



## The Law of Return- A Role Play Exercise

Submitted by: David Greenberg

### Subject Area:

Israel/ Zionism Studies

### Target Age Group:

B'nai Mitzvah Class (12 year olds)

### Project Title:

"The Admissions Board" a role-play activity regarding The Law of Return

### Lesson Objective(s):

To create an understanding of the concept of Zionism and its necessary connection to Judaism, develop a healthy respect, admiration and affinity for the modern state of Israel and knowledge of why the Law of Return was created as a fundamental premise of the Constitution of the State of Israel. Since the law of return was implemented in 1950 its intent was to allow any Jew to "come home" to Israel. Since to this day there are still Jews in various parts of the world suffering from persecution, simply because they are Jewish, this law remains one that must exist. The reality is that there are non-Jews who have tried to make Aliyah to Israel for various reasons, mostly to improve their economic situation and quality of life, which they believe, will improve living in Israel.

### Discussion:

Teaching Zionism to 12 year-olds can be as exciting as it can be challenging. With all the negative news stories about Israel, it is vital to the very existence of Judaism, to teach the fundamentals of the creation of the state of Israel. An inseparable link between Jews in the Diaspora and the state of Israel exists as a main tenet of our faith. Along with learning to chant Torah and all the other things that a B'nai Mitzvah student needs to learn, he or she should also begin to develop an understanding of the role that the state of Israel plays in Judaism.

1. Begin with a class on the definition of "Zionism", which can be as simple as *"a belief in the state of Israel"*. This is meant as a jumping off point for a discussion about student's individual connections with or experiences with Israel. Discuss if students have been there, have family there, have raised or donated money to help Israel, etc.



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2. The next step is to teach a history lesson on how the modern state of Israel came into being. This should include dates and places and historical events that facilitated the creation of modern day Israel. Examples are the Holocaust, the Balfour Declaration, The United Nations' decision to partition Palestine in November 1947 and UN Resolution 181.

3. Students should be told that at midnight on May 14, 1948, the Provisional Government of Israel proclaimed the new State of Israel. On that same date the United States, in the person of President Truman, recognized the provisional Jewish government as de facto authority of the new Jewish state (de jure recognition was extended on January 31). The U.S. delegates to the U.N. and top ranking State Department officials were angered that Truman released his recognition statement to the press without notifying them first. On May 15, 1948, the Arab states issued their response statement and Arab armies invaded Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war began.

4. The next step for the new state of Israel was to write a constitution. Though the Law of Return was not originally mentioned in the constitution, in 1950, Israel's Knesset passed a remarkable law, beginning with a few simple words that defined Israel's central purpose: "Every Jew has the right to immigrate to this country..." Two thousand years of wandering were officially over. Since then, Jews have been entitled to simply show up and declare themselves to be Israeli citizens, assuming they posed no imminent danger to public health, state



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security, or the Jewish people as a whole. Essentially, all Jews everywhere are Israeli citizens by right.

### **The Role Play Exercise:**

Students should be divided into “applicants and Admission Board Members”. Each student is given an index card, which has a short biography of who he or she is portraying in the exercise. The Admissions Board sits at the head table and one by one each applicant presents his or her case. Some of the applicants are instructed to offer legitimate reasons for making Aliyah while others are told to express reasons that are questionable or blatantly incompatible with the Law of Return.

The Admission Board members then meet privately and discuss their reasons for or against each applicant. They then vote. Then the applicants are brought back into the room the board’s decisions are read, and the reasons for their decisions are discussed as a class in order to reinforce the proper criteria that the admissions board needed to use to make their decisions. This is all followed up with a class discussion of the Law of Return revisited and whether or not it is necessary, ‘fair’ and whether or not it needs to be fair.

This exercise lays the groundwork for a continuing discussion of Zionism Studies, which includes Aliyah; reverse Aliyah, Arab-Israeli relations, and Palestinian issues.



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### The Law of Return A role Play Exercise

#### Website Support

#### Law of Return 5710-1950

[http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFArchive/1950\\_1959/Law%20of%20Return%205710-1950](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFArchive/1950_1959/Law%20of%20Return%205710-1950)

#### Law of Return 5710-1950

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Text\\_of\\_Law\\_of\\_Return.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Immigration/Text_of_Law_of_Return.html)

#### The Law of Return and the Law on Citizenship

<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/50/act/shvut/2.html>

#### Israel Adopts the Law of Return

<http://www.jewishgates.org/history/modhis/return.stm>

**Aliyah and the Law of Return:** <http://www.jafi.org.il/aliyah/aliyah/law.html>

#### **Theodor (Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl**

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Herzl.html>

**The Jewish Agency for Israel:** <http://www.jafi.org.il/>



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The UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination,  
Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, South Africa

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/durban1.html>

Hagshamah:

<http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1322&subject=191>