

Navigating Complexity:

Israel Education in the 21st Century



Questions We Will Explore

How has Israel been situated in American Jewish life and American Jewish education?

What are the goals of Israel education?

How can I, as a Jewish educator, navigate multiple, often competing goals for Israel education?



**Question
1:
The
Context**

How has Israel been situated in American Jewish life and American Jewish education?



Common Wisdom

A generation ago, Israel was the glue that held together American Jews of different religious denominations and political persuasions.

Today, Israel is the third rail of American Jewish life.

Help me adjust the learning:



*I've heard
that before.*



*This is new
to me.*





Experts Say:

Today Israel is “so deeply ideologically rooted and so divisive” (Daniel Gordis, 2019) that it has become “one of the most contested issues” confronting American Jewish institutions (Jack Wertheimer, 2018) and the one “most likely to destabilize” those institutions and their leaders (Yehuda Kurtzer, et. al., 2019). In fact, “Israel used to bring American Jews together. Now it is driving them apart” (Dov Waxman, 2016).

**YOUR
TURN**

**TYPE YOUR
ANSWERS IN
THE CHAT**

What evidence do you have to suggest that Israel has become contentious and/or contested in American Jewish life?

Complicating the Common Wisdom

At many points in time in the history of modern Zionism, American Jews have disagreed about what ought to happen in the land of Israel and what role, if any, American Jews ought to play in it.



Time Travel Itinerary

We will take stops in the:

- 1880s
- 1940s
- 1950s
- 1960s
- 1980s

By the end of our trip, you should understand that...

At some moments, American Jews have been united in purpose. At other moments, American Jews have been engaged in vociferous disagreements about Israel.





Time Machine Stop 1: The Late 19th Century (Late 1800s)

The Rise of Political Zionism

American Jewish Anti-Zionists

Jewish religious expression, not Jewish nationalism



American Jewish Zionists

Zionism is the Jewish form of American liberal ideas





Time Machine Stop 2: The Mid 1940s (1945-1948)

After the Shoah, Before the State



American Jews displayed
“a unity of purpose on a
scale unprecedented in
the modern history of
the Jews.”

(Arthur Goren, 1999)





Time Machine Stop 3: The 1950s

The Early State & McCarthyism

Integration of Israel into American Judaism

Israel begins to permeate the cultural institutions of American Judaism



Unease about Israel in American Judaism

American Jewish leaders sidelined in Israeli policy decisions

American Jewish community fears accusations of dual loyalty





Time Machine Stop 4: The Late 1960s and Early 1970s (1967-1977)

After the Six Day War



A “golden era” (Sasson, 2014) of American Jewish relationships to Israel in which Israel functioned as the “civil religion of American Jews” (Woocher, 1986)





Time Machine Stop 5: The Late 20th Century (1980s & 1990s)

The Lebanon War, the First Intifada &
Increasing American Jewish Access to Israel

Right-Leaning Jews

Push back when the Israeli government leaned left



Left-Leaning Jews

Push back when the Israeli government leaned right





Welcome Home to 2022

Growing political polarization in *both* the
Israeli and U.S. contexts

Right-Leaning Jews

Push back against left-leaning Jews



Left-Leaning Jews

Push back against right-leaning Jews



YOUR TURN

TYPE YOUR
ANSWERS IN
THE CHAT

Option 1:

What are the major take-aways of our travels through time?

Option 2:

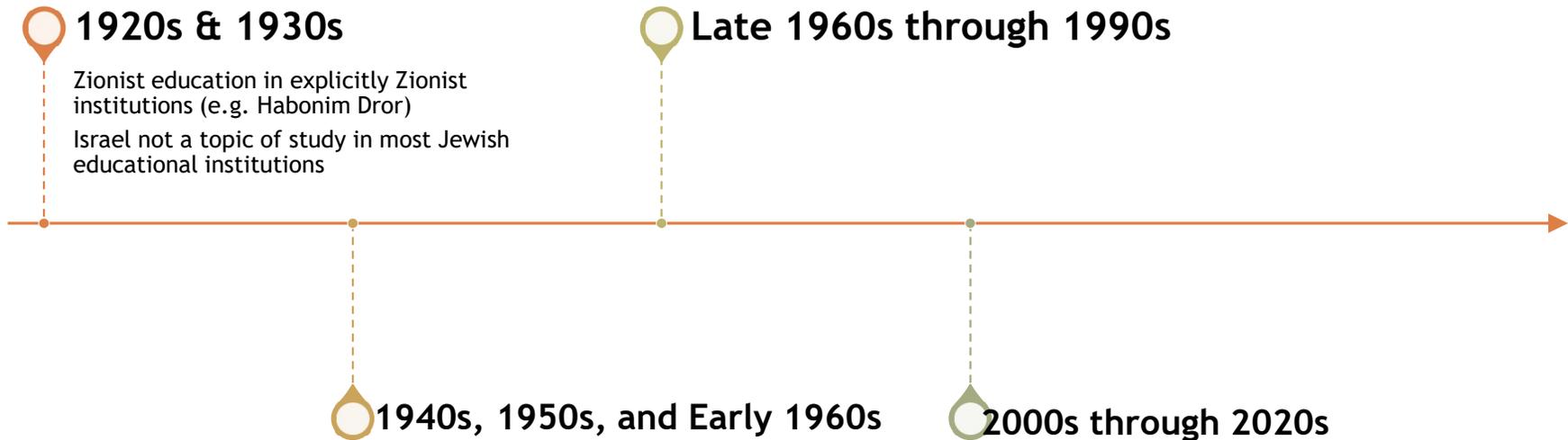
How has Israel been situated in American Jewish life?

**Question
1:
The
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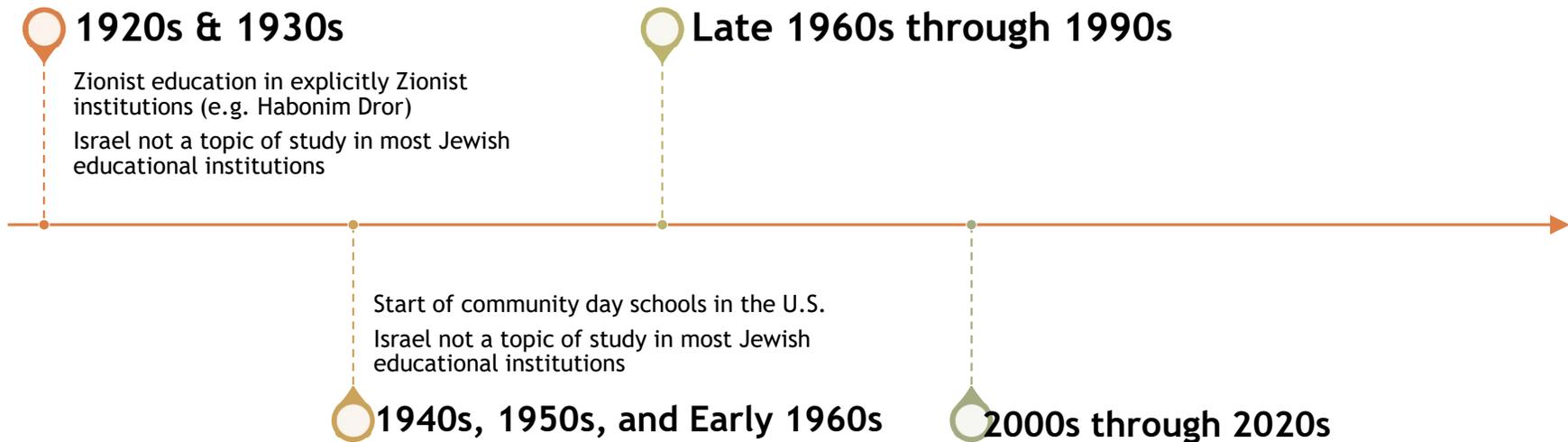
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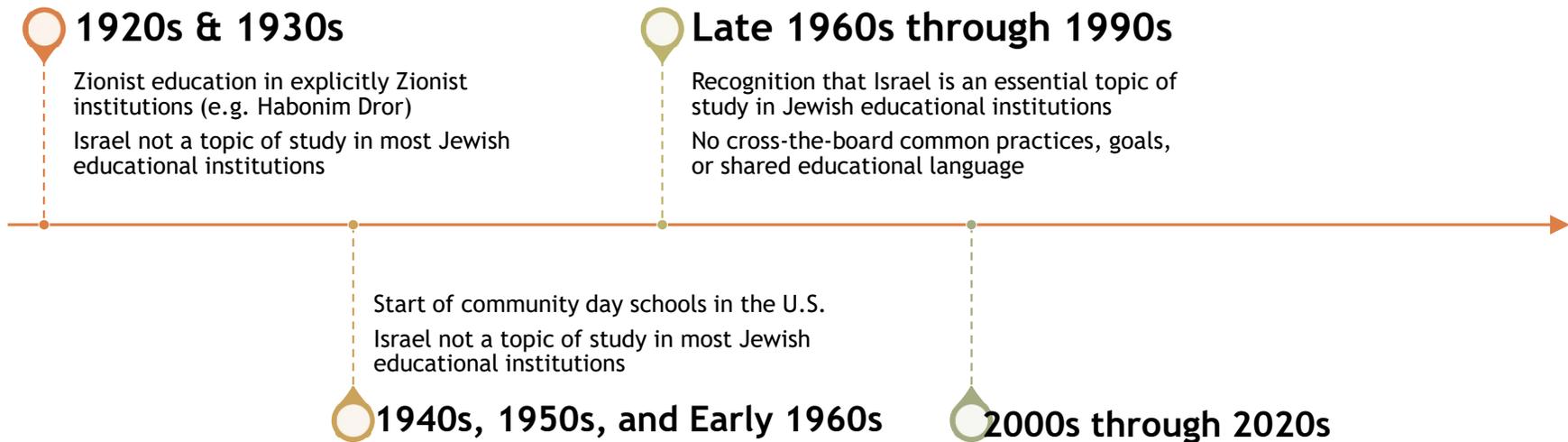
Israel in American Jewish Education



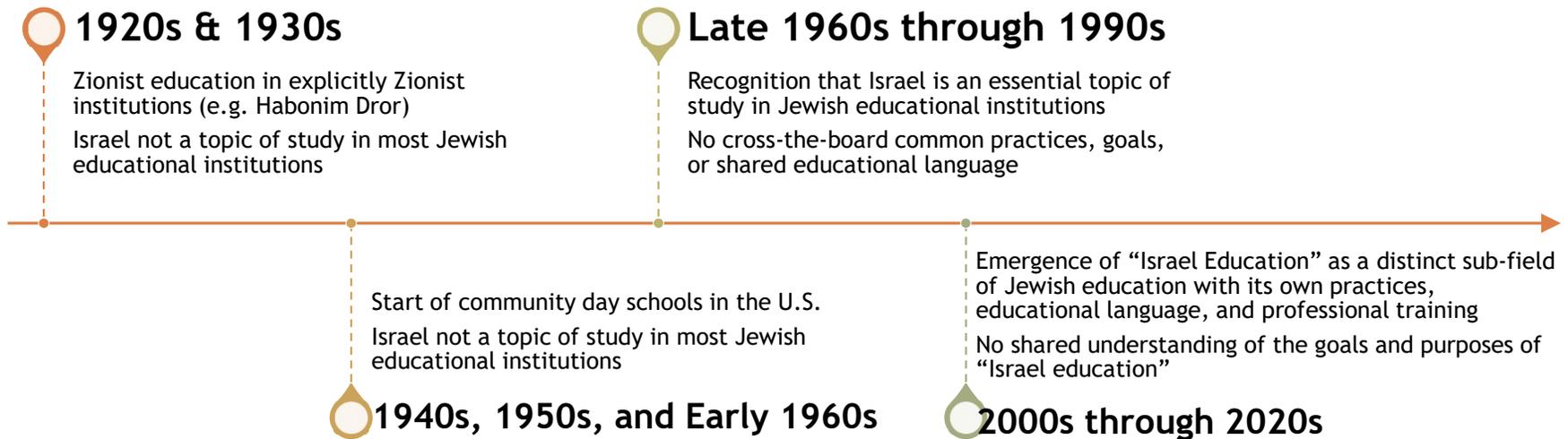
Israel in American Jewish Education



Israel in American Jewish Education



Israel in American Jewish Education



**Question
2:
The Goals**

**What are the goals of
Israel education?**





**We will
resume
in 10
minutes.**



**Question
2:
The Goals**

**What are the goals of
Israel education?**



Investigation into the Goals of Israel Education

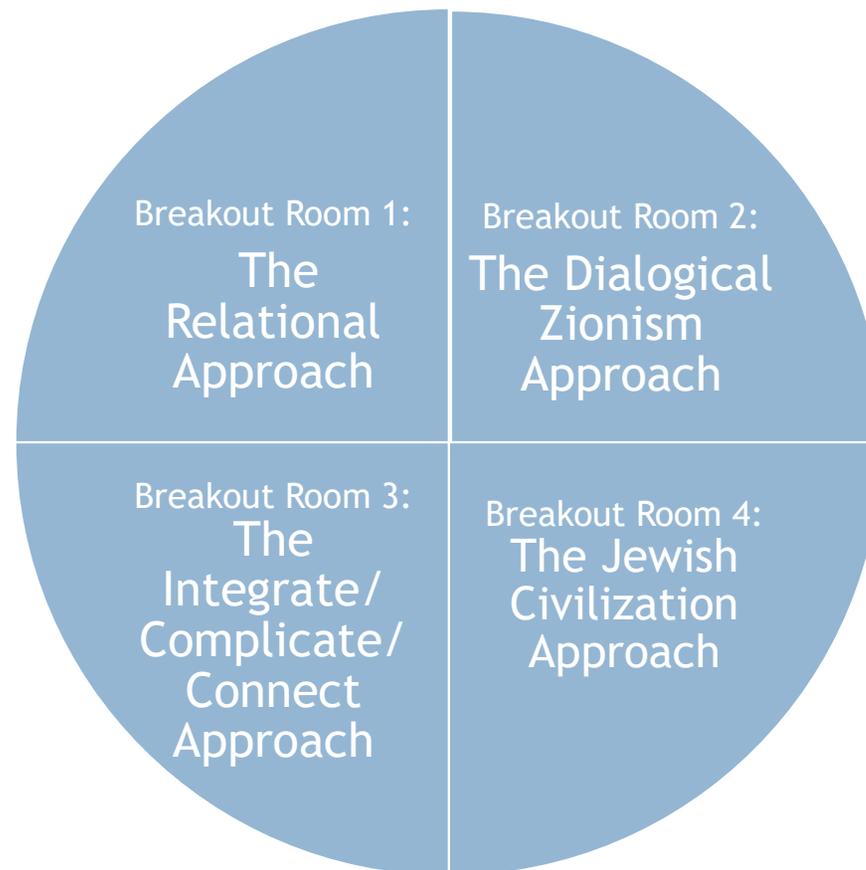


By the end of this investigation, you should understand that...

While teaching and learning about Israel is a common practice in Jewish institutions (across different religious, political, and educational orientations), there is no shared belief about what the goal(s) of Israel education should be.



The Goals of Israel Education



Note: All of these approaches offer push-back against a "Traditional Zionist Approach" and against one another.



Instructions

Each group will be assigned to one educational approach to thinking about the goals of Israel education. With your group:

1. **Read** aloud the short reading associated with this approach.
2. **Discuss** the discussion questions associated with this approach.
3. **Imagine** the possibilities for curriculum and pedagogy aligned with this approach.
4. **Create** a bumper sticker to display the essence of this approach.



Head Over to Google Slides

Open:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1O4cv6l9ctwwSJllWMD1vkFboE5D9PhM2MmypdpDmW8/edit?usp=sharing>



Multiple, Competing Goals

The Relational Approach

A Philosophy of Israel Education: A Relational Approach

by Barry Chazan

The Dialogical Zionism Approach

Loving the Real Israel: An Educational Agenda for Liberal Zionism

by Alex Sinclair

The Integrate/Complicate/Connect Approach

Israel Education Matters: A 21st Century Paradigm for Jewish Education

by Lisa Grant & Ezra Kopelowitz

The Jewish Civilization Approach

My Second-Favorite Country: How American Jewish Children Think About Israel

by Sivan Zakai



Most Jewish educational institutions do not have a clearly articulated stance about the goals of Israel education in their institution.

Position 1: Get on the Same Page

Educational leaders ought to offer a clear, coherent vision of the goals Israel education. These clearly articulated goals should be threaded throughout the curriculum and culture of the institution.

*What are the **advantage** of this position? What are the **disadvantages**?*



Most Jewish educational institutions do not have a clearly articulated stance about the goals of Israel education in their institution.

Position 2: Strategic Indecision

Educational institutions ought to continue functioning with strategically constructed broad, umbrella language (e.g. we teach a connection to Israel). Institutions ought not take a particular stance about the goals of Israel education, letting multiple goals coexist within the institution.

*What are the **advantage** of this position? What are the **disadvantages**?*

YOUR TURN

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ANSWERS IN
THE CHAT

Option 1:

What are the major take-aways of our investigation of the goals of Israel education?

Option 2:

Does your institution have clearly articulated goals or strategic indecision? How do you know?

Question 3:
**The
Mindsets**

How can I, as a Jewish educator, navigate multiple, often competing goals for Israel education?





**We will
resume
in 10
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Question 3:
**The
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How can I, as a Jewish educator, navigate multiple, often competing goals for Israel education?



Navigating Competing Goals: Stance, Not Structure

Stance

- We need to shift our **mindsets** to help us, and our students, adapt with the complexity and uncertainty of the present moment in time.
- Examples:
 - Inquiring (not answering)
 - Deliberating (not debating)

These are *mindsets* that cut across various ways of framing the goals of Israel education, helping us navigate challenges that may have no solution.

Structure

1. We need a better curriculum with a clearer spiraled scope & sequence.
2. We need richer materials to explore with our students.
3. We need new/more trips to Israel for our students.

These are *technical* solutions to an *adaptive* challenge.



Taking an Inquiry Stance

INQUIRY STANCE

- Teachers and students act as co-investigators
- Investigate questions, some of which have a clear answer and some of which do not (either because there is not yet sufficient knowledge or because there is collective disagreement)
- Can study what *matters* to the students even if the teacher is not already a content expert

KNOWLEDGE STANCE

- Teachers have the knowledge and students seek that knowledge
- Ask and answer questions that have a clear, known answer
- Can study only what the teacher already deeply understands



Taking a Deliberative Stance

DELIBERATIVE STANCE

- ✓ Collaborative
- ✓ Multi-dimensional
- ✓ Slow & continual
- ✓ Seeking strengths in others' ideas
- ✓ May lead to mutually agreeable solutions

DEBATE STANCE

- ✓ Oppositional & competitive
- ✓ Two-sided (mine & not mine)
- ✓ Fast-paced
- ✓ Seeking weaknesses in others' ideas
- ✓ May lead to pithy soundbites



YOUR TURN

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Option 1:

*How can taking an **inquiry stance** help you navigate the competing goals of Israel education?*

Option 2:

*How can taking a **deliberative stance** help you navigate the competing goals of Israel education?*



Inquiry Stance:

What is one thing that I can do (try/consider/investigate/ask) in order to situate my classroom as a place where my students and I **inquire** about important questions related to Israel?

Deliberative Stance:

What is one thing that I can do (try/consider/investigate/ask) in order to situate my classroom as a place where my students and I **deliberate** about important questions related to Israel?

Questions

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How can I, as a Jewish educator, navigate multiple, often competing goals for Israel education?

What questions do **you** have?

