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## Birthright Israel Fellows On-Line Learning

The iCenter and Gizra had the privilege of working together with Birthright Israel on the its Fellows program - an intensive professional development for experiential Jewish educators staffing Birthright Israel trips. Besides the opportunity of working with talented staff for one of the most impactful Jewish educational projects, an opening was created to rethink the way in which we develop informal educators.

Gathering fellows for a four-day intensive seminar -- modeled, in part, by the community training of the Canada Israel Experience -- gave us the ability to go deeper and broader in training than most Birthright Israel trip organizers could feasibly sustain. The challenge however was, how do we adequately prepare fellows for the seminar, provide a somewhat equal playing field among a cohort that has varying backgrounds and experiences, and follow up in a way that both continued their learning and prepared them for the staff experiences ahead?

The Birthright Israel Fellows On-Line Learning Modules were an experiment in leveling up professional development experience of the cohort.

## Asynchronous over Synchronous Learning Opportunities



One of the early decisions in the project was on the basic modality of the learning. When many people think of online learning, they think of webinars and live lectures. Popularized by Massive Open Online Classrooms (MOOCs), synchronous learning opportunities - where learners learn and interact at the same time and their “classmates” - allow subject matter experts to be available to a large, geographically distributed student body.

For Birthright Israel Fellows however, we were less interested putting them in front of subject-matter experts (although there is no shortage), than we were in bringing them through a process that helped familiarize them with the body of knowledge on Birthright Israel and experiential education. For busy professionals and students, asynchronous learning - where each learner could move through “learning modules” at their own pace (with deadlines, of course) - seemed more fit to the task. As such, we developed three modules for fellows, an introduction to concepts in experiential education and Birthright Israel, content – through history, geography and personalities – that is common to the Birthright Israel experience, and best practices in in educational preparation.

## Autodidactic Learning over Presentation of Information

### QUEST 2: THE EVENTS OF MODERN ISRAEL HISTORY ON ONE FOOT

EDIT

APPROX. 2 HOURS

In this Quest, you will be working with a number of key milestone events from Israel's history. You may be familiar with many of these events, but there will likely be some new information for you. Through the following activities, we hope you will increase your comfort citing historical events in appropriate educational settings, and come up with new ideas about how to incorporate key moments into the way you talk about Israel.

Below are the Resource Cards (the same that you received at the training) from which the events on the timeline are drawn. Review them to see which events you are familiar with and which ones merit further study. You can download this set of cards as a PDF for a closer look.

#### BALFOUR DECLARATION



[1917]

The Balfour Declaration was a statement issued by the British Foreign Office in 1917, supporting the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. It was a key factor in the creation of the State of Israel.

EVENT 1

#### UNITED NATIONS VOTE



[November 29, 1947]

The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was adopted on November 29, 1947, recommending the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

EVENT 2

#### SIX-DAY WAR



[June 5-10, 1967]

The Six-Day War was a conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors, fought from June 5 to 10, 1967. Israel emerged as the victor, capturing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights.

EVENT 3

#### YOM KIPPUR WAR



[October 6-25, 1973]

The Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War, was fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria. It began on October 6, 1973, during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur.

EVENT 4

#### OPERATION ENTENBE



[July 4, 1978]

Operation Entebbe was a military operation by the Israeli Defense Forces to rescue 106 hostages held in a plane hijacked by Palestinian terrorists near Entebbe, Uganda.

EVENT 5

#### ISRAEL-EGYPT PEACE TREATY



[March 26, 1979]

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was signed on March 26, 1979, between Israel and Egypt, ending the state of belligerency between the two countries.

EVENT 6

#### OSLO ACCORD



[September 13, 1993]

The Oslo Accords were a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the early 1990s, aimed at achieving a permanent peace between the two.

EVENT 7

#### ASSASSINATION OF PRIME MINISTER YITZHAK RABIN



[November 4, 1995]

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated on November 4, 1995, by a Palestinian gunman. He was the first Israeli Prime Minister to be assassinated.

EVENT 8

In the module addressing content knowledge, we sought to provide opportunities for fellows to explore information that was relevant and interesting to them. From a set of people, sites, and event, fellows were encouraged to do research on their own and create narrative threads that tied pieces of content together. As such, Fellows aren't become content knowledge experts in



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the was that a tour educator is, but rather are deepening their knowledge in a way that can provide context and substance to the Birthright Israel Experience.

Autodidactic learning (where students create their own learning interactions) allows us both opportunities to go into depth on a particular subject and to model best practices in program preparation. By insisting the good experiential educators prepare themselves not only with tools and skills for managing a group experience, but also with more knowledge on the subjects that their participants will encounter, we are raising the level of educational practice on the Birthright Israel trip, and given American madrichim the opportunity to be share partners in the educational program.

## Assessing Knowledge over Testing Knowledge

### QUEST 2: THE EVENTS OF MODERN ISRAEL HISTORY ON ONE FOOT

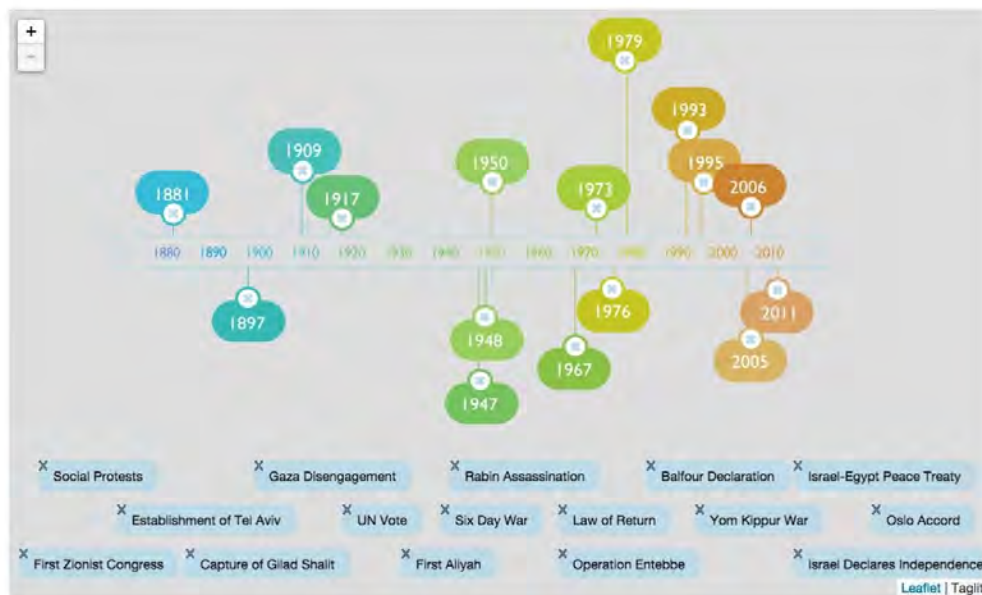
EDIT

APPROX. 2 HOURS

#### Assessing Knowledge: Establishing the Timeline of Modern Israel History

As a way of assessing your knowledge of Israel's modern history, drag and drop the events listed below into their appropriate place on the timeline. If you click the event, you will see the image from the resource card associated with that event. You can [download the set of content cards](#) from the previous page as a reference. This may not be as easy as it seems - think carefully and don't hesitate to check sources.

After you drag each event to the proper place - matching the "x" on the corner of the event to the "x" on the date on the timeline - and you are confident that your timeline is complete, click "Next."



Allowing fellows to explore subject matter that is interesting and relevant does not preclude an effort to create a core competency. In each subject area, we provide an opportunity for fellows to assess their knowledge in an area, understand what they know, and look for ways to learn new content.

One of the more creative exercises is a drag and drop map activity which asks fellows to locate common Birthright Israel sites on a map, and pair those places with stories that they had developed in their previous work. In this way, fellows are literally encouraged to "map their Israel stories" so that they can create an inventory of the places they can provide context to the experience.



## Blended Experience over Stand-Alone Modules

### QUEST 4: UNCOVERING AND FRAMING YOUR OWN PERSONAL NARRATIVE


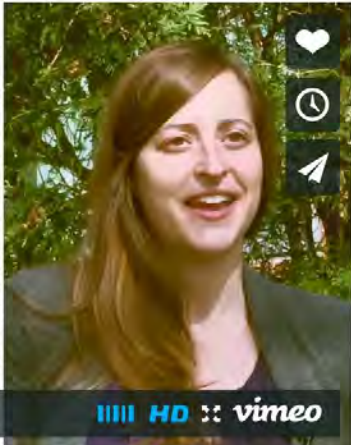
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APPROX 1 HOUR

In this Quest, we will build a story - based on your photo from Quest 1 - that you will ultimately share at our in-person training. But first, we are going to look at an Israel story from an experienced Israel educator, paying special attention to the elements that Ira Glass discussed in the video that you saw in Quest 1:

- "The Anecdote"**: The way in which the story is built and how it is told;
- "The Point"**: The content and relevance (or meaning) of the story to the audience.

Below is a video of Aliza Goodman from the iCenter, who has staffed a number of Taglit-Birthright Israel trips and a variety of other Israel experiences, telling a story about her father's trip to Jerusalem. Watch the video and answer the questions that follow it.

The online experience is designed to complement the in person training. Several of the activities at the training draw from material produced by the online work. After the seminar, modules build on the in-person learning in ways that provide practical applications of the skills they learned.

Birthright Israel Fellows is allowing us new opportunities to explore methods of deepening the knowledge and sharpening the skills of experiential educators. As we confront a changing world of how people learn and interact with each other, some of the tools developed for Birthright Israel Fellows will have broad implications for how we continue to create professional development opportunities for experiential education.