

REIMAGINING ISRAEL EDUCATION

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

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I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages…

ונתתי לך ולזרעך אחריך
את ארץ מגריך את כל-
ארץ כנען לאחזת עולם
והייתי להם לאלוקים

I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding.

Genesis 17:7–8[1]

[1] The Contemporary Torah (Jewish Publication Society: 2006)

"To be trained as a Jew," Kaplan asserted, "should mean to be given the habits that would help one function creatively in all of life's situations." The purpose of living Jewishly, in Kaplan's view, was not confined to safeguarding Judaism to enshrine the religion for its own sake and perpetuity. Rather, he envisioned Jews being able to apply Jewish wisdom to function creatively in a mad, dynamic, real world. As such, the aim of Jewish learning, he asserted, was not simply to pass on tradition and texts; Judaism could be reconstructed for a rapidly changing modern world, and Jewish education was an essential tool for achieving that aim.

Miriam Heller Stern | "Jewish Creativity: An Essential Aspiration for Jewish Education" (Brandeis University, 2024)



Dear Colleagues:

October 7 shattered assumptions about Israel, Jewish security, and the stability of Jewish identity., and ushered in a new era of Jewish life, marked by vulnerability, uncertainty and a fraught public identity once thought to be in the Jewish past. It made it abundantly clear that young Jews will relate to Israel differently from previous generations, more likely to feel pain, responsibility, and hope, simultaneously. And yet, pride, identification and curiosity have surged. Institutions are fielding demands and building responses in real time. The contours of the moment are not yet drawn.

The aftermath of October 7, often contradictory and rooted in grief, exposed the breadth of expectations of educators. Educators are not simply transmitting history or narratives. We ask them to shape identity, cultivate belonging, and help young people navigate one of the most morally and politically complex dimensions of contemporary Jewish life.

If Israel education is to meet this moment, it must first be good education. It must foster critical thinking rather than prescribe conclusions. It must guide learners through complexity rather than shield them from it. In a world where social media, political polarization, and rising antisemitism shape perceptions long before students enter a classroom, Israel education must be proactive, dynamic, and rooted in both moral seriousness and the enduring values of the Jewish story.

The strategic Framework offered here extends and deepens Israel education, making it more than a lesson or a curriculum alone. Learners should engage with Israel and fellow Jews through authentic relationships, exposure to multiple narratives, and opportunities for meaningful action over many years. Israel education should build fluency more than certainty, and commitment more than compliance.

This Framework can serve as an anchor, giving us a shared language and principles to keep at the center of our work. By actualizing the Framework's principles, we foresee that within a decade, more Jews will have refreshed, resilient relationships with Israel, rooted in honest, personal, and durable connections.

We built this Framework with the input of more than 400 diverse stakeholders, gathered through structured data-gathering workshops and informal conversations. Advisory Committees, comprising those at the helm of Jewish organizations today, provided vision and direction as well as close editing of materials. We share the names of Committee members below.

We are deeply appreciative of the Jim Joseph Foundation and Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies. Their foresight and commitment enabled this project, and we are grateful for the mutual trust and careful stewardship.

This project's publication is not a conclusion but a beginning. We look forward to the rich conversations, student learning, and communal growth that will ensue.

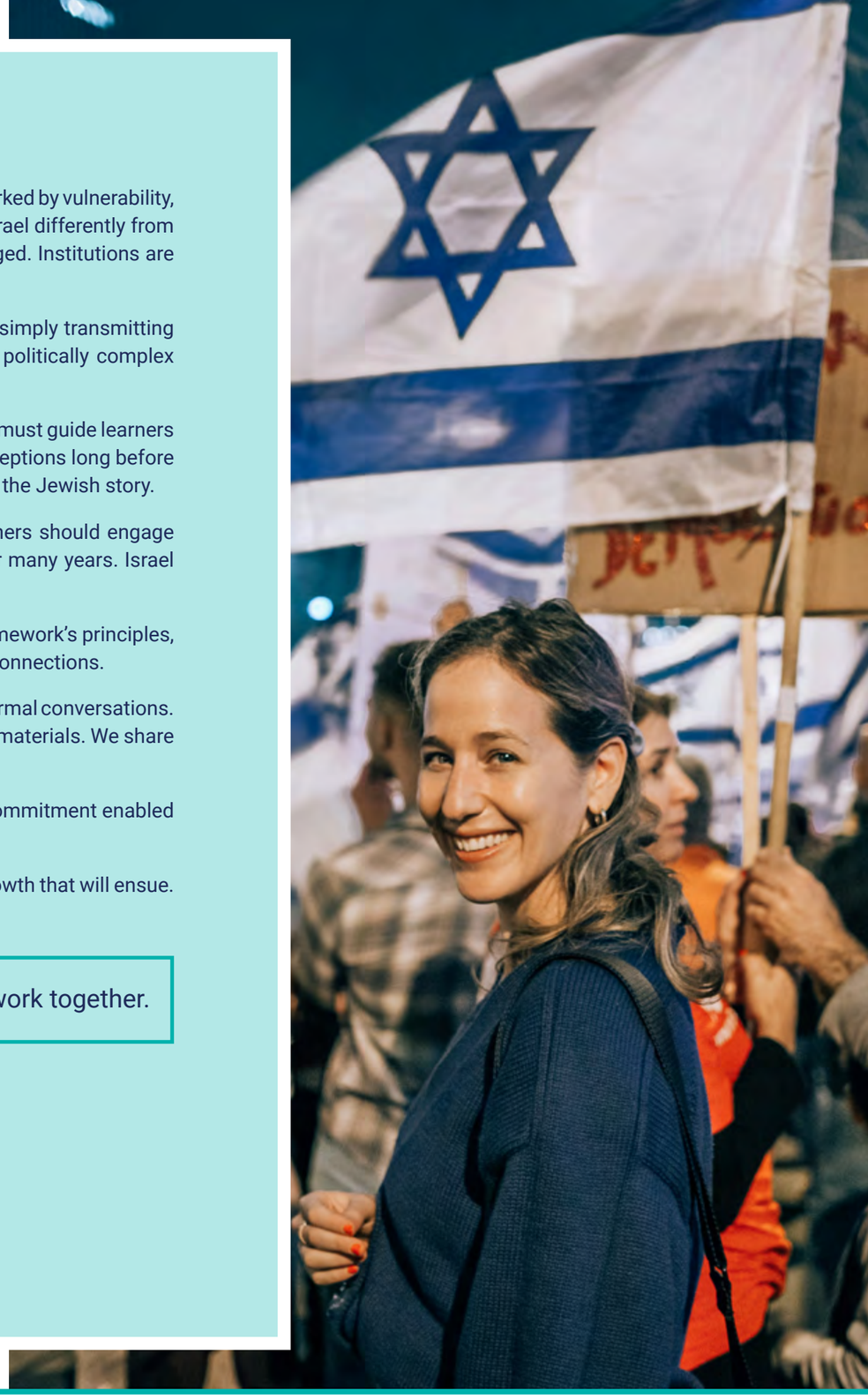
חזק חזק ונתחזק	*Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazek*—may we be strong, and may we be strengthened by our work together.

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Titles reflect positions held during their work with the Reimagining initiative.

The Jewish Education Project also acknowledges the Hadar Institute for its valuable contribution of sacred Jewish texts and corresponding discussion questions that are shared here alongside the Framework.

Our Vision



In 2048, Israel will be 100 years old, and it will be 25 years since the October 7 massacre.

What will have become of the Jewish people?

And how can Jewish education power our commitment—to each other, to our tradition, and to a vibrant future, for the region and for our people, both?

This document presents a strategic Framework for Israel Education. It puts forward an imperative for action to all stakeholders in Jewish education.

It can lead us to resilience and renewal, to Jewish education appropriate for our time and a vibrant future.

We are working toward a future where

We are actively, together, building the Israel and the Jewish people of our dreams.

We are in a new era of Jewish life. The Jewish education we create, with Israel at its center, can provide the grounded, confident, compassionate leadership that can help today's learners grow in safety, with tradition, on their paths toward resilient, lifelong relationships with Israel.

What if...

Israel Education
anchors Jewish youth
in self-knowledge, belonging,
and meaningful contribution,
toward their thriving and the thriving of the Jewish people.

This is more than a field. This is a movement.



"Jewish educational experiences allow learners to navigate multiple understandings of what it means to be a Jew, what it means to be a Zionist, and what it means to be a kind human being in this world."

"All understand that learning is a process, ideas evolve, people are participating because they want to learn and grow and be in community even if they are not all in agreement."

"Diverse students have the knowledge, skill, and desire to be in conversation, debate, and collaboration with other young Jews about Israel."

"Israel education is not separate--but part and parcel of Jewish education."

"There is an understanding that not all organizations will agree on a particular view – but there is trust (from funders and communal leaders) that we're all committed to the same ultimate goal."

"Our relationship with each other is stronger because of Israel."

"We never finish the work, because the work itself is about expanding the notion of what Israel is, based on what it was and on what it could be."

Quotes from Advisory / Field Advisory Committee members

Context

Jewish education grounds young people in who they are, enabling them to become active members of their communities and to engage the world with depth, integrity, and purpose. Educators guide learners as they shape their identities, beliefs, and perspectives, anchoring them in מסורה (*mesorah*, tradition), and in collective memory while cultivating the confidence to participate fully in Jewish life today and to help lead it into the future. Principles of education dictate that learners are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, nor are they clones of their parents or educators. It is the process of education that helps learners begin to consider what *they* will do with all that they learn.

> "... Education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process ...."
>
> *John Dewey,* Democracy and Education *(1916)*

Israel is a central pillar of Jewish history, culture, and covenantal consciousness, and core to Jewish identity itself. ארץ ישראל (*eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel) and *medinat Yisrael* (מדינת ישראל, the state of Israel) are woven into *halacha, tefillah*, sacred texts, and the shared memory of the Jewish people. After thousands of years of yearning, the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty represents a profound expression of Jewish self-determination and actualization.

Today, more than half of the world's Jews live in Israel. As the events of recent years have made unmistakably clear, Israel embodies our past and is deeply intertwined with the present and future of the entire Jewish people. None of us stands apart; Israel and the global Jewish people exist in enduring synergy.

For this reason, Israel education cannot be peripheral to global Jewish life. And it cannot be simplistic or didactic. It must help learners develop the intellectual and emotional capacities to make meaning of a sovereign Jewish state, and the thousands of years of history that led to it, situated in a diverse and complex region, of a people whose destinies are intertwined across continents, and of a living arena in which Jewish values, memory, power, vulnerability, and responsibility are continuously tested and expressed. Israel is central to our story and to our celebrations as Jews. Emphasizing and clarifying that centrality is imperative but not sufficient.



Israel education must move beyond affirmation alone. It must cultivate fluency, resilience, and moral seriousness. It must empower learners to build an evolving personal relationship with Israel and with the Jewish people, a relationship that acknowledges challenge, invites growth, and sustains enduring connection and purpose. As learners mature, they need opportunity to engage with Israel as it has been, as it is, and as it might yet become.

At a time when much of the Jewish world debates the boundaries of acceptable discourse, educators carry a sacred responsibility. Jewish learning must create spaces that are both brave and safe: environments that offer the broadest possible access and belonging for today's diverse Jewish learners, modeling the pluralistic Jewish future we seek to build. Diversity of thought is not a threat to Jewish education but part of its highest calling. Good education does not demand uniformity; it nurtures thoughtful engagement, responsibility for one another, and commitment to a shared future.

Anchored in the larger mission of Jewish education, Israel education affirms the enduring strength of both Israel and global Jewry. It engages learners in a lived, relational, and covenantal identity, imperative to successful Jewish education. We must cultivate Jews who feel responsible for one another across geography and difference, and who see their relationship with Israel not as a slogan or stance, but as an ongoing, meaningful dimension of their Jewish lives.



October 7 created an existential turning point for both Israel and world Jewry. The attacks of the day and the aftermath will shape Jewish life for decades to come. It awakened a renewed sense of connection, vulnerability, responsibility, and solidarity across the Jewish world, while also exposing the fragility of Jewish identity in many communities.

Israel education is the bridge between these realities. It connects the personal and the collective, the historical and the contemporary, the Israeli story and the global Jewish story. In a time when young Jews can no longer remain invisible, Israel education offers them the knowledge, confidence, and sense of purpose needed to navigate a transformed landscape. By embracing this moment with intention and courage, Jewish educators can help ensure that the next generation inherits not only the pain of October 7, but also the resilience, creativity, and hope that have sustained the Jewish people throughout their history.



During 2025, the project's facilitators heard from more than 400 practitioners through daylong convenings, conference sessions, small-group virtual meetings, and one-on-one conversations.

Practitioners came from diverse Jewish educational settings, including experiential and classroom settings, at the local and national levels, and across North America. They ranged in demographic factors, including gender identity, ages, and Jewish background. Their perspectives were complementary and disparate.

In addition, the project solicited new thought leadership in the form of:

Production of new theory, in essays from scholar-practitioners on challenges and opportunities in Israel education today

Development of an empirical essay on excellent practice, through interviews with eleven experienced educators about excellent Israel education

The project also reviewed existing work, including:

Development of a comprehensive literature review, examining approximately 400 pieces of literature that comprise the research on Israel education, building a meta-analysis of themes, implications, and open questions

An exploration of twenty Israel education curricula, drawing conclusions about needed curriculum development

The strategic Framework emerges from this field analysis.

What can we say about the field of Israel education in this moment?

The massacre of October 7, 2023, sent shockwaves through the Jewish people.

Its aftermath has had profound consequences for Jewish education.

The rifts among stakeholders in Jewish education that have been exposed over the past two years are not entirely new. But the conditions these rifts created make long-needed change imperative.

In recent decades, many committed leaders built and advanced the field of Israel education. This field is no longer emerging: Learners and educators can participate in a series of creative, relevant, impactful experiences.



But as a whole, in too many settings and situations, Israel education has fallen short:

1 Educators Lack Confidence and Competence

Educators are not equipped to their task.

"It requires leaning into socio-emotional intelligence, creating conditions for talking through disagreement. We aren't prepared now to do that." *from a synagogue educator*

2 Educators and Educational Organizations Struggle with Consistent Goals

Advocacy and education are conflated.

"Education is engagement with a multivocal tradition that empowers through learning led by experts. You are working with the good, the bad, the ugly daily, and there is room to find your place. This is not an organizational statement." *from a synagogue educator*

3 Educators Are Overwhelmed

Engaging with Israel from all perspectives seems daunting.

"I want to help them have fun. And I follow the parents' lead—I can only push them so far." *from a synagogue educator*

4 The Work Is Disconnected

Israel education is isolated and an add-on.

"If I have an hour, I'm going to do rah rah. I'm going to choose something that gets them to want more, to do more." *from a synagogue educator*

5 Educators Are Anxious

Teaching Israel, in a very particular way, is a litmus test, and educators are under a microscope.

"I have an unforgiving audience. I have no space for failure or experimentation. If I make a *halachic* mistake, people don't care the way they care about this." *from a rabbi educator*

* *Quotations are from participants in day-long convenings*

This represents only part of what we heard from educators and stakeholders about their experiences with Israel education. This landscape is explored in greater depth in a parallel report, "What We Learned and What Comes Next."

Educational Framework

The Educational Framework outlined here provides **ten standards for Jewish education that centers effective Israel education.** Each standard is outlined, with:

- Benchmarks for each standard, that guide implementation
- Rationale explaining each standard
- Direct insights from colleagues about the standard
- Sample outcomes for learners, with some direct quotations from educators
- A source text supporting the standard, with discussion questions
- Excerpts drawn from studies commissioned through the Reimagining initiative

#1 CUMULATIVE

Israel Education comprises repeated, layered learning across varied intelligences, modes, and moments.

- Learning is not episodic, not a program or a semester, but ongoing.
- Learning is integrated throughout Jewish education; Israel is elevated in תנ"ך (*Tanakh*, Bible), תפילה (*tefilah*, prayer), history, culture, language, and more.
- Learning supports engagement through emotion and action, but must also elevate intellectual understanding of and about Israel.
- Learning features Israel repeatedly, across multiple institutions.



Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will be able to describe multiple definitions of "Israel": the state, the people, the historic homeland, and more.
- Learners will have knowledge of Israel and will experience Israel spiritually (even from outside the physical space).
- "Learners will have a deep relationship with Israel, with the people of Israel, the land of Israel, and the state of Israel, by engaging in complex, nuanced learning about Israel and wrestling with how Israel fits into their Jewish identity and Jewish community."

Rationale: A Relationship Is Not Built in a Moment

- The meaning of a learner's experience is not automatically transparent to them. Learners in Jewish settings repeat the word "Israel" countless times during their experiences with Jewish life and education—but they seem not to associate the Israel of prayer, history, and texts with the current state, and neither do many educators. Intentional emphasis on and exploration of the multiple Israels in Jewish tradition will build layered, complex, rich connection. When one piece of the connection is challenged, another piece can take its place.
- New generations of Jewish learners are not automatically loyal to any elements of tradition or communal engagement—and this includes Israel. Their connection and interest require repeated, sustained, diverse exposure. Israel cannot be a one-off, assuming that commitment will come. Repeated and layered engagement will allow Israel to become part of learners' Jewish vocabulary, muscles, and imagination. It will build formation, becoming internal, rather than external.
- Engagement across diverse intelligences and modalities can facilitate complementary attachment with understanding, depth, and internalization. None of the components of the head-heart-hands framework is sustainable on its own.
- Repetition across institutions will build coherence, the message that Israel is essential to the shared Jewish story, not optional or peripheral. Resiliency comes over time.

CUMULATIVE

#1

Source Text & Reflection Questions

To express yearning for something lost, the psalmist (in Psalm 137:5–6) compares Jerusalem to a "right hand." In a commentary, the Malbim explains the metaphor: just like a right hand is essential to our functioning, so is Israel.

מלבי"ם תהלים קלז:ה-ו
כמו שהימין היא מוכנת אל האדם
בכל תנועותיו ועסקיו, כן ירושלים היא
חבת כל תנועותינו ועסקינו, עד שא"א
לשכחה כמו שא"א לשכח את הימין

Malbim (R. Meir Leibush ben Mikhel Wisser)

Just like my right hand is prepared for me for all of my work and dealings, so too Jerusalem is the love of all my work and dealings, such that it is impossible to forget it, just as it is impossible to forget my right hand.

- In what sense is Israel always on your mind?
- How can we inculcate this sense in our students?
- Is this yearning for Israel different for those who cannot access it, like the psalmist? Is it easier or harder for us who know of a living, breathing Jewish homeland?



"

… Integrated approaches weave Israel throughout the educational experience, thereby making it a natural or even organic part of daily Jewish life rather than a special addition. Research on liberal Jewish day schools demonstrates how this integration operates in practice. When schools embed Israel into year-round curriculum through structured programs like Israel Senior Seminars, weave Israeli history into broader Jewish studies, and orient Hebrew instruction toward deepening Israel connections, they create environments in which Israel becomes a natural component of Jewish learning rather than an isolated subject. In another example, intensive camp settings show how environmental design can create what researchers call "simulating the nation," in which Israeli place names, Hebrew usage, and Zionist rituals become part of daily routines, thereby making Israel feel familiar and accessible rather than distant.

When Israel is integrated into regular Jewish practice and learning, it stops being a separate subject and instead becomes a driver for broader Jewish engagement, thus strengthening learners' connections not just to Israel but to their overall Jewish involvement.

Excerpted from: "What We Know about Israel in Jewish Education: A Literature Review"

Ezra Kopelowitz and Benji Davis

#2 COMPLEX

Israel Education invites learners into the many faces of Israel.

- Educators have the confidence and competence to teach diverse and potentially challenging subject matter.
- Educators are trained to construct conversations that offer options for individual learner meaning-making within the larger community.
- Educators are supported in facilitating conversations that foster mutual learning and respectful disagreement.
- Educational organizations support Israel without mandating uniformity from learners and families.

Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will engage in disagreement respectfully.
- Learners will express curiosity for opinions different from theirs.
- Learners will ground their ideas and opinions in reasoning and evidence.
- Learners will have friends and colleagues who hold opinions different from theirs.

Rationale: Complexity Facilitates Resilience

- There is no single story of the modern state. Ultimately, learners will discover the complexity of Israel—the controversy, the different opinions, the discomfort—from sources such as social media and friends. When a more complex story is told inside of Jewish educational settings, learners encounter the very real and consequential differences that have existed since the state's founding in a setting that also feels connected to Israel, despite disagreement and discomfort, rather than in a hostile or apathetic environment. Encountering complexity inside of Jewish environments builds connection through and with that same complexity, helping learners to maintain relationship with Jewish community and with Israel despite their concerns and questions.
- Research consistently shows that educators want to teach in this way, but they require both permission and preparation to do so. When educators are prepared and equipped to facilitate conversations that hold multiple perspectives while allowing space for individual testing, learners develop the capacity to question, reflect, and revise their thinking without feeling that they must step outside the community to do so. Instead, they remain inside the conversation.
- Jewish life is fundamentally relational. Belonging has no litmus test. It cannot be predicated on agreement, but on the effort and energy to engage. Those interacting with Jewish life are marked by responsibility. Tension will continue; the relationship matters.
- Indeed, relationships may be fraught. Learners may feel connection alongside critique, pride alongside ambivalence. These feelings are part of what it means to belong to something real. In this context, educators and leaders can help reframe questions and feelings as part of sustained presence. Struggle can signal not betrayal, but commitment.



#2 COMPLEX

Source Text & Reflection Questions

In this methodological work, the 16th century rabbinic leader Maharal of Prague exhorts us to listen to every source of potential knowledge that is given in good faith.

מהר"ל באר הגולה באר ז
אין ראוי להרחיק שום דבר המתנגד אל דעתו לאהבת החקירה והידיעה. ובפרט אותו שלא כוון לקנתר, רק להגיד האמונה אשר אתו, אף אם הדברים הם נגד אמונתו ודתו, אין לומר אליו 'אל תדבר ותסתום דברי פיך', שאם כן לא יהיה בירור הדת. ואדרבא, דבר כמו זה אומרים 'תדבר ככל חפצך, וכל אשר אתה רוצה וחפץ לומר'

Maharal (R. Yehuah Loew), Be'er ha-Golah, Well 7

It is inappropriate to be distant from anything that contradicts your opinion for love of investigation and knowledge—particularly if they do not intend to provoke, but only to tell you their belief. Even if the words contradict your belief, you should not say to them, "Don't speak! Close your mouth!" for if so there will not be any clarification. Rather, you should say, "Speak all that you want, and all that you wish to say!"

- What kind of relationships with people with whom you disagree is the Maharal advocating for?
- When have you learned from someone who thinks completely differently from you? What was the lesson?
- How can we foster these kinds of interactions in learning?

"… History and memory represent two distinct yet valuable ways of relating to the past. Collective memory begins with a story or a story template and fits the facts into that structure. History, on the other hand, begins with facts and, from these fragments, builds a story constrained by evidence and reason. Starting, as it were, from opposite ends of the field, history and memory can live in productive tension.

History is not purely destructive. Historians do not pride themselves on tearing down memory. The ultimate goal of much historical scholarship is precisely to construct larger-scale narratives that invest the past with meaning and withstand critical scrutiny. Thus, historians do not somehow stand outside history as neutral observers.

The very same forces that lead groups to construct their memories in particular ways shape how historians write their stories. As Frances FitzGerald pointed out in her history of American history textbooks, historians themselves are often shaped by and promote the narratives that circulate in society. The first generation of 19th-century historians set as their task the construction of powerful national narratives that could ground the new collective belongings of nationalism in solid evidence.

Having established history as being driven by facts, it would be comforting to think that careful historical thinking, pursued diligently, yields a single "right" answer. But even after careful historical thinking, we will still be left with more than one narrative that fits the evidence.

Mapping and analyzing these debates is called historiography—the study of how and why history is written. The fact that more than one narrative can fit the facts doesn't imply a kind of relativism or that "anything goes." Careful historical thinking helps us rule out claims and narratives that can withstand scrutiny, including sourcing, context, corroboration, and counterevidence. Indeed, the central debates in historiography often revolve around which narratives can withstand criticism and analysis.

The future of teaching Israel's past lies precisely in this direction. Israel educators must practice the discipline of history themselves and train their students to think historically about Israel's past. This approach prepares students to talk across differences and create shared frameworks with others. The shared historical data points provide a foundation for building collective meaning."

Excerpted from: "The Future of Teaching Israel's Past: A Historiographic Approach to Israel Education"

Jonah Hassenfeld

#3 CONSTRUCTIVIST

Israel Education centers learners.

- Educators facilitate learners' exploration; teaching invites inquiry and co-creation of meaning.
- Learning supports learners' sustained, fluid, and resilient relationships with Israel.
- Stakeholders in and observers of Jewish education privilege learners' voices, even if it feels threatening.
- Israel education helps learners make meaning of the stories of the Jewish people.



Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners can describe what Israel means to them.
- Learners have confidence in their ideas about Israel.
- Learners' ideas reflect their own, personally authentic meaning.
- "Learners will understand why they are choosing to participate in a discussion, or why they are choosing to defend Israel, or why they are choosing to donate or not to donate to a particular cause, and will be able to articulate those reasons."

Rationale: Learners have power

- Jewish learners sew together experiences across Jewish institutions. Inherent to their experiences are multiple educators, voices, and interpretations. Learners bring agency to their experiences; they are the conductors who build a whole from their disparate connections.
- To treat learners as receptacles is to ignore their real experience, to put them into positions of performers. Ensuring their inquiry and co-creation gives them material with which they can genuinely engage. They are moved from accepting or rejecting to building.
- When learners are supported in building ideas, they also develop muscles as constructivists. Their relationship with Israel can stretch and shift; they can navigate changes without risking their fundamental connection. Their relationship to Israel becomes something they own, rather than something imposed.
- Centering learners signals trust. Privileging their voices—even when what they say is uncomfortable or challenges communal norms—communicates that they belong not because they agree, but because the conversation belongs to them. They are builders for their lifetimes.

#3 CONSTRUCTIVIST

Source Text & Reflection Questions

The Passover is Seder is designed to construct anew for each generation an educational outcome: understanding the core Jewish story.

הגדה של פסח
בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שמות יג:ח), וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר, בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם

Passover Haggadah

In every generation, a person is obligated to see themselves as if they left Egypt, as it is said, "You will tell your child on that day saying, 'Because of this God did for me when taking me out of Egypt'." (Exodus 13:8)

- How is it possible to identify with an experience that you didn't have?
- What lessons from the Seder about how to do this can we bring into other educational settings?

Advisory Committee members, commenting on changes needed in Israel education

"There is a greater understanding that the "fear" of critical views is not mitigated by limited conversations – but rather by educational ones that enable gray and nuance and exploration and reflection, that the "fear" is worse [what we fear will come true] when we don't discuss or address the range of opinions."

Keren Fraiman, Dean and Chief Academic Officer, Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership

"There is a reframing of the conversation to be grounded in educational principles that funders and stakeholders alike not just accept, but begin to utilize to guide their own stances and their own giving. At the core, we agree that the goal of (Israel) education is to engage and develop learners as critical thinkers with the tools to be able to navigate through a world that is full of grey. We need to gain comfort living in the grey, recognizing that there is very little in the world that is black and white. Curiosity should drive every interaction we have."

Aliza Goodman, Consultant

"Funders and educators understand the ways we need to educate to keep people engaged in the project of the Jewish people and the ways that many dominant approaches to Jewish/Israel education today work against that goal. There is a reduction in the amount of fear we have to engage hard issues, to see students as 'explorers' and not fear their exploration, recognizing that adolescents are often testing commitments rather than making them, but when we reinforce entrenched positions we push them toward commitments that we'd rather they not make. We put people into the position of being educators first."

Ben Berger, Senior Vice President, Jewish Education, Community and Culture, Hillel International

"We are training skilled facilitators, framers of educational processes, and we are pushing back on funders trying to censor educators. We value an educational approach that gives students exposure to content, texts, and perspectives, along with the tools to think critically. We also have to create educational experiences that will not just get to students' minds but also to their hearts, so that they see themselves as part of a living and unfolding history and not just as spectators."

Adina Frydman, CEO, Young Judaea Global

#4 COLLABORATIVE

The first-hand experience of Israelis shapes diaspora-based learning.

- Learning is deeply informed by Israelis' understandings of themselves, their commitments, and their experiences as Israeli citizens.
- Learning supports learners in becoming sacred עדים (*edim*, witnesses) to the experiences of Israelis in Israel.
- Learning is frequently co-created with Israelis.
- Educational organizations actively include Israelis (from within and outside Israel) in leadership positions.

Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will share the stories of Israeli friends and colleagues.
- First-hand accounts from Israelis will inform learners' meaning of Israel.
- "Learners will understand Israelis in their own words."

Rationale: Shared fate; shared responsibility

- As much as Israel must be part of the experiences, education, and commitments of global Jewry, it is also true that global Jewry will endure.
- In this context, we are also in enduring collaboration with Israelis. We are each responsible for the other.
- Israelis are part of Jewish education in North America. But they are visitors, not co-owners. Learners' experience of Israel will be authentic when it reflects Israeli lived reality, not abstraction. This kind of co-ownership makes Israel a place of real people whose lives are complex, situated, and evolving.
- This kind of texture is critical as the experience of Israeli Jews and global Jews acquires significant dissimilarity. The trauma Israeli Jews have undergone since October 7 cannot be imagined. It has to be witnessed, with responsibility.
- Including Israelis in educational leadership adds their perspectives to the North American Jewish experience. Moreover, it integrates their perspectives, moving them from supplemental to central. Learners come to see themselves not only as participants in an ongoing, shared story.



#4 COLLABORATIVE

Source Text & Reflection Questions

This is the reply of the (Biblical) tribes of Gad and Reuben, who settled beyond the Jordan, to a delegation sent from the land of Israel. The other tribes were worried Gad and Reuben were abandoning the Jewish people by building their own altar, but, after the two parties were able to talk and understand each other, it was clear that the opposite was the case: Gad and Reuben desperately wanted to remain Jewish, despite living outside the boundaries of the land.

יהושע כב:כו-כז

יֹאמְרוּ בְנֵיכֶם לִבְנֵינוּ לֵאמֹר מַה לָּכֶם וְלַה׳ אֱלֹקֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל: וּגְבוּל נָתַן ה׳ בֵּינֵנוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם ... וַנֹּאמֶר נַעֲשֶׂה
נָּא לָנוּ לִבְנוֹת אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא לְעוֹלָה וְלֹא לְזָבַח: כִּי
עֵד הוּא בֵּינֵינוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין דֹּרוֹתֵינוּ אַחֲרֵינוּ... וְלֹא
יֹאמְרוּ בְנֵיכֶם מָחָר לִבְנֵינוּ אֵין לָכֶם חֵלֶק בַּה׳

Joshua 22:26–27

"Your children will say to your children, 'What is YHVH, the God of Israel, to you? God gave a boundary between us and you!' … So we said, 'Let us build an altar—not for sacrifice, but as a witness between us and you, and between our descendants after us… and that your children will not say in the future to our children, 'You have no portion in God.'"

- How do we keep Diaspora-Israel lines communication open to avoid potentially disastrous miscommunications like this?
- What "witnesses," to borrow from the text, can we construct to maintain Diaspora-Israel connections?



"Peoplehood, as a result, does not need territory, political sovereignty, or uniform belief as a primary organizing principle. Jewish peoplehood emerges from a collective commitment to remember a common past and transmit it to future generations. Foundational narratives, such as exodus, exile, revelation, destruction, and renewal, create a sense of shared destiny that transcends geography and time. Through collective memory, Jews understand themselves as participants in an unfolding story, responsible both to their ancestors and to future generations. Peoplehood is not simply an inherited status but an ongoing act of remembrance: To belong to the Jewish people is to locate oneself within a shared past and to carry that memory forward as a source of identity, responsibility, and continuity. Memory, and participating in Jewish memory as a young learner, is inherently personal and relational. It involves our becoming part of something larger than ourselves; we take on an obligation…"

Excerpted from: "Repowering Memory in Jewish Education"

Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath

COURAGEOUS

5

Israel education acknowledges the pressures and challenges inherent to Israel education today.

- Educators can work around and despite stakeholder expectations.
- Educators support learners in addressing their social vulnerabilities and risks.
- Israel education makes space for grief and for joy.



Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will exhibit resilience, returning to their path despite challenges and pressures.
- Learners and educators will persevere despite social risk.
- "Learners will have self confidence to allow themselves and their world view to be questioned without fear of compromising their commitment and love of the Jewish people and the land and state of Israel."

Rationale: Naming tension strengthens resolve

- American Jewish pressure to conform to certain beliefs regarding Israel is significant. Moreover, organizational leaders feel a sense of responsibility to articulate support for Israel, particularly during times of political controversy. Educators, as well as constituents, understand their organizations' stances on Israel, as well as those of stakeholders such as their organizations' funders or their learners' parents. To educate genuinely, to create space for learners to think through their personal and possibly contrary ideas, is an act of courage.
- Educational spaces can, and even should, name the possible disconnects between organizational stances and educational opportunities. This approach is also courageous.
- Learners may also need courage to engage. Their peers may be pressuring them to abandon Israel, to detach from it. To express curiosity and deepen one's involvement with Israel, even by studying it and certainly by celebrating it, can be counter-cultural. When education acknowledges these risks and equips learners to navigate them, it strengthens their capacity to participate in conversations that might otherwise feel too fraught to enter.
- Particularly after October 7, to engage with Israel is to engage with the grief of this time. Israel education should always involve joy, but now it also must help learners confront the pain that Israelis—our people—are carrying. Holding grief alongside joy allows for a relationship with Israel that has fidelity to the experience of Israelis.

#5 COURAGEOUS



Source Text & Reflection Questions

This is the last line in a Talmudic story where rabbis teach a town an important lesson. The townspeople believe that it is the town council that are their protectors. But it is, in fact, the educators.

ירושלמי חגיגה א:ז / עו, טור ג
וּמָאן אִינּוּן נְטוּרֵי קַרְתָּא? … סַפְרַיָיא וּמַתְנִיתַנָיָא

Yerushalmi Hagigah 1:7 / 76c

And who are the guardians of the town? … It's the educators!

- In what ways do educators protect us?
- Why do you think the townspeople might not have appreciated this?
- How can we encourage our educators to boldly act as protectors today?

"In addition to being skilled educators, there was also an understanding that there is pedagogical content knowledge specific to Israel education. Interviewees identified three specific traits that effective Israel educators possess:

- Being courageous and unafraid to engage with difficult conversations and contentious issues such as living alongside the Palestinian people and what it means for Jews to be in positions of power. Good Israel educators "regularly acknowledge the messiness and the problematic elements at play" (PG).
- Being open to hearing voices and perspectives that differ from their own, and creating environments that not only tolerate but actively welcome differences.
- Being creative and able to improvise mid-lesson in response to learners' questions and comments.

When done well, teaching Israel puts educators in a precarious position.

Israel education is high-stakes. Learners, parents, donors, and the wider Jewish community have invested significant financial resources and emotional attention into the subject's success. This deep interest places pressures and burdens on Israel educators and makes it hard for them to do their job effectively.

Two interviewees shared that, after October 7, their roles increasingly required them to serve as a buffer between the educators they oversee and the parents or donors to whom they must answer. This is not because their educators are doing a poor job or are teaching content that is not in line with the organization's philosophy of Israel education. Instead, as HN said, "You can't say anything without someone taking it the wrong way". Both AP and HN believe that it is essential that they serve as a buffer because doing so allows their educators to work to their fullest capabilities and not be fearful of repercussions."

Excerpted from: "Understanding Excellent Israel Education"

Matt Reingold

CONTINUOUS

#6

Learners have ample opportunity to deepen, shift, iterate, and mature their relationships with Israel over time.

- Learners encounter Israel at all ages.
- Learners experience Israel in Israel, repeatedly.
- Learners' formative experiences are intertwined with Israel.

Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will travel to Israel at least once during their childhoods.
- Learners' experiences of themselves will be intertwined with Israel in some way.
- Learners will first encounter Israel as very small children.
- Learners will revisit and revise their understandings of Israel as they grow and change

Rationale: Episodic engagement equals compartmentalization.

- A deep and layered relationship with Israel cannot be formed through a single engagement. It will develop over time, repeated exposure, reflection, and lived experience. Repetition builds depth, moving a learner beyond familiarity.
- Repeated engagements allow learning to shift and deepen as the learner also grows. Their understanding and relationship can evolve as the learner themself evolves and changes. Their relationship with Israel is prevented from being fixed, simplistic, or outdated. It becomes relevant and present.
- When Israel experiences are intertwined with a learner's formative experiences, Israel becomes embedded in a learner's personal development, part of their life story. This creates an essential relationship: A learner may be frustrated, but Israel will remain a part of them.



#6 CONTINUOUS

Source Text & Reflection Questions

For our rabbis, Torah stands in for all serious and worthwhile learning. This metaphor of Torah like water allows this midrash to reflect on how continuous learning can produce major results.

שיר השירים רבה א:ב

מַה מַּיִם יוֹרְדִין טִפִּין טִפִּין וְנַעֲשׂוֹת נְחָלִים נְחָלִים, כָּךְ תּוֹרָה אָדָם לוֹמֵד שְׁתֵּי הֲלָכוֹת הַיּוֹם וּשְׁתַּיִם לְמָחָר עַד שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה כְּנַחַל נוֹבֵעַ

Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1:2

Just as water falls drop by drop and becomes streams and streams, so too Torah—learn two things today and two tomorrow, until it becomes like a gushing stream.

- How can we create settings in which the slow drip of learning can become gushing streams?
- What do we need in order to be able to pull back and focus on the long aim of learning outcomes over time?

"Having worked with dozens of schools, I have observed, in many settings, Israel education to be a fragmented discipline, appearing in pieces across Judaic Studies, Hebrew language, history, Zionism courses, Yamim programming, and co-curricular activities, without a shared framework that helps students, teachers, or even school leaders understand how those pieces fit together. You can often walk into a day school and feel Israel in the air, through the culture, the programming, and the genuine connection of the school community, and see that commitment reflected in the school's official mission statements and on display on the walls with beautiful and creative artwork goals. And yet, despite this visible presence, Israel education is not always organized in a way that reflects those aspirations…

Once a school has clarified its Israel education mission, the next step is for leaders to be intentional about what flows from it: what they choose to teach about Israel, what they choose not to prioritize, and how those decisions shape the student experience. This mindset asks leaders to approach Israel education as a system and consider how it fits together across the life of the school."

Excerpted from: "Israel Education That Lasts: Key Mindsets for School Leaders"

Sarah Gordon

"Making Israel education central to Jewish education looks like…

- Israel at every grade level: Even with limited time, Israel education serves as a central component of Judaic studies curricula in day schools and supplementary schools—not competing with Judaic studies but essential to it.
- Woven throughout the camp experience: Israeli music, Hebrew language and signage, interaction with Israeli staff and campers, and facilitated discussions and activities are not confined to a single "Israel Day" but appear throughout the routine schedule and during special events (e.g., Maccabiah, Zimriah, and Rikkudiah).
- Insights over sites: For Israel experiences, the goal isn't adding more content or visits to the itinerary. To paraphrase Zohar Raviv, the focus is not on the sites, it's on the insights."

Excerpted from: "Am Yisrael Chai Education for Belonging to a 'Living Jewish People'"

Benji Davis

Learners experience Israel education as fundamentally diverse and contrasting.

- Learners critically engage with Zionisms as expressions of the self-determination of the Jewish people in our ancestral homeland.
- Learners encounter Israel's diversity: of religions (in Israel), class, race, Jewish observances, political leanings, Zionisms, and more.
- As part of their experiences, learners are supported in understanding and holding "אלו ואלו" ("*eilu v'eilu*", multiple ideas) as true.[2]



Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will understand how to compare and evaluate differing viewpoints using evidence and reflection.
- Learners will see complexity as inherent to twenty-first century Jewish existence.
- "Learners will understand that Israeli society is diverse and multiethnic."

Rationale: Diversity fosters a realistic relationship.

- The Jewish people's relationship with Israel is multifaceted. It holds multitudes. Israel itself similarly contains extraordinary diversity across class, ethnicity and race, even religion.
- Zionism, while central (now) to the Jewish narrative, itself holds diversity. As a modern movement, it began contested and with different approaches to achieving the state's founding. To portray its development otherwise is to ignore Jewish history.
- As a tradition, Judaism acknowledges multiple voices and multiple interpretations.
- For sure, learners will encounter a variety of narratives about Israel throughout their lives. Their educational experience needs to establish Israel as a dynamic, evolving society, with a history full of contrasts. That engagement will prepare them to understand Israel in its totality, rather than surprise them. Israel's complexity will not be a problem to solve but a reality to explore.
- When learners are invited to wrestle with competing ideas they become active participants in meaning-making. They learn how to ask questions, weigh perspectives, and locate themselves within the conversation, which leads to deeper intellectual and emotional investment.
- When learners come to hold "*eilu v'eilu,*" they can come to understand that multiple, even conflicting truths can coexist. Learners can stay engaged through tension and discomfort.

[2] The idea that "these and those are the words of the living God," or eilu v'eilu divrei El-him chaim," is from Eruvin 13b, Babylonian Talmud.

Source Text & Reflection Questions

God's voice—even though unitary—takes into account the full diversity of its addressees. While a full seventy languages might be too much for most of us, we can still take the lesson to heart.

בבלי שבת דף פח עמוד ב

תָּנֵי דְּבֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל: ״הֲלוֹא כֹּה דְבָרִי כָּאֵשׁ נְאֻם ה׳ וּכְפַטִּישׁ יְפֹצֵץ סָלַע״, מָה פַּטִּישׁ זֶה נֶחֱלָק לְכַמָּה נִיצוֹצוֹת — אַף כָּל דִּיבּוּר וְדִיבּוּר שֶׁיָּצָא מִפִּי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא נֶחֱלַק לְשִׁבְעִים לְשׁוֹנוֹת

Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88b

The house of R. Yishmael taught: "Is my word not like fire—says God—and like a hammer that shatters rock!" (Jeremiah 23:29)—just like a hammer strike splits into many sparks, so too every word of God splits into seventy languages.

- The Jewish world has always been extremely diverse. How can we get this across in our educational settings?
- A first step is tailoring learning outcomes to individual understanding—how do we do the second step: to celebrate our individual experiences?



"Children naturally think about complicated things. They are (perhaps accidentally or vicariously) often exposed to the news, and they can generate challenging questions about the world around them. They recognize and can feel stymied when they receive only one side of a story. Moreover, when students learn about Israel's real challenges alongside its achievements, they typically develop better critical thinking skills.

When educators aim foremost to help students develop a foundation of positive Israel connection, students inevitably discover Israel's complexities through social media, conversations with friends, or college courses, and they can feel misled or unprepared to process what they are learning. Ultimately, children are better equipped to stay connected to Israel over the long term when they understand it critically or encounter difficult concepts at the inception of their relationship with the subject matter.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **Developmental readiness:** Research has shown that children can engage with difficult or uncomfortable topics much earlier than traditionally believed.
- **Cognitive framework building:** Early exposure to difficult concepts creates intellectual and emotional structures that can help students integrate new information effectively throughout life.
- **Resilience development:** Learners who engage difficult topics early show greater resilience throughout their lives when they encounter challenges or criticisms of Israel."

Excerpted from: "What We Know about Israel in Jewish Education: A Literature Review"

Benji Davis and Ezra Kopelowitz

COVENANTAL

8

Learners confront the obligations at the core of Jewish tradition.

- Learners become committed citizens of the Jewish people: contributors, not just members, taking action to better Israel and the Jewish people.
- Learners consider their roles within a global Jewish community in which responsibility for Israel is both collective and differently lived.
- Sacred Jewish texts and ideas inform learners' understanding of Israel.
- Israel inspires and enriches learners' Jewish spiritual practice; for some, it is the fulfillment of God's promise.
- Learners are comfortable with Hebrew as the language of their people.

Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will feel responsibility for building the Jewish state.
- Learners will speak out on behalf of Israel.
- Learners will seek out Israeli culture.
- "Learners will know that Israel is the only Jewish state."

Rationale:

- Post-modern North American Jews talk about their Jewishness as an identity. But Judaism as a tradition is a set of obligations: to each other, to God, and to the larger world. *Mitzvot* are not good deeds. They are commandments.
- Obligation is, to a great extent, fundamentally non-American. Perhaps this is true of Western society in general, but American culture in particular privileges individualism.
- In that context, it is easy for Jewish educators—and, indeed, for all of us—to set aside that which makes us uncomfortable.
- But obligation is what transforms Judaism from an identity into a practice. Obligation facilitates responsibility. Judaism without obligation is a menu; with obligation, it carries weight.
- Teaching through the framework of covenant does not mandate a particular set of behaviors; these pluralistic materials cannot dictate specific beliefs. Instead, "covenant" here refers to remaining in the conversation, or letting ourselves be confronted with core Jewish ideas. Covenant asks for debate, interpretation, and application, but not dismissal.



Source Text & Reflection Questions

The book of Deuteronomy comprises the terms of the Jewish people's covenant with God. In the last speech of his life, Moses explicitly includes all future Jews in the agreement made with the Israelites.

דברים כט:יג-יד

וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבַדְּכֶם אָנֹכִי כֹּרֵת אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת הָאָלָה הַזֹּאת: כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֶשְׁנוֹ פֹּה עִמָּנוּ עֹמֵד הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ פֹּה עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם:

Deuteronomy 29:13–14

It is not with you alone I make this covenant, but with those who are here with us today before YHVH our God and with those who are not here with us today.

- How can we be part of a covenant that has been chosen for us by others?
- Where does this sense of long-lasting covenant pose challenges in modern settings? And where do you see it thrive?
- The covenant is not with any individual Jew; it is with all of us. How can we infuse our teaching with this understanding?

"*Edut* ... bridges memory and history. It grounds truth in responsibility. It forms character. And it offers Israel education a framework that honors the dignity of testimony without rushing it into ideology or myth.

How to practice *edut* responsibly:

- Prepare students with the same guidelines developed for Holocaust testimony: emotional readiness, historical framing, clear boundaries about privacy and detail, and reflective listening.
- Clarify the difference between 'listening to a story' and 'receiving testimony.' The latter involves obligation, restraint, and accuracy.
- Teach students to listen without demanding coherence. Testimony is often fragmentary. It is not their job to resolve the fragments.
- After the testimony, ask not 'How did this make you feel?' but 'What have you now been entrusted with?'
- Create space for writing rather than immediate discussion. Silence and reflection are part of the posture or practice of witnessing.
- Help students place the testimony within a larger historical timeline—not to collapse October 7 into other Jewish traumas but to understand continuity and rupture without mythologizing catastrophe.

To practice *edut* is to help students understand that receiving testimony makes a claim on them. It does not tell them what to think politically. It tells them how seriously to take reality. It binds them to accuracy. It forbids distortion. It resists the flattening force of myth."

Excerpted from: "Edut: Why Witnessing Must Become the Foundation of Israel Education"

Adam Eilath

"As citizenship is often considered the legal foundation of the modern nation-state, many understand—and critique—it narrowly as a status that confers rights and privileges. In the United States, discourse on citizenship has come under attack from both the left and the right. On the left, some reject the notion that certain rights should be tied to citizenship status, viewing nation-states fundamentally as oppressive and advocating for universal human rights. On the right, citizenship has been narrowed and recast in ethnonationalist terms, tying 'real Americans' to white Christian heritage and eroding the institutions that uphold civic life, from voting rights to judicial independence and a free press.

However, citizenship can also be understood not as a legal status but as a set of aspirational ideals. Michael Walzer describes citizenship as 'collective self-determination, which is both a responsibility and a benefit—the citizen who accepts the responsibilities and enjoys the benefits and participates in the arguments about what the responsibilities and benefits should be.' The philosopher Martha Nussbaum roots citizenship in three core capacities:

- Critical examination of oneself and one's traditions
- Global perspective: seeing oneself not only as a member of a local group but also as a human bound to all others by ties of recognition and concern
- Narrative imagination: the ability to imagine others' experiences, hopes, and desires, unlike those of oneself

Walzer and Nussbaum offer a language for an aspirational view of citizenship, providing a powerful model for Jewish education that aims to help Jews see themselves as inheritors and contributors to tradition and their people. Rather than instilling identity as an internal feeling, Jewish education can induct learners into the responsibilities, relationships, and ongoing debates of Jewish civic life, helping them see themselves as participants in shaping the Jewish collective."

Excerpted from: "Jewish Citizenship Education: Integrating Israel into Jewish Education"

Joshua Ladon

#9 CONNECTED

Learners are in active, sustained dialogue and relationship with peer Israelis—Jews and non-Jews—and global Jewry.

- Learners know Israelis and Jews around the world as educators, peers, and friends, with whom they can both find affinity and disagree respectfully.
- Learners experience Israel firsthand (travel to Israel is accessible, plentiful, and affordable).
- Learners regularly encounter Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic experiences through learning, dialogue, and evidence.
- The unique needs and perspectives of non-Jewish learners, particularly non-Jewish parents of Jewish children, are recognized and supported as learners to connect meaningfully to Israel.
- Learners internalize the stories of Israelis, incorporating them into their commitment to Israel.

Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners will have Israeli friends, teachers, acquaintances, and colleagues.
- Learners will learn from Jewish and Arab Israelis.
- "Learners will value Israel and global Jewish community."

Rationale:

- The real, layered experience of Israel, and particularly its diversity, gets lost in the diaspora. For those who have not been there, the place is reduced to slogans, inherited stories, and public media. Israel can feel far away and inaccessible.
- Israelis tell the story of Israel simply by sharing themselves. In each person, including their family's story and their own journey, they share the evolution, challenges, and growth of the Jewish people and of the region as well.
- They also share the simultaneous longings many of us feel for and about our homeland. It is not only global Jews who have disparate beliefs about Israel. Israelis are people, filled with complexity and conflicting emotions. Interacting with these emotions in real time gives us permission to hold the same conflicting commitments.
- Relationships with people also facilitate a particular kind of learning and responsibility. We can more easily encounter opinions we might disagree with when we do so in interaction with someone else. We build commitment to people with whom we are in dialogue. Disagreement becomes possible without rupture.
- These relationships can include relationships with Israelis from all backgrounds: Jewish, Moslem, and Christian, Arab and Jewish, across socio-economics and ethnicity. Learners can hear and internalize multiple perspectives because people, by their nature, hold such nuance. Learners can take seriously the full human landscape that comprises Israel.



#9 CONNECTED

Source Text & Reflection Questions

Living in exile in Babylonia, the prophet Ezekiel is told by God to symbolically act out the reunion of the two Jewish kingdoms: Israel and Judah. It's the union (through Diaspora) of the entire Jewish people.

יחזקאל לז:טו-יז

וַיְהִי דְבַר ה׳ אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: וְאַתָּה בֶן אָדָם קַח לְךָ
עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתֹב עָלָיו לִיהוּדָה וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָו
וּלְקַח עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתוֹב עָלָיו לְיוֹסֵף עֵץ אֶפְרַיִם
וְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרָו: וְקָרַב אֹתָם אֶחָד אֶל
אֶחָד לְךָ לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהָיוּ לַאֲחָדִים בְּיָדֶךָ:

Ezekiel 37:15–17

The word of God came to me, saying, "And you, mortal, take one piece of wood and write on it, 'for Judah and their fellows the Israelites'; and take another piece of wood and write on it, 'to Joseph, wood of Ephraim and the whole house of Israel their fellows.' Bring them close to each other—you will have one piece of wood and they will become one in your hand."

- How can all the Jews become one?
- What is the role of Jewish diversity in that unity?
- How can we also celebrate non-Jewish contributions to Jewish and Israeli culture?

"If peoplehood education is to be meaningfully cultivated in education, it must be embedded intentionally within the structure of Jewish education, rather than approached as one-time experiences. My proposal is to add a new subject to the core of Jewish education. In addition to Tanach (Bible), Talmud, holidays, and Hebrew, there is Jewish peoplehood. This new subject would have an educational arc, with an integrated experiential curriculum for adolescents, employing a relational pedagogical model. The relational approach would proactively cultivate relationships among diaspora Jewish communities by, for example, connecting American and Argentinian Jewish communities and diaspora Jewry with Israeli Jewry, utilizing the latest technology. Jewish peoplehood education is not a one-time experience or course. It is a program that students encounter throughout their Jewish experiences in schools, camps, and youth groups.

The goals of this vision of peoplehood education are as follows:

- To create a system-wide vision of global Jewish peoplehood that fosters belonging across world Jewry and recenters Israel education.
- To forge person-to-person connections facilitated by advances in technological platforms that shrink the continental divides that separate Jews around the world.
- To "initiate, ignite and nurture a personal connection" (Chazan et al., 2017) with the Jewish people, focusing on values, history, and contemporary people.
- To nurture peoplehood consciousness (Kopelowitz, 2021) by teaching students about the Jewish present and how Jews worldwide live as Jews today through relationships with contemporary Jews, cultivating a way of "doing, thinking, and feeling" (Kopelowitz, 2021) that anchors identity to a larger people beyond their local contexts.
- To help students develop critical skills, such as relationship building, communication, empathy, and critical thinking.

Like traditional educational disciplines, this vision of peoplehood education has a core set of skills: textual literacy, cultural literacy, historical analysis, critical thinking, civic and communal skills, cross-cultural competence, and dialogical skills."

Excerpted from: "Transforming Jewish Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence"

Odelia Epstein

#10 CURIOUS AND CARING

Learners' experiences open them up to possibility, including critique and growth.

- Learning engages learners in their responsibility to one another.
- חסד (*chesed*, compassion) and דין (*din*, judgment)—curious, respectful agreement and disagreement—characterize learners' experiences.
- Learners explore and test critical ideas as a natural, safe part of Jewish education.

Examples of Learner Outcomes:

- Learners ask questions about things they find uncomfortable or distasteful.
- "Learners share back others' ideas and their reasoning, even when they disagree."
- "Learners have trusting relationships with those with whom they disagree."
- "Learners do not feel undermined by ideas with which they disagree."
- "Learners refine ideas when introduced to new perspectives."

Rationale:

- Curiosity comprises an interest in understanding, and caring imagines that we want to understand. They share the same underlying ideas: openness, an interest in the other, and relationships.
- Curiosity and caring are at the root of empathy—a tricky word, since empathy asks that we feel just as the other feels. We may never truly be empathetic, but we can try to understand.
- Evaluating others with discernment asks us to listen carefully. Evaluating others with *chesed* asks us to listen first, rather than shut down. We present with *chesed*; we follow with discernment.
- Together, this set of traits facilitates meaningful engagement with complex and uncomfortable ideas. These traits support learning: exploration and even support without personal attachment.



Source Text & Reflection Questions

The mainstay of the sacrificial service in the Temple were the two lambs offered every day. This mystical teaching suggests each offering represents core aspects of the world: compassion and judgment.

זוהר שמות כרך ב:נא דף כא:

רִבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר, יַלְפִּינָן מִשְּׁנֵי כְּבָשִׂים שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם, הָאֶחָד מִתְקָרֵב כְּנֶגֶד מִדַּת הַחֶסֶד, וְהב' כְּנֶגֶד מִדַּת הַדִּין

Zohar Shemot II:51 (21b)

R. Yehudah says: There are two offerings every day—one of them corresponds to *chesed* and the other corresponds to *din*.

- Why is it important to instantiate *chesed* and *din* in our regular Jewish practice?
- How can we ensure that curious and respectful agreement and disagreement is a central part of our educational project?



"The discourse on Israel's place in the lives of American Jews has always stuttered. While the symbolic significance of the State of Israel has inspired generations, the details of its development have struggled to make an impact on curricula. The State's struggles—between Ashkenazim and Mizrachim, Haredim and other Jews, Settlers and Green line dwellers, religious and secular Jews, and Jews and Palestinians—to say nothing of international affairs and enemies, have sometimes been taught but only in a strange parallel universe over which the inspiring symbolism of Israel continues to shine. Educators reach for euphemisms for political realities, calling Israel "complex". Until recently, most of the Jewish community in America has treated this complexity as a bug rather than a defining feature.

As a result, the discourse regarding Israel has grown awkward. Never clear if or how the symbol might be damaged by teaching the reality, many communities have opted for what historian Teresa Bejan calls 'civil silence.' This approach acknowledges that a community comprises people with very diverse views on Israel. Rather than risk airing these differences in public, a community chooses never to talk about them. And the students in the community learn the unspoken lesson (that silence is preferable to conflict)."

Excerpted from: "Teaching Israel When the Walls Are Falling In"

Robbie Gringras

Workplan and Next Steps

Reimagining Israel Education has benefitted from collegial collective thinking, respectful challenge, and interdependence.

Thousands of educators and lay and professional organizational leaders across the Jewish educational landscape build Israel education. Our work to bring the Framework to life throughout Jewish education—extensively, not only in some particular bright spots—should influence our vast landscape and continue to be co-owned. We will want to preserve the texture of the field while expanding and deepening our work.

A series of workstreams will be led by a series of stakeholders and will involve hundreds of organizations.



1 Educator Capacity and Professional Learning

- Develop a robust, tiered ecosystem of professional learning opportunities that meet educators at different stages of their careers and in varied settings.
- Build opportunities in core pedagogies, including argument, interpretation, and facilitation of complex conversations.
- Bring educators to Israel, working at scale; deepen their knowledge, strengthen their personal and professional connections, and align their learning with the Framework.
- Support educators with real-time coaching and mentoring, ensuring that educators can translate theory into practice and respond flexibly to current events.

2 Framework Development and Thought Leadership

- Teach the Framework throughout Jewish educational settings.
- Collect and disseminate examples of the Framework in action.
- Use feedback and testing in the field to iterate the Framework, keeping it relevant and responsive.

3 Content Development and Digital Enablement

- Build high-quality, accessible content, fully aligned with the Framework's principles and pedagogies, available immediately and applicable to educators' specific contexts.
- Leverage emerging technologies (including AI-supported tools) to support lesson planning and resource development.

4 Research and Field Building

- Advance a multifaceted research agenda that identifies and addresses gaps in current knowledge and generates new insights into practice.
- Disseminate findings widely; ensure that research is translated into practice.

5 Innovation and Field Growth

- Pilot new models and approaches to underdeveloped areas of Israel education.
- Focus on, for example, Hebrew language education, parent engagement, expanded roles for *shlichim* (Israeli emissaries), parent education, and a curated speakers bureau.

Application

We Are Moving From and To

A focus on the **modern state**	to	A focus on **3000 years** of history and culture
Israel connections **isolated** from Jewish education	to	Israel connections **integrated** into Jewish education
One-off Israel activities	to	**Continual** Israel education
Israel is **distant**	to	Israel education is **relational**
Fragile connections to Israel	to	**Resilient** connections to Israel
Anxious about new paradigms	to	**Curious** about new paradigms
Advocacy framework	to	**Educational** framework
Singular expressions of support	to	**Multivocal** ways of expressing support
Hebrew-lite environment	to	**Thick** Hebrew environment



Where do we start?

As an organizational leader, any of us take work with this material. The ideas here offer ways to begin the work.

FIRST, with board members and professional team members, read through this document. Focus on one standard at a time, or choose to study closely the texts included in this document (or the larger essays published separately).

Discuss:

- Identify local examples of the ten standards in our environment. Where has our organization performed well, and where have we fallen short?
- What is exciting about this Framework? What is painful or uncomfortable?
- What questions do you have? With whom could we talk this through (and explore our questions)?
- What first step can we take toward learning more?
- What support do we need? Where can we look for it?

SECOND, with board members and professional team members, apply the Framework, one question for discussion, one meeting at a time.

- When is Israel education a one-off for us? Why? What circumstances could we change in order to expand opportunities for Israel education?
- Do our ideas about Israel education reflect what learners want to explore? Or our own ideas about what Israel education should be?
- How do our organizational policies and practices influence how learners experience Israel education?
- How can we integrate the voices and experiences of Israelis into our educational program? When can learners meet Israelis?
- What limits are we placing on educators? Are they safe to explore Israel?
- How can we better support educators to navigate complexity and controversy?
- What are we afraid of? What are we working toward?

SCENARIOS for discussion and exploration

Use these scenarios to discuss how you might bring the Framework to life in your organization.

1. **Name the goal:**
   What is the educational purpose in this moment?
2. **Set the container:**
   Identify two to three norms and boundaries that enable learning and prevent harm.
3. **Apply the framework:**
   Which 2 standards matter most here, and why?
4. **Plan next moves:**
   Identify one step you would take in the following 72 hours, and one change you would make in the coming year.

Teens:
High schoolers come to the synagogue for dinner and conversation. It is the week before a "walkout for Palestine" will happen across the community's public high schools.

Campus:
A student leader says they will only stay involved if the organization publicly "takes a stand." Another student says they will leave if it does. Staff feel trapped between belonging and politics.

Camp:
A unit head asks unit counselors to plan an elective activity on Israel for middle-school campers.

Family education:
Parents and their fifth-grade children come together for a three-session exploration of Israel.

School:
Israel is only occasionally featured in the synagogue education program. Where do you start revisiting the curriculum?

Community organization:
After an Israel program, a major donor or board member says it was "harmful" and demands you promise to sideline certain views going forward, or they will pull support.

Faculty conflict:
Two educators disagree sharply about what is teachable; students pick up the tension; parents complain the school feels "political." A student says they feel unsafe.

School and social media:
A 6th or 7th grader repeats a viral claim about Israel or Gaza; another counters with a slogan. The room heats up fast and you have to respond in the moment.

Youth group:
A seventh-grader comes to a program wearing a watermelon t-shirt. What now?

Shabbat dinner:
A Shabbat dinner turns tense. One young adult says they feel dehumanized; another says they are being silenced. People start leaving early and you worry they will not come back.

Community organization:
A speaker you booked posts something inflammatory online. Some demand you cancel; others say canceling proves bias. The event is in 24 hours.



We are writing the next chapter of our story.

Learners will see their own identities, questions & values as connected to Israel.

They can take ownership of that relationship.











Reimagining Israel Education is an initiative of The Jewish Education Project, in partnership with the Jim Joseph Foundation and Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies. The initiative surveyed more than 400 stakeholders and engaged thought leaders, researchers, Jewish educators and learners to produce a landscape analysis and develop a new educational framework to advance Israel education post-October 7, 2023. This framework emerged from the field-wide process and reflects broad collaboration. We share it with gratitude to many partners.

THE JEWISH EDUCATION PROJECT