

THE ABCDEF'S OF ISRAEL

CURRICULUM: SCOPE & SEQUENCE

GRADES K-5

Rabbi Liz Rolle

On behalf of Congregation Beth El, Fairfield, CT

THE ABCDEF'S OF ISRAEL

CURRICULUM: SCOPE & SEQUENCE

GRADES K-5

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

As a synagogue supplementary school education director and lover of Israel, I believe it is necessary for our students in high school to understand Israel's situation and to be able to respond to challenges they will meet on today's college campuses. But how do we prepare them? How do we familiarize them with Israel's successes - in agriculture, in absorption, in innovation - and to its existential concerns - security, democracy, demography, and pluralism. Confronting this desire to have well-prepared college-ready students led me to understand that this is the wrong question. At least, it is premature to ask this question.

It is impossible to expect that our high school students can understand Israel's situation today without a firm foundation on which to build. I began to ask instead, "What does a tenth grader need to know in order to enter into the discussion about Israel's reality today?" The answers seemed overwhelming: the student needs five thousand years of history, theology, a connection to the land and people, geography, government, politics, language, climate and more. No high school student can cover all of this and still have time to focus on today's reality in Israel. What is that foundation and how does the teen learner acquire it?

Many aspects of Israel are appropriate at much younger ages. It behooves us to provide the background in the lower grades. And there is an abundance of material from which to choose at every grade level. The challenge is arranging the learning through the elementary grades as a sequence that grows a learner's knowledge gradually and somewhat logically. Such a sequence needs to be inclusive and age appropriate. My goal here is to provide a Scope and Sequence for an Israel curriculum for grades K-5. By sixth grade, students are ready to begin the serious conversations about Israel's existential issues.

This Scope and Sequence aims to lay the groundwork in the earlier grades so that learners are equipped to consider Israel's more serious concerns and to do so from a place of caring about, belonging to and identifying with the People of Israel, the Land of Israel and the State of Israel.

Design

The Scope and Sequence contained herein is arranged by grade level. My guide for the included topics is a six-part outline. The sections are

- A** – Ancient Roots: materials up to 1948
- B** – Birth of the Modern State of Israel: including history and structure of the state
- C** – Contemporary Life, with two areas:
 - D** – Day-to-Day Life: covering lifestyles, culture, holidays, resources, economy, recreation, pluralism and diversity
 - E** – Existential Issues such as security, Jewish identity, religious pluralism, economic stability
- F** – My Family, to aim for a sense of connection and belonging to Israel's existence

This Scope and Sequence is not to suggest that all of the topics outlined here be covered every year in every grade. It does identify appropriate directions for any given grade. The specific grade identifications are intended to indicate age appropriateness. In many cases, they also reflect what is being learned in public schools and the Core Curriculum or Standards scheme being followed there so that teachers are building on the knowledge our learners bring with them.

Schools may choose to flip topics in some grades because of the way they can be integrated into other aspects of curriculum already in place. For example, in fourth and fifth grades the Jewish calendar and life cycle subjects may fit other curricular goals already in place.

Conclusion

Knowledge alone is not sufficient. We aim to simultaneously instill values of pride, of ownership, and of belonging. In part, this is accomplished simply by focusing on the material at hand. To a great extent, it is dependent on the teacher's presentation and the teacher's affect. Visits by Israelis and by those who have visited Israel will also deepen a learner's attachment. In addition, the outlook of a particular synagogue community will have an impact on the many messages students receive both in and out of the classroom.

The learning outlined here is comprehensive. It serves as sufficient groundwork for middle school and high school students to enter meaningfully into the discussions being held both in this country and in Israel about current issues faced by the State and its people. It will also enable these learners to understand news stories as they develop.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Ancient Roots

- Geography
- Archaeology
- Emigration and Immigration
- Biblical figures
- Rabbinic Period
- Middle Ages
- Crusades
- Ottoman Rule
- British Rule

Birth of a Modern State

- 1948 to the present
- History
- Government
- Geography
- Climate
- Flora and Fauna

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

- Lifestyles
- Culture
- Education
- Military

Existential Struggles

- Security
- Democracy
- Freedoms

Family - My Israel

- Belonging
- Connections to people and causes

Enduring Understandings & Essential Questions

Ancient Roots

Enduring Understandings

I am part of an ancient people with beginnings in the Land of Israel.

The Bible is a source for understanding Jewish connection to the Land of Israel.

The emigrations of the Jewish people from place to place over 2600 years are rooted first in our origin in the Land of Israel.

Essential Questions

How, when, where do I feel my connections with 5,000 years of Jewish history?

How do I interpret the migration of Jews from the Land of Israel?

Birth of a Modern State

Enduring Understandings

The State of Israel is my homeland as well as the homeland of Jews who have roots all over the world.

I am connected in pride, care and concern to Israel's accomplishments, existential threats and existential issues.

Understanding Israel's present and future is dependent on knowing its history.

Essential Questions

How do I connect with the State of Israel through the last 69 years and today?

How should Jews and Arabs share the land?

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Enduring Understandings

Life in Israel has similarities to and differences from life in the developed nations of the Western world and those in the Middle East.

Judaism in the thread with which Israel's national life and identity are woven; as a Jewish state, Israel is guided by Jewish law, values and traditions.

Essential Questions

How do I make sense of Israel's existential struggles with domestic identity for Jews? For others?

Existential Struggles

Enduring Understandings

Life in Israel is full of struggles for security, identity, religious pluralism and economic stability.

Essential Questions

How do I balance the competing values of security, democracy, and Judaism?

How do I make sense of Israel's existential struggles with security?

Family - My Israel

Enduring Understandings

My Jewish identity is bound up with Jews around the world.

Israel's life and struggles impact my Jewish identity.

My Jewish life and that of my local Jewish community impact Israel's existence, security and identity.

Jewish continuity depends on Israel as much as it depends on my own community.

Essential Questions

How do I act on my connections to the State of Israel and the Land of Israel?

How does the Jewish historical presence in the Land of Israel shape who I am today?

GAN - Kindergarten

Ancient Roots

Map of Israel – (Lesson: Mapping travels or settlements of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)

Birth of a Modern State

Some laws/rules in Israel are Jewish.

Israeli flag – blue and white, Star of David, tallit stripes.

The national anthem of Israel is Hatikvah (familiarity with music).

Begin to learn Hatikvah.

Israel has a Prime Minister.

Israel's currency is the NIS.

Jewish holidays are national holidays in Israel.

Israel's army is powerful, modern and inclusive of women, non-Jewish citizens like Druze and Bedouin, and people with disabilities.

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Diverse populations live in Israel share some languages, some stories.

Jews around the world and in Israel are part of our family.

Existential Struggles

Family - My Israel

Stories in the Torah are about my history and my ancestors who lived in the Land of Israel – biblical family tree.

Where possible: Identify people known to the children who live in Israel or have visited there.

ALEF – GRADE 1

Ancient Roots

Biblical figures are the history of the Jewish people in Israel.
Continue to identify places on a map that figure in the Torah.
Archaeological finds tell us about Israel of the past.

Birth of a Modern State

Israel is a democracy.
There are no 'states' in Israel because it is so small
On a map of Israel, identify:
Four compass directions
Cities of Beer Sheva, Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Eilat
Mediterranean Sea, Negev Desert, Sea of Galilee, Jordan River
and Dead Sea
Israel has all the same community services that we have: teachers, police,
firefighters, ambulance, hospitals, and doctors.
Israel created conditions for agriculture that weren't there originally.
We buy food here that grew in Israel; Israel grows more food than it
needs and exports it around the world.
Native foods are still grown in Israel (Shiva minim).
New foods have been introduced to Israel's agriculture (oranges, flowers,
etc.).

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Artifacts teach us about Israel, past and present:
Native desert clothing
Videos showing architecture
Map of Kibbutz
Many different cultures were brought to Israel by Jews
who made aliyah.

Existential Struggles

Family - My Israel

Stories in the Torah have been passed down to each generation and
remind us of our origins.
Israel has special rules to become a citizen.
I could become a citizen of Israel.

BET – GRADE 2

Ancient Roots

The Torah can help us identify some places in Israel; in conjunction with parsha studies, places should be located on a map:

Cave of Machpelah

Kever Rachel

Different countries and empires have ruled over Israel historically, and remnants of those times remain and can be identified.

The population has changed over time, even or especially in the last 150 years.

The JNF brought changes to the vegetation the chalutzim found on their arrival.

Israel is a major crossroad for bird migrations.

Birth of a Modern State

Israel can be identified on a map or globe:

Identify the shape of Israel.

Israel is a small country in the Middle East.

People in Israel live in cities, towns, moshavim and kibbutzim.

Israelis use public transportation.

Israelis love the beach at the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Eilat.

Names of streets, towns and cities can tell about history.

Israel's elections are different than ours:

Parties, not individuals.

National and local but no state elections.

The President is not elected.

State Symbols

Flag

Knesset

Menorah

Hatikvah (learn entire song)

Har Herzl

Many government functions and departments are just like ours or only slightly different: courts (including a Supreme Court), Knesset

(parliamentary), departments like education, defense, and commerce.

Other government functions are more distinguishable from ours: healthcare.

Israel is connected by roads for cars, buses, trucks, bikes and by trains.

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Israelis live differently in different parts of the country: cities, small cities, towns, moshavim, kibbutzim.

Food can be different from ours: shuk, hummus, techina, salads, etc. – cooking projects may be done here.

Some communities are more diverse than others; many reflect groups of immigrants that arrived together.

Tourists and Israelis like to visit parks with trails, the Negev Desert, the hills of Galilee, museums (Israel Museum, Museum of the Diaspora, Bible Lands Museums, Chagall windows and museums of more recent events like Begin Library, Ammunition Hill, Yad Vashem) and to go to the theater for plays, dance and music (HaBimah, Avodah Dance, Israel Philharmonic).
Israel trains artists (Bezalel school) and musicians (Rubenstein Academy).
Israel lives with two calendars.

Existential Struggles

Family - My Israel

GIMEL – GRADE 3

Ancient Roots

Location – within the Middle East and neighboring countries; vis-à-vis Africa, the equator, Europe and North America.

Satellite images – identify rivers, mountains, desert, coast, lakes, cities

Climates and resources.

Water: Dead Sea, mineral retrieval, desalination, reforestation; shipping: Mediterranean, Gulf of Eilat, Suez Canal.

Key events and places in history:

Torah figures

Kings (First Temple)

Babylonian exile, return, Second Temple

Maccabees

70CE, Masada, Kotel, Dome of the Rock

Exile/Diaspora – 4 corners of the earth

1948 and figures in the history of the State, including founding and current Presidents and Prime Ministers

Influence of outside cultures – Caesarea, Maccabees, Ottomans, British

Birth of a Modern State

National symbols (see also grade 2), capital, democracy and elections, bias and discrimination

Economy: agriculture (and agricultural innovations), tourism, high tech, military (universal service)

Eliezer Ben Yehuda & reviving the Hebrew language; official languages

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Diverse populations, languages, dress, religions

Schools – life for Israeli 3rd graders

Jewish holidays as national holidays

Social action and the role of philanthropy

Existential Struggles

Family - My Israel

Hebrew and prayers are connections to the Jewish People, past and present.

DALET – GRADE 4

Ancient Roots

Populations that have come and gone through the Land: Canaanites, Philistines, Israelites, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, Ottomans, British
In conjunction with Nevi'im study: tribal and prophets' locations
Original Zionism of the siddur
Chalutzim – timeline; what they found in the Land, role of women
Role of Britain: WWI, Balfour Declaration, developments in 20's and 30's with British and with Arabs in Mandate Palestine; UN partition

Birth of a Modern State

War of Independence – Declaration of Independence, fighting, armistice, political parties, role of women
Law of Return – waves of immigration: Western Europe, Arab countries, Yemenites, Russians, Ethiopians

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Diverse populations in Israel today – appreciation of differences
From socialism to capitalism

Existential Struggles

Identify the difference between the view of Israeli independence and the Arab nakba
Borders today

Family - My Israel

HEY – GRADE 5

Ancient Roots

Tigris/Euphrates crescent of civilization – Middle East as ‘land bridge’ between Europe, Africa, Asia

In conjunction with Life Cycle unit:

Tracing the route of patriarchs and matriarchs – identifying stops along the way

The promise of the Land: the biblical covenant (Lesson: Abraham, the sign of the covenant, brit)

Nomadic way of life – then and now (Bedouins)

Human development from nomads, to villages, city-states, empires affected the Land’s history

In conjunction with Nevi’im study:

Review tribal and prophets’ locations

David and the founding of Jerusalem

Solomon and the building of the First Temple

Unification and dissolution – Northern and Southern Kingdoms

Impact of the crusaders

Jewish Peoplehood (Lesson: Post-Chanukah: Where did the Jews go?)

Masada, Dead Sea Scrolls

Diaspora/exile

Forced emigration and Jews as refugees

Birth of a Modern State

Contemporary Life

Day-to-Day Life

Resources in the Middle East and in Israel – impact on world concerns, world events and Israeli economic options – chalutzim and kibbutzim, agriculture and irrigation, trading partners – sharing of innovations throughout the world

Development since 1948: population shifts, economic shifts, growth of cities, rise of Religious Right – political parties today

Life in Israel today: sports (soccer, basketball, Maccabia), leisure, school, Church and State, role of women, government, the environment

Living with a Jewish calendar: Shabbat & holidays in Israel (What is it like/what does it mean to live with the Jewish calendar?)

Existential Struggles

Borders – in the Middle East, borders have changed over time; especially important are the borders determined at the end of WWI

Family - My Israel

This brit connects me to Abraham, the Land of Israel and the Jewish People

Lesson: Living Museum