements can arrive? Or is he about to blow off their heads at point-blank range? BBC lets the implication stand for itself.

## Violation #5: Selective Omission

*By choosing to report certain events over others, the media controls access to information and manipulates public sentiment.*

Example: Ever since the violence began, media outlets routinely refer to the Intifada as being “sparked by Ariel Sharon’s provocative visit to the Temple Mount.” This is despite the admission by Palestinian Minister of Communications Imad el-Falouji that the Palestinian Authority pre-planned the outbreak of violence.

## Violation #6: Using True Facts to Draw False Conclusions

*Media reports frequently use true facts to draw erroneous conclusions.*

Example: Many articles report that “hundreds of people have been killed, the vast majority Palestinians.” This is an indisputable fact, yet without qualifying these figures, the reader is led to the false conclusion that Israeli soldiers are the aggressors and have used excessive force.

## Violation #7: Distortion of Facts

*In today’s competitive media world, reporters frequently do not have the time, inclination or resources to properly verify information be-*

*fore submitting a story for publication.*

Example: The *New York Times*, Associated Press and other major media outlets published a photo of a young man, bloodied and battered, crouching beneath a club-wielding Israeli policeman. The caption identified him as a Palestinian victim of the recent riots—with the clear implication that the Israeli soldier is the one who beat him.

In fact, the bloodied “Palestinian” depicted in the photograph was Tuvia Grossman, a 20-year-old Jewish student from Chicago, studying in Jerusalem. And the assailants were not Israelis, but members of a Palestinian mob who beat and stabbed Grossman mercilessly for 10 minutes. And the infuriated Israeli policeman with a baton was deterring the Palestinians from finishing their lynching.

It is clear that we have much work to do to help advocate for Israel through the media. When we read something that does not tell the whole picture about Israel in our community, or in another country, it is still a matter of concern. We must be actively a part of the solution wherever this bias occurs. In today’s world of instant technology, we must use it to our advantage to stay informed and motivated, acting as one. This may be difficult, but if we unite, media bias against Israel will be overcome. ז



## Project ROPE: Investing in the Jewish Future

Project ROPE: Roots of Philanthropy Education, a pilot program funded by grants from the Jewish Teen Funders Network and the RAVSAK Executive Committee, is creating a cadre of Jewish philanthropic leaders among students in RAVSAK high schools.

Students started by wrestling with a challenging curriculum of Jewish texts on tzedakah and communal obligations to the poor and needy. They proceeded to study about the focus of this year’s activities: the elderly. They are absorbing the issues and challenges facing the

elderly in our society through examining statistics, meeting with experts, exploring Jewish sources, reflecting upon movies and books, and encountering older people in their communities firsthand. Together, students from far-flung corners of our continent have participated on conference calls with philanthropic leaders, learning the vision and values that inform Jewish philanthropy and receiving guidance for their own projects.

A special part of the program is now underway: the Israel Committee. Participating students are learning about the

differences between the situation of the elderly in Israel and in their local communities, and investigating Israeli organizations that service them. All of this committee’s work is conducted collaboratively among representatives from all participating schools. After research and consensus-building, they will award a grant to an Israeli organization of their choice that supports the elderly.

ROPE is now recruiting schools to participate in next year’s cohort. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at [erabin@ravsak.org](mailto:erabin@ravsak.org).

# Bookcase

THIS column features books, articles, and websites, recommended by our authors and people from the RAVSAK network, pertaining to the theme of the current issue of *HaYidion* for readers who want to investigate the topic in greater depth.

## Books / Studies

Cohen, Stephen M. and Kelman, Ari Y. *Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel*. New York: Jewish Identity Project of Reboot, 2007.

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Rosenthal, Donna. *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land*. New York: Free Press, 2003.

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## Articles / Periodicals

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Education." In *From Altneland to Tel Aviv: Of Dreams and Deeds*. Eds. D. Breakstone and A. Feldstein. Jerusalem: The Zionist Library, 2006.

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*Israel: The Dream Meets Reality. Jewish Educational Leadership*, Volume 7:1, Fall 2008.

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Sinclair, Alex. "Beyond Black and White: Teaching Israel in Light of the Matzav."

*Conservative Judaism* 55/3, 2003.

Sinclair, Alex. "A Conservative Jewish Educational Approach to Post-Zionism." *Conservative Judaism* 59/1, 2006.

## Websites

### Articles/Databases

Papers for the upcoming First International Conference on The Purposes and Practices of Israel Education at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education: <http://virtualmelton.huji.ac.il/course/view.php?id=8>.

The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality at Bar Ilan University: <http://www.rappaport-center.biu.ac.il/English/publicationsE.htm>

### Arts/Culture:

Makom Arts: resources on Israeli cinema, fiction, rap and art: <http://makomisrael.net/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom/Arts>

Israeli videos with subtitles: <http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=culturallevant&view=videos>

General guide to Israeli culture: <http://www.tasteofisrael.org/>

Current articles on Israeli culture: <http://www.ynetnews.com/home/0,7340,L-3086,00.html>

### Advocacy/Information:

[www.HonestReporting.com](http://www.HonestReporting.com)

[www.StandWithUs.com](http://www.StandWithUs.com)

Palestinian Media Watch: [www.pmw.org.il](http://www.pmw.org.il)

MEMRI: The Middle East Media Research Institute: <http://memri.org>

Give Israel Your United Support: [www.giyus.org](http://www.giyus.org)

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