

# The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland's **Israel: Six Lenses** **Response Curriculum**

Operation Protective Edge was launched by The Israel Defense Forces on July 8, 2014 in order to stop the escalation of missile fire by Hamas from Gaza into Israel. On the news and via social media sources, we hear the sounds of sirens going off in Israel and see images of people running to seek safety. Israeli adults and children know that when they hear the alert-siren, they have 15-45 seconds to find a nearby bomb shelter. For us, the news is scary and at times difficult to comprehend – whether of the attacks on Israel or the counter-attacks by the IDF to destroy Hamas in Gaza. Facebook and Twitter bring photos, stories and videos to us and our children - truthful or not.

Especially in time of crisis, it is upon Jewish professionals to consider the ways we can help our students and families join with the larger Jewish community in supporting Israel and its citizens. For those who have unambiguous connections to Israel, this probably has been an ongoing conversation at home and with others, with clearly defined actions of reaching out and giving. However, for those whose connections to Israel are more tenuous, it is incumbent upon Jewish educators to find ways of bridging American Jewry with Israel.

This response curriculum is designed to help educators consider age-appropriate ways to place Israel front and center in our lessons and special events planning. It focuses on six big ideas:

1. Israel is a special place for Jews worldwide.
2. Just as we stand by a friend in times of trouble, the Jewish community stands by Israel at this difficult time.
3. It is important to be "critical consumers" of media, carefully evaluating the veracity and slant of the news about Israel.
4. Israel anchors the Jewish people as a spiritual, national, and cultural center.
5. To equate the actions of the Israeli army with those of Hamas terrorists, draws a moral equivalency that does not exist.
6. There are specific actions we as American Jews can do to support Israel.

These six concepts represent a carefully thought-out progression, beginning conceptually with our youngest learners (Israel is a special place), moving upward to more abstract and difficult concepts (moral equivalency), ending with a section that summarizes action-steps open to us as individuals and communities. In this way, we include the entire Jewish community in our unity efforts.

The *Israel: Six Lenses* curriculum is recommended for teachers of young children through adult education. Some activities may need to be adapted to better fit your students' needs.

In this curricular resource you will find for each concept:

- Background Information
- Texts<sup>1</sup>
- Activities
- Resources

<sup>1</sup> **Please Note:** This curriculum contains numerous sacred texts. We ask that you treat it with appropriate respect.

The Curriculum Resources Department of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland gratefully thanks all those local, national, and international colleagues who assisted in developing this curriculum when it was originally published in 2001 at the start of the Second Intifada in Israel.

The guide was revised and updated in August, 2014 to be of assistance in light of the continuing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza and Israel.

## **Focus #1: Israel - A Special Place for Jews**

For thousands of years, **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם** (Zion) has focused Jewish thought, wishes and prayers. It has molded who we are as a people when we lived on its soil, and even while dispersed to lands far beyond. It is a special holy homeland, the object of tears and dreams.

It is easy for us to stand in front of students and say: "Israel is a special place - a place that is very important to Jews all over the world." It is much harder helping students make deep connections to a land that many have not visited, with people they may not know.

This generation of Jews has grown up in a world where the State of Israel is an accepted reality. The rebirth of a Jewish safe haven and homeland after the Holocaust may not inform the identity of our youngest students. Many have not heard of the Entebbe rescue or the Ethiopian Jewry airlift. They did not experience every Arab-Israeli war as a fight for survival for all Jews. Our understanding that Israel is the religious, cultural, and political anchor of world Jewry is lost amid a steady diet of David (represented by the Gazans and Palestinians) and Goliath (Israeli army) streaming across newspapers, televisions, and the Internet.

The dual themes of *Israel as a commonplace reality* and the *Middle East as a war zone*, have stripped away Israel's uniqueness.

The current situation cries out for us to focus more attention on Israel as a special place for Jews. It is our national birthplace, a place where Jews from across the world have gathered to live, a place where Hebrew is a living language, a place where the celebrations, memorials, songs, and television shows are Jewish, a place where the Jewish calendar marks the weeks and months.

While the unit is complex, it is built on a concrete idea, making it an ideal starting place even for our youngest students.

### **For early childhood educators:**

"For the young child, oral story and anecdote constitute the main ways of entering the 'possible worlds' of abstract thought and language disengaged from here and now; they are sense-making devices. The story of Israel, which is the story of the Jewish people, is the primary tool available to the teacher in educating towards a relationship with Israel. It is this story which is usually missing from the teaching of Israel. Isolated activities, as engaging as they may be, will result in a very limited understanding of Israel without this narrative glue to hold them together."

Source: *Israel In Our Lives: Israel in Jewish Early Childhood Education*  
by Ruth Pinkenson Feldman & Shira Ackerman Simchovitch. Jerusalem: 1997.

Check out Deena Bloom's

"Making Israel Part of Everyday Education for Young Children," <http://tiny.cc/pnqekx>

**TEXT STUDY: *Israel - A Special Place for Jews*****Text #1a:** *Declaration of Israel's Independence*, Tel Aviv, May 14, 1948 / *Iyar 5*, 5708

## THE STATE OF ISRAEL

will be open to **the immigration of Jews from all countries in which they live** in the world;  
will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all those who live there;  
will be based on the ideas of

liberty,  
justice  
and peace

taught by the Hebrew Prophets;

will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of  
race,  
creed  
or sex;

will guarantee full freedom of  
conscience,  
worship,  
education  
and culture;

will safeguard the specialness and sacredness of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions;  
and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations . . .

We offer peace and unity to all the neighboring states and their peoples,  
and invite them to cooperate with the **independent Jewish nation**  
for the common good of all.

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world  
to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development  
and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations  
- the redemption of Israel.



**Text #1b:** Genesis 26:2-5

*Adonai* appeared to him (Isaac / Yitzhak) and said,  
 “Do not go down to Egypt.  
 Stay in the land that I point out to you.  
 Live in this land  
 and I will be with you and bless you.  
**I will give all this land to you and your descendants,**  
 and I shall fulfill My promise  
 that I swore to *Avraham*, your father.

I shall increase your descendants  
 like the stars of Heaven,  
**and I shall give them all this land. . .**

**Text #1c:** (*Birkat Ha-Mazon*; blessing after meals)

We thank You, Lord Our God,  
 for **giving our ancestors**  
**a pleasing, good, and spacious land...**

**Text #1d:** (*Hatikvah*, Israel's national anthem)

As long as in our inner hearts  
 a Jewish spirit sings,  
 As long as the eye looks to the East,  
 gazing toward Zion.

Our hope is not lost,  
 the hope of 2000 years:  
**To be a free people in our own land,**  
**the Land of Zion and Jerusalem.**

**Text #1e:** Danny Siegel, "Surveying the Jewish Multitudes," in *Before Our Very Eyes: Readings for a Journey Through Israel*, Pittsboro, NC: The Town House Press, 1986.

Rejoice, O Jerusalem,  
 your streets are filled again with children!  
 Proud children.  
 Be joyous, Mother Rachel,  
 your children have come home!

Home. Such a foreign word  
 to the refugee from Argentina,  
 the Vizhnitzer chossid,  
 the Jew from Bulgarian cities.  
 That you are home,  
 and there is no more need to hide  
 and steal across the border,  
 is the stuff of Jewish lullabies.  
 When the planes at Lod  
 crowd with long lost sons and daughters,  
 truth and freedom blur near disbelief.

Tiberias and Yavneh,  
 raise your voices!  
 Massada burst your rocks  
 with song,  
 for we are home.

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**Text #1f:** Danny Siegel, "Some People Kiss Runways," in *Before Our Very Eyes: Readings for a Journey Through Israel*, Pittsboro, NC: The Town House Press, 1986.

Give me 5 more years  
     away from Israel  
 I will go back "home"  
     to make and save my money  
 So that when I come back home again  
     life will be uncomplicated  
 And I can spend  
     as many as my days  
 Will be at Lod  
     with a barrel of honey  
 And a vat of milk  
     to sprinkle on the runway  
 I want those who kiss

the holy concrete  
 To taste  
 how very sweet  
 the Homeland has become.

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**Text #1g:** (*T'filat Shaharit*/the morning service)

Bring us safely from the four corners of the earth,  
 and lead us in dignity to our holy land.



**Text #1h:** Marc Rosenstein, *Galilee Diary*, NY: URJ. 12/3/2000. <http://tiny.cc/8vsckx>

For me, and I don't think I am unusual, the word "home" is a somewhat slippery term, with multiple meanings. When I travel to Philadelphia to see my parents, I am going "home;" yet when I go back to the airport to fly to Israel, I also feel that I am going "home." Just what do I mean? And just what is it about this mountainside here in the Galilee that has given me such a strong feeling of at-home-ness? When the plane lands at Ben Gurion airport, I know for sure that I am about to face:

- Having to communicate in a language that is my second language, so that every conversation and transaction, even after all these years, takes more energy than it does in the US; feeling helpless and tongue-tied in any argument
- "In your face" manifestations of the terrible divisions that beset Israeli society: Jew vs. Jew, right vs. left, Arab vs. Jew, rich vs. poor, etc.
- The everyday frustrations and discomforts of living on the edge of the third world, with the vestiges of Turkish and British bureaucracies still apparent here and there
- Having a son in the army at a time when (as at many other times), the prospects for peace seem uncertain
- Living half a world away from extended family, including aging parents...

And yet, when the stewardess opens the door and I smell the mixture of aviation gasoline and orange trees, when my ear is bombarded by Hebrew (and Arabic, and Russian); when two hours later the rolling mountains and the lovely olive groves of the Galilee are all around me - then all the frustrations and alienation melt, and it just feels good to be home. And I still don't know why...

Perhaps, ultimately, there are some things that you can't understand rationally, and "home" is one of them.



**Text #1i:** Psalm 137:1-6

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat and wept,  
when we remembered Zion.

On the willows there  
We hung up our lyres.

For there our captors  
Required of us songs,  
And our tormentors, mirth, saying,  
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

How shall we sing the Lord’s song  
In a foreign land?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
Let my right hand wither!

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,  
If I do not remember you,

If I do not set Jerusalem  
Above my highest joy!

**ACTIVITIES:**

1) Show students a picture of a family in a home. Talk with them about the comfort and ease one feels at home, perhaps sharing a story from your own life. Show students various pictures of Israel and talk with them about the comfort and ease Jews feel when in Israel. Can students share any stories of family members who either have visited Israel, or live there? Tell students that Israel is a home to Jews, sharing photographs of various Jewish families in Israel. How are the families like their own? How are they different?

2) A *mizrah* is a picture that Jews place on the walls of their home that face the direction of Jerusalem. [The word *mizrah* means, "east" and is placed on our eastern walls.] It helps remind us that Israel is in the east and, while we are in our homes, we can think about Israel as our special home. Create a *mizrah* with your students to place on the eastern wall of your classroom, or in their homes. Many *mizrahim* have a picture of Jerusalem and/or the Hebrew word מִזְרָח; they may be made out of any material.

3) Invite a speaker to class to discuss the specialness of Israel to him/her or to Jews. Consider:

- an Israeli
- a parent with strong Israel connections
- a teen or young adult recently returned from a trip
- a community person closely connected with your Federation's Israel projects
- a teacher in a local Jewish high school program, or college, who teaches about Israel
- a Holocaust survivor



- 4) Offer videos on Israel that show it as a special place.
- PJ Library has a list of videos and books for very young children, including Shalom Sesame: <http://tiny.cc/b1hfkx>. For instance, this is Grover in Jerusalem: <http://tiny.cc/6gmhkx>
  - This was developed for the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Israel (2013), showing its achievements over the decades: <http://tiny.cc/u1mbkx>
- 5) Throughout the year, place an emphasis on the Israel aspects of your studies:
- discuss (and show pictures of) how the holidays are celebrated in Israel
  - find Israel connections in the history or Bible course you teach
  - use worship time to focus on Israel-related prayers
  - discuss current events and the issues that arise
  - sing *Hatikvah* in assemblies
- 6) Ask students to go on a scavenger hunt in their homes for items made in Israel. Prompt students to ask their parents:
- how the object was obtained
  - why it is special to the family
  - any stories the object reminds them about Israel

Ask each student to bring (or photograph) one object to school to share. As part of the follow-up, discuss the significance of collections in general (people find the items of importance or of interest) and the significance of Jewish families having items in their home from Israel (it's a signal that Israel is important to us). [This activity may be incorporated into a family program.]

Or, create a digital scavenger hunt using an app like SCVNGR (it digitally offers clues and those on the hunt can send back their answers). Lead students to items, organizations or concepts that are Israel-related.

- You could be specific (e.g., “I see trees in Israel, do you? This agency does a lot to help the ecology and environment of Israel.”)
- You could be more general (e.g., “Take photos of three books you find here that would encourage you to read something about Israel.”)
- You could be metaphorical if there are no Israel-specific agencies or items in the area (e.g., “Take a photo of something that shows hope.” And then when all return those on the hunt return, put that into a slideshow with *Hatikvah* playing in the background).

7) For students with a general background in Jewish history: divide into groups and ask them to research what Israel has meant to the Jewish people during the last 4,000 years from different time perspectives, such as:

- Patriarchal/Matriarchal in the Torah
- Exodus, wandering in the desert, and conquest
- The First and Second Temples
- The Rabbinic Period
- Middle Ages
- Early settlements in the late 19th century and early 20th
- Statehood

Ask each group to create a “Fakebook” character and to post in a class-developed Fakebook page, with attention in their postings to the perspectives of their assigned time periods. Conversations, “Likes,” etc., between the pages will make it even more interesting! [Fakebook offers a template for classes to create pseudo-Facebook pages:

<http://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page>]

8) Read and discuss the excerpt of the opening entry of Marc Rosenstein's Galilee Diary <http://tiny.cc/8vsckx>. Why does he feel that home is "something that you can't understand rationally?" Where is home to Marc? [Note that the Galilee Diary is no longer being updated, but large archive is available: <http://urj.org/learning/teacheducate/publications/galilee/>]

9) For older students, study *Hatikvah* (Text # 1d) as a poem. Read the words, listen to the music, and find a way to have them respond or illustrate the ideas. Tangentially, reinforce the Hebrew words (are students pronouncing them correctly?)

For younger students, introduce *Hatikvah* as an important song for Israel. Listen to a recording, move to the music, and discuss how it makes them feel.

Some versions of *Hatikvah* are below:

- <http://tiny.cc/20uckx> (traditional)
- <http://tiny.cc/eumhcx> (with photos of Israel, including its history)
- <http://tiny.cc/rwmhcx> (sung before a World Cup qualifying game)

10) Show the Ein Prat Fountainheads’ video, “Hope” <http://tiny.cc/17gfkx> (*Yom Ha'atzmaut*, 2013). Focus on the segments of the video that build on the idea of Israel as a special place for Jews including the female singer who says, “This is my homeland, this is my story, I build my future with ancient glory.”

11) Choose the texts in this section that you believe would speak most to your students. Divide them up so that small groups of students each have one to work with. Give them time to discuss their text, and then share questions or comments as a class. Show students this video from August, 2014 of young adults going on aliyah to Israel to join the IDF: <http://tiny.cc/zjmhcx>. Which of the texts complement the reasons provided by the young adults?

12) Collect past issues of Israeli newspapers, either hard copies or selections downloaded from the Internet:

- Ha'aretz [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)
- The Jerusalem Post [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)
- Ynetnews [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com)
- The Times of Israel <http://www.timesofisrael.com>
- Arutz Sheva [www.israelnationalnews.com](http://www.israelnationalnews.com)

Read and study Israel's Declaration of Independence (Text #1a), then divide it into small segments, assigning groups of students to each. Ask each group to search the Israeli news sources for articles and photographs that illustrate their section of the Declaration. Create a collage with these.

13) Develop a worksheet that helps students compare and discuss God's promises to our ancestors in the *Torah*:

	Who was promised?	What was promised?	Did the promise come true?
<i>B'reshit</i> /Genesis 17:5-8			
<i>B'reshit</i> /Genesis 26:2-5			
<i>B'reshit</i> /Genesis 28:10-15			
<i>D'varim</i> /Deuteronomy 4:14			
<i>Devarim</i> /Deuteronomy 8:6-10			
<i>Devarim</i> /Deuteronomy 26:15			

13) Share with older students this PDF from the Gaza conflict in 2012 developed by Makom: <http://tiny.cc/p30dkx>. Use the questions at the top of the page and the multiple voices presented below it to open the conversation on what it means to support Israel, as well as the nuances to that perspective (e.g. the Makom question, “Does the value of solidarity trump all else in times of crisis?”).

14) Divide students into groups, assigning each one of the Danny Siegel poems about Israel as a home. Have each group:

- Read and understand the poem, focusing on what he seems to mean by Israel as home. [You may wish to develop specific questions for each poem.]
- Do a large torn-paper collage illustrating the poem. [Provide a piece of poster-board, colored construction paper and glue. Students will tear the paper to create their illustrations and glue them to the board. The imprecision of the tearing helps alleviate the students' artistic concerns; nothing is perfect, but the abstractness is beautiful.]
- Prepare a choral reading of their poem.

Share the poems and pictures with the entire class, or in an assembly.

What other poetry might students find of interest, as well?

## **Focus #2: A Friend In Need**

The importance of friendship has strong roots within Jewish tradition. The rabbis instruct us to seek positive friendships [see (*Pirkei Avot*/Ethics of Our Ancestors, 1:6)] because friendships help build our intellect and our identities.

As we grow, we appreciate this wise advice more and more. In times of joy and times of trouble, whether in person, over the telephone, or via text messages, our true friends are there for us and we are there for them. It is a reciprocal relationship.

The friendship between Jews living in Israel and Jews living in the Diaspora is a pillar of Jewish life in the modern era. It goes beyond moral and financial support. It goes beyond the fact that the United States calls Israel a valued friend and ally. It goes beyond the personal friendships that we can count by looking in our list of email contacts or Facebook friends. We are connected to the people of Israel and they are connected to us through our joint history, culture, and connection to the land. Their triumphs fill us with a sense of pride and their losses fill our hearts with sadness. We share the central value that appears twice in the *Talmud* (Babylonian *Talmud Shavu'ot* 39a and *Sanhedrin* 27b): “All of Israel is responsible one for another.”

We have a wonderful opportunity before us, and important *mitzvah* at hand - to help a friend in need.

The metaphor of Israel as a friend-in-need focuses this second curricular section.

### **TEXTS: *A Friend In Need***

**Text #2a:** M. Ibn Ezra, *Shirat Yisrael*, (12c) 1924, p. 136.  
In Baron, Joseph L. (editor), *A Treasury of Jewish Quotations*, New York: Arnsion, 1985.

A friend will prove him/herself in time of trouble.



**Text #2b:** *Talmud Bavli Ta'anit 22a*

Rabbi *Beroka* of *Huzistan* often visited the market at *Belapat*. There he would meet Elijah the prophet. One day, Rabbi *Beroka* asked, "Does anyone in this market have a share in the world to come?"

While they were talking, two men came by.

Elijah said, "Those two have a share in the world to come."

Rabbi *Beroka* went to them and asked, "What do you do?"

They said,

"We are jesters. When we see a person depressed, we try to cheer him up.

And when we see two people arguing, we work hard to make peace between them."

**Text #2c:** *Genesis Rabbah 33:3*

Be filled with compassion for one another,  
and the Holy One will be filled with compassion for you.

**Text #2d:** Leviticus 19:18

Love your fellow person as yourself...

**Text #2e:** *Mishneh Torah Hilhot Avel 4:1*

In his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides says that the biblical commandment,  
"love your fellow person as yourself"  
is the basis for many described by the rabbis.

These Rabbinic laws include

visiting the sick

comforting mourners

caring for the dead

providing a dowry for the bride

inviting guests

performing burial rites

rejoicing with bride and groom and helping support them with necessary provisions



**Text #2f:** Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays by Abraham Joshua Heschel*, Susannah Heschel Editor, pub. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, NY, 1997.

People pray in different languages, but they shed tears in common...



**Text #2g:** *Pirkei Avot* / Ethics of Our Ancestors 1:2

The world stands on three things:  
 on the *Torah* (study),  
 on *avodah* (worship),  
 and on *g'milut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness).



### ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Divide students into pairs to brainstorm the kinds of things friends do for each other (emphasize "for", not "with"). Create a class list and then spend some time creating a parallel to Israel - Israel is our friend, and so we do things for her, and she does things for us. [For example, "When friends want company, they visit one another," parallels "Jews living in the Diaspora visit Israel and our Israeli family and friends visit us."]
- 2) Invite a recent visitor to Israel to speak to your students about the trip. Cue the speaker to use language that parallels the big idea of this section - that Israel is like a friend who needs our friendship. [Encourage the speaker to bring photographs/slides that highlight this theme.]
- 3) Share with students a segment from a recent newscast in which the reporter uses language or images that paint a bad picture of a Israel. Parallel it to a friend, "slammed" by others. How would we help the friend? How can we help Israel? For examples of biased reporting, check:
  - <http://www.camera.org/>
  - <http://www.honestreporting.com>
- 4) Divide students into pairs, giving each a highlighter and a copy of the Prayer for State of Israel from the prayerbook [See Text #6p, below, for one version or consult your congregation's prayerbook. Alternatively, find a prayer that would be appropriate you're your age group or grade: <http://urj.org/israel/prayers/>.] Have the pairs highlight parts of the prayer that show our support for Israel. Discuss in light of the friend metaphor.

5) Divide students into small groups, giving each a set of props (include one or two items from Israel) and 1-2 short quotes in the text section.

- Have students prepare a “promo video” (it may be in skit-form) showing support of Israel using each provided prop and quotation.
- Alternatively, offer materials and have students create a stop-motion video, or one where those in the video hold cards with pictures, short phrases or words.

6) Distribute (*mahzorim*/High Holiday prayer books) and ask students to examine the High Holiday liturgy. Why is so much of the language written in plural form? How does the world-view expressed in these prayers relate to how we might respond to Israel in a crisis situation? As friends, what are our responsibilities at this time?

7) Have students trace full-body outlines of each other. Ask them first to draw in an Israel-related T-shirt design on their own body. Then ask students to write

- on their “head” what they know about Israel
- in their “hands” what they do for Israel
- in the “feet” whether they’ve been to Israel or when they might go

Line up the bodies, hands-holding-hands, perhaps with one of the paper dolls “touching” Israel on a map. [Alternative: Make regular size paper dolls, with each student’s photo as the head.]

8) Using the quote from (*Pirkei Avot*) 1:2 (Text #2g) ask students to say what they would do in each of the three categories to help Israel. Use the following chart to help organize students thoughts:

<b>Torah (studying)</b>	<b>Worship (praying)</b>	<b>Acts of loving kindness (doing)</b>
<i>Example:</i> Study the prayer for the State of Israel	<i>Example:</i> Write a note to put in the <i>Kotel</i>	<i>Example:</i> Raise money for Israeli social services

Follow-up on the ideas developed by the students.

9) As a class write letters to a class in Israel (preferably from their partnership city), matching each student with a pen-pal of the same age in Israel. Have the two classes share pictures of the students and broader communities; create a comparative bulletin board in your room.

10) Distribute the pieces of a simple Israel-related puzzle to your students, secretly keeping one piece for yourself. (If you don't have a puzzle available, create one by cutting up a poster into the number of students in your class, plus one). Ask the students to put the puzzle together. When they have completed the puzzle as far as they are able, discuss how the experience would have been different if all the pieces had been there. How is the final product different? How did it feel when the final piece goes in to complete the picture? How does this relate to the Jewish people standing together as one, with Israel?

11) Encourage students with relatives or friends in Israel (perhaps as a result of a trip or maybe a camp counselor) to be in contact and correspond.

12) Study the text from the *Mishneh Torah* (Text #2e) with your students. How does it help inform us about our reciprocal relationship as Jews with Israel?

13) Ask students to create a poster, mural, or webpage for a community event using the themes found in the Ibn Ezra and Abraham Joshua Heschel texts (Texts #2a & #2f, respectively).

14) Share with students stories from people living in Israel during the Israeli-Gaza conflict. For instance:

- “Stop the Sirens,” Jewish Federations of North America <http://tiny.cc/15eekx>
- The iCenter’s Resources page includes a number of stories of Israelis during the conflict <http://tiny.cc/47eekx>

What are the needs of these people and how might we go about helping them?

15) Take action that helps our friend (Israel) across the ocean. The iCenter has a list of next-step actions on the right side of its webpage. Also, the JECC’s Responding to Crisis: Israel” webpages have a variety of action steps students could take.

<http://jeccrespondingtocrisis.weebly.com/israel.html>



### **Focus #3: Critical Consumer of Information**

News from the Middle East, though thousands of miles away, reaches us and our students in a variety of forms: word of mouth, newspaper, radio, television and internet. Behind the delivery systems are reports from a variety of sources, each with its own agenda and bias.

As educators, it is dangerous for us to assume that our students, born and raised in the Information Age, know how to sift through the continuous onslaught of information and separate the chaff from the wheat, the facts from the opinions, the factual reporting from the opinion pieces. This is a skill that is learned through guided practice.

Helping our students become critical consumers of information is an important element in nurturing their connection to Israel, understanding the challenges Israel faces, and developing their advocacy skills.

Issues to be alert to include:

- Pictures are often chosen for their emotional impact.
- Pictures do not always show complexity of the entire scene or situation; some photos are recirculating from past conflicts, even in other countries.
- Reporters choose words that can excite or incite the reader.
- Seemingly factual information can be inaccurate or incomplete.
- Well-meaning people are biased and may view the same situation from different perspectives.
- Some items in the media offer opinions and reflect the bias of the author.
- The media often favors the underdog.
- Foreign journalists have reported that they were threatened by Palestinian security forces not to report stories that are unfavorable to the Palestinian position.

This third section helps students better evaluate a wide variety of information sources.

#### **TEXTS: *Critical Consumer of Information***

**Text #3a:** Abraham H. Foxman, “*Media Bias Against Israel: Perception or Reality?*”  
Available online at [http://www.adl.org/Israel/media\\_bias\\_oped.html](http://www.adl.org/Israel/media_bias_oped.html).

...we should challenge the media when there are factual errors. We should urge that proper context be given to video images that only tell part of the story. We should insist that when interviews are done, there be a true balance between Palestinian and Israeli viewpoints. And we should offer to work with reporters and broadcasters so that they can get the fullest picture of Israel and its meaning to the Jewish people.



**Text #3b:** Christian Stephen (reporter), as reported by Lahav Harkov in, “Reporter: Gazans only want us to show damage, not shooting,” JPost.com, August 8, 2014. <http://tiny.cc/06cekx>

A fighter inside Gaza city threatened to shoot me in the head if I didn't stop taking pictures of a group of cars with tarp-covered trunks parked behind a building.

Another young guy near the outskirts of the city was waving an old handgun around screaming at me because he wanted me to take a picture of the dead boy on the ground next to us under the rubble of a building. He was screaming "This is our hell! This is our hell!"

After a minute or so he sat down and kept murmuring the same words in Arabic.

It's a dichotomy of them needing the situation to be seen, as long as you only show the damage and not the retaliatory measures.



**Text #3c:** “The Invisible Face of Hamas,” *IDF Blog*, August 7, 2014 <http://tiny.cc/w9cekx>

Despite the large number of international journalists reporting from Gaza during Operation Protective Edge, images of Hamas terrorists have scarcely appeared in Western media outlets. This is primarily because Hamas threatens journalists who don't tell the story the way Hamas wants it to be told.

In addition, Hamas terrorists are often difficult to identify because they wear civilian clothing. By doing so, Hamas terrorists are not only trying to avoid being targeted by the IDF, but they are also causing international organizations to incorrectly label the death of many terrorists as civilians. It should come as no surprise that Hamas has ordered Gaza's social media users not to post images of terrorists online and to refer to all terrorists killed in IDF strikes as “innocent civilians.”

*[Examples and quotes from international reporters are included in the blog posting.]*



**Text #3d:** “Israel, Gaza, War & Data: Social Networks and the Art of Personalizing Propaganda,” by Gilad Lotan, *The World Post: A Partnership of the Huffington Post and Berggruen Institute on Governance*, August 7, 2014 <http://tiny.cc/jojekx>.

Not only is there much more media produced, but it is coming at us at a faster pace, from many more sources. As we construct our online profiles based on what we already know, what we're interested in, and what we're recommended, social networks are perfectly designed to reinforce our existing beliefs. Personalized spaces, optimized for engagement, prioritize content that is likely to generate more traffic; the more we click, share, like, the higher engagement tracked on the service. Content that makes us uncomfortable, is filtered out.

*In a broadcast society, there were gatekeepers, the editors, and they controlled the flows of information. Along came the Internet and it swept them out of the way, and it allowed all of us to connect together, and it was awesome. But that's not actually what's happening right now.* Eli Pariser, the Filter Bubble.



### ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Give your students the names and website addresses of various newspapers, some local, some read throughout the U.S., and some Israeli or from other countries. Assign students to research any topic related to the current crisis, each from a different news source. Guide the students through a comparison of the information they have discovered. Use a chart to divide information into “fact” and “opinion.” Discuss what is involved in really understanding any event with objectivity.
- 2) Divide the class into an even number of groups. Give half of the groups a photograph that has been in the paper. Ask them to discuss what they know from just looking at the photo. Have these groups write a caption for the picture, and a few sentences about what they think happened. Give the other groups an article that describes each photo. As the class comes back together, ask the groups with the photographs to present their work, followed by the groups that read the corresponding article. How accurate were the assumptions based on the photo? How does a photograph influence how we understand an event?
- 3) Interview a reporter. What is considered fair journalism? How do reporters work to write articles that fairly represent the news? How do reporters balance their personal views while presenting an accurate view of events? How do reporters respond to those involved in a situation who wish to have their specific agendas reported?
- 4) Ask students each to bring in one or two articles they or their parents have found circulating on Facebook, Twitter or another source. Ask students to read the articles and determine if it is straight reporting or an opinion piece. Make sure they also research the original website on which the news item is found – what is the perspective of that particular organization or media outlet? Spend time talking about the impact of social media on the current situation in

Israel/Gaza. [An interesting article from Huffington Post takes a broad perspective on this: “Israel, Gaza, War & Data: Social Networks and the Art of Personalizing Propaganda,” by Gilad Lotan, *The World Post: A Partnership of the Huffington Post and Berggruen Institute on Governance*, August 7, 2014 <http://tiny.cc/jojekx>. It includes some activity ideas, as well.]

- 5) Survey adults for their perceptions of biases in different newspapers and media sources. Select stories from these sources and analyze them to see if the biases are accurate.
- 6) Begin a current events section of your class time, devoted to Israeli news. Provide students with site addresses such as:
  - Ha'aretz [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)
  - The Jerusalem Post [www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)
  - Ynetnews [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com)
  - The Times of Israel <http://www.timesofisrael.com>
  - Arutz Sheva [www.israelnationalnews.com](http://www.israelnationalnews.com)
  - Jewish Telegraphic Agency - [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org)
- 7) Help students become more educated about the conflict. They might, for instance
  - Take on a 30 Day Challenge (or whatever number of days you wish). Ask them to find, read and reflect on one article each day on a class webpage, blog or other platform like VoiceThread.
  - Click on the videos that interest them on a site like ADL's *Israel/Hamas: Your Questions Answered* which has a series of videos on a number of current topics such as: How is Hamas using civilians as human shields? What are the roles of Egypt and the United States in this conflict? What can the American Jewish community do to support Israel? <http://tiny.cc/h2bekx>

## **Focus #4: Israel - The Jewish Anchor**

In Genesis, God appears to Abraham and promises him and his children's children the Land as a permanent possession. Thus began the Jewish people's 3,500 year-old connection with the place we call Israel. Regardless of where we lived or how we identified as Jews, Israel remained the focal point.

Israel is our *spiritual* and *religious* center. In our prayers, we ask that Israel be blessed with peace. At our weddings, we break a glass to remember the destruction of the Holy Temple and our land. At every *seder*, we proclaim, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Israel is our *political* and *national* center. Israel is the only state where Jewish political parties vie with one another to hold the reins of power. It is the only state whose national anthem speaks of the Jews' ages-old hope of living in freedom in our land. It is the only state with national Jewish holidays, the only one ready to send its soldiers across Africa to rescue Jews in peril.

Israel is our *cultural* center. Israel hosts a thriving Jewish cultural life filled with poetry, music, plays, film, and art.

Israel is important to Jews because it is intimately connected to the origins of our people and our religion. The very idea of Israel has always been connected with the Jewish belief that the world can be changed and that life can be better. Modern Israel adds another element to this concept by saying that Jewish life can be ameliorated - through our actions, hopes and deeds we can reshape our destiny.

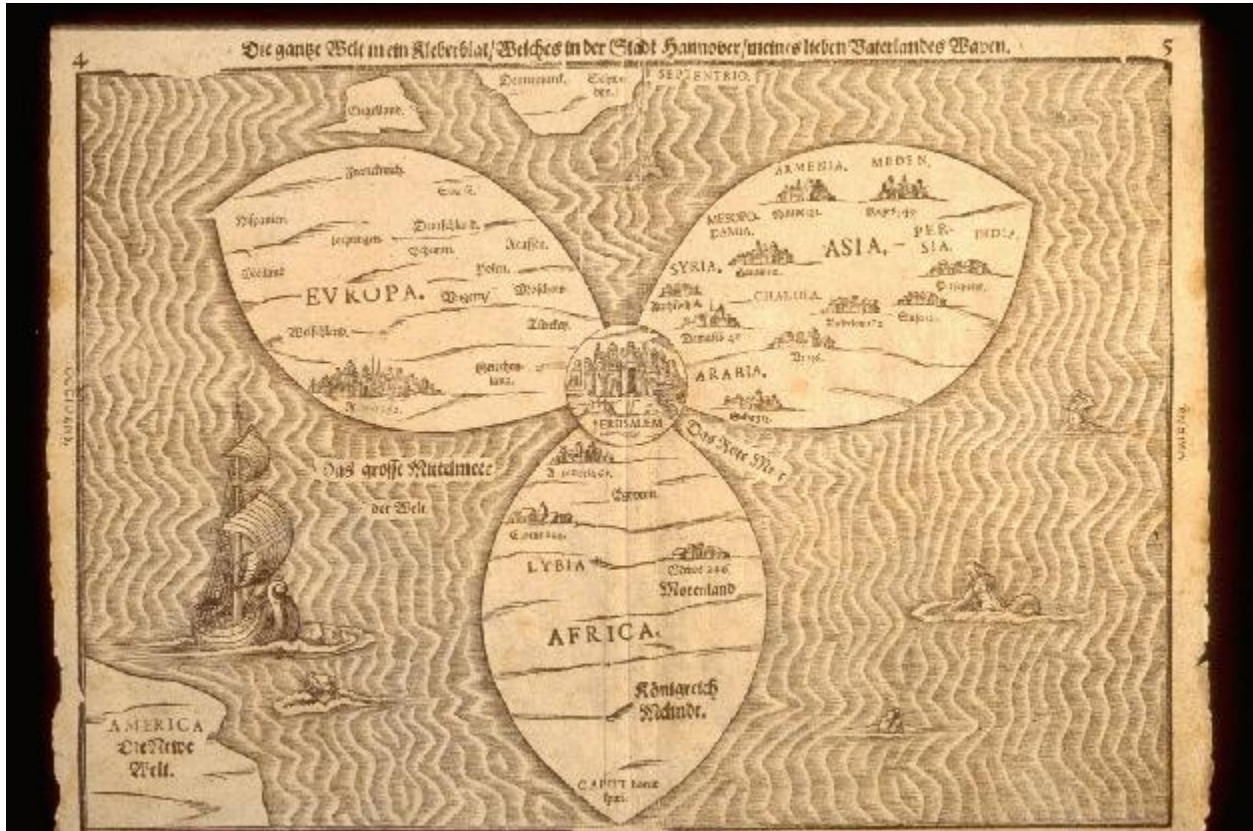
### **TEXTS: *Israel - The Jewish Anchor***

#### **Text #4a: *Genesis 17:7-8***

I will keep my covenant  
     with you and your children  
     through all the generations  
 as an everlasting covenant to be God to you  
 and to your children after you.  
**I give to you and to your children after you**  
**the land in which you are living, all the land of Canaan**  
 as an everlasting possession...



**Text #4b:** Jerusalem: The Center of the World. Available online at University of Southern Maine: Osher Map Library <http://tiny.cc/0ukekx>



**Text #4c:** *Tanhuma* Leviticus, *Kedoshim* 10

Just as the navel is placed in the center of the human (body), so too is the Land of Israel placed in the center of the World, as it is said: "...who dwell on the navel of the earth (*tabbur ha-aretz*).” (Ezekiel 38:12).

And it forms the foundation of the World, as it is said: “A psalm by Assaph. The mighty God spoke and called the earth from east to west.” (Psalms 50:1)

From where? “From Zion, perfect in beauty, God appeared.” (Psalms 50:2)

The Land of Israel is the center of the World and Jerusalem is in the center of the Land of Israel.



**Text #4d:** *Isaiah 2:3*

...from Zion shall go forth Torah,  
and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem.



**Text #4e:** Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, “*The Land of Israel.*” in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

*ERETZ ISRAEL* (the Land of Israel) is not something apart from the soul of the Jewish people, it is no mere national possession, serving as a means of unifying our people...Eretz Israel is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being.



**Text #4f:** A.D. Gordon, “*Our Task Ahead*” (1920) in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

We are engaged in a creative endeavor the like of which is not to be found in the whole history of mankind: the rebirth and rehabilitation of a people that has been uprooted and scattered to the winds. It is a people half dead, and the effort to recreate it demands the exclusive concentration of the creator on his work. The center of our national work, the heart of our people, is here, in Palestine, even though we are but a small community in this country, for here is the mainspring of our life. Here, in this central spot, is hidden the vital force of our cause and its potential for growth. Here something is beginning to flower that has greater human significance and far wider ramifications than our history-makers envisage, but it is growing in every dimension deep within, like a tree growing out of its own seed, and what is happening is therefore not immediately obvious. Here, in Palestine, is the force attracting all the scattered cells of the people to unite into one living national organism. The more life in this seed, the greater its power of attraction.



**Text #4g:** Ahad Ha'am, “*The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem.*”

This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in the course of time the center of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and will develop in all its aspects up to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Then from this center the spirit of Judaism will go forth to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, and will breathe new life into them and preserve their unity . . . .



**Text #4h:** Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967, p. 121-122.

The land of Israel has been sanctified by the words of the prophets, by the suffering of a whole people, by the tears and prayers of thousands of years, by the labor and dedication of pioneers. Such sanctity is precious to God, vital to the people, a light within history. The State of Israel is not only a place of refuge for the survivors of the holocaust, but also a tabernacle for the rebirth of faith and justice, for the renewal of souls, for the cultivation of knowledge of the words of the divine. By the power and promise of prophetic visions we inhabit the land, by faithfulness to God and Torah we continue to survive.



**Text #4i:** Rabbi David Hartman, “*From survival to freedom and back: A new agenda for Israel and the Diaspora.*” Available online at <http://tiny.cc/15kekx>. February 3, 2008.

Israel gives Jews an identity grounded in a feeling of dignity and power, in the ability to cope with external enemies.



### ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Distribute a copy of the map of the world that has Jerusalem in its center (see #Text 4b). Ask students to analyze the message of the map - who might have been cartographer and/or what might have been the world situation that precipitated such a drawing? Introduce Text #4c from *Tanhuma* Leviticus. Ask students how the map and the *midrash* complement each other.
- 2) Ask students to make a list of the customs Jews have adopted over the millennia that clearly show their attachment to Israel. Prompt students to think about: facing east to pray; hanging a *mizrah* (a picture or wallhanging on the eastern wall of one's home) in the direction of Jerusalem; leaving a corner of one's home unfinished as a sign of mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem; breaking a glass at the end of a wedding ceremony in memory of the destruction of the Temple 2000 years ago; placing some soil from Israel in one's coffin (if burial takes place outside of Israel).
- 3) Study artwork of Israel, with an eye to the spiritual connections each artist seems to have to the country. If you are able to locate art that focuses on Israel as the/a Jewish center, have students analyze those pictures with this section's theme in mind.
- 4) Divide students into small groups, giving each one quote from this section, along with some specific discussion questions that focus them on their author's conception of Israel "at the center." Give each group art supplies (or access to a computer graphics program) and ask them to



illustrate or diagram their quote. Share the thoughts and diagrams, discussing student reactions to each.

5) Study the words of *Isaiah* (Text #4d), then ask students to create a work of art, dance or music that expresses the idea that words of *Torah* are continually coming out of Israel.

## **Focus #5: Moral Equivalency**

A cursory review of news reports describing the current unrest in Israel could easily lead one to the conclusion that the Israeli government and the Hamas leadership are equally to blame for the ongoing pain and suffering inflicted on the people of the region, Israeli and Gazan. The reports rarely distinguish between Palestinian attacks on civilian targets and Israel's preemptive, defense operations - between Palestinian children hurt or killed because Hamas missiles are in range of schools or homes, and Israeli children who are killed as they sit in a stroller outside their homes.

The tendency to equate these actions blurs the lines between right and wrong, defensive measures and murder.

This section focuses on the importance of making distinctions and critically examining the depiction of the situation as "a cycle of violence."

### **TEXTS: *Moral Equivalency***

**Text #5a:** Seth Mandell, "False Moral Equivalency." *JPost.com*, June 29, 2001.

My 13-year old son, Koby Mandell, and his friend, Yosef Ish-Ran were brutally murdered, bludgeoned to death with bowling ball-sized rocks six weeks ago. The perpetrators, not yet apprehended, are assumed to be Palestinians who happened upon my son and his friend - vulnerable, easy targets - as they were hiking in a canyon about a kilometer from our home...

Discerning readers and media observers should be aware that the two tragedies are not morally equivalent. In almost every instance of noncombatants killed by the Israeli army, the injury resulted from an Israeli defensive reaction to an attack by trained Palestinian fighters using victim's civilian home for cover. The baby's injury was a mistake for which Prime Minister Ariel Sharon expressed regret...

A glaring example of false moral equivalency, Thomas Friedman in his New York Times column on June 19 writes: "What Israeli settlers and Palestinian suicide bombers have in common is that they are each pushing for the maximum use of force against the other side."

To equate the two is to create moral mush. The rhetoric and actions of the suicide bombers and the Palestinian leadership is a "push" for wholesale and indiscriminate slaughter of Israeli Jews wherever and whenever they are to be found. The so-called settlers' "push" is for defensive action against armed militants who threaten the roads, the homes, and the lives of many Israelis, both inside and outside of the territories.



**Text #5b:** Rabbi Jacob Shtull, “Active Self-Defense Permissible.” *Cleveland Jewish News*, July 20, 2001.

Is Israel justified in pursuing its “active self-defense” policy .....? An understanding of the ethical principal involved helps clarify.

When one becomes aware of a *rodef*, a person intent on inflicting harm, destruction, or death, it is ethically permissible to defend yourself and, if necessary, *yakum v'yaharog*, to kill the attacker.

Israeli intelligence knows the names and addresses of the militant enemies. It is entirely just and moral to confront the enemy before he strikes. These defense tactics are not assassinations. The alternative is condolence calls for Jewish mourners.



**Text #5c:** *Talmud Bavli Berakhot 58a*

The *Torah* has said (*Shemot/Exodus 22:1*):

If a person comes to kill you,  
rise early and kill him first.



**Text #5d:** James Klurfeld, “*Israeli and Palestinian Violence: There’s No Moral Equivalency*,” *Newsday.com*, May 24, 2001.

When it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute in the spring of 2001, the tendency to judge the actions of both sides as morally equivalent is repugnant. By moral equivalency, I mean the tendency of both diplomats and media to give the same weight to acts of the Palestinians and the Israelis . . .

The problem for a journalist writing about all this is that we often need to telescope complex events into a small space. That's when equivalence becomes a technique, but one that is unthinking and unfair. Even if you believe the Israeli response to terrorism has been excessive in some cases, it is still important to differentiate between who started and perpetuated the violence and who is trying to respond to it. There is also a difference between Palestinians deliberately targeting civilian populations, including women and children, and Israeli soldiers killing Palestinian youths who have been placed by the Palestinians on the front lines of the fight. It is distorting simply to count up the number of children killed, tragic though that may be.

For diplomats, the tendency toward moral equivalence has to do with the desire to maintain credibility with both sides, to remain honest brokers. This is especially true for the United

States. But distorting the truth is too high a price to pay for diplomatic efficacy. To suggest expanding settlements is the same as perpetrating terrorism is wrong. . . .



**Text #5e:** Jerold S. Auerbach, “Two Weeks of Shallow, Facile Moral Equivalency in The New York Times,” *New York Observer*, July 23, 2014. <http://tiny.cc/4gmekx>

In a nearby Opinion column entitled “Faith-Based Fanatics,” Timothy Egan equated “the rage that moved Hamas to lob rockets on birthday parties in Tel Aviv, and Israelis to kill children playing soccer on the beach in Gaza.” In a disgraceful display of moral equivalence he blamed “extremists on both sides” for what Hamas intended and Israel did not.



**Text #5f:** Religion and Ethics Newsweekly, “Michael Walzer on War,” March 27, 2009. <http://tiny.cc/werlkx> (includes a video and transcript)

How do you fight against non-state organizations, whose militants, zealots, and terrorists hide among, or are sheltered by, the civilian population? How do you use modern, high tech armies against enemies like that, without imposing terrible costs on civilians? And without looking like murderers? What is the value of stopping rocket attacks on Israeli towns and cities? How many civilian deaths are “not disproportionate” to that achievement?



**Text #5g:** Rabbi Abraham Cooper, “Response to those providing Hamas an Iron Dome of moral equivalency: Guest commentary,” *Los Angeles Daily News Opinion*, August 8, 2014. <http://tiny.cc/tj2dkx>

In condemning the “disgraceful” alleged Israeli fire targeting an UNWRA school that left 10 dead “civilians,” its spokesperson declared, “We once again stress that Israel do more to meet its own standards and avoid civilian casualties . . . The suspicion that militants are operating nearby does not justify strikes that put at risk the lives of so many innocent civilians.”

That’s the best advice these friends of Israel can give? Provide these barbarians who deliberately put their own women and children in harm’s way an iron dome of moral equivalency? Further embolden a terrorist organization — weaponized and trained by Iran — to continue to murder your civilians, and to enable mega-terror attacks from tunnels reaching nurseries, kindergartens and homes in Israel’s heartland?



**Text #5h:** *Pirkei Avot* 1:14

Hillel used to say:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

And if I am for myself alone, then what am I?

And, if not now, when?

**ACTIVITIES:**

1) Divide students into four groups, providing each with two photographs (with captions) or articles from the recent news about deaths in the Israel/Hamas conflict, one of an Israel-focused situation and one Palestinian. Ask each group to study the material and to prepare to debate the position you assign. They need opening statements, as well as forethought to their arguments against the other positions:

Position #1: The deaths in this conflict are equal - both sides are morally wrong in their actions.

Position #2: The deaths in this conflict are equal - both sides are morally right in their actions.

Position #3: The deaths in this conflict are not equal - the Israelis are committing crimes that are more morally wrong than the Palestinians.

Position #4: The deaths in this conflict are not equal - the Palestinians are committing crimes that are more morally wrong than the Israelis.

After the debate, have students drop their assigned roles and argue the question from their personal beliefs.

2) Share with students the excerpt from Rabbi Shtull (Text #5b), the text from the Talmud (Text #5c), and the article by Klurfeld (Text #5d). Build to a definition of moral equivalency. Provide students with a highlighting pen and several recent news articles (be sure to include articles that are evenly weighted and articles that are weighted unevenly to both the Palestinian or the Israeli positions respectively). Divide students into pairs and ask them to study the articles, looking for statements of moral equivalency. Discuss their findings as a class. Do they agree with the Klurfeld's statement, or not? What is their reaction to his statement that judging both sides with moral equivalency is "repugnant?"

3) Share with students the lesson developed by Makom on the question of whether the IDF acts in a moral fashion: <http://tiny.cc/p30dkx>. The quote in Text #5f, above was taken from it.

4) Most adolescents are not well educated on the source of the conflict or the issues. It is hard to judge the concept of moral equivalency without this background. Ameliorate this problem by finding some direct ways to teach the history of the situation. Consider:

- giving a 30-day-challenge (or whatever number of days), with students asked to find, read and respond to one news article on the Israel crisis each day. This could be done

using an app or program that offers channels for sharing (or Facebook, if the students are old enough).

- inviting in a speaker
- showing a movie that provides an overview (see the Resource List)
- dividing students into groups to study the information on Gilbert's maps of the Middle East conflict (see the resource list)

5) Direct students to the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (<http://www.camera.org>). Have them choose an article that seems to illustrate the issue of moral equivalency. Share these in class and discuss them in light of the Pirke Avot quote (Text #5h).

6) There are those who respond to the issue of moral equivalency by saying that we need to be advocates for Israel, helping others see the imbalance in the media. Share with students Hillel's quote in the text section above and analyze it in light of the dangers of moral equivalency. Replace the word "I" with "American Jewry" and "me" with "Israel." What are the answers to Hillel's questions when phrased from those perspectives?

7) Arab journalists also write about moral equivalency and the continuing struggle between Israel and the Palestinians. To read one view of an Arab-American, print and study the article, "Arabs driven by biases that mirror Israeli biases," March 16, 2008 (<http://tiny.cc/airlkx>). How does the position offered by the author mirror that of what we have been reading in the Jewish press? How is it different? (Recommended for adult study.)

## **Focus #6: Solidarity With Israel**

The Hebrew word for solidarity is *ahdut* - its root letters are related to the Hebrew number *ehad* (one). The notion that we are “one” is an important idea in Jewish tradition. The Biblical commentator, Rashi, in explaining the verse describing the preparations leading to the giving of the *Torah* [Exodus 19:2] wrote the following: *k'ish ehad b'lev ehad* - as one person with one heart. Elsewhere [Deuteronomy 29:14], the rabbis point out that we were all standing as one at Mount Sinai, those present and those generations not yet born.

Despite our differences, we are one people with a common collective responsibility. In good times and bad times, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with one another in thoughts and in deeds.

This concluding section highlights our collective responsibility to demonstrate solidarity with Israel.

### **TEXTS: *Solidarity with Israel***

#### **Text #6a:** Exodus 19:2

And Israel encamped there opposite the mountain...

Rashi's commentary: As one person with one heart



#### **Text #6b:** *Zohar*, Genesis 151b

A little hurt from a kin is worse than a big hurt from a stranger.



#### **Text #6c:** *Tanhuma N'tzavim*

Separate reeds are weak and easily broken,  
but bound together, they are strong and hard to tear apart.



**Text #6d:** *Zohar*, Leviticus 93b.

The Holy One and the community of Israel are called one  
when they are together,  
not when they are parted.



**Text #6e:** *Mehilta d'Rabbi Yishmael*

Rabbi Y'huda said:

This was Israel's excellence:  
When they all stood in front of Mount Sinai  
to receive the Torah,  
they were in agreement  
in accepting God's dominion joyfully.

In addition, they pledged themselves  
to one another.



**Text #6f:** *Shimon bar Yohai*, *Sifre* 346

Only when Jews are united on earth is there a firm foundation for God's chambers on high.



**Text #6g:** *Talmud Bavli Shavuot 39a*

All of Israel is responsible one for another.





Text #6h: Dry Bones cartoons



November 3, 2000

June 12, 2001

June 18, 2001

(Permission to reprint granted by cartoonist for educational purposes only.)



Text #6i: Psalms 133:1

How good and pleasant it is  
for brothers and sisters to live together.



Text #6j: Midrash Tanhuma, Parshat Naso 1

All Jews are relatives and friends.



**Text #6k:** Martin Buber, “*Hebrew Humanism*,” in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*. (New York: Atheneum, 1976.)

“And who is like Thy people Israel, a nation *one* in the earth.” (II Samuel 7:23) And these words, regardless of what epoch they hail from, express the same profound reality as those earlier words...Israel was and is a people and a religious community in one, and it is this unity which enabled it to survive in an exile no other nation had to suffer...



**Text #6l:** *Pirkei Avot* 2:4

*Hillel* said,

Do not separate yourself from the community.



**Text #6m:** *Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit* 11a

A person should share in the distress of the community.

For so we find that Moses, our teacher,  
shared in the distress of the community,  
as it is said (Exodus 17:12),  
But Moses' hands were heavy;  
and they took a stone and put it under him,  
and he sat on it.

Did not then Moses have a bolster  
or a cushion to sit on?

This is then what Moses meant [to convey],  
As Israel are in distress  
I too will share with them.

One who shares in the distress of the  
community will merit to behold its consolation.



**Text #6n:** Appears in both *T'filat Shaharit* (the morning service) and *Birkat Hamazon* (blessing after meals)

Our brothers and sisters, the entire house of Israel,  
 who are delivered into distress and captivity,  
 whether they are on sea or dry land,  
 may our God have mercy on them,  
 and remove them from distress to relief,  
 from darkness to light,  
 from subjugation to redemption,  
 now, speedily, and soon...



**Text #6o:** Ecclesiastes 3:7

There is a time for silence and a time to speak out.



**Text #6p:** A Prayer for the State of Israel  
 (Translation: *Siddur Sim Shalom*, NY: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1985.)

Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of the people Israel: Bless the State of Israel,  
 with its promise of redemption.

Shield it with Your love; spread over it the shelter of your peace.

Guide its leaders and advisors with Your light and Your truth. Help them with Your good  
 counsel.

Strengthen the hands of those who defend our Holy Land. Deliver them; crown their efforts  
 with triumph. Bless the land with peace, and its inhabitants with lasting joy.



**Text #6q:** "*Light One Candle.*"  
 by Peter Yarrow, Silver Dawn Music, 1983.

Light one candle for the Maccabee Children with thanks that their light didn't die.  
 Light one candle for the pain they endured when their right to exist was denied.  
 Light one candle for the terrible sacrifice justice and freedom demand.  
 Light one candle for the wisdom to know when the peace maker's time is at hand.

Don't let the light go out  
 it's lasted for so many years.  
 Don't let the light go out

let it shine through our love and our fears.

Light one candle for the strength that we need to never become our own foe.  
 Light one candle for those who are suffering pain we lived so long ago.  
 Light one candle for all we believe in that anger won't tear us apart.  
 And light one candle to bring us together with peace as the song in our hearts.  
     Don't let the light go out,  
     it's lasted for so many years.  
     Don't let the light go out,  
     let it shine through our love and our fears.

And what is the memory that's valued so highly that we keep it alive in that flame?  
 What's the commitment for those who have died, when we cry out they have not died in vain?  
 We have come this far always believing that justice would somehow prevail.  
 This is the burden, this is the promise, and THIS is why we will not fail.  
     Don't let the light go out,  
     it's lasted for so many years.  
     Don't let the light go out,  
     let it shine through our love and our fears.

Don't let the light go out!  
 Don't let the light go out!  
 Don't let the light go out!

(Permission to reprint granted by author for educational purposes only.)



## ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Give each student a new, unsharpened pencil. Develop a demonstration that shows how one may break a pencil, but can't break a group of them together. Then, discuss the quote from *Tan<sub>h</sub>uma N'tzavim* (Text #6c), "Separate reeds are weak and easily broken, but bound together, they are strong and hard to tear apart." How does this relate to our strength as a people to stand together?
- 2) Share with students the Dry Bones cartoons (Text #6h). How do they react to this being "good news and bad news?" Ask students to examine the three cartoons and identify their common themes. Brainstorm ways in which the Jewish people are (or can be more) united in light of the current situation in Israel.
- 3) During worship, take a few moments to focus on the words of prayers that ask for peace. Give an introduction that helps students focus on the meaning behind the words they say on a regular basis. Read aloud the Prayer for the State of Israel (Text # 6p) and the selection from *Birkat Hamazon* (Text #6n). Alternatively, find some readings here that would be appropriate you're your age group or grade: <http://urj.org/israel/prayers/>; you might make the choices, or students might.

4) Create a choral reading using the texts in this section of the curriculum. Present it at an assembly or worship service.

5) Study the words to, "Light One Candle," in light of its message to solidarity with Israel. Ask a cantor or music specialist to share the tune and sing along (or, check YouTube for a version you like, for instance <http://tiny.cc/4hpekx> start at :35).

6) Write letters, e-mail or phone in support of Israel.

Addresses:

President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
Fax: (202) 453-2883  
E-mail: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

U.S. State Dept.  
Washington, D.C. 20520  
Fax: (202) 262-8577  
E-mail: [secretary@state.gov](mailto:secretary@state.gov)

Members of Congress  
*(locate your members of congress on the websites, below)*  
Senators <http://www.senate.gov/>  
Representatives <http://www.house.gov/>

The Honorable Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary General of the UN  
NY, NY 10017  
E-mail: [inquiries@un.org](mailto:inquiries@un.org)

Contact your local Federation, synagogue or community relations council for the contact information for your state and local elected officials. They may also be able to provide sample letters.

7) Talk with students about dedicating their *tz'dakah* collection to causes in Israel. The country's social services are losing funding because of deep security issues that require major financial resources. Have students ask parents and friends for suggestions, then brainstorm a list of ideas. Contact your local federation to see how these monies are being distributed in your community and nationally. Also, ask your federation or synagogue how one may donate locally to an emergency assistance campaign. [You might also look at the "Causes" page of JChoice.org, sorting by "location" – Israel/Middle East.]

8) Develop a pen pal writing program with a school in Israel. Contact your Federation to find out about school twinning opportunities.

9) Attend (help organize) an Israel rally.

10) Take part in a mission to Israel.

11) Call/e-mail family members/friends in Israel and tell them they are in your thoughts.

12) Recite Psalms 121 & 122 in memory of those who have died, and for peace in Israel.

## RESOURCE LIST

### PART ONE: CURRICULAR RESOURCES RELATED TO THE 2014 ISRAEL CRISIS

*AIPAC*. “Issues: Israel’s Defense against Terror from Gaza.”  
<http://tiny.cc/a1klkx>

*AIPAC*. “Issues: Israel and the UN.”  
<http://tiny.cc/l2klkx>

*Behrman House*. “Help parents and teachers talk to students about Israel and the Gaza Conflict.” (2014, July 18).  
<http://tiny.cc/frdekx>

*Jewish Education Center of Cleveland*. “Israel, Operation Protective Edge” (Parent/ Teacher guide), *Responding to Crisis*.  
<http://jeccrespondingtocrisis.weebly.com/israel.html>.

*Makom Israel*. “The Gaza Conflict, materials for educators.”  
<http://makomisrael.org/current-affairs/the-gaza-conflict/>

*Schusterman Foundation*. “Stand with Israel: Support. Act. Learn.”  
<http://www.schusterman.org/blog/stand-with-israel-support-act-learn>

*The iCenter*. “Operation Protective Edge: resources to teach and learn.”  
<http://www.theicenter.org/resources-protective-edge>

*The iCenter*. Schrag, Carl. (2014, July 18). “It’s a story about people.”  
<http://www.theicenter.org/voices/its-story-about-people>

### PART TWO: GENERAL ISRAEL RESOURCES

*AIPAC: The American Israel Public Affairs Committee*. <http://www.aipac.org/>  
 Provides insightful Middle East policy briefings & action steps for contacting Congress.

*CAMERA: Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America*.  
<http://www.camera.org/>

A media-monitoring, research and membership organization devoted to promoting accurate and balanced coverage of Israel and the Middle East. Suggested sections:

- Key issues in Israel. <http://tiny.cc/yd1lkx>
- Media false reporting: <http://tiny.cc/kellkx>

**Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs (Canadian):** <http://www.cija.ca/>

The Centre serves the advocacy needs of Jewish Canadians and pro-Israel Canadians.

- Resources. <http://www.cija.ca/resources/>

**David Project.** <http://davidproject.org>

The David Project promotes a fair and honest understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict to counter the assault on Israel on campuses, high schools and in the general community.

- Advocacy guides. <http://www.davidproject.org/resources/advocacy-guides/>
- The issues. <http://www.davidproject.org/resources/israel-discussion-guides/>
- Educational materials. <http://www.davidproject.org/educators/curricular-materials/>

**Dry Bones:** <http://drybones.com> and <http://tiny.cc/sfllkx> (the blog)

Israel political cartoon from *The Jerusalem Post*.

**The Embassy of Israel to the United States.** <http://tiny.cc/willkx>

The constantly updated information page on the current situation in Israel .

**Honest Reporting.** <http://honestreporting.com/>

[Honest Reporting explores media biases against Israel.](http://honestreporting.com/)

**iCenter.** <http://www.theicenter.org/educational-resources>

An Israel education website that features resources to discuss the Gaza Conflict

**Israel21C.** <http://www.israel21c.org/about>

An online news magazine of Israel innovations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Israel Up Close.** <http://www.israelupclose.org/eduguide.html>

News segments that cover Israel beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict. The most recent videos are on the bottom of the page.

**Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.:** <http://mfa.gov.il>

The Israeli government website containing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, current events, facts about Israel and official up-to-date maps.

- Frequently asked questions. <http://tiny.cc/bkllkx>

**Jewish Federations of North America.** <http://www.jewishfederations.org>

This the umbrella organization for local Jewish federations provides, among other things, media briefings on the Israel situation. Local Jewish federations are also great resources for local communities.

**Library of Congress.** <http://tiny.cc/wjllkx>

The history of Israel is posted on the Library of Congress website. It includes resources regarding Israel's foreign relations, the Israel Defense Force, Israel's political system, education system and social structure.

**Makom Israel.** <http://makomisrael.org/>

Makom, the Israel Engagement Network, is a partnership between North American Jewish communities and the Jewish Agency.

- Educational materials for teens.  
<http://makomisrael.org/educational-material/school-camp/>

**Palestinian Media Watch.** <http://www.palwatch.org/>

Palestinian Media Watch is an Israeli research institute that studies Palestinian society from a broad range of perspectives by monitoring and analyzing the Palestinian Authority through its media and schoolbooks).

- News on the Gaza Conflict. <http://tiny.cc/2klkx>

**Stand With Us.** <http://www.standwithus.com/>

An organization that is dedicated to inform the public about the achievements of Israel.

- Educational materials. <http://www.standwithus.com/teachingtools/#>

**The Israel Project (TIP).** <http://theisraelproject.org>

TIP is a non-partisan American educational organization dedicated to informing the media and public conversation about Israel and the Middle East

**University of Texas.**

A great collection of Middle East Maps. <http://tiny.cc/u1llkx>

### **PART THREE: NEWS AND INFORMATION WEBSITES ABOUT ISRAEL**

**Arutz Sheva/Israel National News.** [www.israelnationalnews.com](http://www.israelnationalnews.com)

A news website that provides news briefs, opinions, and updates on the latest news from Israel.

**Ha'aretz.** [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)

Israel's leading daily newspaper.

**The Times of Israel.** <http://www.timesofisrael.com>

A newsite that covers Israel and the Middle East.

**Ynetnews.** [www.ynetnews.com](http://www.ynetnews.com)

Analysis and opinion on Israel, the Middle East and the Jewish World.