**Ancient Israel Lesson**

*Normal Park Museum Magnet School*

November 18, 2021 | 2:00-3:00pm

Inbal Lev & R’ Keilah Lebell

Outcomes:

1. Students feel curious about Ancient Israel and what it has to do with modern events, major religions practiced today, and American values.
2. Students can identify basic geographical sites and features of Ancient Israel and where it is in relation to Mesopotamia (Iraq), Egypt, and Syria.
3. Students can summarize the basic story of the Israelites in relation to the land of Canaan.

Lesson:

| *2 mins* | Brief Introductions: Inbal - an Israeli from modern day Israel; R’ Keilah - a rabbi  |
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| *1 min*  | Opening question (raise your hand): Have you ever been to Israel? To the Middle East? It’s very different, right?! Some of you might wonder, what does Israel, the Middle East, the history of Ancient Israel have to do with me and with events today… |
| *6 mins* | Three reasons why the history of ancient Israel is important:1. Impact on American Values: Display or read a quote from the opening of the Declaration of Independence. Recognize? **→** The values developed in Ancient Israel are part of American foundational values.
2. Modern Conflict: Display or read a recent headline about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **→** There has been conflict in this region of the world since the beginning and we’re going to talk a little bit about why this land and the people who lived there are so significant.
3. Three major religions: Display image of religious Jew, Muslim and Christian. **→** These religions were born in this region and are rooted in the story of Ancient Israel.
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| *25 mins* | The when, where and how of Ancient Israel:* WHEN - basic context for Ancient Israel’s place in history
	+ Make a human timeline among the seated students. Hand out cards with dates to appropriate students to illustrate the span of time. Have certain students stand to indicate a significant event or person.
* WHERE - geography, topography and climate
	+ Make a human map to illustrate the fertile crescent - Inbal as Israel (place sticker labels indicating key locations)
	+ Volunteers come up to be surrounding countries or bodies of water (each wears a paper crown with the name of the location and makes the shape of the region with their body)
	+ R’ Keilah points out where it’s hot and dry, where it’s moist, where it’s good for farming **→** reliance on God in Israel (pray for rain)
	+ R’ Keilah points out Trade route
	+ Pass around topographical map for students to look at (hand sanitizer) - find one location you recognize and notice what kind of region it is (mountain or valley)
* HOW - basic story of how Ancient Israelite society and Israel came to be
	+ This story is found in the Hebrew Bible (TaNaKh), multiple writings gathered together and considered holy to Jews
	+ Refer to human timeline and to maps
	+ Highlights: Abraham from Mesopotamia to Canaan (one God), Joseph from Canaan to Egypt, Israelites from Egypt to Canaan (Torah, Commandments), United Israelite kingdom (Saul, David, Solomon), Breakup of Israelite Kingdom (Israel & Judah), Babylonian conquest and exile, return to homeland under the Persian Empire
		- Abraham— monotheism- smashing idols
		- Moses and Pharaoh
		- Revelation at Sinai- laws for free people
		- Saul was moody
		- Story of David and Goliath - the small over the mighty
		- David wasn’t perfect either
		- Solomon was wise, but extravagant

**→** human kings cannot be completely trusted, only God* Kingdom’s disintegrated because of baseless hatred
* Temple destroyed, but we make our spiritual home wherever we are
 |
| *10 mins* | Synthesis- turn to a partner and share:1. One thing you found interesting or didn’t know before.
2. A question you still have about Ancient Israel

Share back: a few volunteers share answers |
| *1 min* | Close: you are welcome to be in touch with us to learn more and to visit a local Jewish Synagogue! |

Materials:

* ~~Sticker labels for each of the following: Jerusalem, Jordan River, Tigris River, Euphrates River, Nile (River), Red Sea, Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea (Salt Sea), Sinai Peninsula / Inbal~~
* ~~Paper crowns for each of the following: Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Greece / Inbal~~
* ~~Projector / Inbal confirm~~
* ~~Computer that connects to projector / R’ Keilah has macbook pro we can use - Inbal confirm~~
* [~~Google slides prepared~~](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1NjzrlgKNF7nkz-jfe1IXjSDOnrMD6RaHBqHbxFcOtSU/edit?usp=sharing) ~~/ R’ Keilah prepares content and Inbal designs~~
* 3D Map of Ancient Israel / R’ Keilah
* ~~4x6 Cards with the following: Common Era, BCE (Before the Common Era), 3000 BCE, 2000 BCE, 1800 BCE, 1400 BCE, 1300 BCE, 1280 BCE, 1000 BCE, 587 BCE, 520 BCE / Inbal~~

Lesson Notes:

| *2 mins* | Brief Introductions: * Inbal - an Israeli from modern day Israel
* R’ Keilah - a rabbi, teacher of the Jewish tradition

*We’re going to go on a very fast journey through history - buckle up and pay attention!* |
| --- | --- |
| *1 min*  | Opening question (raise your hand): * Have you ever been to Israel? To the Middle East? It’s very different, right?!
* Some of you might wonder, what does Israel, the Middle East, the history of Ancient Israel have to do with me and with events today…
 |
| *6 mins* | Three reasons why the history of Ancient Israel is important (SLIDES 2-5):1. Impact on American Values: Display or read a quote from the opening of the Declaration of Independence. Recognize? **→** The values developed in Ancient Israel are part of American foundational values.
2. Modern Conflict: Display or read a recent headline about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **→** There has been conflict in this region of the world since the beginning and we’re going to talk a little bit about why this land is such a hotbed for conflict and for inspiration.
3. Three major religions: Display image of religious Jew, Muslim and Christian. **→** These religions were born in this region and are rooted in the story of Ancient Israel. All of them begin with the patriarch Abraham.
 |
| *25 mins* | *We’re going to need your help!*The when, where and how of Ancient Israel:* WHEN - basic context for Ancient Israel’s place in history
	+ Make a human timeline among the seated students. Hand out cards with dates to appropriate students to illustrate the span of time. Have certain students stand to indicate a significant event or person.
	+ Invite students to suggest where the (approximate) dates should go (brief)
		- Common Era
		- BCE - Before the Common Era
		- 3000 BCE - (Nomadic tribes settle in Canaan)
		- 2000 BCE - (Old Babylonian Period)
		- 1800 BCE - Abraham & Sarah (famine ~1850), Hebrews emerge
		- 1400 BCE - Moses born (1393)
		- 1300 BCE - (Mosaic Period)
		- 1280 BCE - Exodus from Egypt, Sinai
		- 1000 BCE - Monarchy Begins
		- 587 BCE - Kingdom of Judah Destroyed, Babylonian Exile
		- 520 BCE - Israelites get to return under the Persians (Cyrus)
* WHERE - geography, topography and climate
	+ Slide: Where in the world
	+ Make a human map to illustrate the fertile crescent - Inbal as Israel (place sticker labels indicating key locations):
		- Jerusalem, Jordan River, Tigris River, Euphrates River, Nile (River), Red Sea, Sea of Galilee, Dead Sea (Salt Sea), Sinai Peninsula
	+ Volunteers come up to be surrounding countries or bodies of water (each wears a paper crown with the name of the location and makes the shape of the region with their body):
		- Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Greece
	+ R’ Keilah asks where it’s hot and dry, where it’s moist, where it’s good for farming (Slides 7-8) **→** reliance on God in Israel (pray for rain); farming allows more time for thinking about big questions
	+ R’ Keilah points out Trade route - hotbed of economic activity and conflict - empire after empire conquers this little area
	+ Pass around topographical map for students to look at (hand sanitizer) - find one location you recognize and notice what kind of region it is (mountain or valley)

*Now we’re ready to tell the story…** HOW - basic story of how Ancient Israelite society and Israel came to be, refer to human timeline and to maps
	+ This story is found in the Hebrew Bible (TaNaKh), multiple writings gathered together and considered holy to Jews
	+ Highlights:
1. Abraham from Mesopotamia to Canaan (one God) - (Slides: Abraham’s journey, patriarch family tree)
	1. Abraham smashing the idols
	2. the patriarchs and their relationship with God
2. Joseph from Canaan to Egypt, famine, settling in Egypt, slavery
3. Hebrew Slaves Exodus from Egypt to Canaan (Torah, Commandments)
	1. The importance of personal freedom, becoming a free nation bound only by God’s laws, Passover
4. Settling in Canaan - Tribes assigned territory - Slide 11 - Judges… Conflict leads people to elect a King...
5. United Israelite kingdom (moody Saul, hero David, wise Solomon builds Temple) - slide 12
	1. David and Goliath - the small over the mighty, Saul’s jealousy, Batsheva
6. Solomon was wise, but extravagant - Breakup of Israelite Kingdom (Israel & Judah) **→** human kings cannot be completely trusted, only God - slide 13
7. Assyria conquers Israel - 10 lost tribes - only southern kingdom of Judah left (“Jews”)
8. Babylonian conquest and exile
9. Return to homeland under the Persian Empire, rebuilding Temple… So begins conquest after conquest - Jews scattered but remain spiritually attached to the land
	1. Kingdom’s disintegrated because of baseless hatred - we must be kind, compassionate to each other
	2. Temple destroyed, but we make our spiritual home wherever we are
	3. Love your neighbor as yourself - the whole Torah
	4. Prophets: our goal is not power or empty ritual; it is justice, peace, and freedom - caring for the stranger, the orphan and the widow - the most vulnerable in society
 |
| *10 mins* | Synthesis- turn to a partner and share:1. One thing you found interesting or didn’t know before.
2. A question you still have about Ancient Israel

Share back: a few volunteers share answers |
| *1 min* | Close: you are welcome to be in touch with us to learn more and to visit a local Jewish Synagogue! |