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The Birth of the Modern State of Israel

Turning Our Dream into Reality

textbook pages 80–89

Chapter Overview

Unable to resolve the tensions and fighting between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine, the British handed the problem over to the United Nations. The UN devised a partition plan, dividing Palestine into two states that no longer would be ruled by the British: one Arab and one Jewish. The new Jewish state was immediately met by the challenges of war, hostile neighbors, and the absorption of hundreds of thousands of poor Jewish immigrants.

core concepts

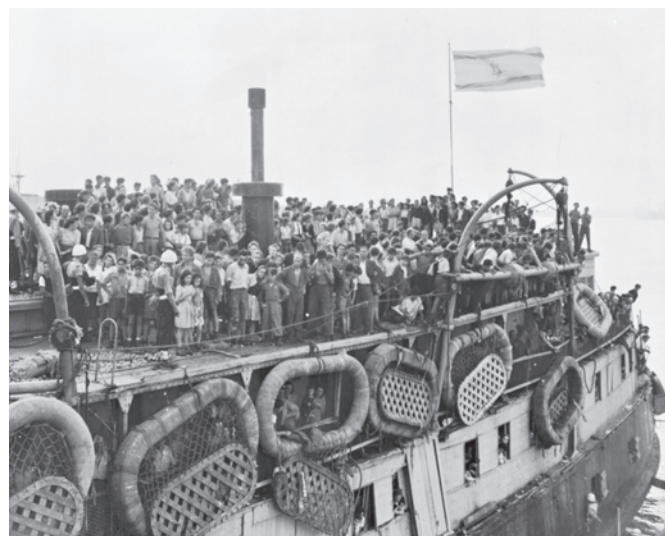
- The Jews of Palestine were an emancipated people who believed that a Jewish state was possible and were prepared to defend it.
- When the dream of a Jewish state became a reality, Jews were faced with the challenge of absorbing hundreds of thousands of new immigrants.
- The achievements of Israeli Jews often add to the pride Diaspora Jews feel in their own Jewish identities.

Learning Objectives



Students will be able to

- Identify at least two challenges faced by the Jews of Palestine and two faced by the Arabs of Palestine.
- Describe how the spirit of Jewish unity helped the Jews overcome the challenges they faced.
- Apply what they have learned to explain how the achievements of Israeli Jews might add to the pride of Diaspora Jews.



Teaching Opportunities

Getting Started

Explain that one of the most remarkable achievements of the Jewish people has been our continued devotion to the Land of Israel, *Eretz Yisrael*. Read aloud and discuss the following text from Psalm 137:5–6:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither.

Let my tongue cleave to my palate if I stop thinking of you,

If I do not set Jerusalem above my greatest joy.

Ask: Do you think that it is necessary for all Jews to feel connected to Israel? How might commitment to Israel help Jews around the world remain as one community?

Encourage students to respond honestly. As with most other issues, if students are permitted to be candid, they are more likely to remain open to different views. Thus, if you have students who do not feel connected to Israel or who do not think that such connections are critical to Judaism, permit them to speak freely and encourage others to voice differing opinions and experiences.

Explain that in this chapter students will read about the creation of the modern State of Israel. Impress upon students that while they may take the State of Israel for granted, for almost two thousand years there was no independent Jewish state.

page 80 The Big Picture

Write the following Talmudic teaching on the board: *kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba-zeh*, “all Jews are responsible for one another.” Ask: How is this teaching reflected in the deeds described in this passage? You may want to refer to this teaching later in the chapter, when students read “The Surviving Remnant” on page 81 and “A Flood of Newcomers” on pages 87–88.

page 81 The Surviving Remnant

Ask: Why did so many Jews end up in DP (displaced persons) camps rather than in their original homes? (*Some could not go home because their previous lives had been shattered; some encountered antisemitic attacks.*) What did other Jews do to help these survivors? (*Underground fighters and soldiers helped move many survivors to the DP camps; the JDC [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee] provided necessities such as food and clothing.*)

If your students created a poster about the JDC when studying chapter 4, display the poster and review the history of the JDC. Alternatively, you can have

your students turn back to page 33 and ask them to explain why and how “The Joint” was formed.

pages 80–81 **Timeline**

Ask students to calculate how many years ago the State of Israel was established. Have them compare the results with how long ago the United States declared its independence from Britain (1776) or with the date when some other significant event occurred, such as when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone (1875). You may want students to research and create their own timeline of events that puts the creation of the modern State of Israel in historical context.

page 82 **Britain and the Jewish Refugee Problem**

Tell students that problems continued because different nations had conflicting interests. Ask: What did the British want? (*Middle Eastern oil and to avoid angering the Arabs*) What did the Arabs want? (*no Jewish immigration to Palestine*) What did the Jews want? (*to freely immigrate to Palestine*) How did the British resolve their problem? (*handed it over to the UN*)

Explain that Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, India, Guatemala, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia were the eleven countries that were represented in the UNSCOP. Invite a student to locate these countries on a world map.

page 82 **Underground Resistance**

After students read this feature, ask: Do you think this action would be acceptable according to the ethics of today’s Israeli military? Explain why or why not. (Students may want to refer to the “Then & Now” feature on page 61 of their textbook, and you may want to read aloud the section on the Israel Defense Forces doctrine found on page 45 of this teaching guide.)

page 82 **Photograph: Survivors Studying Hebrew**

Ask: Why do you think these people began to learn Hebrew even before they immigrated to Palestine? How might the need to speak a language in daily life motivate someone to learn it?

You may want to invite students to share words they know in modern Hebrew or refer back to a Hebrew dictionary your class made as part of the “Family Connection” activity described on page 28 of this teaching guide.

page 83 **Exodus 1947 and Photograph: Passengers Aboard Exodus 1947**

Have students write acrostic poems describing the voyage of a passenger on the *Exodus 1947*. Suggest that students use the letters of the word ALIYAH to begin the lines of their poems. Thus, the poem would have six lines; the first word in

line 1 would begin with an “A,” the first word in line 2 would begin with an “L,” the first word in line 3 would begin with an “I,” and so on, for a total of six lines.

If you are creating a literary magazine, as described on page 9 of this guide, save students’ work.

pages 83–84 **The UN Partition Plan**

Present the list of thirteen nations of the UN General Assembly who voted against the partition plan: Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen.

Ask: Why might these nations have voted against the partition plan? (*Many are Arab nations, biased in favor of the Arabs who were against the plan.*)

Why wasn’t David Ben-Gurion totally overjoyed at the announcement that the British would be leaving Palestine? (*He feared that the Jews would soon be at war with the Arabs.*)

pages 84, 86 **Israel’s War of Independence**

Invite volunteers to read aloud one paragraph each. Have students locate Jerusalem on the map on page 86. Ask: According to the partition plan, under whose control would Jerusalem be? (*international authority*) After the War of Independence, who controlled the Old City of Jerusalem? (*Jordan*) Why would that be a problem for the Jews? (*They could not go to the Western Wall; there were synagogues and homes in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City.*)

Use the following activity to underscore the rapid change of events and mood. Give each student a sheet of white paper. Instruct students to fold their papers in half, forming two 5 ½" x 8 ½" rectangles. Have them write “May 14, 1948” at the bottom of the left rectangle and “May 15, 1948” at the bottom of the right rectangle. Ask students to draw illustrations in each rectangle depicting the events of May 14 and May 15, 1948.

Invite students to share and discuss their illustrations with the class.

page 85 **Famous Figures: Golda (Myerson) Meir**

Remind students that in the United States only a native-born citizen can become the U.S. president. Ask: What do you learn about Israel from the fact that Golda Meir was Israel’s fourth prime minister? (*The Israeli prime minister can be an immigrant.*) Explain that any Israeli citizen over the age of twenty-one can be elected to the Knesset, Israel’s Parliament.

page 86 **Map: Israel Survives**

Compare the Arab and Jewish territories that were designated in the partition plan to the actual borders after the War of Independence. (*The Arabs lost land while the Jews gained land.*) Ask: After the war, was Jerusalem in the Jewish or



Arab territory? (*It was a divided city.*) Jordan controlled East Jerusalem. Who controlled West Jerusalem? (*Jews*)

pages 86–87 The Palestinian Refugees

Ask: What happened to the Arabs who had been living in territories that became part of the State of Israel. (*Many fled or were forced from their homes. Some remained in Israel but met with discrimination.*) How do these events from 1948 still have an impact on us today? (*Tensions and violence continue to exist between Arabs and Jews; disputes continue regarding who has the rights to the Land of Israel; Arabs still meet with discrimination.*)

page 87 Palestinians as Pawns

Ask: Why was Jordan the only Arab nation that accepted Palestinian refugees as citizens? (*The other Arab countries wanted the rest of the world to view the terrible conditions the Palestinians were living in and hold the Jews responsible.*) How did Israel hope to use the Palestinians' weak position for its benefit? (*It would withhold compensating the Palestinians until the Arabs made compromises for a peace plan.*)

pages 87–88 A Flood of Newcomers

If your students are not familiar with the communities and culture of Middle Eastern and North African Jews you may want to bring in books with photographs that show the life and customs of Jews from these countries and share some aspects of their culture, such as crafts, music, and foods. If you serve food, first check the dietary regulations your synagogue observes and any dietary concerns your students may have, including food allergies.

Your cantor may have CDs that you can borrow. Alternatively, your cantor or music teacher may want to teach students to sing a prayer using a traditional Mizrahi melody.

page 88 Photographs: Operation Magic Carpet and A Tent Camp

Invite students to imagine that they are one of the people in either of these photographs. Ask them to write a journal entry describing the events of the day the photo was taken. If you are creating a literary magazine, as described on page 9 of this guide, save students' work.

page 88 Looking to the Future

Invite a volunteer to read this passage aloud. Then, have students join you in reading a prayer for the State of Israel and a prayer for peace. The text for such prayers is available in many prayer books as well as on the Internet.

You may also want the class to sing Hatikvah. (See *Siddur Sim Shalom*, 1998 Shabbat and Festival edition, page 395; *Gates of Prayer*, 1975 edition, page 765; *Kol Haneshamah*, 1994 edition, page 851.)

page 89 **Then & Now**

After students have completed the activity, ask: In what ways is Israel a model for how we can help people in need? What Jewish values compel us to aid others in need? How do you feel when you read about Israel helping other nations? Encourage students to research Israel's history of providing humanitarian aid.



Family Connection

Encourage students to interview family members who recall when Israel became a state. You may have the class generate interview questions.

In addition or alternatively, you may want to develop one of the family-based activities described on pages 7–8 of this guide.