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An Approach Toward Teaching Israel and Zionism in a Reform Jewish Setting

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

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The way Reform Jews perceive a relationship to Zionism and Israel directly impacts how they define themselves. Throughout the history of Reform Judaism in America, a relationship to Israel has been the central issue. Reform Jews have struggled with whether to embrace or reject Zionism. At the end of twentieth century, Reform Judaism continues to define its relationship with Israel by institutionally recognizing that a relationship to Israel is part and parcel to being Jewish. Such a history directly impacts the ways that Reform Jewish children learn about Israel.

This thesis examines the educational manifestations of the relationship between Reform Judaism and Israel. Exactly how do supplemental religious schools teach about Israel? Do they present Israel as a mythical, exotic land of milk and honey? Is teaching about Israel a vehicle for studying historical texts since the Land of Israel is the physical setting where significant relationships between the Jews and God occurred? Is gaining a sense of Israel's geography more important than gaining an understanding of Israel's history? Are curricula about Israel reflections of the existing relationship between the Reform Movement and the State of Israel? Is Israel a place of political turmoil and civil unrest or a lovely vacation spot? Should American Jewish children learn that Israel is a viable option for Jews, from all over the world, to live? How are these questions reflected in curricula, textbooks, and other teaching materials?

Furthermore, how is Israel presented and taught in the Movement's experiential educational environments? Do the summer trips offered by the North American Federation of Temple Youth encourage making *Aliyah*? Are these trips designed to be visceral experiences enhancing adolescents' Jewish identities? Are they viewed as the first step of many in creating and sustaining Jewish lives committed to Israel?

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first section examines the history of Reform Judaism and Zionism in America. The second section offers reasons for why Israel is taught in Reform Jewish education, discusses problems with how Israel is currently taught, and suggests guidelines for teaching about Israel. The third section reviews textual materials for efficacy and age appropriateness and focuses on the quality of "Israel experiences." The fourth section discusses developmentally appropriate goals and recommends relevant resources.

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Section One:
The History of Reform Judaism and Zionism

In referring to the late 1800s/early 1900s, Michael Meyer wrote:

> To Reform Judaism, Zionism was a counsel of defeat, a surrender to the forces of anti-Semitism rather than the valiant fight to defeat them. It was retreat substituted for advance, a fantastic nightmare for the beautiful American dream. [1]

At their annual convention in 1999 the Central Conference of American Rabbis stated:

> We are committed to *Medinat Yisrael*, the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel, and encourage *aliyah*, immigration to Israel.[2]

The juxtaposition of these two quotes represents where Reform Jews in America have been in terms of their feelings toward Zionism and how far they have come. The relationship between Zionism and Reform Judaism, from its inception, only can be described as tumultuous, at best. There has been a constant push and pull, both for the movement as a whole and amongst various factions within the movement as well.

This type of tension is quite reminiscent of the relationship, with regard to liturgy and religious practice, between traditional Rabbinic Judaism and Reform Judaism. In the beginning, the leaders of the Reform movement, deliberately and drastically, pulled away from rituals and observances that Jews for centuries had previously embraced. Gradually, however, such rituals and observances

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[1] Michael Meyer, Response to Modernity (New York: Oxford UP, 1988) 293.
[2] Proceedings of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, "A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism," (Pittsburgh: 1999).

have begun to find their way back into Reform practice. And, so it is with Zionism. After a long history and much turmoil, Reform Jews now consider themselves Zionists and work to support Israel in many ways. This section will explore such a journey, framed by the CCAR's official stances of 1885, 1937, 1976, and 1999.

In order to understand the history of Reform Judaism and Zionism, one must examine the ideology behind the latter. At the outset, it is important to make clear that:

> Zionism stands on two levels, the immediate and the ultimate. The concern of the immediate level is the elimination of Jewish homelessness through the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. The concern of the ultimate level is the regeneration of Judaism through Palestine. The first is the indispensable condition for the second. The second must be the unconditional consequence of the first.[3]

In the beginning, Zionism was created primarily out of a necessity for a homeland for the Jewish people. However, there was a caveat--not all Jews needed such a homeland. Palestine was to be a safe-haven only for those who at the time found themselves disenfranchised from their native countries because of anti-Semitism. Those who embraced this goal were political Zionists. Secondarily, Zionists hoped to ignite a spark of love of, and loyalty to, an exclusively Jewish land. In having their own land, Reform Jews hoped to be recognized within the world as a people rich with its own culture and history and subsequently deserving of its freedom. "In turning the passive waiting for

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[3] David Polish, Israel—Nation and People (Hoboken: Ktav, 1975) 15.

the messiah into an activist effort at national redemption, whether in secular or in religious terms, Zionism placed the Jewish people alongside other national entities seeking liberation and independence."[4] They were cultural Zionists.

Initially, then, it seems that the two goals of Zionism, the need for a home for those Jews without homes or land and world recognition of the Jews as their own people lay in direct contradiction with one another. For some, the former represented a short-term goal of Zionism and the latter a long-term goal. Yet, to further complicate matters, for others, this was not simply a case of short- versus long-term goals; there were two different types of Zionism at issue, political and cultural. Such confusion and misunderstanding lay at the heart of the issue whether to embrace or reject Zionism.

In 1885, the CCAR declared, "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and, therefore" do not expect "a return to Palestine."[5] The early leaders of the Reform Movement believed that a Jewish homeland, even if simply for those in need of one, would undermine the chance to prosper in America. "America is our Zion. Here, in the home of religious liberty, we have aided in founding this new Zion, the fruition of the beginning laid in the old."[6]

Stated simply, Jews came to the United States to begin anew. Many believed the streets *were* paved with gold. Such an idea serves as a metaphor for

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[4] Michael Meyer, "Setting Zionism Before Us," The Rabbi Stanley M. Davids Journal of Reform Zionism 2 (1995): 5.
[5] Proceedings of the CCAR, "The Pittsburgh Platform," (Pittsburgh, 1885).
[6] Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society, 1898 as cited by Meyer, Response (293).

the multitude of opportunities available to Jews in the realms of finance, business, education, culture, religious freedom, and society. Because of anti-Semitism, Jews came to America to claim what was no longer theirs in other lands. Consequently, carving out a successful life, here, became all consuming. There was no room to think about a far away land that once religiously meant something to their ancestors. The ultimate focus of Reform Jews was establishing themselves here, in America.

Furthermore, Reform Jews had the opportunity to become a vital part of the American fabric here. They could be active, contributing members of society.

> We are opposed to the idea that Palestine should be considered the home-land of the Jews. Jews in America are part of the American nation. The ideal of the Jew is not the establishment of a Jewish state—not the reassertion of a Jewish nationality which has long been outgrown.[7]

And yet, while there were many in the CCAR and the larger Reform movement who felt that America was indeed the new Zion, such feelings were not unanimous. "At the very time that Reform Jews were emphasizing complete loyalty to the country where they made their home, other Jews began a movement to rebuild the Land of Israel."[8] These Zionists felt that while the fulfillment of dreams for prosperity and inclusion was possible, there was

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[7] CCAR, "The Rabbis Turn from Zion," (1897-1898): 61 as cited by W. Gunther Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965) 154.
[8] Eugene Borowitz and Naomi Patz, Explaining Reform Judaism (New York: Behrman House, 1985) 95.

something equally, if not more important, at issue. In order to remain Jews, a spiritual attachment must exist as well. Such attachment was necessary and possible if Jews were to feel tied to something beyond their lives here. Zionism alone was capable of "inculcating self-respect, a task which can be accomplished only by restoring the ties of the Jew to the noble past of his race, and by making him realize the possibilities of a no less glorious future."[9]

The leader of this small group of Zionist rabbis, Bernard Felsenthal, "an admirer of David Einhorn, and an officer of the Free Religious Association...turned toward Zion, perhaps because he realized that the loose bond of individualistic religion required the firmer tie of ethnic attachment."[10] In 1920, even though the numbers were small, it helped that rabbis like Gustav Gottheil, Judah Magnes, and Stephen Wise were among them.[11] While it may have started soft, a Zionist voice would be heard in the Reform movement. Such a voice would eventually become loud and booming.

The once loud and booming rabbinical voice opposed even to political Zionism slightly softened with the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Some within the movement changed their minds by supporting immigration of persecuted Jews to a Jewish state, even under British occupation. Still, though, they did not feel that there was a need for a national Jewish homeland. Consequently, the CCAR,

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[9] Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea (New York: 1973) 85 as cited by Polish, Renew Our Days (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976) 65.
[10] Meyer, Response 294.
[11] Martin P. Beifeld, "Joseph Krauskopf and Zionism: Partners in Change," American Jewish History, 75 (1985/86): 48-60 as cited by Meyer, Response 294.

after much bantering back and forth between political and cultural Zionists, and in an attempt to promote more harmony within the movement, passed a resolution at its 1917 convention.

> At a time of universal conflict and suffering, such as the present, it is of prime importance the Conference emphasize not the differences that divide us, but those sacred principles which all Jews hold in common, and those great tasks which it is our paramount duty at the present moment to promote and perform together for the alleviation of human suffering and the healing of the Jewish people."[12]

Other than agreeing to disagree with peace and grace, no definitive conclusion was reached by the Conference. The debate would continue.

Perhaps, the debate could have been assuaged were it not a question of semantics and language. Zionists felt that Palestine was the homeland for the Jews while anti-Zionists objected to America not being considered another, and equally viable, option for a homeland. For example one reads that:

> The real point in the Reform camp was over the implications of calling Palestine the *sole* homeland of the Jewish people. Rabbi Samuel Schulman of New York, an avowed anti-Zionist, said that if the Basle Program would call for a secured home for the Jews in Palestine instead of for *the* Jews, he would at once join the Zionist movement.[13]

Yet for Zionists, especially cultural Zionists, the notion of two homelands was an oxymoron. If Jews were to be recognized by the rest of the world as an ethnic people, rich with culture, history, and tradition, they needed their own land—

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[12] Proceedings of the CCAR. (Buffalo: 1917) 141.

[13] American Jewish Council 3 (September 14, 1917) 491 as cited by Meyer, "Studies in Zionism", 7 (spring 1983): 53.

and only one land. "Those who supported Zionism were convinced that the land was inseparable from the faith."[14] In effect, this was the Zionists' motto. The (unofficial) anti-Zionist motto, as stated by Julian Morgenstern in 1919, then president of Hebrew Union College (HUC), was a bit longer and more stern:

> It matters little if one labors for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, even as an independent Jewish state, so long as it does not affect his personal attitude toward Americanism, and his perfect faith in the future of America as a unified nation, and in American Judaism as a living religion in America.[15]

Conflict within the movement would remain unless a compromise could be reached. In order for such a compromise to take place, the Reform Jews needed to reach a new level of understanding.

As will be evidenced throughout this thesis, what happens in Reform Jewish education affects Reform Judaism. Religious education in the early 1920s was no exception. Emanuel Gamoran, Director of the Department of Education for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), helped to bring about greater understanding. In an effort to improve the efficacy of Reform religious education, he said that the movement must teach "'survival values,' those particularistic ideas and observances that would preserve the Jewish people. They included furthering the establishment of a normal and complete Jewish life in Palestine and developing a broadly based Jewish culture in the

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[14] Howard R. Greenstein, The Changing Attitudes Toward Zionism in Reform Judaism, diss., Ohio State U, 1973, 55-56.
[15] CCAR Yearbook 29 (1919): 236-239 as cited by Polish, Renew 146.

Diaspora."[16] Gamoran was successful in convincing anti-Zionists to begin to change their views because he stressed the religious importance of a Jewish homeland. In order for Judaism to survive, an exclusively, religiously—as opposed to secular—Jewish land was crucial.

While, institutionally, not much had changed regarding the movement's stance on Zionism, because of Gamoran, and other factors, some shifts were taking place. Anti-Zionists, as a whole, were much more accepting of the necessity of Palestine as a haven for homeless Jews. In 1924, at their annual convention, the CCAR, as an act of compromise, began to see for both anti-Zionists and Zionists alike, the necessity of "Palestine as the only valid answer to Jewish homelessness."[17] In his presidential address, where he quotes the Churchill White Paper, Abram Simon, says,

> When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish national home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of the world, in order that it may become a center in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride.[18]

Concerning Zionism, the CCAR evolved. Whereas previously, the majority was anti-Zionist, both politically and culturally, the majority by 1924, while not Zionist, supported political Zionism.

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[16] Meyer, Response 300.
[17] Polish, Renew 158-159.
[18] CCAR Yearbook 34 (1924): 136-139 as cited by Polish, Renew 160.

In fact, political Zionism and a love for America were not mutually exclusive. Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver, among the most notable Zionist leaders, recognized this.

> An American Jew can love Israel and work for Israel's security without being a traitor to his/her country. By the late 1930s, the increasing dangers of the Jewish people in Europe and a better understanding of the goals of political Zionism convinced many other Reform Jews that being a Zionist didn't [sic.] conflict with being a good American or weaken loyalty to Reform Judaism.[19]

It seemed that the two sides, anti-Zionism and Zionism, were moving to a level of greater understanding. Thus the stage was set for the movement's next institutional stance, The Columbus Platform of 1937.

> *Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith...In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.* [20]

This Columbus Platform incorporated both sides of the debate over Zionism. The statement that the tie to the land of Palestine is one of faith and religion represented the position of cultural Zionists. The expressions "many of our brethren," "as a Jewish homeland," "a haven of refuge for the oppressed," and

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[19] Borowitz and Patz, Explaining 96.
[20] Proceedings of the CCAR, "The Columbus Platform: "Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism" (Columbus: 1937).

"a center of Jewish cultural and spiritual life" reflected political Zionism in that these statements did not say *all* of our brethren, *the* Jewish homeland, *the* haven of refuge for the oppressed, *the* center of Jewish cultural and spiritual life. Palestine represented a very viable solution for oppressed Jews, but it was not the only option. Furthermore, Palestine was to be more than just a homeland; it also held a very special place culturally and spiritually for the Jewish people. The Columbus Platform, as the official statement of the CCAR, was the result of compromise by both political (including those who at one time were opposed to any notion of Zionism) and cultural Zionists.

Yet, the Columbus Platform did not prove to be the definitive statement for the entire movement.

> Columbus was a major milestone in the changing posture of Reform Judaism toward Zionism, but it was not the final judgment on the matter or even the most decisive...so far as the total, movement was concerned, the Columbus Platform was a statement for and of rabbis. Laymen did not consider themselves bound by this rabbinic decision.[21]

At one time, what was true for the CCAR was true for the rest of the movement as well. The UAHC supported the CCAR's stance on Zionism. "In 1937 the Union endorsed the Columbus Platform, including the plank on Palestine; but it still had not confronted the Zionist demand for an independent Jewish state. For most Reform Jews, Zion was at best only one of several homes for the Jewish

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[21] Greenstein, Changing 52.

people."[22] A few years later, however, the UAHC, entered, and became an active part of, the debate over Zionism.

Two specific incidents ignited controversy over Zionism for the UAHC. The latter had a direct impact while the former indirectly affected the UAHC. The American Council for Judaism began as a meeting of non-Zionist rabbis in 1942. "By 1942, the official position of the Reform movement, favoring the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, caused a small group of diehard anti-Zionists to break away from the movement."[23] Although on one hand they showed "a readiness 'to render unstinted aid to our brethren in their economic, cultural, and spiritual endeavors' in Palestine."[24] Yet, on the other hand, they could not "but believe that Jewish nationalism tends to confuse our fellow men about our place and function in society and also diverts our own attention from our historic role to live as a religious community wherever we may dwell."[25] The American Council of Judaism became a huge source of contention for the entire movement. Those who opposed Zionism felt that support for a Jewish state would result in questions regarding "Jewish loyalty to the United States."[26] In contrast, James Heller, an avid Zionist and then president of the CCAR, said that the American Council of Judaism harkened "back to Reform ideology as it

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[22] Greenstein, Changing 177.
[23] Borowitz & Patz, Explaining 145.
[24] Meyer, Response 332.
[25] Meyer, Response 332.
[26] Meyer, Response 332.

was at the turn of the century."[27] The repercussions of the American Council of Judaism propelled a fierce debate between Zionists and anti-Zionists within the Reform movement.

As a direct consequence of such schism amongst Reform Jews, congregations now independently made their own decisions regarding what, if any, level of support to give Palestine. This was the case of Hebrew Congregation Beth Israel in Houston, Texas. Meyer wrote:

> In an effort to combat the growing number of East European Jews who inclined more toward Zionism and traditional practice...new members seeking to vote would henceforth have to sign a set of principles committing them to...neither pray for nor anticipate a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state [and] accept as binding only the moral laws of Mosaic legislation and prophetic teaching.[28]

While the congregation ultimately relinquished its adamant anti-Zionistic stance, it caused great damage to the Reform movement. "When the Houston congregation announced to the world that the true Judaism excluded nationalism—they injured the prospect of realizing a safe refuge for at least those Jews who would survive Hitler."[29]

Both the American Council for Judaism and Congregation Beth Israel of Houston served to greatly impact the embracing or rejecting of Zionism. "These decisive episodes prompted laymen to question whether a religious commitment to Jewish peoplehood required or even permitted support for the establishment

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[27] Meyer, Response 332.
[28] Meyer, Response 333.
[29] Meyer, Response 334.

of a Jewish state."[30] These two events coupled with the dire need for a Jewish homeland for the oppressed, in light of the Holocaust, invigorated (as if this was necessary) the debate over Zionism.

Because of this controversy, the CCAR not only continued its passionate debate regarding Zionism but would brought it to the forefront of its proceedings. In 1943, at the annual convention in New York, the Conference debated this issue framed by the quintessential question, "Are Zionism and Reform Judaism Incompatible?" William Fineshriber and Hyman Schactel represented those who felt that they were incompatible while Felix Levy and David Polish represented those who felt that they were not. The four presenters, in essence, revisited political and cultural Zionism. Again language was an issue. Fineshriber and both Schactel considered themselves to be Classical Reform Jews and non-Zionists; they were not anti-Zionists. Regardless of language, both sides strongly and loudly asserted their views.

According to Fineshriber, Zionist theory was at the heart of the debate. "Zionist theory is based on the concept of Jewish nationhood... Being a nation, albeit scattered, it must have a national home."[31] Finseshriber opposed this notion. He stated:

> To this theory Non-Zionists oppose the following facts:
> To say we are a nation is to torture words and their meaning.
> A nation implies a common land, a common language, and
> common folk-ways. For two thousand years, we have not had any

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[30] Greenstein, Changing 178.
[31] William H. Fineshriber, Felix A. Levy, David Polish, and Hyman J. Schactel, Are Zionism and Reform Judaism Incompatible? Papers Read at Convention of the CCAR (New York: 1943) 3.

> of these desiderata...What we do have in common is tradition, suffering, and religion. We are a religious community and we are attached to our brethren the world over, not because we are a part of a ghostly nationhood but because we are partners in a religious brotherhood.[32]

Zionism was possible only to the extent that Jews were a religious people and not a nation. Consequently, a national homeland was far from necessary.

Schactel reiterated Fineshriber's point. He said:

> Reform Judaism believes that Israel is primarily a religious community whose mission is to witness to God everywhere in the world. Zionism believes that Israel is primarily a racio-national group whose aim is to be restored as a nation ...The one is religious, the other is secular. The one is universal, the other is local. Reform Judaism is a religion for the people while Zionism is the people *as* a religion.[33]

For both Fineshriber and Schactel, there was nothing in the history of the Jewish people that made them a nation. Rather they were a religious people. In their opinions, recognition of Palestine as the Jewish homeland would greatly limit Judaism. Why should Jews be restricted to a tiny piece of land when they could be a religious people at home all over the world? "Henceforth, Israel could live without nationhood, without a particular country of its own, without a center in Jerusalem...It could live because the *Keneseth Israel* felt that it had the Torah."[34] Judaism would survive and thrive because of common bonds instilled by a sacred text as opposed to the common bonds instilled by a land.

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[32] Fineshriber et al, Are 3-4
[33] Fineshriber et al, Are 3-4.
[34] Fineshriber et al, Are 45.

In contrast, Levy and Polish could not minimize the power and importance of land. Levy felt that Judaism was as much about the land as the Torah. He asked:

> Why must we Jews contrast people, land and universalistic ideals? They are supplementary and not antithetic. The Jew is a universalist because of the history of Palestine as he is a man because he is a son of Israel, a partner in his people's covenant with God.[35]

Judaism, to Levy, was equal parts Torah, land, nation, and religion.

Polish, in echoing Levy's sentiments, categorically believed that in order for Jews to survive in the aftermath of the Holocaust, a place where they no longer could be at home, Judaism must be more than a religious endeavor; it must be a national/secular one as well.

> The bleeding remnant of Israel that yet survives in Europe is on the march -the march of the hunted beggars. No Jew on the occupied continent now lives in the place which four years ago he called home. What shall we have them do? Shall we have them return some day to the place whence they came, where the waters of terror and swept away every memory of their presence? They are now in a howling wilderness, a no man's land.[36]

For Levy and Polish, the land of Palestine was both necessary for Jewish survival and an essential component of Judaism.

By devoting so much time and effort to the issue of Zionism at its annual convention, the CCAR stated that this was a crucial matter to Reform Judaism. Clearly, these rabbis desired to reach a unilateral decision regarding the

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[35] Fineshriber et al, Are 16-17.
[36] Fineshriber et al, Are 62.

movement's position on Zionism. It was equally clear, however, that this singular issue was too emotionally, religiously, and politically charged. Conflict over Zionism continued.

Nevertheless such conflict did not sway the CCAR from attempting to reach a resolution.

> Without impinging the right of members of the conference to be opposed to Zionism, for whatever reason they may choose, the conference declared that it discerns no essential incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism, why those of its members who give allegiance to Zionism should not have the right to regard themselves as fully within the spirit and purpose of Reform Judaism.[37]

Again, the movement resolved essentially to remain in an official state of wavering. In what seems an apparent contradiction, Reform Judaism and Zionism were not incompatible officially, yet those who opposed Zionism were fully entitled to do so.

The movement was not only divided between whether or not to support Zionism but also whether a decision applicable for the entire movement could be reached in the first place. In 1946, Maurice Eisendrath, the namesake for a future high school exchange program to Israel and president of the UAHC, stated that the movement could not, in fact, reach such a conclusion. Eisendrath's transformation from anti-Zionist to Zionist makes his argument particularly cogent. "The 'spark of conversion' was kindled when he surveyed the devastation and destruction which Arab marauders had inflicted on Jewish

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[37] CCAR Yearbook 53 (1943): 92 as cited by Polish, Renew 230.

settlements without provocation."[38] Eisendrath felt very passionately that there was a desperate need for a world-recognized Jewish homeland. And yet, despite his deeply personal feelings. In his initial state of the Union Address, Eisendrath assured the delegates that:

> Were he living, Isaac Mayer Wise himself would have applauded the position adopted by the UAHC Executive Board which declared in effect that Zionism or anti-Zionism is not a matter for the Union to determine for everyone, but a matter for each individual to resolve for himself within the sanctity of his own conscience.[39]

No matter how convincing Eisendrath's argument was that Zionism was an individual decision, the movement, as a whole, would soon be forced to confront this issue. Both the events of the Holocaust and the anticipated reality of a Jewish homeland impacted on, and ultimately changed, the movement's stance on Zionism. At the annual CCAR convention in 1948, Abraham J. Feldman, its president, said:

> It seems to me that in the presence of the *fait accompli,* the half-century of debate on the subject of Zionism should now come to an end. After all the government of the State of Israel is not your government or mine. The democracy of *Eretz Yisroel* [sic.] will forge its own political destiny. We shall help them where and when we can and rightly so...But the political controversy amongst us here should be adjourned...Let, then, the conflict produced by our differences engendered by the yearning of the masses of Israel for *Eretz Yisroel,* a conflict which has been at least distasteful for both sides, now be dismissed, and as a united household, let us devote ourselves to the urgent tasks which await us in this country,

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[38] Greenstein, Changing 163.
[39] Greenstein, Changing 171.

> tasks to which we are all committed by choice and by the consecration of our ordination.[40]

With the founding of the State of Israel, the Reform movement's debate on Zionism essentially resolved itself. "Once there was a State of Israel, virtually every Reform Jew—if not a Zionist in the fullest sense—at least became its friend and supporter."[41] Great strides were made. "The accommodation between Zionism and Reform Judaism was now almost complete. The Reform movement welcomed enthusiastically the rebirth of a Jewish State and offered its unconditional support in defending its integrity." [42] For so long, the issue of Zionism created strife in the Reform movement. Now that Israel was a reality, the movement transformed. With the founding of the State of Israel, the issue was no longer whether or not Reform Jews should support a Jewish homeland. The issue, then at hand, was to what extent the movement would support Israel. Not surprisingly, a harmonious decision was not in the foreseeable future. For example one reads that:

> With the creation of the State of Israel, the Reform Rabbinate confronted two issues that were no longer theoretical—the relationship of the Diaspora to Israel, and the quality of Zionist life in the Jewish State. By their nature, these issues could only be opened up, certainly not resolved, but the questions were now

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[40] CCAR Yearbook 58 (1948): 199-200.
[41] Meyer, Response 326.
[42] Greenstein, Changing 217.

> being asked by a Rabbinate which had demonstrated its commitment to Israel.[43]

The relationship of the Diaspora to Israel was now one of the major issues in the life of the Reform movement.

Specifying the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel became crucial in defining the Reform movement. The movement, however, in recognizing that this was more than a simple matter of how to relate to Israel, broadened its focus. This occurred because the question of how Israel would relate to American Jews also arose. For many in the Reform Movement, the relationship between Israel and American Jews of necessity would be based on mutuality and duality. In 1950, at the CCAR convention, Samuel M. Blumenfield said:

> In the light of the reality of the State of Israel and our present day knowledge and experience of America, I submit that...
> Israel and American Jewries are indispensable to one another and that they must maintain close and living contacts for their mutual spiritual welfare...It is only through give and take, acceptance and rejection, constructive criticism and helpful cooperation that an effective cultural two-way passage is possible.[44]

Two interpretations were offered with regard to the paradigm shift made by the Reform movement in America in relating to Israel. First, as evidenced by Blumenfield's statement, suggested that Reform Judaism and Israel were in an equally beneficial relationship as evidenced by Blumenfield's statement. The

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[43] Polish, Renew 239.
[44] CCAR Yearbook 60 (1950): 303-304.

second possibility suggested that such a relationship was not equal after all. "The land of Israel is necessarily precedent to Galut in our scale of values. True, each needs the other, but historically life is not worth living without Israel."[45] If Judaism was to survive, Israel must survive as well. David Polish wrote, "I believe that the secret of Jewish survival is embedded chiefly in the State of Israel...It is Zionism and Israel that have set loose mighty moral and spiritual currents in the modern world."[46]

It was clear by this time that the Reform movement must support Israel. Furthermore, the movement needed clarity in deciding how. "With the debate over Zionism long since resolved, the Central Conference and the Reform movement now addressed themselves to '*tachlit*' (practical matters) in Israel."[47] The Reform movement supported Israel (and the Progressive movement) by building a new high school building for the Leo Baeck School in Haifa in 1951 and opening a Jerusalem campus of HUC-JIR for archaeology in 1962.

Practical matters aside, the CCAR returned to the bigger issue—concretizing its philosophy regarding support of Israel. At the CCAR convention in 1956, the Committee on Projects for Israel stated that the CCAR supported Israel politically and economically. Regarding the extent of its political support, the Committee reported:

> We therefore urge that our colleagues use their role as spokesmen for the Jewish people and interpreters of the Israeli scene to build a

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[45] Polish, Israel 105.
[46] Polish, Israel
[47] Polish, Renew 243.

> favorable climate of opinion in this country toward Israel, to persuade our government of its moral responsibility to see that Israel is supplied with the means of defense, and above all, to hasten the achievement of permanent peace in the Middle East. To do so is our responsibility as rabbis; and our right as American citizens.[48]

Concerning the Reform movement's economic support of Israel, the Committee stated:

> We therefore reiterate our appeal to our colleagues for support and leadership in the United Jewish Appeal, the Israel Bond Drive, and other officially recognized campaigns for support to Israel through philanthropy or investment. We furthermore urge that efforts be continued to improve Israel's trade balance through purchase of export items, particularly those associated with religious and cultural activity—such as Israeli books, ritual objects, sacramental wine, building materials for the construction of new sanctuaries, etc."[49]

More specifically, the CCAR showed support for Israel by urging its members to encourage congregational trips, tours arranged by the UAHC, NFTY-sponsored pilgrimages as well as other youth trips to travel and/or study in Israel.

Even though the CCAR offered tangible ways in which it would support Israel, the Reform movement as a whole, however, continued to struggle with Israel's true significance. For example, Jakob Petuchowski wrote:

> We welcome the creation of the State of Israel...We also look hopefully towards the development of a Jewish culture in the State of Israel, and we greet with joy the rebirth of the Hebrew language and its literature. We believe that these may have an invigorating influence on Jewish life throughout the world. At the time...we feel that, in our day, the State of Israel may occupy such a position—but not to the exclusion of other centers which, with the help of God and the devotion of the Jewish people, may likewise

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[48] CCAR Yearbook 66 (1956): 94.
[49] CCAR Yearbook 66 (1956): 94.

> rise to a position of spiritual leadership in World Jewry. Though we expect great things from the State of Israel, we do not await from it the solution of the religious problems peculiar to American Jewish life.[50]

The issue with Israel was not whether it was important in the lives of American Jews. Rather the movement continued to wrestle with the extent of such importance.

The events of the Six-Day War in 1967, however, spurred the Reform Movement to take a stance on Israel. When crisis struck Israel and seriously questioned its ability to survive such damage, the CCAR determined that its involvement was crucial. In 1967 at an emergency session, the CCAR stated "We declare our solidarity with the State and the people of Israel. Their triumphs are our triumphs. Their ordeal is our ordeal. Their fate is our fate."[51] The end result was that both individual and conference-wide financial support went to the Israel Emergency Fund and Israel bonds. Roland Gittelsohn, president of the CCAR in 1970, said:

> We (Reform Jews) shall use our influence, wherever and whenever we can, to persuade the world that its own survival and integrity are irrevocably linked with those of Israel. We shall do all this not as a gesture of philanthropy, but because we know how imperative the survival of Israel is for the enhancement and vitality of our own Judaism.[52]

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[50] Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Towards a Definition of Our Relation to Israel," CCAR Journal (October, 1961): 10-11.
[51] CCAR Yearbook 77 (1967): 109.
[52] Greenstein, Changing 10.

The Reform Movement could no longer afford to be indecisive and vague in declaring institutional support for Israel. Consequently, HUC-JIR, the UAHC, the World Union of Progressive Judaism, and the CCAR merged their separate committees into a Joint Commission on Israel in 1970 (which proved to be a significant year in terms of change). The CCAR's commission on Jewish Education established the observance of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* as an officially observed holiday in Reform Judaism by preparing religious school materials for various age levels. All rabbinical students were now required to spend their first year of studies in Israel. That same year, the CCAR held its annual convention in Jerusalem (and pledged to do so at least every seven years).[53]

The Reform Movement expanded its institutional support of Israel by becoming politically active (on Israel's behalf) in the United States. Max Nussbaum said:

> The challenge of the hour, therefore is to mobilize the American Jewish community, and commence the battle in behalf of Zion...by enlightening public opinion...with the help of our many friends in the House and in the Senate, we can change the atmosphere of this debate, alert America to the dangerous implications of her present stand, and achieve from Washington the necessary concessions which spell security for Israel, a state which hasn't [sic.] known a single peaceful day in her 23-year-old history.[54]

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[53] CCAR Yearbook 80 (1970): 16.

[54] Max Nussbaum, "Reform Judaism Appraises the Relationship of American Jewry to the State," CCAR Journal (June, 1971): 19.

For many Reform Jews in America, it was no longer sufficient to only be concerned about life in the United States. Now they emphatically supported Israel and encouraged and motivated others to do so as well.

By bringing to light the realities of Israel, the Reform movement boldly stated its fierce intention to protect the State. The impact of this shift was immense. For almost one hundred years, the movement wavered back and forth in its support of Zionism (and later Israel). While there always existed individuals and small groups who felt the need to extend support, the Reform movement, in its entirety, now for the first time supported Israel in earnest.

The Yom Kippur War in 1974 strengthened the movement's support. Alfred Gottschalk, president of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, said "As members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, as free and liberal Jews, we have come to Israel at this time because we need to be here. We need to be with the *Mishpachat Yisrael* in its turbulent hours as we needed to be here when the mood was exuberant."[55] In the same manner, Alexander Schindler, president of the UAHC, stated "And so we will come here, and we shall bring our children here. Some will be here for a time, and some for always. Here we shall build our synagogues and schools and camps. The very center of our movement shall be established here."[56] With regard to institutional support of Israel, it was clear how far the Reform movement had come since the

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[55] CCAR Yearbook 84 (1974): 130.
[56] CCAR Yearbook 84 (1974): 139.

Columbus Platform of 1937. Yet, the San Francisco Platform in 1976 (referred to as the Centenary Perspective) made it apparent that there was more work to do in order to unify Reform Judaism.

> *We are privileged to live in an extraordinary time, one in which a third Jewish commonwealth has been established in our people's ancient homeland. We are bound to that land and to the newly reborn State of Israel by innumerable religious and ethnic ties. We have been enriched by its culture and ennobled by its indomitable spirit. We see it providing unique opportunities for Jewish self-expression. We have both a stake and a responsibility in building the State of Israel, assuring its security and defining its character. We encourage* aliyah *for those who wish to find maximum personal fulfillment in the cause of Zion. We demand that Reform Judaism be unconditionally legitimized in the State of Israel.*[57]

The Centenary Perspective reiterated earlier statements concerning the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship between Israel and Reform Judaism. Israel afforded Diaspora Jews opportunities to understand their Judaism religiously, culturally, and ethnically. In return, Reform Jews in America were responsible in building and ensuring the security of Israel as a Jewish homeland. Those who wanted to make *aliyah* were fully encouraged to do so.

The Centenary Perspective continues with a proviso. "At the same time that we consider the State of Israel vital to the welfare of Judaism everywhere, we reaffirm the mandate of our tradition to create strong Jewish communities wherever we live."[58] By including both of these statements, the drafters of the Centenary Perspective embraced both sides of the debate over Zionism and

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[57] CCAR Yearbook 86 (1976): 177.
[58] CCAR Yearbook 86 (1976): 177.

Israel—Israel was absolutely essential in defining Judaism and yet, Israel did not solely define it. In fact, the motivation behind this platform was to create peace within the movement by formulating a "unifying 'statement' that would help 'heal the wounds in our movement.'"[59]

For the most part, the Centenary Perspective was successful. For example, Zionists within the movement made progress by creating the Association of Reform Zionists in America (ARZA) in 1977. ARZA "gave American Reform Judaism its own distinctive voice within the Zionist enterprise, which more than any other collective endeavor, united world Jewry."[60] The CCAR endorsed financial support of ARZA over the next few years. In addition, Reform rabbis should encourage their congregants by asserting the importance of support for Israel during High Holy Day sermons and in bulletin articles.[61] During much of the 80s, the CCAR recommended that Reform Jews, specifically its youth, make trips to Israel. "What is needed is an opportunity for personal involvement in the intellectual and religious life of Israel, albeit a necessarily brief involvement, which would serve to stimulate both thought and feeling."[62] By extending financial support and encouraging its members to visit Israel, it was clear that Israel was very important in the life of Reform Jewry.

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[59] Meyer, Response 383.
[60] Meyer, Response 383.
[61] CCAR Yearbook 89 (1979): 16.
[62] CCAR Yearbook 94 (1984): 108.

However, money and trips to Israel were deemed to be insufficient. Reform Jews needed to relate to Israel on a deeper and more visceral level. "Israel must be encountered in its historical and meta historical realities. It must be understood, not merely loved. It must be brought into an organic relationship with all the rest of what we call Jewish identity."[63] For some, in order to understand Israel, it was necessary to live there. Truly, the movement had traveled a great distance. Once, institutionally, Reform Judaism debated whether or not it should even be interested in Zionism. Now, Reform Jews chose to live in Israel with support of their movement. "We celebrate those in our Conference and those members of our congregations who have committed themselves to *Aliya*, and we call upon our colleagues to teach *Aliya* actively as a legitimate option within the spectrum of Reform Zionist beliefs."[64] Making *Aliyah* at the end of the 20th century meant something much different than for Jews who chose to live in Israel at the beginning of the 20th century. "Traditionally, the major waves of *Aliya* have come from Jews in search of refuge from persecution or distress. But the numbers of Jews living under conditions of danger is fast diminishing."[65] Reform Jews no longer elected to live in Israel out of necessity; rather, they made *Aliya* because, ultimately, they wanted to live singularly Jewish lives.

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[63] CCAR Yearbook 95 (1985) 138.
[64] CCAR Yearbook 96 (1986) 215.
[65] Richard G. Hirsch, "Toward a Theology of Reform Zionism," Journal of Reform Judaism (fall, 1991): 44.

> From the perspective of Jews from lands of affluence living in Israel offers opportunities for personal fulfillment: to be a full-time active force in securing the future of the Jewish people; to help shape the society whose character will have an impact on the character of World Jewry; and to live in an environment whose mother tongue, social patterns, and cultural setting are Jewish.[66]

Those who now chose to live in Israel, unlike their ancestors before them, did so out of free will and not desperation.

It was clear that great progress was made, but for many, it was not enough. While both the leaders of the movement, and groups within, clearly supported Israel, the majority of the movement showed a lack of interest and concern for Israel. Steven M. Cohen wrote:

> Despite this complete turn-about in the movement's institutional approach to Israel and Zionism, despite the solid dedication to Israel on the part of Reform Judaism's lay and rabbinic leaders, there is considerable evidence that much of the Reform public does not share the passionate involvement with Israel that has come to characterize the movement as an institution. The possibly sharp contrast between an involved leadership and a detached public poses a dilemma and a challenge to Reform rabbis, educators, congregational officers, and other leaders of the movement.[67]

Notwithstanding all the progress and the repeated attempts to unify the Reform movement regarding Zionism and Israel, two distinct camps remained. While their sizes fluctuated over time, both sides continued to exist and reassert themselves as necessary. Since those who supported Zionism had enjoyed so much time in the limelight, it was now the other side's turn.

> In recent years, a revisionist form of non-Zionism has evolved within American Jewry...The basic tenet of the revisionist theory is

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[66] Hirsch 44.

[67] Steven M. Cohen, "Are Reform Jews Abandoning Israel?" Reform Judaism 16:3 (19): .

> simple: the State of Israel does not fulfill the Zionist vision. The real does not match the ideal, therefore, since the Jewish people cannot rely on the Jewish State to assure its continued survival, it must develop alternative resources and instrumentalities. The non-Zionist approach does not deny or reject, but rather de-emphasizes the State of Israel.[68]

Non-Zionists revisited the earlier argument that Israel was not enough to sustain the Jewish people.

In response to the apathy expressed by their counterparts, Zionist Reform Jews emphatically continued their fight to make *Eretz Yisrael* a crucial component in the identity of Jews. "Proper Zionist thought begins, therefore, with a consideration of what it means to be a landed people, with what must follow from adding a fourth term to the big three...God, Torah, Israel [the people] and Israel [the land]."[69] Clearly, the two sides were still in full force. Again, something needed to happen in order to bridge the gap between the movement's Zionists and non-Zionists. Apparently, the CCAR's most recent platform, the Centenary Perspective, either no longer adequately reflected Reform Judaism's attitude towards Israel or now needed stronger, more specific language.

In June of 1997, the CCAR adopted a platform entitled, "Reform Judaism and Zionism" (also referred to as the Miami Platform) which it hoped would more clearly reflect the entire movement's view of Israel. The platform states that in order:

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[68] Hirsch 35.

[69] Lawrence A. Hoffman, CCAR Yearbook 104 (1994): 81.

> *to enhance appreciation of Jewish peoplehood and promote a deeper understanding of Israel, we resolve to implement educational programs and religious practices that reflect and reinforce the bond between Reform Judaism and Zionism. To deepen awareness of Israel and strengthen Jewish identity, we call upon all Reform Jews, adults and youths, to study in, and make regular visits to, Israel. While affirming the authenticity and necessity of a creative and vibrant Diaspora Jewry, we encourage* aliyah *[sic.] (immigration) to Israel in pursuance of the precept of* yishuv *Eretz Yisrael (settling the Land of Israel). While Jews can live* Eretz Yisrael *(settling the land of Israel). While Jews can live Torah-centered lives in the Diaspora, only in* Medinat Yisrael *do they bear the primary responsibility for the governance of society, and thus may realize the full potential of their individual and communal strivings.*[70]

Again, much like with the Centenary Perspective, the Miami Platform hoped to fairly reflect both sides of the debate over Zionism. Yet, the Miami Platform went further than its predecessor by specifically asserting what Reform Jews' obligations to Israel are in terms of education, religious practice, and journeys to Israel both for visiting and studying. In addition, while the 1976 platform stated that Israel was essential in defining Judaism but did not solely define it, the 1997 platform emphasized that Israel was the best place for Jews to fully integrate their religion with the rest of their lives. While there would always be some within Reform Judaism who dissented to the centrality of Israel to Judaism, at long last the movement adopted a platform that clearly and emphatically asserted this very notion.

> Jews in Israel and abroad...are called to provide a Jewish state for all Jews, whether resident of Israel or not; a Jewish state that all Jews have the obligation to support; a state where all Jews have the right to settle and to practice the Judaism of their choice.[71]

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[70] CCAR Yearbook 106 (1997): 56.

[71] Hoffman, "Toward a Post-Nationalist Paradigm of Zionism," CCAR Journal (spring,1998): 32.

The careful reflection in which the Reform movement engaged in order to solidify its views towards Israel, in conjunction with the CCAR return to Pittsburgh for its annual convention in 1999 reinvigorated the Reform Movement to revisit other aspects which define Reform Judaism as well. Consequently, the CCAR adopted the "Pittsburgh Principles."

Regarding Israel, the "Pittsburgh Principles" declare:

> We are committed to *Medinat Yisrael*, the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel, and encourage *aliyah*, immigration to Israel... We affirm that both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry should remain vibrant and interdependent communities. As we urge Jews who reside outside Israel to learn Hebrew as a living language and to make periodic visits to Israel in order to study and to deepen their relationship the Land and its people, so do we affirm that Israeli Jews have much to learn from the religious life of Diaspora Jewish communities.[72]

Essentially, there is not much difference between the Miami Platform and the "Pittsburgh Principles." In fact, the former more clearly defines the contemporary relationship between Israel and Reform Judaism. This relationship assumes that Israel is not a Jewish homeland by default, nor out of necessity, as was the case for the first half of the 20th century—the political Zionism argument. By living in Israel, Jews are enabled to live fully as Jews—the cultural Zionism argument. While this is possible elsewhere, it is not so nearly to the same extent. Reform Jews are inextricably tied to the land, and this bond cannot be broken. Israel cannot be viewed as just one of many

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[72] Reform Judaism 28.1 (fall, 1999): 11.

components of Reform Judaism. Rather, it is the central component for through her, all Jews, everywhere, are connected to the Divine, the myriad of ancestors who have come before them, and to each other.

In order to understand how Reform Judaism teaches Israel, an examination of the history of Reform Judaism and Zionism/Israel is critical. One finds that there is a long and involved past between the two. Such a past touches the heart of how Reform Judaism defines itself. Much of this search manifests itself in terms of what to embrace or reject—more simply, what to teach. By being fully aware of all the issues inherent in the relationship between Israel and Reform Judaism, educators can make informed decisions regarding the possibilities of how to teach Israel.

Section Two:
Why Teach Israel? Problems and Guidelines

The history of Reform Judaism and Zionism illustrates the intense and issue-laden relationship between Reform Judaism and Israel. In order to gain a full sense of the significance of Israel to Reform Jewish education, it is necessary to examine three aspects, in accordance with the views of Jewish educators: Why teach Israel? What problems exist in terms of the way in which Israel is taught today? What are the educational guidelines one must adhere to when teaching Israel?

Clearly, Israel is an integral component of Judaism. "Israel constitutes one of the historically, metaphysically, and hence logically defining elements of Judaism. Jewish education, which should be concerned with the nature of Judaism, must therefore include Israel education."[1] A Jewish education that does not teach about Israel is simply not a Jewish education as the two are so inextricably connected. "The teaching of Israel is the teaching of Jewish civilization (or Judaism), and the teaching of Jewish civilization is the teaching of Israel."[2] Specifically, however, the focus of this thesis is how Reform Judaism in America teaches Israel. Consequently, one must focus on the issues inherent in this distinction.

For American Jews, education about Israel must take into account that American Jews live in two worlds—a secular one and a religious one. Therefore,

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[1] Barry Chazan, "Out of Zion," CCAR Journal (winter, 1973): 65.
[2] Chazan, 67.

according to David Breakstone, there are five ways Israel fits with American Jewish education without imposing rigid, unattainable demands.

1. Israel in American Jewish education may increase awareness of involvement in Israel-related concerns without demanding adjustments in the basic life styles and behavioral patterns of the audience.

2. The way in which Israel is presented suggests the evolution of an American Jewish community concerned primarily with its survival. Yet, while the importance of Israel to that survival is a message convincingly transmitted, it is done in such a way that the significance of Judaism itself remains a topic unaddressed.

3. America's Jews tend to approach Israel in such a way a) that it may be readily incorporated into their belief in the American way of life, and b) that it does not challenge their fundamental faith in the vitality and viability of Jewish life in the United States; *aliyah* is thus denied as a preferred option.

4. The major concern in the teaching of Israel is the evocation of positive attitudes towards, and strong identification with, the Jewish State rather than the transmission of any particular subject matter.

5. Teaching Israel is an endeavor engaged in much more to create a sense of belonging to the Jewish people than to stimulate explorations of a personal relationship with the Jewish tradition, although there is some indication of an emerging trend to approach Israel for this latter purpose as well.[3]

With each point that Breakstone offers for how education about Israel fits with American Jewish life, he also implies an inherent problem in how Jewish education suggests that American Jews to relate to Israel. For example, education about Israel creates an awareness of ways in which American Jews

[3] David Breakstone, "The Dynamics of Israel in American Jewish Life: An Analysis of Educational Means as 'Cultural Texts,'" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 66.1 (1989): 11.

should be concerned for Israel but does so in a way that allows them to remain essentially inactive in supporting her. Israel can remain a key component of Judaism as long as it does not interfere with American life. Moreover, Jewish Americans recognize that Israel is important to Judaism's survival but do not recognize why. While American Jews feel positively towards Israel, they lack in-depth knowledge of Israel. The goal of teaching Israel is to create a feeling of *Klal Yisrael*, Jewish peoplehood, but does not equally encourage a personal interfacing with Judaism.

Breakstone is far from alone. Many educators feel that Jewish education about Israel is severely deficient. "The teaching of Israel is intended primarily to foster a willingness to aid and support the state...Great emphasis is placed on telling children that Israel is important; however, little emphasis is placed on explaining why."[4] Simply put, an overwhelming majority of Jewish educators feel that education about Israel lacks substance. Clearly, while everyone believes that education about Israel is undeniably crucial, not enough have bothered to figure out why.

Yet, the issue goes deeper than this. In addition to the question of what to teach, there is also the question of "Who are the learners?" While the relationship between American Jews and Israel has changed over the years, Jewish education has not always reflected such an evolution.

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[4] Chazan, "Israel in American Jewish Schools in the 1980s," Jewish Education 52.4 (winter, 1984-85): 2 as cited by Walter Ackerman, "The 'Land of our Fathers' in the 'Land of the Free': Textbooks on Israel in American Jewish Schools," Jewish Education 54.4 (1986): 4-14.

> American Jews born after the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel do not have the same profound feeling for Israel as did the generation for whom the JNF boxes were ubiquitous, debate over the proper direction of Zionism was central, and the drama of the State's creation marked a biographical high point never to be forgotten.[5]

The realization of the State of Israel dramatically affected how American Jews related to it. What was once the hypothetical ideal had now come to fruition. This dream connected American Jews to a far-away Jewish homeland. Consequently, American Jews believed that they could now focus elsewhere, as Israel no longer needed them.

> It is much easier to relate to a dream than to a reality...It is much easier to hold fast to a mythic picture of a society and culture far away than to know them in the innumerable specifics of their actual workings...Most still have not even visited Israel once. And so they have felt increasingly alienated from the State which is putatively theirs and yet so palpably other.[6]

A circular argument evolved. In order to feel religious, cultural, and communal ties, American Jews needed to strive for a uniquely Jewish homeland. Once this Jewish State existed, American Jews no longer felt linked to Judaism. There was a choice between the lesser of two evils—either no Jewish homeland with Jews united in working towards such a goal or a Jewish homeland to which American Jews no longer felt connected.

Jewish educators recognize that American Jews feel disconnected from Israel both in terms of the land and the people who live there. "The answer lies in

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[5] Arnold Eisen, "Israel in American Jewish Identity," Jewish Education News (summer, 1995): 17.
[6] Eisen, 17.

the diverse societal and political forces which shape Jewish life both here and in Israel, and which affect the ways we see ourselves, each other, and the meanings we attach to contemporary events."[7] Much of the problem lies in the perceived differences between American and Israeli Jews. As a result, we find that:

> Many educators, children, and of course, the parents refuse—or perhaps are unable—to relate to Israel as part of their lives. One might even suggest that that which separates Jewishly-committed American Jews and Israeli is greater, at times, than that which unites them.[8]

The fact that many American Jews cannot relate to Israeli Jews, leads to inquiry about the goals of Reform Jewish education in terms of teaching Israel. "We more or less know how to run an Israeli Independence Day Assembly, how to raise money to buy trees, and how to get people to Israel for the summer. We rarely know *why* we have such assemblies, plant those trees, or send our people to Israel."[9] Jewish educators believe that the ways Israel is currently taught do not encourage or forge identification between American Jews and their Israeli brethren. If such a connection is to exist, Reform Jewish education must categorically revise the ways it teaches Israel.

In this regard, a number of questions arise. Specifically, what are the goals of teaching Israel in American Jewish education? Are they consistently the same or have they changed over time?

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[7] Art Vernon, "Why is Teaching Israel So Difficult Today?" Jewish Education News (summer, 1995): 12.
[8] Yair Baumi, "The Teaching of Israel: An Israeli Perspective, Jewish Education News (summer, 1995): 24-25.
[9] Chazan, "Out of Zion" 70.

Two formal studies, in 1968 and 1974, examined these very issues. In both cases, researchers surveyed large pools of supplemental religious schools (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform) in order to learn the goals of teaching Israel. Each study highlights seven goals, ranked in order of priority.

1968:

1. to create positive attitudes towards Israel
2. to learn about Israel
3. to help pupils understand current Jewish events
4. to stimulate pupils to help Israel
5. to prepare pupils to help Israel when they become adults
6. to provide indirect influence on parents
7. to motivate pupils to emigrate to Israel (*aliya*).[10]

1974:

1. to create positive attitudes toward Israel
2. to tie us to the Jewish people
3. to teach us about our history and heritage
4. to teach us about the contemporary State and current events
5. to teach us about Israel as a religious holy land
6. to make us better Jews
7. to encourage *aliya*[11]

In comparing the two studies, it becomes clear that in 1968, there was little concern that American Jews to feel tied to the Jewish people. Rather, much emphasis was placed on the importance of American Jews possessing general knowledge about Israel. Extending support to Israel was equally crucial. In 1974, however, the focus was for American Jews to feel connected to Israel on a

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[10] Alvin I. Schiff, "Israel in American Schools," Jewish Education 38.4 (1968): 17.
[11] Barry Chazan, "Israel in American Jewish Schools Revisited," Jewish Education 47.2 (1979): 10.

deeper and more personal level. Knowledge about Israel was viewed as a means to this end.

While there is a noticeable increase in terms of the value placed on creating a connection to Israel, from 1968 to 1974, curriculum, at this time, does not reflect this shift. It lacked depth and breadth. The solution was not to create more resources; too many already existed.

> The new era of the teaching of Israel is beyond the creation of *more* books, *more* curricula, *more* films, *more* posters. It is now on the threshold of the most sublime and genuine educational concerns: the meaning of a concept or values for the life and soul of a child."[12]

In order to really change the ways in which Israel is taught in American Jewish education, something much bigger than the development of resources must transpire. A huge paradigm shift is necessary.

In recognizing the need for major change in how to teach about Israel, Jewish educators have engaged in a deliberate and careful examination of subsequent rationales and guidelines in an effort to re-envision how to teach about Israel. They have concluded that "current Israel curriculum lies in a vacuum, trapped between a set of false myths which students can no longer embrace, and an Israeli-Palestinian political reality they can barely comprehend,"[13]

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[12] Chazan, "Israel in America Schools" 16.
[13] Carmela Ingwer, "Re-envisioning How We Teach About Israel," PS-The Intelligent Guide to Jewish Affairs 76 (1997): 2.

In order to dispel the myths about Israel, American Jews need to identify with her by viewing her in a realistic light. "To begin with, it is important to convey that there may be legitimate criticisms of Israel, that Israel need not be perfect to justify our love and support."[14] American Jews must see beyond the abundant land of milk and honey and the oppressed land tormented by its Middle Eastern neighbors and see that Israel is somewhere truly in between the two. Israel is both ripe with possibilities and scarred by its past.

Yair Baumi suggests five rationales for teaching about Israel which help to accurately depict Israel.

> The **first** rationale is to teach about Israel from a Zionist perspective—that is, from the point of view that the State of Israel is the creation of Zionism, which views it as the best solution to the continued existence of Judaism in the twentieth century.
>
> The **second** rationale is historical. The State of Israel is another episode in the history of the Jewish people. Just as one teaches about the Exodus from Egypt, the Hasmoneans, the Sabbateans, and the Holocaust, so one teaches about Zionism and the State of Israel.
>
> The **third** rationale is to teach about Israel as a subject in geography, as yet another state on the globe. This approach emphasizes that just as every other nation has unique characteristics, so Israel is unique in that the majority of its inhabitants are Jewish.
>
> The **fourth** rationale is to teach about Israel from the point of a view of a universal, unified Judaism; this is basically a religious approach...Israel is the land that was pledged to the Jews by God. There the people of Israel, protected by God became a nation...This attitude can co-exist comfortably with Zionism, which can be seen as a messianic movement that realized the prophecy "Next Year in Jerusalem..." The main problem with this approach is that it does not

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[14] Kenneth Jacobson, "Teaching Israel to the Young," Jewish Education News (winter, 1988): 22.

> present the Zionist movement and the State of Israel as an alternative way to live a comprehensive Jewish life.
>
> The **fifth** approach—the philanthropic and/or paternalistic—was popular for a number of years, but may be now open to question...Israel's irresoluteness (or, rather, its image as a weak country, supposedly created by the actions of its leaders) was instrumental in supporting this rationale and in removing any doubt regarding the relations between Israel and the Diaspora.[15]

These five rationales each suggest a different perspective from which to teach Israel: Israel as the answer to the problems Jews faced in the 1900s; Israel as another historical event in the history of Judaism; Israel as a geographical land; Israel as the essence of Judaism; and Israel as a land and a people that desperately need the help of Diaspora Jews. Baumi's rationales echo the various approaches employed in teaching in American Jewish education. The last one reaffirms the notion that a connection between American Jews and Israel, which is viewed only in terms of benevolence and assistance, is quite insufficient. "All of these approaches, except, for the fifth, are quite acceptable, even if not all equally good. In creating a course of study on Israel, one should make a conscious and deliberate effort to combine the first, second, and fourth approaches.[16] Baumi's analysis of the rationales on teaching Israel is comprehensive and accurate. He aptly delineates the various approaches and then supports those that are the most applicable. Education of American Jews about Israel must teach that the Modern State of Israel is a contemporary solution

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[15] Baumi, 25-26.
[16] Baumi, 26.

to timeless anti-Semitism and oppression. It must also teach that Israel is an essential and defining component in the history of Judaism and also represents tangible evidence of the relationship between Jews and God. In terms of content, the amalgamation of approaches that Baumi suggests goes far beyond celebrating *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, buying JNF trees, and encouraging pilgrimages to Israel.[17]

The Israel that American Jewish educators must teach is one that must be taught from both politically and culturally Zionistic stances. Israel was, and still can be, a safe-haven for Jews from all over the world that need a home. Yet, at the same time, Israel links Jews to God and their ancestors in a way that no other place can. Because Judaism teaches that both the land and the people of Israel are truly sacred, Reform Jewish education must communicate this awareness and develop Israel curricula that convey this sense of holiness. For this very reason, the geographical rationale of which Baumi speaks is inadequate. Israel represents much more than a nice place to visit. Consequently, Jewish education needs to create and teach curricula that accurately reflect a more complex sense of Israel—a land, a people, and a state of being that is quintessentially Jewish.

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[17] Please refer to footnote #10 in this section.

Section Three:
Textual Materials and "Israel Experiences"

The two tangible pieces of Reform Jewish education's curricula on Israel manifest themselves in terms of textbooks and Israel experiences (trips to Israel). For the most part, textbooks are intended for students from pre-school through high school. At this point, Israel experiences supercede textbooks and become the vehicle for teaching Israel to adolescents. In order to understand more fully how the Reform movement elects to teach Israel to its youth, these two areas of curricula must be evaluated.

Textbooks employed in the Reform movement generally come from four different publishers: Behrman House, Ktav Publishing, Torah Aura Productions, and UAHC Press, although there are several other publishers. In reviewing textbooks on Israel, Walter Ackerman offers the following:

> Without exception our textbooks present Israel of today as the embodiment of centuries of aspiration and the realization of a deep religious longing...Two motifs are dominant in the presentation of the factors which led to the development of the Jewish national movement; the persecution of and suffering of the Jews in Eastern Europe and the need of Jews everywhere for a "spiritual center."[1]

According to Ackerman, textbooks portray Israel as the product of either political Zionism or cultural Zionism. Israel stands today as a Jewish safe-haven for victims of anti-Semitism and oppression and as the spiritual home of Judaism. Consequently, these two constitute the first two of eight significant criteria with which to review textbooks on Israel. The remaining six are further

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[1] Walter Ackerman, "The 'Land of our Fathers' in the 'Land of the Free': Textbooks on Israel in American Jewish Schools," Jewish Education 54.4 (1986): 7.

derived from the history of Zionism and Reform Judaism and what approaches Jewish educators assume when teaching about Israel as suggested by the first and second sections of this thesis respectively. Specifically, Elan Ezrachi demonstrated the third criterion when he likened visiting Israel to visiting any foreign country when he stated:

> Visiting Israel should be considered an experience of another culture because it involves lengthy, international travel to a strange, unfamiliar place. This greatly contrasts the notion of going to Israel is "going home." This 'otherness' should challenge our youth journeying to Israel to both understand another type of Jewishness and to seek to be understood.[2]

The early anti-Zionists of the Reform Movement created the fourth criterion with their discontent that Palestine was portrayed as the only homeland of the Jewish people. According to the American Jewish Council:

> The real point of the Reform camp was over the implications of calling Palestine the *sole* homeland of the Jewish people. Rabbi Samuel Schulman of New York, an avowed anti-Zionist, said that if the Basle program would call for *a* secured home for the Jews in Palestine instead of *for* the Jews, he would at once join the Zionist movement.[3]

Roland Gittelsohn, president of the CCAR, made the fifth criterion clear when he stated that Israel needs financial aid and support from Reform Judaism.

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[2] Elan Ezrachi, "The Israel Experience: Discovering a Different Jewish Culture." Jewish Education News (winter, 1997): 15.

[3] American Jewish Council 3 (September 14, 1917): 491 as cited by Michael Meyer, "Studies in Zionism", 7 (spring 1983): 53.

He said:

> We (Reform Jews) shall use our influence, wherever and whenever we can, to persuade the world that its own survival and integrity are irrevocably linked with those of Israel. We shall do all this not as a gesture of philanthropy, but because we know how imperative the survival of Israel is for the enhancement and vitality of our own Judaism.[4]

David Breakstone recognized the sixth criterion for reviewing textbooks on Israel—the creation of a strong Jewish identities in Reform Jewish youth—with his statement that "The major concern in the teaching of Israel is the evocation of positive attitudes towards, and strong identification with, the Jewish State rather than the transmission of any particular subject matter."[5]

Yair Baumi established the seventh criterion with one of his five rationales for teaching Israel: "The State of Israel is another episode in the history of the Jewish people. Just as one teaches about the Exodus from Egypt, the Hasmoneans, the Sabbateans, and the Holocaust, so one teaches about Zionism and the State of Israel."[6]

Lastly, the eighth criterion suggests that visiting Israel is the natural conclusion to one's formal religious education because being in Israel offers

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[4] Howard R. Greenstein, The Changing Attitudes Toward Zionism in Reform Judaism, diss., Ohio State U., 1973, 55-56.
[5] David Breakstone, "The Dynamics of Israel in American Jewish Life: An Analysis of Educational Means as 'Cultural Texts,'" Journal of Jewish Communal Service 66.1 (1989): 11.
[6] Yair Baumi, "The Teaching of Israel: An Israeli Perspective, Jewish Education News (summer, 1995): 24-25.

unparalleled real-life experiences. Haim Skirball said:

> Often a youth "discovers" a hidden sight, makes a new friend, contacts an unknown relative, reveals a hitherto untapped talent, etc. S/he is bombarded with stimuli, provocations, challenges to which a response—even if tentative must be forthcoming. The depth of 3-D, living color, stereo-sound experiences is almost limitelss.[7]

The eight significant criteria with which to review textbooks on Israel are:

Israel is:

1. a safe-haven for Jews
2. the spiritual home of Judaism
3. a land like other foreign lands with its own culture
4. one of several Jewish communities
5. a land and a people desperately in need of aid and support from Diaspora Jews
6. a vehicle for establishing Jewish identity
7. a modern solution for Israel's historical existence
8. an experience which formally culminates one's Jewish education

Textual materials on Israel are grouped by publisher and then put into alphabetical order by the authors' last names. While this annotated bibliography intends to be comprehensive of what materials are available, it is not exhaustive. In addition, some of the books reviewed are no longer published. While these books appear very dated and will not be of interest to the students, the information they present is still valuable—if only for teachers' use as resources. Following the four main publishers, other publishers' books and materials on Israel will be reviewed.

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[7] Haim Skirball, "The Israel Imperative." Jewish Education News (winter, 1988): 19.

Behrman House, Inc. West Orange, New Jersey

David Bamburger, A Young Person's History of Israel. 1994.

This textbook, teacher's guide, and student activity book begin by presenting the creation of the State of Israel as historical event within Judaism. In fact, Bamburger does provide a very thorough history that includes Israel as the place where our ancestors (from Abraham, the patriarch, to King David) interacted with God; a land occupied by the Romans and Muslims; the fruition of Jewish dreams; a land to be cultivated; a country greatly affected by World Wars; the answer to oppression and anti-Semitism for those victimized in the Holocaust. The book continues and offers a very detailed account of Israel's struggle to both gain and preserve its own freedom.

Criteria employed: 1, 5, and 7 **Age appropriate: fifth-eighth grade**

Elissa Blaser and Aviva Kadosh, The Aliyah Bet Simulation Game. 1980.

This instruction book to a simulation game focuses on the illegal *Aliyah, Aliyah Bet* when Palestine was under British mandate in the 1930s and 1940s. The participants play different roles: refugees, *Haganah* members, and British soldiers. Each player receives an "individualized program" providing biographical information and strategies. The goal of the game is for the Jews to be successfully smuggled into Palestine. The game obviously takes a historical approach. In addition, Israel is presented as a much-needed oasis for Jews.

Criteria employed: 1 and 7 **Age appropriate: seventh grade-**

Amos Elon, Understanding Israel. 1976.

This textbook, teacher's guide, and activity book take a sociological approach to Israel. The author presents the history of both Israel and Zionism, beginning with the First *Aliyah* in 1881. The reader then learns that Palestine/Israel became more universally recognized because of the politics and literature which developed there. After focus is given to the struggle to become a state, the book then emphasizes Israel's uniqueness in terms of geography, religion, politics, and industry. The chapters are formatted so that they begin with a historical event, focus on related themes, and then discuss which issues and values are presented as a result.

Criteria employed: 2,3,4,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: eighth grade-**

Sarah Feldman, Let's Explore Being Jewish--Israel: A City Tour and Let's Explore Being Jewish--Israel: People and Places. 1995.

These two colorful leaflets are filled with information on Israel and activities for children to do at home with their parents. A City Tour leads the reader through various cities in Israel. Each city offers its own unique accompanying activity. The goal of this leaflet is for the child, with guidance

from his/her parent(s), to understand what a wonderfully rich and exciting place Israel is.

Criteria employed: 3and 6 **Age appropriate: first and second grade**

People and Places emphasizes that Israel is a very important place for Jews from both a historical and spiritual context. In addition, knowing about the land and the people who live there helps Jews to identify with their religion.

Criteria employed: 2, 6, and 7 **Age appropriate: first and second grade**

Max Frankel and Judy Hoffman, I Live in Israel (A Text and Activity Book). 1979.

This book leads the reader as he/she journeys through different cities. Each chapter, in the form of a different city, is narrated by a child who lives there. Each child relates important information about his/her homeland in a relevant and understandable way. Some of the children immigrated to Israel from other countries (mainly, places where Jews oppressed). The book presents Israel as a very interesting and unique place in terms of geography, history, and religion. Israel is the essence of Judaism.

Criteria employed: 1,2,3,4, and 6 **Age appropriate: third-fifth grade**

Nora Benjamin Kubie, The Jews of Israel: History and Sources. 1975.

The first section of this book, history, traces Israel from biblical times to present. Along the way, her people develop the land agriculturally, militarily, politically, and culturally. In addition to providing much insight into the many aspects of Israel, this section also focuses on how American Jews relate to Israel. The second section, by employing primary sources and personal accounts connects Israel from biblical times to contemporary times, makes the history of Israel, and our relationship to it, both relevant and timeless.

Criteria employed: 2,3,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: eighth grade-**

Elizabeth Zinbarg Nover, My Land of Israel. 1987.

This is a combined text book, coloring book, and activity book. It begins with a passport, takes the reader through Israel, and concludes with the teaching of *Hatikvah*. The journey through Israel offers insight into aesthetical, cultural, geographical, and spiritual aspects.

Criteria employed: 1,2,3,4,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: first-third grade**

Naomi Pasachoff, Basic Judaism for Young People, Volume One: Israel. 1986.

The author arranges the book and student activity book into chapters based on the Hebrew *Alef-Bet*. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of the "broadness" of Israel. According to the author, the book "includes theology, ritual practice, love of land, and a host of values some regard as simply secular." In addition, the book intends to convey "both the universality and particularity of

Jewish sacred culture." Relevant biblical texts accompany each core concept. The reader is expected to come away from the book with an awareness of how exciting Judaism can be because of its connection to Israel.

Criteria employed: 2,3,5,6, 7, and 8 **Age appropriate: fifth-eighth grade**

Ktav Publishing House, Inc. Hoboken, New Jersey

Jeri Hill, Let's Explore Israel. 1978.

This is a combination textbook, coloring book, and activity book. The book begins with the readers flying on El-Al to Ben Gurion Airport. The entire book follows the students of a fictional supplementary school as they travel throughout Israel. The first half of the book focuses specifically on Jerusalem and the many attractions within it. There, the students can feel very Jewish and close to their ancestors. As they travel throughout the rest of the country, they also encounter non-Jewish Israeli citizens.

Criteria employed: 2,3, 6, and 7 **Age appropriate: first-third grade**

Sara Schacter and Sol Scharfstein, All About Israel. 1984.

This book presents the whole gamut regarding Israel from its national symbols, natural resources, citizens, educational system, archaeology, culture, history—from biblical times to the present, and holidays. There are many chapters, each being no more than five pages. The book is very thorough in presenting everything about Israel but, because so much is included, does not present any topic very comprehensively.

Criteria employed: 2,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: seventh grade-**

Sol Scharfstein, Israel Activity Kit. 1979.

A teacher's guide accompanies this activity kit. The kit is filled with simplistic activities and pictures to color. Israel is presented as a very interesting foreign land with its own unique features. The heroes and history of Israel are also presented. Since much emphasis is placed upon the activities themselves, the actual content seems to be diminished.

Criteria employed: 3 and 7 **Age appropriate: kindergarten-second grade**

Sol Scharfstein, Understanding Israel. 1994.

This book, much like All About Israel, co-written by the same author, is also very broad in what it emphasizes regarding Israel. Everything from the geography of the land, to the people, politics, religion, culture, and history are introduced. The book's pages are very glossy, colorful, and filled with photographs, which makes it quite interesting to read. Yet, since so much

information is presented in a relatively short book, the book glosses over many issues without providing much substance about a singular issue.
Criteria employed: 2,3,4,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: seventh grade-**

Torah Aura Productions, Los Angeles, California

David Bianco, Five Decades of Israel's History: An Instant Lesson. 1998.

In honor of Israel's fiftieth anniversary, this mini-textbook presents five decades of Israel from a historical perspective. Each decade contains key historical events and people. Upon reading this instant lesson, the student demonstrates his/her mastery of an overview of Israel's history by answering questions.
Criteria employed: 7 **Age appropriate: seventh grade-**

Sharon Lerner, Passport to Israel Instant Lesson Series. 1994.

This series contains eight instant lessons and a passport. Each lesson consists of a leaflet containing information about a specific geographical region and questions to answer at the end. The series is designed so that the students go at their own pace. As they finish each leaflet, their "passports" note that they have been successful in visiting each place. This series takes a very geographical approach, leaving the students with the sense that Israel is an interesting other/foreign land.
Criteria employed: 3 **Age appropriate: second-fourth grade**

UAHC Press, New York, New York

Chaya M. Burstein, Our Land of Israel. 1994.

In this book and teacher's guide, each of the thirteen chapters is narrated by a different Israeli citizen and offers a different aspect of Israel from history, culture, education, holidays, spirituality, and so on. The textbook is filled with information, activities, and photographs. The text and activities go hand in hand for the activities' purpose is to reinforce the knowledge the reader should have attained by interacting with the text. The author presents an overview of Israel without overwhelming the reader at the same time with unnecessary information.
Criteria employed: 1,2,3,4,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: fourth-sixth grade**

Barbara Cohen, The Secret Grove. 1985.

This novel and teacher's guide chronicles a fact-based friendship that develops between a Jewish Israeli boy and a Jordanian boy. The two both live in bordering villages connected by a grove. Free from the influence and stereotypes of Israeli Jews and Jordanians, the boys' secret friendship grows to be based on respect, admiration, and kindness. Eventually, the two grow up but not without being profoundly affected by their childhood friendship.
Criteria employed: 2 and 7 **Age appropriate: fourth-sixth grade**

Harry Essrig and Abraham Segal, Israel Today. 1964.

Since this book is older, it looks much more like a textbook than any of the other books reviewed thus far. It is bound with a hard cover and seems to resemble a secular school social studies textbook. In fact, the authors' approach to Israel is very much from a social studies perspective. The book focuses on both the history of the land and the people. Also, since the book was published only sixteen years after the creation of the State and since Reform Judaism, as an entire movement, did not fully embrace Zionism, the authors present Zionism as viable and crucial. Because of its outdated appearance, this book would best be used as a resource for teachers.

Criteria employed: 1,2,3,4,5,6, and 7 Age appropriate: sixth-ninth grade

Helen Fine, Behold the Land. 1968.

Fine, like Essrig and Segal, takes a sociological approach to Israel. The book both relates Israel's history and contemporary life as well. In addition, she makes the bridge between the land and its sacredness. This book also portrays the key people of Israel in hero or mythic proportions. Many of the chapters are written in narrative form to make the material more interesting to the readers. At the end of each chapter are suggested activities and questions that really encourage the reader to apply and expand the knowledge they have gained about Israel. Also, as with Essrig and Segal's book, because of its outdated appearance, this book would best be used as a resource for teachers.

Criteria employed: 2,3,5,6, and 7 Age appropriate: fifth-seventh grade

Samuel and Tamar Grand, The Children of Israel. 1972.

This textbook, student activity book, and teacher's guide also takes a social studies approach. However, unlike the two preceding books targets a much younger audience. Israeli children are the focus so that the children who read this book can more readily relate to Israel. The book recounts how Israeli children learn, play, and experience the land in which they live. Jerusalem is highlighted as a "special city." The book concludes with a chapter on the holidays.

Criteria employed: 3,6, and 7 Age appropriate: second-fourth grade

Seymour Rossel, Israel—Covenant People, Covenant Land. 1985.

This textbook and teacher's guide relates the history of Israel from biblical times to the present. Much emphasis is given to what life was like in Israel during the Roman Empire. The author then discusses Christianity's relationship and past with Israel. Zionism and the struggle for independence are also prominently featured. The book concludes by connecting Israel's contemporary military and religious struggles with biblical and medieval times. Rossel deftly

presents Israel's present and future with the same degree of sanctity with which he approaches her history.
Criteria employed: 2,4,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: seventh grade-**

Sheila F. Segal, Joshua's Dream. 1992.

This storybook chronicles one boy's family history with Israel. Joshua's great-aunt, Rivka, was an early Zionist settler who helped to cultivate the land to make it both appealing and livable. After hearing about Rivka's connection to the land, Joshua is inspired and determined to develop his own personal relationship with the land. Such a relationship begins when Joshua visits Israel and plants a tree there. For Joshua and Israel, this is only the beginning.
Criteria employed: 5,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: kindergarten-third grade**

Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education, K-12 Activities. 1985.

As part of the Israel Expo of 1985 in Atlanta, the Bureau published an educational series on Israel, which includes activities, sources, and guidelines. The series is quite comprehensive and includes archaeology, religions, education, military, geography, government, sociology, science and technology, and culture. Each section is intended to be read by the parent or teacher prior to the students engaging in the activity. Once the adults have sufficient knowledge, they can then guide and encourage the students as they learn. The activity book contains activities for kindergarten through twelfth graders and include everything from connect the dots, to word finds, to simulated games.
Criteria employed: 3 and 7 **Age appropriate: kindergarten-twelfth grade**

Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, New York, New York
Ruth Ebenstein and Barbara Rosoff, All of This Country Is Called Jerusalem: A Curricular Guide about the Contemporary Rescue Operations of the American Joint Distribution Committee. 1995

This collection of stories and activities has two basic goals: "redemption of captives" and "all Jews are responsible for one another." The students read the story together and then engage in the follow-up activity. Along the way, the students have gained a sense of what life is like for persecuted Jews living in other lands and their struggles to be free in Israel.
Criteria employed: 1, 5 and 6 **Age appropriate: fifth-seventh grade**

Alan Silverstein, For the Record. 1992.

This book focuses on the deeper issues affecting Israel today regarding Palestinian and Arab conflicts. The book is divided into eighteen sections, with each section beginning with a key question. The author guides the readers, adolescents and adults, to think about the ramifications on Arabs and

Palestinians as Israel continues to fight for her political freedom.
Criteria employed: 3 **Age appropriate: ninth grade-**

Central Agency for Jewish Education, Miami, Florida

Dov Goldflam, The Borders of Israel: A Struggle for Peace and Security. 1986.

This curriculum approaches Israel from a geographical approach. Maps of various areas of Israel, as they relate to other countries, are the vehicles used for presenting Israel. The goal is to convey Israel's history, through the land and the people, as she interacts with the world around her.
Criteria employed: 3 and 7 **Age appropriate: seventh-ninth grade**

Greater Kansas City Section, National Council of Jewish Women, Hello Israel Source Book. 1989

This packet provides an overview of Israel, including geography, history, government, economy, people, education and culture, music, and cuisine, provides the reader with basic information. It seems to be a primer intended so that teachers, prior to teaching Israel, have their own basic mastery of Israel. The packet's approach to Israel is in the social studies genre. Because this book is intended for use in public schools, almost no mention is made of Israel as a spiritual center.
Criteria employed: 3,4, and 7 **Age appropriate: ninth grade-**

Steimatzky Publishing/Shapolsky Books, New York, New York

Arlene Kushner, *Falasha* No More: An Ethiopian Jewish Child Comes Home. 1986.

This storybook follows an Ethiopian Jewish boy, Avraham, as he and his family journey from Ethiopia and settles into life in Israel. Avraham must adjust to life a where he now shares religion with this classmates but does not share the color of his skin. Eventually, Avraham becomes more comfortable with Israeli culture as he becomes friends with his Israeli brethren. They enjoy a mutual relationship as he introduces his friends to Ethiopian culture and they introduce him (and his family) to Jewish life in Israel.
Criteria employed: 1 and 2 **Age appropriate: second-fourth grade**

The Department of Education and Culture in the Diaspora, the World Zionist Organization, New York, New York

David Breakstone, ed., Teaching Israel, Part One: An Annotated Guide to Educational Media. 1980.

This annotated media guide groups and review films by subject. The subjects all fall within four sections: the land itself, Zionism, contemporary Israel, and archaeology and history. While filmstrips are no longer widely used and/or available, this guide is quite thorough and is very helpful in enabling educators

to know what was once available and how Jewish education previously approached its teaching of Israel.
Criteria employed: 1,2,3,4,6, and 7 Age appropriate: adults/teachers

Aviv Ekrony, Tamar Ariav, and Raphael Bannai, The Hebrew Teacher's Pal, 1.3: Continuous Jewish Settlement in the Land of Israel. 1983.

This pamphlet, which is intended for teachers, contains relevant sources and documents, the history of Jewish settlement in the land of Israel, readings and learning activities, and songs. The pamphlet specifically begins with the history of Israel as it was settled in biblical, mishnaic, and talmudic times. It continues with the period prior to the different *aliyot*, the *aliyot* themselves, and the founding of the State of Israel. The pamphlet only provides a very brief overview of the history of the settlement and consequently provide teachers with only the most basic information.
Criteria employed: 1,2,3,4,6, and 7 Age appropriate: adults/teachers

Abraham P. Gannes, ed., Teaching Israel, Part Two: An Annotated Guide to Textual Material. 1982.

This guide categorizes and reviews texts on teaching Israel. The texts are divided by age group and subject. The subjects are quite specific and limiting. For example: the bulk of the material is on teaching about Jerusalem and *Yom Ha'atzmaut*. The guide also suggests ways to create units for religious schools, family education programs, and community-wide celebrations. In addition, specific reference works are recommended in aiding the teachers to create lessons and/or curricula. Even though this book is a bit old and quite limited in its subject matter, it a good resource for teachers.
Criteria employed: 3,6, and 7 Age appropriate: adults/teachers

Levi Soshuk, Ten Lesson Plans on Israel in Observance of the Anniversary of the State of Israel. 1978.

This book focuses on Israel as she struggled to become an independent state. Each of the ten lesson plans reflects a different aspect of this struggle. In accordance with the publisher, there is a very Zionistic slant to the material. The book intends to summarize Israel's hardships and celebrate her victories. Each lesson presents an identifying issue, questions for discussion, and follow-up activities.
Criteria employed: 1,2,5,6, and 7 Age appropriate: adults/teachers

The Tartak Learning Center at the Los Angeles campus of HUC-JIR also serves as a resource for educational materials on Israel (and many other subjects for that matter). In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Jewish

Education, students write curriculum guides. Each guide contains developmental goals, behavioral objectives, curricular units, suggested activities, and resources. Each guide covers one year of supplemental religious school. There are several guides relevant to an Israel curriculum, each with a different emphasis intended for a specific age group.

Betsy Barth, Israel: The Heart of a People 1998.

This curriculum guide "through an investigation of history, integrating archaeological, geographical and documentary fact" is crucial if students are "to have an critical understanding of...people, religion" and themselves. The units focus on the Land of Israel, how the Land connects all Jews to God, the Exodus from Egypt, Jewish settlement, life during the First and Second Temples, the Prophets, destruction and exile, the Diaspora years, and the return to Zion.

Criteria employed: 2,6, and 7 **Age appropriate: tenth grade**

Wendy Robinson, One Can Make a Difference 1984.

Strong Jewish identities lay at the heart of this curriculum guide. Each unit underscores a key component in forming a strong attachment to Israel and an equally solid Jewish identity. The units are: To Love and Cherish Israel, The Rise of Zionism, Let My People Go, At Home in Israel, The Inspiration of Jerusalem, Arab-Israeli Relations, Youth in Israel, and Going Up to Israel: Why Consider *Aliyah*?

Criteria employed: 2,3,5,6,7, and 8 **Age appropriate: eighth-ninth grade**

Debra Sagan, Exploring Contemporary Issues Facing Teens in Israel 1998.

This curriculum guide intends to precede summer visits to Israel for adolescents. Its main goal is to both adequately prepare students for their visits to Israel, and by providing basic and crucial information, enhance their experiences as well. The units focus on Zionism, patriotism and nationalism, border relationships with Arab countries and their people, and Israel/Diaspora relationships.

Criteria employed: 2,3,6,7, and 8 **Age appropriate: tenth-twelfth grade**

Kathy Schwartz, Zionism: The Collision of Modernity and Judaism 1994.

The author uses Zionism "as a model for students to begin their own struggle and confrontation with Judaism in their world. Out of this will come a stronger identity." If students understand how others struggled and embraced their Judaism by working to fulfill the dream of Palestine, then they can more

readily understand and appreciate their own relationships to Judaism and Israel.
Criteria employed: 1,2,5,6, and 7 Age appropriate: sixth grade

Laura Weiss, A Curriculum Guide for Teaching Students the Biblical Geography of the Land of Israel 1994.

"Biblical historical-geography...is the basis for a religious and cultural lesson, from which we can learn about the existence of our people throughout the ages." As children study the history and geography as it pertains to the relationship between God and the Children of Israel, they will gain a profound sense of appreciation for the struggles of their biblical ancestors. The author divides the curriculum into the following units: Maps, Text Study, Covenant, Literature of the Bible, and Resources.
Criteria employed: 1,2,6, and 7 Age appropriate: fifth-sixth grade

Ira J. Wise, Who Are We? Who Are They?—The Israeli Jewish Experience: A Course of Study 1991.

This guide focuses on the relationship between American and Israeli Jews. The ultimate hope is that through exploration of such a relationship, stronger Jewish identities will form. However, the author intends to explore this relationship based on the acquisition of knowledge and facts rather than just emotions. The culmination of this curriculum is a trip to Israel.
Criteria employed: 2,3,4,6,7, and 8 Age appropriate: tenth-twelfth grade

Many of the textbooks reviewed present Israel in sociological terms. Furthermore, by using a social studies approach, these books intend to be quite comprehensive in portraying more than just Israel's history. Of the books reviewed, it seems difficult to isolate Israel's history from the politics, geography, culture, and the like. Yet, interestingly enough, the authors who limit the scope of their focus to one or two areas, for example Ebenstein and Rosoff's, All of This Country Is Called Jerusalem: A Curricular Guide about the Contemporary Rescue Operations of the American Joint Distribution Committee and Kushner's *Falasha* No More: An Ethiopian Jewish Child Comes Home, are very successful in conveying their messages. Most-likely, most authors of textbooks on Israel, by

attempting to include so much information, inundate and overwhelm the readers so that they are unable to absorb, in a comprehensive way, any information about Israel other than the basic geographical facts (the Dead Sea has a very high content of salt, Jerusalem is "the" holy city, and Eilat is a nice place to vacation). The fourth section of this thesis will provide alternatives for conveying a lot of information without having to include so much in textbooks. Otherwise, it seems a general guideline to follow regarding textbooks on Israel is "the more limiting and narrow the focus of the book, the more successful the student at possessing knowledge about, and feeling an intense connection to, Israel."

Textual materials on Israel are limited by what they offer students about Israel. Consequently, there is a great need for more experiential education on Israel. It is generally customary that high school students, upon their confirmation, spend the summer in Israel, an "Israel Experience." Such a trip is often considered the culmination of one's formal Reform Jewish education.

> An Israel experience has to be seen as the locus or occasion for the integration of one's Jewish and/or education experiences: school, youth group, camp, family experience, trips, *tefillot*, Shabbat, ethnicity, etc. We should be conscious of our need to integrate experiences, and the integrative power that Israel represents—as an idea and as a value—among a lot of other core values and core knowledge of Judaism.[8]

[8] Daniel J. Margolis and Shlomo Shimon, "Israel in the Bureaus of Jewish Education." Jewish Education News (winter, 1997): 33.

All summer trips for Reform youth are sponsored jointly by the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) and UAHC, although they are considered part of NFTY Programs.[9] Participants may choose from a variety of trips, each one offering a unique component. For example, a high school student may elect to experience the "Exodus" trip, where he/she arrives in Israel aboard a ship that has sailed the Mediterranean Sea, a recreation of the Exodus ship sailing to Palestine. Another trip offers a visit to Prague and *Terezin*, a Nazi concentration camp, illustrating what life was like for Eastern European Jews before and during the Holocaust. Regardless of the special emphasis, each Israel experience is similar in terms of which cities and sights are visited and the curriculum being taught.

Each NFTY trip spends a week in Jerusalem so that ample time can be spent in the Old City, at the *Knesset* and *Yad Vashem*, climbing Masada, hiking in the Judean Hills, floating in the Dead Sea, as well as experiencing contemporary life in Jerusalem. Other key features of this "Israel Experience" are an archaeological dig, a trip to the Galilee and Golan, a camping trip in the Negev Desert, a visit to Tel Aviv and Jaffa, and time in Haifa, shared with Israeli teens and their families. In addition, each student selects one of six "5-day in depth experience": living on a *Kibbutz*, traveling from sea to sea, doing *Tzedakah* in

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[9] NFTY also offers a high school semester program as well. The Eisendrath International Exchange Program offers most of the same geographical experiences as the summer trips. In addition, participants study and learn in classes where they receive credit for a full high school semester class load.

Mitzvah Corps, participating in an archaeological dig, training and living on an Israeli Defense Forces army base, or studying Hebrew in ulpan.

Bearing the obvious and necessary geographical nature of the trips in mind, focus must also be spent on the educational aspects of the trips. Paul Reichenbach, the director of Israel programs for NFTY, said he hopes that Israel experiences serve as springboards for developing life-long relationships with Israel and Zionism. In summer trip literature, NFTY states its philosophy, goals, and curriculum. The goals are:

1. To reinforce positive Jewish identity, to develop a sense of pride in oneself as a person, as a Jew and as a member of the Jewish people.
2. To provide broadening experiences which embrace the continuous growth of participants into mature, responsible adults.
3. To develop an awareness of the history of Israel, its people, its land and culture, through visits to historical sites—ancient and modern.
4. To develop an awareness of the issues and challenges that face the modern Jewish State through seminars, meetings with individuals who are involved in these issues and challenges, and through visits to the relevant sites and institutions.
5. To provide an opportunity to met young Israelis in a sharing environment in order to acquaint North American and Israeli youth with each others' world views and concerns as members of the same people.
6. To experience the physical connection between the Jewish people and its land and to appreciate Israel's natural beauty through "walking the land."
7. To develop group togetherness through communal living, shared experiences and mutual respect.
8. To reaffirm the participant's belonging to, and belief in a Reform Jewish world view.
9. To deepen and expand this Reform Jewish world view through new educational experiences, formal and informal, which are uniquely available in Israel.

10. To expose individuals to the Hebrew language as the national language, through the introduction of Hebrew phases and words related to the Israel experience.[10]

An Israel experience, according to NFTY, is a unique and rare opportunity for Reform Jewish youth to fully participate and interact with Israel. Relating to Israel in this way is not possible unless one comes to experience the land both personally and viscerally. This sentiment pervades all of Jewish education. According to Breakstone, "the organized Jewish community needs to insure that the Israel trip becomes an integral part of every child's Jewish education—not an encounter of happenstance, but of design."[11]

A positive Jewish identity lies at the forefront of what can be achieved by spending a summer in Israel. However, life in Israel is very different than life in North America. Consequently, Jewish educators must exercise caution in...viewing trips as a way to exclusively strengthen Jewish identity because "Israel represents a different reality when compared to any diaspora [sic.] community."[12]

Furthermore knowing Israel's history, experiencing the Hebrew language and Israeli culture, and more deeply appreciating Reform Judaism as it relates to Israel and the rest of the world are equally as important. While it is true that NFTY has great hopes for Israel experiences in how their profound effect on

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[10] NFTY in Israel, "The Israel Experience and Jewish Identity: Summer Program Curriculum Values and Goals." 2000.
[11] Breakstone, "The Israel Experience: Great Expectations." Jewish Education News (summer, 1995): 37.
[12] Ezrachi, 15.

Reform Jewish youth, the goals are not unattainable. The continued popularity of the trips combined with the prominence the movement places on them is testament to their continued success. However, Jewish educators feel that all Israel experiences, not just those sponsored and run by NFTY, are missing a crucial component.

Summer trips to Israel fail to maximize their success by not including preliminary educational programs prior to the summer or opportunities for continued learning and growth following the summer.

> As successful as an Israel Experience [sic.] may be, without essential investment in preparatory and follow-up components, it is less-likely to reach its full educational potential, or to sustain its educational impact much beyond the time-frame of the journey itself. Preparation is important on two levels: setting realistic expectations and mastering basic knowledge that will permit the experience to incorporate more advanced content...But follow-up is probably even more important...it is imperative that returnees continue to process the experience and begin to explore ways of incorporating some of the conclusions into personal (and where relevant, professional) dimensions of life.[13]

Educational programming prior to the summer places greater emphasis on Israel's reality than on the students' often mythical perceptions. Simultaneously, participants can begin their learning process by acquiring fundamental information prior to their experiencing Israel. Since many of the NFTY trips are composed of high school students from all over North America and participants

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[13] Richard Juran, "Israel as a Jewish Educational Opportunity." Jewish Education News (winter, 1997): 14.

may not be on a trip with any one from their geographical locale or home congregation, returning from Israel can be isolating without with whom to share or process feelings and reflections. Breakstone says, "For most of the returnees, there is simply on one with whom to share or with whom to make sense out of, the profound awakenings they had begun to feel in Israel."[14] Periodic retreats, which focus on how the students continue to be affected by their summer trips to Israel interspersed with occasional contact from trip staff, can only serve to reinforce and magnify the power of Israel experiences.

Educators suggest another opportunity to expand the effect of a summer trip to Israel. While it is only the high school student in the family who actually visits Israel with a NFTY trip, others are affected as well. Reform Jewish youth go to Israel partly because their parents either encourage or support them to do so. A child's Israel experience has the potential to impact one's parents as well.

> As educators and communal leaders, we need to see the teen Israel trip as not just a great opportunity for strengthening the teen's Jewish identity but for expanding the parents' Jewish identity and involvement as well. Sending a teen to Israel is one of those rare windows of opportunity for the entire family that the organized Jewish community cannot afford to pass up on.[15]

With its formally stated and executed curriculum, NFTY intends for its summer high school programs to Israel to be more than just visits to other foreign countries. The curriculum both assures and ensures this. While NFTY's

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[14] Breakstone, Moment Magazine (December, 1995) as cited by Harry Glazer, "Continuity After Israel." Jewish Education News (winter, 1997): 23.
[15] Jay Lewis, "Including Parents in the Teen Israel Experience." Jewish Education News (winter, 1997): 22.

curricular goals intend for Israel experiences to encourage its participants to begin to define and forge a strong Jewish identity, gain a sense of Israel's history and sacredness, and have an appreciation for Reform Judaism, more can be done. With preliminary educational programs, reflection and processing upon returning from Israel, and familial involvement, the effects of a summer trip to Israel can last a lifetime instead of one glorious summer.

Section Four:
Developmentally Appropriate Goals and Resources

In order to offer sound and comprehensive educational suggestions for how to teach Israel in Reform Judaism, one must first know the history of the relationship between Reform Judaism and Zionism, examine why Israel is a central component in Reform Jewish education, focus on the problems with how Israel is currently taught, reflect on guidelines for teaching Israel, and review the curricula (textbooks and "Israel experiences").

Reform Judaism and Zionism share a long and complicated past. Prior to the creation of the State of Israel, the movement struggled to define the centrality of Israel/Zionism. Many thought that the dream of a Jewish homeland, and the actualization of such a dream, greatly diminished chances of prosperity here in America. In 1948, when the United Nations recognized the State of Israel, Reform Judaism had to redefine its Zionist relationship. Today, the Reform Movement is quite clear about its obligations to Israel regarding education, religious practice, and trips to Israel for sightseeing/vacationing and studying. Furthermore, it is believed that Israel is the best place for Jews to fully integrate their religion into the rest of their lives.

Reform Jewish education chooses to teach Israel because the land, the people, and the State are central to Judaism. The Reform Movement cannot adequately transmit Judaism without Israel. Educators need to recognize that the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jews has changed over the years and that curricula must reflect such an evolution. When creating and teaching any curriculum on Israel, the educators must emphasize that the Modern State of

Israel is a contemporary solution to timeless anti-Semitism and oppression; is an essential and defining component in the history of Judaism; and is tangible evidence of the relationship between Jews and God.

Most of the resources, which teach about Israel, fall into the categories of either textbooks or "Israel experiences." When reviewing textbooks to determine their efficacy, one must realize that these authors often include too much information. Consequently, readers are inundated and overwhelmed and only retain the most basic information. In terms of these materials, "less is more." The most successful books appear to be those that convey a lot of information on one specific aspect of Israel as opposed to a little information about many aspects. The effectiveness of "Israel experiences" will greatly improve if preliminary educational programs; post-trip processing, reflecting, and socializing; and family education are employed and offered.

Barry Chazan offers five over-arching goals for Israel curricula. They are:

1. **cultural transmission**—the goal of teaching Israel is the transmission of basic knowledge about the history, geography, and sociology of Israel...The study of Israel is one of the most important dimensions of being a knowledgeable Jew.[1]
2. **religion**—this approach conceives of Israel as a part of Judaism (the religion) and it shifts the emphasis from the transmission of knowledge to the development of a Jewish religious lifestyle and practice.[2]
3. **identity**—this approach emphasizes the role of shaping the character and personality of young Jews. It shares the religious

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[1]Sara Schacter and Sol Scharfstein, All About Israel (New York: Ktav, 1955) as cited by Barry Chazan, "What We Know About the Teaching of Israel" in What We Know About Jewish Education (Stuart L. Kelman, ed.) (Los Angeles: Torah Aura, 1992) 242.

[2] Board of Jewish Education, *David's City* [video] (New York: 1987) as cited by Chazan, "What We Know" 242.

approach's focus on personality and lifestyle; however, it shifts the emphasis from religious beliefs and behaviors to some general notion of positive Jewish identity or personality.[3]

4. **survival**—teaching Israel for Jewish survival focuses on Israel as a central force in strengthening young people's commitment to the perpetuation of the Jewish people. Its concern is to implant and nourish the commitment of young people to the survival of the State of Israel and to the Jewish people.[4]
5. **aliyah**—teaching Israel for aliyah is aimed at encouraging—and ultimately causing—people to settle in Israel. This approach assumes that the situation of the Jews in the Diaspora is ultimately doomed and that a complete Jewish life is only possible in Israel. Consequently, advocates of this approach are concerned with preparing young people for life in Israel.[5]

The author of this thesis, bearing in mind the history of Reform Judaism and Zionism, what Jewish educators think about Israel is taught, and Israel curricula, believes that the goals for teaching Israel in the Reform Movement ought to be religion, identity, and survival. The religious approach emphasizes the importance of attaining knowledge in order to equip one better to engage in a Jewish life-style with religious practice. The identity approach encourages the recognition that Diaspora Jews are part of *Klal Yisrael*, the peoplehood of Israel. One cannot feel an identify with Judaism unless he/she feels an important part of it. The survival approach focuses on the dual and mutual relationship between Reform Judaism and Israel. The benefits of this relationship occur for

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[3] B. Reisman, The Jewish Experiential Book: The Quest for Jewish Identity (New York: Ktav, 1979) as cited by Chazan, "What We Know" 242.
[4] Chazan, "What We Know" 242.
[5] World Zionist Organization, Teaching *Yediat Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Department of Education and Culture, 1970) as cited by Chazan, "What We Know" 242.

American Jews for what they give to Israel as well as what they receive. While the cultural transmission and *Aliyah* approaches are not without merit, because they respectively solely encourage the importance of being a knowledgeable Jew and feel that life for Diaspora Jews is destined for failure, they are not advocated.

Since Israel, in various ways, is taught to all ages of children in Reform Judaism, when creating curricular suggestions, one must take into account the different developmental stages. The goals and behavioral objectives for each age preschool and kindergarten-second grade, second grade-seventh grade, and seventh grade-twelfth grade) vary depending on developmental capabilities. Therefore, curricular suggestions offered in this section will be grouped according to age. In addition to appropriate developmental information and goals, each section will include recommended textbooks and other suggested resources.

According to Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist who created a model for understanding children's cognitive development, as human beings progress through life, they make "sense of their world by gathering and organizing information."[6] Cognitive development is directly affected by one's biological maturation , activity, and social experiences.[7] Since children learn according to

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[6] Jean Piaget, The Construction of Reality in the Child (M. Cook, trans.) (New York: Basic Books, Handbook of Child Psychology (New York: Wiley) 1970 as cited by Woolfolk 27.
[7] Piaget, Piaget's Theory as cited by P. Mussen (ed.) 1954) as cited by Anita E. Woolfolk, Educational Psychology (Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1980) 27.

their cognitive development, curricular suggestions for each age group will reflect Piaget's stages of cognitive development.

Pre-school through Second Grade

Children, from two to seven years of age, are in what Piaget coined the pre-operational stage which is marked by the following characteristics: Children gradually develop use of language and ability to think in symbolic form, are able to think operations through logically in one direction, and have trouble seeing another person's point of view.[8] Woolfolk suggests guidelines for teaching the preoperational child. They are:

1. Use concrete props and visual aids whenever possible.
2. Make instructions relatively short, using actions as well as words.
3. Don't expect the students to be consistent in their ability to see the world from someone else's point of view.
   Example—Avoid social studies lessons about worlds too far removed from the child's experience.
4. Be sensitive to the possibility that students may have different meanings for the same word or different words for the same meaning.
5. Give children a great deal of hands-on practice with the skills that serve as building blocks for more complex skills like reading comprehension.
6. Provide a wide range of experiences in order to build a foundation for concept learning and language.[9]

Woolfolk's guidelines are very effective in developing appropriate educational goals for teaching Israel to children who are in preschool and kindergarten-second grade. Since these students are just beginning to think in

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[8] Barry J. Wadsworth, Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development (Addison Wesley, 1971) as cited by Woolfolk 30.
[9] Woolfolk 33.

abstract terms, educators must exercise caution when teaching about Israel by asking students to think beyond their own worlds. American children will not be able to connect to Israel if it is presented as a far-away land where people live, speak, and eat very differently than they do. Rather, educators need to begin by teaching that life for American Jews and Israeli Jews is very similar by first emphasizing the commonalities. Yet, it is very important to use the children's lives as the standard for which to compare life in America to life in Israel. Piaget elaborated: "preoperational children...are very egocentric; they tend to see the world and the experiences of others from their own viewpoint...and assume that everyone else shares their feelings, reactions, and perspectives."[10] American Jewish educators must start with the children in their classrooms. Just as they have parents and siblings, live in homes, go to school, and celebrate their religious holidays, children in Israel do as well.

In addition to approaching curricular material from the children's perspective, educators should create "memorable moments", innovative and multi-sensory experiences that enhance and reinforce textual material. "Memorable moments" include special visitors, field trips, hands-on activities

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[10] Woolfolk 32.

like cooking or arts and crafts—anything that connects a unique and enjoyable activity to a textual, or factual, lesson.

Israel curriculum for teachers of children in the preoperational stage of cognitive development are:

1. To create an environment in the classroom that is accepting and respectful of different cultures and ways of life.
2. To convey that Israel is an important component of Judaism.
3. To encourage a connection to Jews everywhere.
4. To foster interest and concern for what happens in Israel.
5. To teach the relevancy of biblical characters because of the common bonds of the Land of Israel and God.

Suggested resources for Israel curricula intended for children in the preoperational stage:

- Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education, K-12 Activities. 1985.
- *Molly Cone, The House in the Tree: A Story of Israel (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968).
- Sarah Feldman, Let's Explore Being Jewish--Israel: A City Tour and Let's Explore Being Jewish--Israel: People and Places (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House,1995).
- *Louis Goldman and Seymour Reit, A Week in Hagar's World: Israel (New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1969).
- Samuel and Tamar Grand. The Children of Israel (New York: UAHC, 1972).
- *Evelyn L. Greenberg, The Little Tractor Who Traveled to Israel (New York: Behrman House, 1949).
- Arlene Kushner, *Falasha* No More: An Ethiopian Jewish Child Comes Home (New York: Steimatzky/Shapolsky Books, 1986).
- Jeri Hill, Let's Explore Israel (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1978).
- *Jewish National Foundation Paint 'Em Coloring Book (New York: 1967).
- *Marganit Lish, Ideas for Teaching "Love of Zion" in the Primary Grades (Woodland Hills, California: Educational Resources, 1977).
- Elizabeth Zinbarg Nover, My Land of Israel (West Orange, New Jersey: 1987).
- Sol Scharfstein, Israel Activity Kit (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1979).
- Sheila F. Segal, Joshua's Dream (New York: UAHC,1992).
- *Althea O. Silverman, Habibi's Adventures in the Land of Israel (New York: Bloch, 1951).
- *Robert Sol, Rocket Ship to Israel (New York: Ktav, 1953).

- ❖ *Sadie Rose Weilerstein, K'tonton in Israel (New York: National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, 1964).

*Indicates a suggestion from Teaching Israel, Part Two: An Annotated Guide to Textual Material (Abraham P. Gannes , ed.) (New York: The Department of Education and Culture in Diaspora, the World Zionist Organization, 1982).

Third Grade-Seventh Grade

This age group, ages seven through eleven, according to Piaget, are in the concrete operational period. There are three characteristics of this stage. Children are able to solve concrete (hands-on) problems in logical fashion, understand laws of conservation and able to classify and seriate, and understand reversibility.[11] Woolfolk's guidelines for teaching the concrete operational child are:

1. Continue to use concrete props and visual aids, especially when dealing with sophisticated material.
   Example – Use timelines in history.
2. Continue to give students a chance to manipulate and test objects.
3. Make sure presentations are brief and well-organized.
4. Use familiar examples to explain more complex ideas.
5. Give opportunities to classify and group objects and ideas on increasingly complex levels.
6. Present problems that require logical, analytical thinking.
   Example—Use open ended questions.

Woolfolk's suggestions are very helpful. First, concrete operational children are capable of learning history and time-lines (visual representations of time) help them to frame and retain the historical facts. While these students, unlike their preoperational counterparts, are developmentally able to fathom and

[11] Wadsworth as cited by Woolfolk 30.

understand worlds outside of their own, educators must recognize that students are able to digest a little information at a time. Consequently, concepts must be broken down into small, well thought-out sections. In addition, teachers must start with Jewish life in America as a point of reference when discussing historical and contemporary life in Israel.

Woolfolk also applauds teachers' encouraging their students to think freely. Now is the appropriate time, in their cognitive development, for concrete operational thinkers to analyze information, form their own viewpoints, and express their thoughts to others. The California Department of Education feels similarly:

> A strong history-social science program at the elementary level helps all students to develop their full potential for personal, civic, and professional life... A variety of materials, resources, primary sources, strategies, and technologies are used to engage students. This variety fosters enjoyment of history, cultivating historical empathy for and a knowledge of men, women, and children of different times, places, and cultures.[12]

The concrete operational stage is a wonderful time for children to begin to make sense of the world and understand their places within it.

Israel curriculum goals for teachers of children in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development are:

1. To teach that Jews everywhere share a common bond because of their Jewish homeland.
2. To facilitate an environment where students are encouraged to be creative thinkers.
3. To create an open and safe environment where students feel comfortable sharing their viewpoints.

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[12] Elementary Grades Task Force and the California Department of Education, It's Elementary! (California Department of Education, 1992).

4. To teach basic historical facts about Israel.
5. To guide students to objectively compare their lives in America to life in Israel.

Suggested resources for Israel curricula intended for children in the concrete operational stage:

- Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education, K-12 Activities. 1985.
- Daniel Bennett, *Yisrael:* A Curriculum (New York: UAHC, 1976).
- Elissa Blaser and Aviva Kadosh, The Aliyah Bet Simulation Game (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, 1980).
- *Libbie L. Braverman, Children of the Emek (New York: Bloch, 1964).
- *---, Children of Freedom (New York: Bloch, 1953).
- Chaya M. Burstein, Our Land of Israel (New York: UAHC, 1994).
- Barbara Cohen, The Secret Grove (New York: UAHC, 1985).
- *Joan Comay, Ben Gurion and the Birth of Israel (New York: Random House, 1967).
- *Molly Cone, Hurry Henrietta (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).
- *Margaret Davidson, The Golda Meir Story (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976).
- Ruth Ebenstein and Barbara Rosoff, All of this Country is Called Jerusalem: A Curricular Guide about the Contemporary Rescue Operations of the American Joint Distribution Committee (New York: Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, 1995).
- *Azriel Eisenberg, My Own JNF (New York: JNF Youth and Education Department, 1958).
- *Sarah Feder-Tal, The Stone of Peace (H.R. Kousbroek, trans.) (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1961).
- Max Frankel and Judy Hoffman, I Live in Israel (A Text and Activity Book (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, 1979.
- *Sharon A. Fried with Sandy Vogel, Guide to the Study of Israel (Baltimore: Board of Jewish Education, 1977).
- *Sonia Gidal, My Village in Israel (New York: Pantheon, 1959).
- *Cecil P. Golann, The Taming of Israel's Negev (New York: J. Messner, 1970).
- *Tamar Grand, Israel Fun Book (New York: WZO Department of Education and Culture, 1978).
- *Dorothy C. Herman, Touring Israel: An Experiential Approach to the Teaching of Israel (Miami: Central Agency for Jewish Education of Greater Miami and the JNF of Greater Miami, 1979).Helen Fine, Behold the Land (New York: UAHC, 1968).
- Sharon Lerner, Passport to Israel Instant Lesson Series (Los Angeles: Torah Aura, 1994).

- *Devorah Omer, Rebirth: The Story of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972)
- *Morris Rosenblum, Heroes of Israel (New York: Fleet Press, 1972).
- Kathy Schwartz, Zionism: The Collision of Modernity and Judaism Los Angeles: Tartak Resource Center, 1994).
- *United Jewish Appeal School Program, The Promise (1973).
- *Regina Tor, Discovering Israel (New York: Random House, 1960).
- Laura Weiss, A Curriculum Guide for Teaching Students the Biblical Geography of the Land of Israel (Los Angeles: Tartak Resource Center, 1994).
- *Sally Watson, The Mukhtar's Children (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston).
- *WZO Department of Education and Culture, Profiles Series: Dreamers and Builders of Zion (New York, 1973).

*Indicates a suggestion from Teaching Israel, Part Two: An Annotated Guide to Textual Material (Abraham P. Gannes , ed.) (New York: The Department of Education and Culture in Diaspora, WZO, 1982).

Seventh Grade-Twelfth Grade

Eleven-year-olds through adults are in Piaget's formal operational stage with the following characteristics: able to solve abstract problems in logical fashion, become more scientific in thinking, and develop concerns about social issues and identity.[13] Woolfolk offers guidelines for teaching formal operational:

1. Continue to use concrete-operational teaching strategies and materials.
2. Give students the opportunity to explore many hypothetical questions.
   Example – Have students write position papers, then exchange these papers with the opposing side and have debates about topical social issues.
3. Give students opportunities to solve problems and reason scientifically.
4. Whenever possible, teach broad concepts, not just facts, using materials and ideas relevant to students' lives.[14]

[13] Wadsworth as cited by Woolfolk 30.
[14] Woolfolk 39.

Woolfolk again suggests that connections and comparisons are made between the students' experiences and the experiences of the people they encounter in their lessons. Also, as students gain clear and defined senses of themselves, having them assert and express their opinions is an enriching and developmentally appropriate learning experience.

Woolfolk deftly notes that in the formal operational stage, "the focus of thinking shifts...from what is to what might be. Situations do not have to be experienced to be imagined."[15] This distinction indicates much cognitive developmental growth from the earlier stages—preoperational and concrete operational. Woolfolk continues:

> Adolescents can deduce the set of "best" possibilities and imagine ideal worlds ...This explains why many students at this age develop interests in utopias, political causes, and social issues. They want to design better worlds, possible futures for themselves and may try to decide what is best. Feelings about any of these ideals may be strong.[16]

In fact, adolescents' feelings may become so strong that they possess another characteristic of the formal operational stage, adolescent egocentrism. "Unlike egocentric young children, adolescents do not deny that other people may have different perceptions and beliefs; the adolescents just become very focused on their own ideas...They reflect on others thinking as well but often assume that everyone else is as interested in their thoughts, feelings, and behavior."[17]

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[15] Woolfolk 37.
[16] Woolfolk 38.
[17] Woolfolk 38.

Because students are overly consumed with their own points, Woolfolk's suggestions that students write position papers and then debate with their peers and defend opposing positions on a given subject are both valid and effective.

Finally, Woolfolk suggests that teachers convey broad concepts in addition to specific facts. This approach helps formal operational thinkers to be more holistic and integrated in their thinking and learning. A lesson on the social life of Israelis serves as an entrée to their values, hopes, and realities of life.

In light of the characteristics of the formal operational stage, it becomes increasingly evident why "Israel experiences" are developmentally appropriate. A summer in Israel provides opportunities to: form personal opinions based on actual experiences, reinforce and/or dispel previously-held perceptions of the Land and people of Israel, encourage developing interests in other worlds, and facilitate a recognition that people experience the world differently.

Israel curriculum goals for teachers of children in the formal operational stage of cognitive development are:

1. To teach that Israel offers an alternative and viable way of life for Jews.
2. To bridge connections between American and Israeli Jews.
3. To encourage students to explore, defend, and fulfill their visions of Judaism and Israel.
4. To facilitate an environment where students are encouraged to be creative thinkers.
5. To demonstrate that summer in Israel offers the unique opportunity to know, learn about, and love Israel first-hand.

Suggested resources for Israel curricula intended for children in the concrete operational stage:

- *Benjamin Appel, Ben Gurion's Israel (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967).

- *S. Ascheim et al. The Fateful Decision (Jerusalem: WZO Youth and *Hechalutz* Department, 1974).
- *Rachel Baker, Chaim Weizmann: Builder of a Nation (New York:
- J. Messner, 1950).
- David Bamburger, A Young Person's History of Israel (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, 1994).
- Betsy Barth, Israel: The Heart of a People (Los Angeles: Tartak Resource Center,1998).
- *Noah Bee, In Spite of Everything (New York: Bloch, 1973).
- *Yeshayahu Ben Porath, Eitan Haber, and Zeev Schiff, *Entebbe* Rescue (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977).
- David Bianco, Five Decades of Israel's History: An Instant Lesson (Los Angeles: Torah Aura, 19).
- *Aharon Bier, *Eretz Yisrael*: Old and New (Jerusalem: WZO Department of Torah Education and Culture, 1976).
- *David Breakstone and Cindy Jochnowitz, The Israel Experience Book (New York: Bloch, 1977).
- *Joel Carmichael, Arabs and Jews (Reprints from Keeping Posted) (New York: UAHC, 1969).
- *Joan Comay and Moshe Perlman, Israel (New York: Macmillan, 1964).
- *Moshe Davis and Isaac Levy, All About Israel (London: JNF Education Department, 1973).
- Amos Elon, Understanding Israel (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, 1976).
- *Azriel Eisenberg, The Great Discovery: The Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Ableard-Schuman, 1956).
- *--- and Leah Ein Globe, editors, Home at Last (New York: Bloch, 1977).
- Harry Essrig and Abraham Segal, Israel Today (New York: UAHC, 1964).
- Dov Goldflam, The Borders of Israel: A Struggle for Peace and Security (Miami: Central Agency for Jewish Education, 1986).
- *Robert Goodman, Zionism and Israel (A Joint Project of the National Commission on the Teaching of Zionism and Israel and the Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago) (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1980).
- *David C. Gross, Pride of Our People (New York: Doubleday, 1979).
- *Joan Kagan, compiler, Beyond the Six Days (New York: UAHC, 1971).
- Greater Kansas City Section, National Council of Jewish Women, Hello Israel Source Book (1989).
- *Marcia Kaunfer, Proposal: A Simulation Game on the Issues of Boundaries and Arab Refugees (New York: National Curriculum

Research Institute of the American Association for Jewish Education, 1970).

- *Keeping Posted, Along the Road to Peace; Digging Into Our Past; Fighters of Israel, Ingathering: Kibbutz *Galuyyot*; Jerusalem: Why are the Nations in an Uproar?; To Israel With Love; The Kibbutz: Past, Present, and Future; The Palestinians, The Refugees and the PLO; Speaking Out for Israel; Tracing Roots Through Archaeology, Zionism: What It Is and Is Not (New York: UAHC).
- *Mina C. Klein and Arthur H. Klein, Israel: Land of the Jews (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).
- Nora Benjamin Kubie, The Jews of Israel: History and Sources (New York: Behrman House, 1975.
- *---, Israel (New York: Franklin Watts, 1968).
- *Meyer Levin, The Story of Israel (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966).
- *Amihay Mazar and Alexandra Trone, Voices for the Past (New York: Harvey House, 1967).
- Naomi Pasachoff, Basic Judaism for Young People, Volume One: Israel (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, 1986.).
- *Judah Pilch, The Concept of *Eretz Yisrael* in Jewish Literature (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1967).
- Wendy Robinson, One Can Make a Difference (Los Angeles: Tartak Resource Center, 1984).
- Seymour Rossel, Israel—Covenant People, Covenant Land (New York: UAHC, 1985).
- Debra Sagan, Exploring Contemporary Issues Facing Teens in Israel (Los Angeles: Tartak Resource Center, 1998).
- Sara Schacter and Sol Scharfstein, All About Israel (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1984).
- Sol Scharfstein, Understanding Israel (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1994).
- Alan Silverstein, For the Record (New York: Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, 1992).
- Levi Soshuk, Ten Lesson Plans on Israel (New York: WZO Department of Education and Culture, , 1973).
- *---, Israel: A Course on the Jewish State (New York: UAHC, 1971).
- *Irving Werstein, All the Furious Battles: The Saga of Israel's Army (New York: Meredith, 1968).
- Ira J. Wise, Who Are We? Who Are They?—The Israeli Jewish Experience: A Course of Study (Los Angeles: Tartak Resource Center, 1991).

*Indicates a suggestion from Teaching Israel, Part Two: An Annotated Guide to Textual Material (Abraham P. Gannes , ed.) (New York: The Department of Education and Culture in Diaspora, WZO, 1982).[18]

[18] A general note about resources—the textual materials represented are a fairly large sampling, albeit a sampling, of what is available for teaching about Israel. Books with older publishing dates were included because of their content, which is often timeless. For information on further resources, please consult the "National Jewish Organization Index" in the American Jewish Yearbook: A Record of Events and Trends in American And World Jewish Life (The American Jewish Committee, 1999)

Conclusion

When teaching about Israel in Reform Jewish education, educators must be cognizant of several factors. The history of Reform Judaism and Zionism share a past that is both long and complex. Such a past lies at the heart of the relationship between the two. As Reform Jews struggled to define their movement, they encountered both periods of pulling away, and turning towards, Zionism. Consequently, the governing body of rabbis for the Reform Movement, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, instituted various decisions, throughout its history, regarding the extent of the relationship between Reform Judaism and Zionism. Most recently, in 1999, the CCAR adopted the "Pittsburgh Principles," which declare:

> We are committed to *Medinat Yisrael*, the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel, and encourage *aliyah*, immigration to Israel...We affirm that both Israeli and Diaspora Jewry should remain vibrant and interdependent communities. As we urge Jews who reside outside Israel to learn Hebrew as a living language and to make periodic visits to Israel in order to study and to deepen their relationship the Land and its people, so do we affirm that Israeli Jews have much to learn from the religious life of Diaspora Jewish communities.[1]

For the time being, the leaders of the Reform Movement are quite clear regarding the centrality of the place of Israel. Studying about Israel, visiting Israel, and even making *Aliyah* enhance the definition of what it means to be a Reform Jew.

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[1] Reform Judaism 28.1 (fall, 1999): 11

That said, the core issue becomes how Reform Jewish children learn about Israel. In this regard, educators must examine why Israel is taught, what are the problems with how it is currently being taught, and what are valid guidelines for teaching about Israel. Upon doing so, one sees that Reform Jewish educators choose to teach Israel because they recognize that Israel is a crucial component of Judaism. In order to be fully Jewish, one must have knowledge of, and interactions with, the Land and her people. As far as teaching Israel, problems arise when Israel is portrayed in both unrealistic and antiquated lights. Children need to develop a relationship with Israel based on truth. Consequently, they must learn of her problems as well as her joys. At present, much of what is taught about Israel illustrates that Israel is a wonderfully geographically interesting land. Yet, it is much more than this. Therefore, Reform Judaism must also teach about Israel from the perspectives of a contemporary solution to timeless anti-Semitism and oppression, an essential and defining component in the history of Judaism, and tangible evidence of the relationship between Jews and God.

There are two main vehicles for teaching about Israel in Reform Judaism. They are textual materials and "Israel experiences." Both vehicles should emphasize religious, identity, and survival approaches. The religious approach emphasizes the importance of attaining knowledge in order to equip one better to engage in a Jewish life-style with religious practice. The identity approach encourages the recognition that Diaspora Jews are part of *Klal Yisrael*, the

peoplehood of Israel. The survival approach focuses on the dual and mutual relationship between Reform Judaism and Israel. Textual materials are more effective when they focus more in depth on one or two particular aspects of Israel rather than generally on many. "Israel experiences" can increase their efficacy by adding educational programs both prior to, and upon returning from, trips. In addition, components that address the educational needs and issues of the student's family are also quite helpful.

Lastly, all educational materials employed to teach Israel must be developmentally appropriate for the learners. Children experience different phases of cognitive development as they age, and material presented to them must always bear this in mind. Consequently, educators must identify and strive to attain appropriate educational goals when using any, and all, materials. There are a wealth of resources available for teaching about Israel. While some are out-dated, they are still excellent teacher resources.

Reform Jewish educators can greatly maximize their effectiveness in teaching Reform Jewish children about Israel if they are sensitive to the history of Reform Judaism and Zionism, recognize the inherent problems and goals of an Israel curriculum, objectively review textual materials and trips to Israel, and are aware of children's different developmental abilities. Then it can be said: Reform

Jewish educators "are committed to *Medinat Yisrael,* the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments."[2]

[2] Reform Judaism 28.1 (fall, 1999): 11

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