Pre-Trip Student Workbook

CIE
Center for Israel Education

To Israel and Back:
A Journey to Our Future

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Name:_____

Lesson 1
What is My Connection? Introduction to P.O.W.E.R. and Israel's People

How has the connection between Jews and the land of Israel been evident over time? How do Jews related to Israel in different ways?

How did Zionism reinvigorate the connection between Jews and Israel?

What are the components of Jewish national identity? How can diversity and national identity coexist?

How large a population is necessary to create and sustain a state?

Go around the room and read the different definitions of Zionism. Choose the ones with which you most identify and paste them in the space below:

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"And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him, Raise your eyes and look out from where you are to the north and south, to the east and west, for I give all the land that you see to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring too can be counted. Up, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you."

-Genesis 13:14-17

In 586 BCE, the Babylonians invaded the autonomous Jewish kingdom in the land where Israel now stands. The Jews were sent into exile and thus began the Jews' longing for the return to Mount Zion, Jerusalem, and the Temple.

This longing is captured in Psalm 137: "By the waters of Babylon there we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres…How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" During Jewish marriage ceremonies, the groom even recites a line from this psalm: "If I forget you O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skills." (Psalm 137:5)

This longing included both the Jews' desire to return to the land of Israel and the desire for self-determination and autonomy. Jews wanted to decide their own fate, rather than forever be a minority in someone else's state; they wanted to be independent, just as they were in the Jewish kingdom during biblical times.

Today, the word "Zionism" is used to refer to both the ancient longing described above, as well as the ideological, political, and religious phenomenon of Zionism that began in the late 19th century. Zionism is a Jewish liberation movement, seeking to liberate the people from someone else's control. The term "Zionism" was coined by Nahum Birnbaum in 1891 to describe an ideology that suggested that Jews are a nation and should be together in a single homeland. Theodor Herzl founded the Zionist movement in 1897 as a political movement. Zionism had a religious strand as well; funded by donors from Europe, religious Jews would go to the land of Israel to pray for all Jews and to eventually be buried in Jerusalem.

"Zionism is derived from the word Zion. Zion, the name of a hill in Jerusalem, has since olden times been the poetic designation for Jerusalem. Since that city was regarded as the focal point of the Jewish land, it became by extension the poetic name of this land and of the Jewish nation insofar as it was rooted in the soil of Palestine and had become one with it. When the Roman legions dissolved this unity, the word Zion acquired the flavor of longing; the hope of a national rebirth was embodied in it…Zion became the ideal of the Jewish tribe and accompanied it on its road of life and sorrow for two thousand years. This ideal is the foundation of Zionism, but it did not build on it until an unconscious emotion had become thinking consciousness, sorrowful yearning had turned into an active will, and an unfruitful ideal had become a saving idea."

Nahum Birnbaum (as quoted in Bein, Alex. *The Jewish Question: Biography of a World Problem.* Rutherford, NJ.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990. P. 284)

Look at the quotes you chose and pasted on page 4. Which movement would you have belonged to in the 1880s? How do you want to be identified in terms of Judaism? In terms of Zionism? In terms of your connection to Israel?

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In order for a state to exist, it must have power. Copy/fill in the acronym from the board:

P_____

O_____

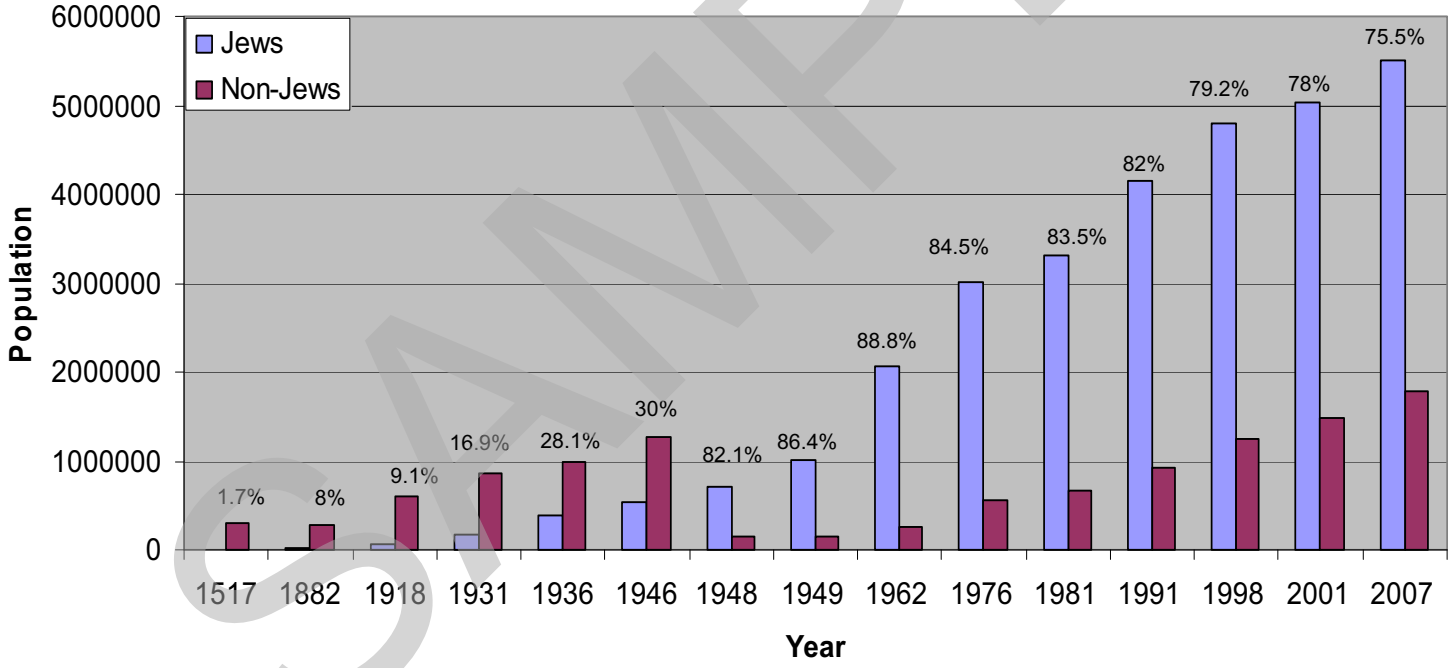
W_____

E_____

R_____

Are there components a state would need that do not fit this acronym? Can you create one?

Can you measure U.S. power, as opposed to another country's power, using this acronym? Look at the chart below and answer: Are there enough Jews to sustain a Jewish and democratic state before 1918? Why or why not? In 1948? Today? What other information would you need to make this decision?



"The number of immigrants which we have been able to bring into the country hitherto is not large enough…Unless we are in a position at least to double the number our real progress in Palestine will be exceedingly slow."

Quoted from a letter by Chaim Weizmann to Samuel Untermeyer of Palm Beach. Written in New York on February 6, 1924. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*. Volume XII. ed. Joshua Freundlich, Transaction Books, Rutgers University, 1977, Letter #94, p. 121.

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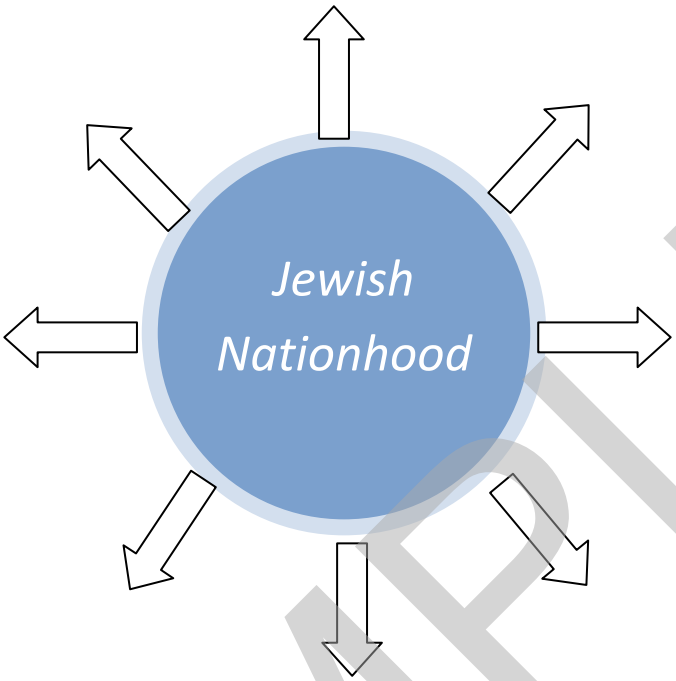
Work as a class: What are the factors that make Jews a nation, as opposed to a random group of people? What common experiences unite Jews as a people?



Discuss: What components of your Jewish identity are evident in this web? To be part of a nation, how many components of nationhood should one have and which do you feel are more important than others?

Share your answers with the class.

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"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing." - Genesis 12:2 (God speaking to Abraham)

"וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וַאֲבָרֶכְךָ וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וֶהְיֵה בְּרָכָה..."

"And He said, I am God, the God of your father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation." - Genesis 46:3 (God speaking to Jacob)

"וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי הָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ אַל-תִּירָא מֵרְדָה מִצְרַיְמָה כִּי-לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׂימְךָ שָׁם..."

Read the following excerpt from the Zionist visionary Herzl:

Theodor Herzl, “The Jewish Question,” 1897
(Abbreviated from the original by Kenneth W. Stein, 11/22/07)

No one can deny the gravity of the situation of the Jews. Wherever they live in perceptible numbers, they are more or less persecuted. Their equality before the law, granted by statute, has become practically a dead letter. They are debarred from filling even moderately high positions, either in the army, or in any public or private capacity. And attempts are made to thrust them out of business also: "Don't buy from Jews!" Attacks in Parliaments, in assemblies, in the press, in the pulpit, in the street, on journeys--for example, their exclusion from certain hotels--even in places of recreation, become daily more numerous. The forms of persecution varying according to the countries and social circles in which they occur. In Russia, imposts are levied on Jewish villages; in Rumania, a few persons are put to death; in Germany, they get a good beating occasionally; in Austria, Anti-Semites exercise terrorism over all public life; in Algeria, there are traveling agitators; in Paris, the Jews are shut out of the so-called best social circles and excluded from clubs. Shades of anti-Jewish feeling are innumerable. But this is not to be an attempt to make out a doleful category of Jewish hardships.....Everything tends, in fact, to one and the same conclusion, which is clearly enunciated in that classic Berlin phrase: "Juden Raus" (Out with the Jews!)

CAUSES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

We shall not again touch on those causes which are a result of temperament, prejudice and narrow views... political and economical causes. Modern Anti-Semitism is not to be confounded with the religious persecution of the Jews of former times. It does occasionally take a religious bias in some countries, but the main current of the aggressive movement has now changed. In the principal countries where Anti-Semitism prevails, it does so as a result of the emancipation of the Jews... the equal rights of Jews before the law cannot be withdrawn where they have once been conceded.

EFFECTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM

The oppression we endure does not improve us, for we are not a whit better than ordinary people. Oppression naturally creates hostility against oppressors, and our hostility aggravates the pressure. It is impossible to escape from this eternal circle...Our national character is too historically famous, and, in spite of every degradation, too fine to make its annihilation desirable. We might perhaps be able to merge ourselves entirely into surrounding races, if these were to leave us in peace for a period of two generations. But they will not leave us in peace. For a little period they manage to tolerate us, and then their hostility breaks out again and again. The world is provoked somehow by our prosperity, because it has for many centuries been accustomed to consider us as the most contemptible among the poverty-stricken. In its ignorance and narrowness of heart, it fails to observe that prosperity weakens our Judaism and extinguishes our peculiarities. It is only pressure that forces us back to the parent stem; it is only hatred encompassing us that makes us strangers once more. Thus, whether we like it or not, we are now, and shall henceforth remain, a historic group with unmistakable characteristics common to us all.

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