

# Reform Movement Israel Education Learning Outcomes

## Preamble:

Just as Israel continues to evolve, so too should our learning about and relationship to Israel. We believe these learning objectives will provide learners with a core framework for beginning and continuing to deepen and broaden their knowledge about Israel. We commit to reviewing this document every 3-5 years as a Movement.

## Endorsed by:



## Criteria for determining these outcomes include:

- They are measurable
- They expand with learners over their lifespan
- They represent multiple aspects of Jewish life, including *am* (people), *eretz* (Biblical connection to the land), and *medina* (modern Israel).
- They can be deconstructed into smaller sub-outcomes
- Taken together, they address cognitive, spiritual, and emotional aspects of connection with Israel. While the focus is on cognitive learning, any effective learning will have emotional and spiritual impact but this is not the central focus of these outcomes.

## Learning Outcomes with annotation by Dr. Lesley Litman, RJE

Learners are able to articulate Israel's (Zion's) role as a central force in the narrative of the Jewish people from Biblical times to the present.

*The terms "Israel" and "Zion" are used interchangeably here, an indication that Zion was present in the Jewish psyche from the earliest days of Jewish consciousness. Note the use of the term "Zion" and not Zionism (which, as a term, emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and has specific connotations as an ideology. Learners will be able to trace references to Israel/Zion, including multiple and varying references to the geographic contours of the place, from early Biblical times, through the rabbinic period, medieval times, and so forth.*

Learners can interpret and engage with the depth and breadth of Zionist thought as they seek to articulate their own personal understanding of the term.

*"Zionist" or Zionism here refers to the modern, nationalist idea that emerged in the 19th century. Political Zionism has emerged as the perspective that is most present in current discourse. The goal here is for learners to explore multiple Zionist thinkers from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. This outcome is also an opportunity to explore the ramifications of how the term is used in today's discourse while helping learners to find their own definition of the term that they can articulate to others.*

Learners demonstrate the capacity to recognize multiple narratives of Israel as a modern state while simultaneously constructing and developing their own unique narrative of Israel's role in their lives and in the life of the Jewish people

*Israel's role in their lives and in the life of the Jewish people. History is at its core a narrative of the way in which different individuals and groups experienced events and understood their ramifications. This understanding has become more evident in recent years leading to Jewish youth questioning the narrative of modern Israel they encountered in their Jewish education.*

This outcome seeks to responsibly provide learners with a range of narratives including a range of Jewish Israeli narratives, Israeli Palestinian Arabs narratives, Palestinian (non-Israeli) narratives, those of Arab countries and others as seen fit. The ultimate goal is for learners to arrive at a well-reasoned, nuanced narrative that, at its core, recognizes the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state.

**Learners can hold in tension the image of Israel as a religious and spiritual focal point (*Yerushalayim shel mala*) and as a real, live, messy, and human place (*Yerushalayim shel mata*)**

Learning about the ideal Israel and the real Israel is not an either/or proposition. This learning outcome points to the exploration of a more expansive vision of Israel, one aspirational and one reflective of the complexities of the real world. This outcome includes the skill of simultaneously holding multiple truths and navigating the tension embodied in this. Do not assume that young learners are unable to hold multiple truths and deal with dueling realities. They can and this learning outcome can help develop this skill in an intentional and nuanced way.

**Learners have a facility with Israeli cultural expression (including Israeli Reform Jewish expression) and explore its relationship to their sense of self.**

Learners will engage with cultural expression such as current music, literature, stories, art, food and more. This is to be done from a very early age creating what we call an “internal landscape” of love for Israeli culture, for example the songs that arise in our hearts when we think of a particular time in our lives or a favorite children’s book that brings back warm memories. The goal here is for these types of experiences to evoke feelings and memories that are core to learners’ identities.

**Learners are able to articulate Hebrew’s role as a central force in the narrative of the Jewish people from Biblical times to the present.**

Hebrew is the glue of the Jewish people. Its development as a vibrant modern language is attributable to the growth and development of Israel as a Jewish state. Hebrew is the gas in the engine of Israeli (and Jewish culture). A deep knowing of Israel includes facility with Modern Hebrew which, in turn, requires knowledge of those elements of the language (and culture) that are drawn from our ancient texts, reflecting Jewish thinking and life that have been part of us for millennia.

**Learners are able to tell the origin stories of the many ethnic, cultural, and religious groups that make up Israeli society.**

This learning outcome focuses on Israel as a shared space, shared by a multiplicity of groups each bringing a unique culture and history and sometimes a unique religious perspective. This includes a range of Jewish groups, a range of groups with Arab origins, and more. Embedded in this outcome is the idea that sharing space (especially a small space like the State of Israel) involves engaging with individuals who are different from one another.

**Learners can continuously discern which information sources about Israel are reliable and legitimate and explain their stance regarding the content they consume.**

In this time of sound bites, extensive access to social media, echo chambers and more, learners are encountering massive amounts of information and perspective. In earlier times this would have primarily entailed exploring the topic of media bias. In current times, it is not always easy to discern who or what organization has disseminated a particular social media post or headline. This outcome asks learners to both engage in the process of investigating where a particular piece of information was initiated from and to determine whether or not they find it valid. Embedded here is verification and personal evaluation of information.