



HOME-LAND



THE 4HQ OF IT...

We're now going to be looking into the question of "In Our Land", and focusing on what we understand by the word "homeland". Home/land can be understood as a combination of two words, that we're going to explore separately and then together. In particular we are going to focus on other Peoples who yearn for a return to their Home/Land. How might their experiences reflect on those of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel?

Sometimes the idea of connecting to a geographical place is strange for a mobile and virtual generation. Connecting to a place that holds no lived personal memories is even stranger. We'll be addressing this central aspect of "In Our Land" in this session, as the Jewish People spent two thousand years outside of "Our Land", wishing they were "In Our Land"...

AIMS

Learners will:

- Compare and contrast different People's experience of exile and home
- Create images and understandings of the difference between home and home-land
- Imagine the Jewish People's connection to the Land of Israel as a refugee nation longing for return.



PREPARATION



1. Print out [the Chief Seattle testimony](#)
2. Print out [the Jew in the Lotus extract](#)
3. Print out [the "Experts in Exile" worksheet](#)
4. Check for yourself that you can answer the question: Who is the Dalai Lama?
5. Make sure you have internalized for yourself the move from "home" to "homeland" (box at the end of Part 1)



PART 1: EXPLORING HOME - 20 MINUTES

Introduction:

"Remembering our big Four Hatikvah Questions, we've delved into how Freedom and People are made up, and how they are connected. Now we're going to be looking into the question of "In Our Land", and particularly focusing on what a "homeland" is and means to different people. For the first part of this lesson, we're going to be exploring the idea of what it means to feel at home..."

Depending on the nature of your class, you might wish to open up a conversation about the use of the word "homeland" in the Israel discourse. To what extent do the learners have an emotional understanding of their "homeland"? Make sure to give them permission to admit that Israel does not necessarily feel like their homeland! Some might even refer to the United States as their homeland...

WHAT IS HOME?

- Give everyone a post it note and write the moment they last felt most "at home".
- Have everyone post their notes on a wall and give them time to read the other posts. (if you have a large crowd, divide them into 2 walls for posting.)
- Have a few people share some moments that they read. Then have a full group discussion.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACH:

- Divide the class into groups.
- Have everyone in the small group share an image of the moment they last felt most "at home".
- Each group builds a tableau/statue of one person's image of being "at home". Organize an "exhibition" of these statues of home.

In the ensuing whole class discussion, aim to bring out these key ideas.

You may wish to write them up on the wall/board:

- "Feeling at home" is rarely connected to a geographical place. One can move house from coast to coast and yet still "feel at home" in one's family house. This is where "home" is separate from "land".
- Home is where I accept the people, the relationships and the ways of doing things in a place, and they accept me. This feeling of "identifying with a culture" is portable and dependent on people, not on a particular place.

So then...

- A Home-Land is a particular place (land) in the world from where the culture that I identify with (home) emerges.

PART 2 - WHEN "HOME" AND "LAND" ARE ONE - 20 MIN

Draw our definition of homeland into the opening of this section: "A Home-Land is a particular place in the world from where the culture that I identify with emerges."

Divide the group into small groups and have them discuss the following testimony and answer the following questions.

Testimony attributed to Chief Seattle [Washington Territory, 1877]

"Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe. Even the rocks, which seem to lie dumb as they shelter in the sun along the silent seashore in solemn grandeur, thrill with memories of past events connected with the lives of my people. The very dust under your feet responds more lovingly to our footsteps than to yours, because it is the ashes of our ancestors, and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch, for the soil is rich with the life of our kindred."

- Can you empathize with Chief Seattle's connection to land? Is there any part of your country that is "sacred" for you? (Can you think of a place that has a "fond memory" for you? Anywhere that you feel the dust "responds more lovingly" to your footsteps than anyone else's?)
- How do you imagine Chief Seattle might think and feel about the land of America if he were expelled and had to live in London?
- How do you think he would talk about the land of America to his children?
- And how do you imagine his "English" grandchildren, now third generation English, might feel about the land of America?

ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

[If your group enjoys more imaginative approaches, you might ask everyone to take off their shoes and socks, and ask them to walk silently around the room. Then ask them to stand with their eyes closed as you read out Chief Seattle's testimony. Now ask them to walk barefoot again, while allowing their gait, their attention, the way their feet meet the ground, to be inspired by Chief Seattle's relationship with his land. Discuss the different feelings and sensations that arise.]

[You might take the participants on a guided meditation as Chief Seattle is expelled to London. There might be a role-play that posits an argument between Chief Seattle and his English grandchildren who are not interested in hearing about the "old land"]

PART 3 - JEWS, THE EXPERTS IN EXILE - 30 MINUTES

You might wish to read out this introduction, or introduce the story in your own words, or have the students read the introduction themselves. We have emphasized the words that relate the Jewish and Tibetan experience back to the language of Chief Washington, about an emotional connection to homeland.

Some 40 years ago, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, feared for his people. The Chinese had occupied his land in 1949, persecuting his Buddhist priests, and forcing him to shift his palace to Northern India. More and more Tibetans were leaving Tibet, fleeing for a better, safer life. The Dalai Lama was terrified that his people, the Tibetan Buddhists, would disappear from the world. Like so many other refugees, he sensed they would make a new home in different lands, far from their holy places and Tibetan way of life, and the glory and riches of Tibetan Buddhism would be lost forever. He feared they would lose sense of their identity without the dust under their feet responding “more lovingly” to them. He needed some advice.

He needed to learn from a people that had also gone through a cruel occupation, irreparable exile, and had nevertheless succeeded to maintain its culture and its unity over many generations. He needed to learn from another ancient people that had managed to turn their place-based culture into something portable, able to hold the people together until their return to their Land. He called the Jews.

Why the Jews?

Because the Jews were experts. Experts in Exile.

Some two thousand years ago, the children of Israel, the Jews, lived in the land of Israel. Israel was a land that was “sacred” to them, full of “fond memories”. They would gather three times a year at their holy Temple in Jerusalem, and worship in the way their forefathers had. The Roman occupation put an end to that. The Romans outlawed the elders of the people, destroyed the holy Temple, and slayed or sold into slavery any Jew who resisted. The destruction was total. Accounts talk of rivers of blood flowing through Jerusalem’s streets, and others report that the global price of a human slave fell to below that of a horse, so flooded was the market with Israeli slaves.

The Jewish People’s connection with their Land was severed.

If the People of Israel were to survive, outside their holy land, and without access to their holy places, they needed to survive in exile. Their elders (Rabbis) needed to create a way of making their people feel “at home” even if they were out of their home-land.

The Dalai Lama looked at Jewish religious and cultural traditions, and marvelled at the strength of Jews’ identity despite their long detachment from their land. He saw that the Jews had succeeded. And he wanted to learn how. The Dalai Lama turned to the experts. Experts in exile.

(An account of this gathering between Rabbis and Tibetan priests can be found in “The Jew in the Lotus” by Rodger Kamenetz).



ACTIVITY - EXPERTS IN EXILE WORKSHEET

Have your students read the excerpt from "The Jew and the Lotus" and work through the sheet built from the excerpt and additional materials. They might do so individually or in small groups. Since there is some information that might be more familiar to Jewish students than to others, you might wish to divide them up equally around the groups.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION* - 20MIN

- *Imagine that tomorrow the Chinese withdraw from Tibet. After more than 70 years of occupation and destruction the Chinese hand over control to the Dalai Lama, and all native Tibetans are allowed to return to their land.*
- *And now imagine if most of these Tibetans and their children choose not to return.*
- *Why do you imagine they might choose not to return?*
- *How do we imagine that the Dalai Lama might feel, if most of the Tibetans and their children do not return to Tibet?*

*If you are comfortable with running role-plays, this discussion could be enacted through various roles.

As we come to the end of this unit, we are beginning to appreciate that the Jewish People did have a "home-land" from which they were expelled some two thousand years ago. Much of our "culture" – that which helps us "feel at home" – emerges from our desire to maintain a connection with our "land".

In this sense we might say that Jewish culture is a form of "refugee" culture, that has enabled us to "feel at home" despite not living "in our land", similar to the kind of advice the rabbis gave to the Dalai Lama.

The creation of the State of Israel presented a thrilling challenge to the Jewish People. Would they "come home", back to their home-land? After two thousand years?

If we can imagine (and empathize with) Tibetans who might choose not to return to Tibet after some 70 years in exile, what do you think 2000 years might do to a desire to return to the Land of Israel?

And conversely, what kind of inner drive led so many hundreds of thousands of Jews to pick up and move to live in their home-land?