

Essential Question: *What is the difference between Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael, and M'dinat Yisrael?*

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Understand that it is acceptable to struggle with God and the concept of God.
2. Explain the origins of the names *Yisrael* (Israel) and *Yehudim* (Jews).
3. Differentiate between the varying uses of the word *Yisrael*.

Materials Needed: Copies of the *Tanakh* or *chumash*

Getting Started: (15 minutes)

Distribute copies of the *Tanakh* or *chumashim*. Direct students to Genesis 32:23-31, the story of Jacob wrestling the angel. Students work in *hevruta* pairs to read the text and answer these questions: Who are the characters in the story? Who does Jacob think that he wrestled? Why was Jacob's name changed? What do you think the name *Yisrael* means? Reconvene as a class to discuss. Explain that *Yisrael* means "He who wrestles with God."

Exploring the Text:

1. (5 minutes) Ask students to look at the picture *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (page 13), and discuss how this picture is similar to or different from the image they had in mind.
2. (15 minutes) On the board, write *Am Yisrael*, *M'dinat Yisrael*, and *Eretz Yisrael* as headings to each of three columns. Explain that the word *Yisrael* has different meanings in each phrase:
 - a) *Am Yisrael* or *B'nei Yisrael*=the People of Israel or Children of Israel (the Jewish people)
 - b) *M'dinat Yisrael*=the State of Israel
 - c) *Eretz Yisrael*=the Land of Israel

As a class, categorize the following terms, and any others you can think of, into the appropriate column: *B'nei Yisrael* (*Am*); the Kingdom of Israel (*Eretz*); the Knesset, or Israeli parliament (*M'dinat*); Tel Aviv (*M'dinat*); the Promised Land (*Eretz*); *Sh'ma Yisrael* (*Am*).

3. (10 minutes) Read aloud **What's in a Name** (page 15). Explain that like the names *Yisrael* (Israel) and *Yehudim* (Jews), many biblical names have a backstory. Break students into three groups, and instruct each group to read one of the selections below, write down the name of a biblical character, and find the phrase that explains the origin of the name. Share with the class.

Group 1: Genesis 21:1-6 (*Isaac; because Sarah laughed*)

Group 2: Genesis 25:19-26 (*Jacob; because he held on to Esau's heel*)

Group 3: Exodus 2:1-10 (*Moses; because Pharaoh's daughter drew him out of the water*)

Wrapping It Up: (5 minutes) Explain that Judaism encourages us to struggle with the idea of God—to wrestle with God and Jewish law in pursuit of truth and justice—as long as it is done respectfully. Ask: Do you sometimes feel like Jacob, wrestling with the idea of God? Allow students to share.

Essential Question: *How does understanding our biblical history affect Judaism today?*

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Name two ways in which we learn about our biblical history: the *Tanakh* and archaeology.
2. Cite the Exodus as a biblical story that influences who we are today as Jews.
3. Explain how archaeology can help us to understand things about our ancient history.

Materials Needed: green onions, 2 foil pans filled with sand, an assortment of occupation-themed props such as paper and pencils, ladle and spatula, paintbrushes and watercolors

Getting Started: (5 minutes)

As a class, read aloud **How Do We Know...** (page 9), skipping the question in the middle. Explain that two of the ways we learn about our biblical history are through the stories contained in the *Tanakh* and through archaeology.

Exploring the Text:

1. (10 minutes) Break students into *hevruta* pairs, and instruct them to read the fictional diary entry on page 8 and answer these questions: Who was Rachel? Where did she live? What are some of her fears? On what holiday do we remember the events she describes?
2. (5 minutes) Read **From Exile to Exodus** (page 12) and ask students to give examples of Passover traditions that are designed to help us feel like we were personally freed from slavery in Egypt. (*eating maror, eating matzah, reclining at the table*) Ask students how this helps us to appreciate our freedom even more. (*We are less likely to take it for granted; we are lucky to live in a country with freedom of religion; Jews have not always been free; we want to work harder to make sure everyone is free.*)
3. **Experiential Learning:** (15 minutes) Explain that on Passover we sing a song called “Dayeinu,” which means “it would have been enough,” to show our gratitude to God. During the Passover seder, Iraqi Jews use green onions to gently hit their neighbors when singing “Dayeinu,” to symbolize the Egyptian taskmasters’ whips. Ask each *hevruta* to make a list of two or three things they are thankful for. For example, “Had God not given me loving parents, *Dayeinu*.” Distribute green onions and join students in singing their “Dayeinu.”
4. **Experiential Learning:** (10 minutes) Explain that the stories of the *Tanakh* teach us about who we are, and so can archaeology. We are now going to be archaeologists and discover the occupations of ancient peoples. Break students into two groups and distribute the foil pans of sand. Set out the assortment of props, and direct one group to choose props that are consistent with a specific occupation (such as writer, artist, or chef) and bury the props in the sand. Then direct the other group to be archaeologists and discover the occupation of the ancient peoples whose artifacts are buried here. Have the groups switch roles. Explain that throughout Israel, archaeological digs help us to learn how our ancestors lived, what they ate, how they prayed, etc.

Wrapping It Up: (5 minutes) Ask students to explain how archaeology and the *Tanakh* help us to understand our ancient history.

Tech Connection: Visit www.youtube.com and search for a video on the Jerusalem Archaeological Park. Or visit www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org and search for “Archaeology in Israel.” Post something you learned in the Online Learning Center.



Essential Question: *What characterized Am Yisrael's evolution from a family into a nation?*

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Articulate that *Am Yisrael* evolved from a small family into a nation.
2. Name some characteristics of biblical Jewish leaders.
3. Begin to recognize the theme of exile and return in Jewish history.

Materials Needed: Long strips of construction paper, markers, paper, pens

Getting Started: (5 minutes)

Read aloud **Laying a Foundation** (page 9). Ask: How do these values still affect the Jewish nation's identity today? (*Giving tzedakah is important to Jews; we care about social justice.*)

Exploring the Text:

1. (5 minutes) Break students into *hevruta* pairs and instruct them to number the biblical quotes in **From Family to Nation** (page 10). Explain that the *Tanakh* records how our ancestors started as a small family with just Abraham and Sarah, but grew into a nation and is still growing. This shows that God's promise to Abraham was kept. (*Activity answers: 3, 5, 1, 4, 2*)
2. (10 minutes) Explain that as a nation, our biblical ancestors had many strong leaders. Direct each *hevruta* to read and solve the historical crises in the boxes in **Leading the Jewish Nation** (page 11). Students should then use the answer key to check their answers.
3. **Experiential Learning:** (10 minutes) Instruct students to imagine that these leaders had access to cell phones, and that they might text a friend their thoughts about their decisions. Then, instruct each *hevruta* to write a short text message conversation for each of the Jewish leaders in **Leading the Jewish Nation** (page 11).
4. (5 minutes) Tell students that the themes of exile and return have repeated themselves over and over throughout Jewish history. Direct students to look at the map **The Land of Israel under Changing Empires** (page 13), and explain that due to changes in control of the land, our ancestors moved around a lot. We will be spending the next number of weeks learning about the migrations of our ancestors and the reasons behind these movements.
5. (10 minutes) Explain that our class will be making a historical timeline that we will be adding to throughout the year. Distribute long slips of construction paper and markers. Direct students to look for historical events, either from the timeline on pages 8 and 9 or from elsewhere in the chapter. Instruct students to each choose one event, write out a brief description and the date or approximate date of the event, and draw something meaningful that adds to our understanding of the event. You might want to divide the chapter amongst students to avoid duplication.

Wrapping It Up: (5 minutes) Students post their timeline pieces in chronological order on the wall of the classroom.

Tech Connection: As an alternative, create a digital timeline using Microsoft Word or online tools (search Google for "create a timeline") and post it to the Online Learning Center.

