A Vision for Coherent Israel Education: The Makom Matrix, The Right Angle Vector, and Diagonal Pedagogy

Master’s Thesis

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Abstract

A Vision for Coherent Israel Education: The Makom Matrix, The Right Angle Vector, and Diagonal Pedagogy

A thesis presented to the Hornstein Program for Jewish Professional Leadership

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A popular philosophy of Israel education in North America has been predicated on the notion of “connection first, knowledge later.” Some common phrases that epitomize this philosophy are “love before learn” and “connection before complexity.” This thesis seeks to challenge the effectiveness of this approach, problematize its elements, and articulate an alternative coherent and holistic vision for Israel education that engages both in meaningful connections to Israel and deep understandings of Israel’s nuances.

The Makom Matrix is an exceptionally instructive tool developed by Alex Sinclair, Robbie Gringras, Yonatan Ariel, Esti Moskowitz-Kalman, and other colleagues at Makom Israel. The Matrix both helps map the challenges with the sequential connection or love-first approach, and aids in demonstrating a coherent and holistic vision of Israel education through proportional diagonal pedagogy.

The sequential connection or love-first approach is captured by a framework coined the Right Angle Vector approach. Cases of published press pieces written North American Jews reflecting on their Israel Educational experiences illuminate the framework.
TaNaKh education and the role of teaching biblical criticism, through the case studies provided and vision articulated in Susan Tanchel’s work, serve as a powerful comparison and proof of concept.

Finally, an original paradigm of Israel education is presented, of the three C’s: connected, compelling, and complex. This new model is offered as a tool to aid in better achieving proportional diagonal pedagogy as part of a coherent and holistic vision for Israel education.
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Introduction

The field of Israel education is dynamic and plays a critical role in modern Jewish identity development in North America today. Yet, the theory at the core of some contemporary Israel education can be problematic. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that a “love before learn” and “connection before complexity” approach to Israel education is not always the best approach to teach about Israel. The sequential nature of the connection-first or love-first approach, can actually be harmful to a learners’ connection to Israel and Jewish identity. Additionally, such an approach may not adequately build sufficient understanding of Israel’s nuances. This thesis seeks to establish a coherent\(^1\) and holistic vision for Israel education that engages in both meaningful connections to Israel and deep understandings of Israel’s nuances.

This thesis contains three chapters. The first chapter introduces the Makom Matrix, explaining its utility in mapping the connection-first or love-first approach (dubbed the Right Angle Vector approach), and uses case studies of published articles reflecting on North American Jews’ experiences with their Israel education. The Matrix also provides a suggestion of a model for coherent and holistic Israel education: proportional diagonal pedagogy. The second chapter explores TaNaKh Education and the role of biblical criticism as a comparative study and proof of concept. Susan Tanchel’s work provides case examples and an educational

\(^1\) I was first introduced to the concept of coherence as related to Israel education by Dr. Alex Pomson in his spring 2013 course titled “Bringing Coherence to the Work of Israel Education” at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Pomson for this concept, and for his formative teaching.
vision to aid investigating the comparison. The third chapter provides an original framework as a tool that models how to begin to engage in proportional diagonal pedagogy. This framework consists of the three C’s of Israel education: connected, compelling, and complex.

Definitions:

Israel education, in the context of this thesis, is the teaching of and about Israel to North America Jewish audiences.

The Makom Matrix is a tool to aid in mapping Israel education. Yet the Makom Matrix also warns us of the challenges we face in Israel education and presents a more sound, holistic vision of Israel education. The Matrix was originally developed by Dr. Alex Sinclair\(^2\) and his colleagues at Makom Israel (including Robbie Gringras, Yonatan Ariel, Esti Moskowitz-Kalman, and others) in 2006. The Matrix will be described in depth in the first chapter.

On its website, Makom describes itself as, “The place for compelling Israel education. Makom trains leaders and creates educational content to embrace the vibrant complexity of Israel: The People and the Place. Non-partisan yet passionate, our expert team offers a cutting-edge approach to rich, meaningful, experiential Israel education. We empower educators, rabbis, activists, arts and community leaders to articulate a compelling vision, and provide the tools to make it happen in practice. The content we create for leaders enables them to craft honest programming that sparks and forges Jewish commitment.”\(^3\)


\(^3\) “About Makom,” Makom Israel, accessed March 26, 2015, http://makomisrael.org/about-makom/about/
Clarification of Scope:

In clarifying the scope of this work, it is important to note that the only specificity of the population being explored is North American Jews. This work is not specific to any age or setting of Jewish or Israel education. This work is intended to be conceptual research and an exercise in the philosophy of Israel education, which will articulate a vision for coherent and holistic Israel Education on theoretical level, and will be based on existing literature, cases, and a proof of concept comparative study.

Additionally, it is important to state that in describing all the phenomena, categorizations, and characterizations of people in this entire work, I posit only that such people exist; establishing their prevalence is beyond the scope of this work. This work is not a statistical analysis on the impact of the Makom Matrix or any aspect of Israel education, but rather focus on the philosophical and conceptual paradigms. Nowhere in this work am I making the claim that any of what is described has any statistical significance or non-significance in the North American Jewish community. Instead this work will examine some of the theoretical foundations in the field of Israel education, and seek to analyze and add to them on a conceptual and philosophical level.

It is understandable that such an approach may be frustrating to the potential reader of this work who is looking for concrete and practical steps to enhance the teaching of Israel to North American Jews. This may be especially true for a variety of practitioners, front-line educators, and their trainers or coaches. To all those seeking that which is beyond the scope of this work, I apologize. I hope that in the future this work will be expanded upon, and such work will be published.
Chapter One:

An Exploration of The Makom Matrix, The Right Angle Vector, and Diagonal Pedagogy in Israel Education

The Makom Matrix:

The Makom Matrix exists on a quadrant plane, and features two axes of Israel education. On the “X” axis is connection to Israel, moving from “outside” to “inside.”

Outside  

Inside

The greater the extent to which Israel is a part of one’s identity, the more connected and “inside” they are. There is a great deal of scholarship devoted to identity and connection. In his book *Loving the Real Israel*, Alex Sinclair defines connection to Israel as, “Jews who feel connected to Israel feel joy at its achievements and pain at its sufferings, and Israel inserts itself into their Jewish life in many ways.” For the purpose of this discussion of the Matrix, connection contains the following three attributes: an individual’s emotional investment in Israel’s success, a feeling of belonging, and a sense of responsibility. The greater or deeper the extent of each attribute, the greater the degree of connection.

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For example, consider a learner thinking about Israel moving from “them” to “us.” Such a statement might imply a greater sense of belonging and thus moving farther “inside.” This is what traditional Israel education has done well.\(^5\)

On the “Y” axis of the Makom Matrix is resolution of knowledge, moving from low to high resolution.

The deeper the individual’s understanding of the nuances of Israel, the higher is their resolution of knowledge. This axis uses the language of Photoshop and digital imagery— the higher the resolution the clearer, less pixilated, and more in focus the picture.\(^6\) This is not only a measure of quantity of knowledge; one can possess a great number of facts and still be at a low resolution if those facts only pertain to one facet of Israel or allow the learner to view Israel only in one way. High-resolution does require an understanding of some basic information, though not

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\(^5\) I am grateful to Robbie Gringras and the rest of the staff at Makom for the “them to us” description articulated here: “Makom Matrix,” Makom Israel Youtube Channel, uploaded August 15, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro--wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro--wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24).

\(^6\) I am grateful to Robbie Gringras and the rest of the staff at Makom for the Photoshop analogy articulated here: “Makom Matrix,” Makom Israel Youtube Channel, uploaded August 15, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro--wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro--wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24).
exclusively. The study of knowledge acquisition and intelligences is a complex and dynamic field. For the purposes of this discussion, resolution of knowledge is understood as the level of nuance and complexity in Israel related-knowledge. It is important to note that basic literacy is required in order to achieve any level of nuance and complexity. Additionally, the higher the level of nuance and complexity, the higher level of literacy required. High resolution does not imply any compelling or frustrating nature of knowledge, nor any emotional response to the information at all.

These two axes of Israel education come together to form the Makom Matrix.
It is important to note that each axis has a vector on each side—this indicates that each line continues. There are no absolute or ending points—there is always farther to travel, as learning is a lifelong process.\(^7\)

Traditional Israel education has been very successful at moving learners from outside to inside. Unfortunately, this process can be executed without any regard for the resolution of knowledge. In this case, learners are plotted far inside, but at a low resolution. Learners are first brought inside for one of two reasons: either educators do not believe in the importance of high resolution knowledge (the case for high resolution will be made later in this chapter), or educators believe that learners must first be brought “inside” before raising the resolution of their knowledge. It is this second reason—the “connection first” approach—that will be explored in the coming section through the phenomenon known as the Right Angle Vector.

*The Right Angle Vector*

The “inside first” approach is problematic for two reasons. First, there is the problem of time. In an age with staggering post B’nai Mitzvah dropout numbers, a declining appetite for supplementary school, low day school enrollment, and increasing numbers of those learners who travel to Israel going for only ten days, once learners are brought inside, educators often have neither the time nor institutional incentive to raise learners’ resolution. The second problem is

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\(^7\) I am again grateful to Robbie Gringras and the rest of the staff at Makom for the idea of ever-continuing vectors articulated here: “Makom Matrix,” Makom Israel Youtube Channel, uploaded August 15, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro--wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro--wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24).
that, even when learners are retained long enough to raise their resolution, doing so in a conditional and sequential manner is educationally harmful because it can engender negative feelings toward and associations with the educational experience. This process has been dubbed the Right Angle Vector approach.\(^8\)

Additionally, and possibly more often, this conditional and sequential manner of raising resolution after having been brought inside happens independently, outside of Jewish institutions. Due to modern access to the Internet, the greater dispersion and diversification of news sources, the central role of social media in the lives of Millennials, and the discussion about Israel on college campuses, many learners raise their resolution independent of the institutions that brought them inside.

**Possible Examples**

In raising their resolution, learners may be exposed to subject areas or to new perspectives of which they have not had any previous knowledge. Some examples might include; the lack of religious freedom for liberal Jews in Israel, women’s rights in Israeli society, the African refugee crisis, social inequality, the occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza, and encountering a thoughtful Palestinian narrative. Additionally, experiences being or living in Israel can also contribute. Some examples might range from the challenges of navigating Israel’s unique bureaucratic systems, to the high cost of living, to racism and sexism in Israeli society.

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\(^8\) The Right Angle Vector was articulated by the original team who developed the Matrix (see Introduction)—I am grateful to them for first articulating this paradigm.
It is important to note that, although some may argue that many of these issues are not unique to Israel, they do often diverge from the picture of Israel illustrated in the field of Israel education (what brought students “inside”).

Such feelings and associations may not end with the learner’s relationship to Israel. As learners’ connection to Israel is often garnered in the same context as other Jewish subjects are taught and Jewish identity established, the impact of the trauma may also extend to these areas.

*Right Angle Vector Variation A*

There are two possible variations of the Right Angle Vector; the two variations differ by the result of the process that led the student to the top right hand corner. The first of these is Right Angle Vector Variation A. In this variation, the student is brought into the top right hand corner in a conditional and sequential way, and once arriving there becomes resentful of the process and the community or institutions that subjected them to the process, but remains “inside.” This means that the level of emotional investment in Israel’s success, feeling of belonging, and sense of responsibility remain high. Being “inside” is a reflection of personal and not communal expressions or beliefs. In Right Angle Vector Variation A, it is the learner’s relationship and feeling towards the community that is negatively impacted.

The following are three examples of the source of these resentful attitudes:

A. Learners may feel that there is a lack of coherence between the narratives of Israel taught at a low resolution that brought the learner inside and the nuanced knowledge they gained
that raised their resolution. This learner might say a variation of, “I fell in love with an Israel that I thought was perfect and filled with people just like me. But people here are really rude to me and there is no customer service! Now that I have experienced Israel in a deeper way, I don’t always see myself reflected in the country or its people like I used to, and my relationship with Israel doesn't make sense anymore.”

B. Learners encounter compelling content, through the raising of their resolution, that leads to frustration because such content was never part of their previous education. This learner might say a variation of, “I’m a secular Jew searching for organized communal expression– no one told me there is a secular yeshiva in Israel! In addition to all the reasons I already love Israel, I now realize that Zionism provides me with a secular avenue to connect to the Jewish people.”

C. Learners may even feel that the knowledge that caused the raising of their resolution undermines that which brought them “inside.” This learner might say a variation of, “One of the reasons I love Israel is that it was created to be a safe haven. Now I hear that Israel is planning to expel refugees.”

The result of all three of these reactions can be a negative feeling towards the community and institutions of which the learner is a product. Yet, the learner remains “inside,” as the learner’s level of emotional investment in Israel’s success, a feeling of belonging, and a sense of responsibility, all remain high.

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9 This idea is predicated on the understanding that Judaism has become universalized for some Jews in modern America. Those Jews can be challenged by Israel’s actions when Israel differentiates (or they might say, discriminates against) people based on their religion—especially when it comes to such a core issue of Israel’s history and existence such as refugee rights. This learner might continue the quote: “My universal values don't differentiate suffering humans by their religion—if Israel is my Jewish state, based on our common Jewish values, why does it differentiate?”
Robbie Gringras has described the raising of resolution as “undergo[ing] something of a trauma.”\(^{10}\) This trauma results in, at best, Right Angle Vector Variation A, where once the learner’s resolution is raised they are able to stay in the inside high-resolution quadrant, but it elicits resentment and adverse attitudes towards the educational process. As Sinclair writes, “The moment these kids get to college, and take a class in Middle Eastern Studies, or meet a thoughtful Palestinian, or read a book by Tom Segev, the bubble is burst. They feel lied to. Their connection to Israel, built on a utopian vision of idealistic wishful thinking and few actual facts, collapses.”\(^{11}\) This level of frustration and trauma exemplifies Right Angle Vector Variation B.

The second variation to the Right Angle Vector consists of a category of learners that, as a result of the process of raising their resolution, are driven farther outside. Variation B differs from Variation A by the result of the process that led the student to the top right hand corner. While in Variation A, after they raised their resolution, learners remained “inside,” in Variation B, the conditional and sequential process of the Right Angle Vector causes learners to move back “outside.”

Sinclair articulates this category of learners well; he writes, “If we educators are only concerned with creating connection to Israel, while fudging or blurring the more complicated details, then we run the risk that when our students do find out those details from other sources, as they invariably will, they’ll think that we've been lying to them, indoctrinating them, or

\(^{10}\) “Makom Matrix,” Makom Israel Youtube Channel, uploaded August 15, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KArqoxiSVfQ&list=UUpa0T5Tro-wmW9hm_dLn1g&index=24.

\(^{11}\) Sinclair, Loving the Real Israel, 93.
treat them like children, and end up in the top left hand quadrant, retreating to a position of being less connected than they were before, even if they are now more knowledgeable.”12

In Right Angle Vector Variation B, not only may the learner harbor negative emotions towards the process, but the results of the process may damage the learner’s connection to and relationship with Israel. The result of this is the learner becoming more disconnected, or moving farther “outside.” When a learner moves farther outside, the learner’s emotional investment in Israel’s success, feeling of belonging, and/or a sense of responsibility might diminish. Any lessening of any of these qualifies as a move farther outside, and the greater each of these are diminished, the greater the move in the outside direction.

*Distancing Hypothesis and Right Angle Vector Variation B*

To some readers, this variation may seem to have some similarities to Peter Beinart’s “Distancing hypothesis.” Beinart penned what is now an infamous June 2010 article in the New York Review of Books titled, “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment.” In the article, he claimed, “The Jewish establishment has asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism’s door, and now, to their horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead.”13 While powerfully written, what Beinart is describing is clearly different from Right Angle Vector Variation B.

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12 Sinclair, *Loving the Real Israel*, 93.
There are three major distinguishing factors between Beinart’s argument and Right Angle Vector Variation B. First, Beinart claims in the article and in much of his later work\(^\text{14}\) that Israel’s actions are what is causing young Jews to disconnect from the American Jewish community. In Right Angle Vector Variation B, the cause of the disconnection is the result of an educational process, not any particular act (political or otherwise) of Israel’s.\(^\text{15}\)

Second, to reiterate, this work (including Right Angle Vector Variation B) does not make any claims about prevalence or statistical relevance of the cases being described. This work only seeks to assert that such cases (like Right Angle Vector Variation B) exist. Beinart makes broader claims about the prevalence of this phenomenon among American Jews. In fact, the work of Ted Sasson\(^\text{16}\) shows that, while “major segments” of American Jews oppose some Israeli government policies, that opposition does not affect their connection to Israel. Steven M. Cohen of the Hebrew Union College writes in a March 2015 Newsweek article titled “The Shifting Sympathies of America’s Jews” that, “Views on Israeli policies are far from identical to emotional attachment to Israel the country. Just as within Israel major segments of the public oppose their government’s policies while caring deeply about their country, so among American Jews overall there continues to be a meaningful bond with Israel, moving from mobilization to engagement, as scholar Theodore Sasson tells us.”\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{15}\) It is important to note, that the content of the educational process that causes the disconnection can be about Israel’s actions. Yet, it is possible to engage with those same Israeli actions without disconnection when in an educationally sound frame as described by this work. Thus, it is not the actions themselves that cause disconnection, but the educational process in which they are encountered.
Third, the only element the two theories have in common is their result. Beinart’s “distanced” feel estranged from and resentful towards the American Jewish community and the learners of Right Angle Vector Variation B (and Variation A additionally) may share some of those feelings as well. Right Angle Vector Variation B has clear impact on Jewish identity, which the “distanced” may have as well, but such is not argued nor proven. Yet, the key difference is that Beinart claims that the educational process is not the key factor in the disconnection of the “distanced,” but rather it is political decisions made in Israel and American Jewish communal organizations’ reactions to them. While the two can sometimes be intertwined (as sometimes organizations’ political outlooks can translate into educational content), Variation B is focused on the educational methods and content, not on larger communal political jockeying. What is taught in Israel education and how it is taught is the focus of Right Angle Vector Variation B—reflections on such elements are mostly absent from Beinart’s arguments.

Right Angle Vector Variation Examples

The following cases are each examples of one of the two Right Angle Vector variations. These cases are not meant to claim any prevalence of their occurrence nor demonstrate anything more than that such cases exist. Any additional claims to trends and statistical realities are beyond the scope of this work.

Each case is a published piece by an author who represents one of the two Right Angle Vector variations. Each piece is written by a Jewish millennial (or near-millennial) who is a product of some formal Jewish education. At the time of publication of each article, all but one of the authors were enrolled in a four-year college or university.
Rebecca Powell

Rebecca Powell, a student at the University of California Berkeley, published a letter to the Los Angeles Jewish community in the Jewish Journal on December 7th, 2011. In her powerful and moving piece, Powell describes many of the challenges faced by her fellow Los Angeles-native compatriots in regards to their relationship to Israel, which follow the exact path of the Right Angle Vector Variation A.

Powell wrote about how she was first brought inside, taught to love Israel and be connected to Israel. She penned:

You taught us so much about the world, and for a long time whatever you said was all that mattered. You gave us a Jewish education through Jewish day school, camp, Hebrew school, temple and family Shabbat dinners that taught us how to braid challah, read Torah and love Israel. Yes, we learned to love Israel. We went to Israel on exchange programs, youth-group trips, family vacations. We climbed Masada, floated in the Dead Sea and had unforgettable experiences at the Western Wall. We visited family, learned Hebrew and made friendships that will last a lifetime. We found our second home.18

Powell describes her process of moving inside through her Israel education during her time within Los Angeles Jewish institutions. She shows an emotional investment in Israel’s success, a feeling of belonging, and a sense of responsibility.

Powell continues in her letter to demonstrate her process of raising her resolution, discovering a complex and nuanced outlook:

We went off to college and you told us to learn — learn to think critically, write a research paper, explore new interests, befriend people from other cultures. As much as

you may think we don’t listen, you may be surprised to find that we aren’t sullen teenagers anymore. We listened. We are studying at 2 a.m., joining clubs, making new friends and, most of all, thinking critically. About everything. Including Israel. Here is where we have reached a contradiction in our education. You see, you always told us to be the change we wish to see. To make a difference. To ask questions. To not stand idly by. Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof — seek justice, and pursue it. So we have. We were the leaders of the community service clubs, volunteered at SOVA, and lobbied our government to fight against discrimination and social injustice in the United States. When we got to college, we realized that our second home is also in need of some social change. Even though we were warned, it was shocking to find out that just as we grew up loving Israel, some of our classmates grew up hating it. You prepared us to fight these people and to defend Israel at all costs. Yet, it was confusing for a while, realizing that Israel, a place physically so far yet emotionally so close, is not perfect. Israel has a troubled education system, a troubled economy, a government [its people] can’t always trust, and yes, discrimination. Inequality. Social injustice….

Listen to our voices, have mature arguments about our contrasting opinions, and trust that we, too, read the news. Stop claiming that your opinion is the only one, the right one. Two Jews, three opinions — remember? We are doing our best to be the people that your generation raised us to be: people who are willing to take a stand and fight for what we believe in, who are proud to walk in the footsteps of generations of Jews who have fought toward the goal of tikkun olam. We need you to continue to support us as we transition into adulthood. Sincerely, Your loving, progressive, Zionist children.

It is worth reading the entirety of Powell’s letter. Powell captures the sentiment of much of what this project is attempting to articulate and her writing is eloquently poignant. Powell’s beautiful expression of her experience transcends Los Angeles—indeed, it speaks deeply of the group of people this work seeks to portray. Since its publication, Powell’s piece has been a motivator for this project.

Powell’s letter exemplifies the Right Angle Vector Variation A. Powell explains her process of moving “inside” in the Los Angeles Jewish community and her process of raising her resolution during college. Powell demonstrates that she is still in the top right hand quadrant—she is still inside and at a high resolution—but she is upset with the Right Angle Vector process of education. Powell voices frustration to the community, and thus, given her remaining “inside”

19 Ibid.
(connected to Israel) while at a high resolution, she is a clear example of Right Angle Vector Variation A.

*Harry Samuels and Simone Zimmerman*

Harry Samuels and Simone Zimmerman’s article in the now defunct Open Zion blog of The Daily Beast on March 3rd, 2013, demonstrates Samuels’ and Zimmerman’s frustration with the Israel education they received. In their piece, affiliation with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) represented the embodiment of what they were “supposed to do” as a result of their Israel education. Affiliation with AIPAC demonstrated a connection to Israel:

Though we grew up on opposite coasts, we both experienced eighteen similar years of Jewish day school, summer camp, and United Synagogue Youth, where celebrating Israel’s achievements—from Iron Dome to the cherry tomato—was the norm. After meeting at a Long Island Bar Mitzvah, we reunited years later as college freshmen eager to become pro-Israel advocates at AIPAC’s Saban Leadership Seminar and Policy Conference…

AIPAC, while an advocacy organization, represented for them the embodiment of their Israel Education in their Jewish institutions. Yet, when their resolution rose to put them in the inside high-resolution quadrant, they felt they needed to leave AIPAC and join J Street. Subsequently, they became resentful towards AIPAC, and by extension, their Israel education. Samuels and Zimmerman write:

We were surprised to meet again as sophomores at what seemed an unlikely venue: J Street’s second national conference. Gil Troy’s recent reflection on “feeling the love” at AIPAC Policy Conference reminded us of the parallel experiences that in part led us to J Street: while the conflict seems to grow more intractable, AIPAC appears uninterested in

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addressing its cost… For us, that innocent love came at the expense of the critical engagement we so desperately sought, and that we now realize Israel so desperately needs. We have many dear family and friends who are active with AIPAC. They are smart people. We do not doubt the kindness in their hearts nor the earnestness of their intentions. We do, however, question the wisdom of a foreign policy conversation based on “innocent love,” instead of on the hard realities facing Israel. With every successive AIPAC gathering, our dissatisfaction grew. At AIPAC’s Winter Saban in 2009, our questions about the settlements were consistently deflected. At Policy Conference 2010, barely two weeks after the Israeli Housing Ministry welcomed Vice President Biden by announcing 2,000 new housing plans in East Jerusalem, AIPAC Board Chair Lee Rosenberg dismissed them simply as expanding Jewish “neighborhoods.” In 2011, we watched as President Obama’s proposal of Palestinian statehood based on the 1967 borders with land swaps was met with skepticism, while Netanyahu received a standing ovation when he declared refusal to share Jerusalem. This year, the peace process was startlingly absent from AIPAC’s program. For us, peace with the Palestinians should be center stage, not an inconvenient nuisance… Rather than working to effect a peaceful resolution to this conflict, AIPAC tacitly supports policies that perpetuate Israel’s 45-year rule over the Palestinian people. According to Troy, AIPACers also understand the “genuine pain” of the Palestinian people. Yet this pain has never been reflected in the conference program. We have both visited Hebron, where armed Jewish settlers walk along the once bustling Shuhada Street, where their Palestinian neighbors, living literally feet away, are forbidden access. We have seen the wreckage of homes in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, where Palestinian families were evicted and replaced by Jews…. We left AIPAC because we found a persistent refusal to make the necessary concessions for the two-state solution. J Street has allowed us to mature from “innocent love” into embracing a model of Israel activism grounded in our commitment to the full story of Israel, including the hard reality of occupation and the necessity of ending a century of conflict. Community “lovefests” do not allow for meeting the challenges of our time. They do not produce wise and effective foreign policy. Enough with the cherry tomato. For the love of Israel, we need to talk about how to end the occupation and achieve a lasting peace.21

As their resolution rose, as Samuels and Zimmerman learned more and began to see more and more nuance in the reality of Israel today, AIPAC (and the Israel education on which they were raised) began to speak less and less to them. By the end of the article it is clear they are frustrated with the process and the organization that, to them, represents it. Samuels and Zimmerman remain inside (at high-resolution), but feel negatively about the process that got them there. This is a clear example of Right Angle Vector Variation A.

21 Ibid.
Benjy Cannon’s July 30th, 2013 piece in Ha’aretz is another example of the Right Angle Vector Variation A. Cannon, a graduate of the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, felt that the school’s Israel engagement—the application of the Israel education—taught students to have a connection to Israel and always to stand in solidarity with Israel. Cannon writes, “At CESJDS, we stood in solidarity with Israel during its every conflict, and in times of crisis, a safe space for dissent was nonexistent.”

Cannon further explains that the school’s solidarity sometimes came at the cost of high resolution. Cannon writes:

At CESJDS and across the country, it very often lacks nuance, and fails to strive for any degree of objectivity… My generation of American Jews was raised and educated by the Jewish community we now rally against, whether over intermarriage or islamophobia. But that doesn’t mean the system we came from is irrevocably corrupt and broken. Elements of the Jewish educational pantheon are essential; like the tremendous emphasis on social justice, critical thinking and speaking out for the oppressed… Thus, Jewish educators needn’t reinvent the pedagogic wheel, but should strive to better apply their core educational values to Jews and Palestinians alike.

By stating that he still shares the values taught in general Jewish education at the school, Cannon only demonstrates his resentment towards the Israel elements of the character of the school. He is able to remain in inside high-resolution, while still being frustrated at the process. This is an example of Right Angle Vector Variation A.

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23 Ibid.
Elissa Strauss

Elissa Strauss published an article in the Jewish Daily Forward on February 3rd, 2014 about her Israel educational experience in Hillel and on Birthright. She reports:

I went to Hillel and on Birthright because I was looking for a source of unbiased information on, and sober insight into, the country. I naively believed that I could rely on the Jewish community to educate me. I wasn’t looking for a diversity of opinions so much as I was hoping to find a place where I could leave all the noise behind and feel comfortable and safe…

I just couldn’t juggle the experience of Tel Aviv’s lively beaches, the serene intensity of Friday evenings at the Kotel, and the sadness and shame I feel when I hear about life in Gaza and the West Bank. So instead of finding a way to reconcile these discordant realities, I detached. Israel just wouldn’t be my problem to solve.24

Strauss’ narrative shows that she was inside because wanted Israel to be a place where she felt comfortable and safe, connected at the Kotel, and felt personal responsibility. Yet, when her resolution was raised and she met the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she felt that her educational structures were unable to provide space for that particular struggle. As a result, Strauss checked out and disconnected.

The Case for High Resolution

Such analysis should not be taken as an argument against the importance and the role of high resolution. Nor should it be understood as a simple acceptance of the role of high resolution

as inevitability. Rather, high resolution is critically important in a holistic and coherent Israel educational approach.

Lisa Grant and Ezra Kopelowitz’s book *Israel Education Matters: A 21st Century Paradigm for Jewish Education* is a clarion call for high-resolution, complex, and nuanced Israel education. From Grant and Kopelowitz’s book, it is clear that complexity is critical in coherent Israel education because, without it, educators are creating an idealized, inconsistent-with-reality picture of Israel. Without complexity, students may come to understand Israel as a Jewish Disneyland—free of problems and only full of people just like them. When students encounter the parts of Israel that they do not find compelling, and possibly even deeply disenchating, without complexity, it is possible these students will disengage. Judaism encourages critical thinking and question asking in all its other facets, and Israel should not be any exception. As Alex Sinclair, Bradley Solmsen, and Clair Goldwater write in a 2013 paper, “Israel education that engages with all of Israel’s complexities will ultimately lead to more robust connections between young people and Israel.”

The Diagonal Approach

It is clear that there is no single answer to the problem of the Right Angle Vector and the challenges it presents. One possible approach is to begin to think about what a directly straight diagonal line looks like—on every level, from largest vision to each individual element of each

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experience. Such an approach would bring the learner inside and raise resolution proportionally, and in a completely non-conditional and sequential way. Sinclair explores this idea and writes, “when the Israel educator models for her students a connection to Israel that co-exists with an understanding of its complexities, when connection to Israel is built upon a more solid, hi-res examination of the multi-faceted issues, then further revelations about Israel’s faults can be merged into that pre-existing identity. Hence my claim that the move into the top right quadrant can and must be done directly from bottom left to top right.”

Sinclair continues to state he does not believe a straight line is likely given the reality of Israel education. He believes that the kind of education most likely is one that has a meandering or squiggly path from bottom left to top right, with many stops and directions along the way. In this model, there might be some upwards and rightwards movements at one point, but at another there could also be downwards and leftwards movement (and any possible permutation). The movement is neither systematic nor consistent. The overall goal of the approach is to move the learner in the general direction from bottom left to top right, and while the process does not follow either of the variations of the Right Angle Vector, the process may still remain not totally direct and somewhat erratic.

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26 Sinclair and Makom describe this as a “straight line” but do not fully articulate or develop the idea.
27 Sinclair, Loving the Real Israel, 94.
It is important to rearticulate at this juncture that this work articulates a vision for Israel education—rather than making claims about statistical realities in the field. With that understanding, this work has somewhat of a disagreement with the vision Sinclair articulates of the squiggly line. On a conceptual and philosophical level, completely holistic and coherent Israel education demands a straight diagonal line.

In articulating his vision for sound Israel education, Sinclair also describes the beginnings of how to go about realizing sound Israel education within the movement in the Matrix previously described. He writes, “The thoughtful Israel educator will seek ways to move horizontal activities a little more vertical, and vertical activities a little more horizontal, and to include in the curriculum a variety of educational experiences that mix horizontal and vertical movement.”

While Sinclair’s suggestion is a generally good one for educators seeking to tinker with predetermined models, it is not a recipe for coherent sound Israel education. By simply “mix[ing] horizontal and vertical movement,” an educator can easily still perpetuate miniature Right Angle Vectors. While clearly not on the same scale, and thus easier to process, such a vectored approach is not sound. Sinclair’s approach to generally move from bottom left to top right, lacks the requisite intentionality for a holistic vision of coherent Israel education—such an approach requires maximal diagonal (right and upwards) movement. True diagonal pedagogy requires thinking in total proportionality terms: How is Israel education envisioned on all scales, from largest vision to individual experiences, as bringing learners “inside” proportionately to raising their resolution (and vice versa)? It is only through further exploration of this question (as will be addressed by the paradigm presented in chapter three), that sound coherent Israel education will be achieved.

28 Sinclair, *Loving the Real Israel*, 95.
Chapter Two:

TaNaKh Education as Comparative Study and Proof of Concept

The study of TaNaKh education, and specifically the role of biblical criticism in TaNaKh education, can provide a number of helpful comparisons to the concept and philosophy of Israel education being discussed.

The Important and Valid Elements of the Comparison:

TaNaKh education and Israel education share a number of characteristics that make the comparison important and valid. Two of these will be explored here.

Jewish Beliefs or Understandings, and Identity:

Both TaNaKh education and Israel education have content areas that have the potential to affect learners’ Jewish identity and religious beliefs or understandings. In TaNaKh education, the study of Biblical criticism can be some students’ first exposure to the idea that there were human authors of the text. This notion, coupled with scientific evidence of its truth, can be quite unsettling for students who have core beliefs in the divinity of the text. One can imagine a student basing their personal religious identity, of being commanded and of *hiyuv* (obligation) to *halakha* (Jewish Law), predicated on the notion of the divine authority of the text. Once the
notion of Divine authorship of the text is challenged, debunked, or undermined, it could have a domino effect and cause all of the student’s beliefs, understandings, and core Jewish identity to be called into question. In this paradigm, Divine authorship of the text is the bedrock of the student’s belief system. Within many traditional frames of Jewish education, belief system is at the core of Jewish identity. Thus, disrupting the foundation stone of a student’s belief system can deeply affect a student’s Jewish identity.

The previous chapter explored a similar phenomenon. The raising of resolution from low to high in the Right-Angle Vector variations, students’ opinions, beliefs, and understandings about Israel evolved. As a result of this process, their Jewish identity was impacted.

*Myths, Facts, and Complex Narratives:*

In traditionalist circles, both TaNaKh and Israel are sometimes taught in clear black-and-white terms. Students are presented “facts” about Israel (which usually includes a good portion of one-sided opinion), and taught that the TaNaKh is a history book reporting on events in historically factually accurate actuality. Both of these frames lack complex narratives—they present simplistic paradigms—and exposure to complex narratives can undermine the myth that has been created about each.

The TaNaKh is often taught in other Jewish educational settings as the collections of “stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.” This, in a certain sense, is part of the creation of the TaNaKh mythology.

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29 Myth, in this context, is to be understood in its basic meaning as story or structure of a fictitious nature. As the Merriam-Webster defines, “an unfounded or false notion.”

30 This phrase was coined by American Anthropologist Clifford Geertz in 1973 as a definition of culture. For more, see Geertz’s *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973).
Rabbi Dr. Neil Gilman is arguably the foremost Jewish scholar on the idea of myth within the Jewish tradition. He writes, “Myths, then, are not to be contrasted with facts… The myth posits an invisible world to account for what it is that we do see… Myths are the connective tissues that knit together the data of experience, thereby enabling these data to form a coherent pattern and acquire meaning… To use another metaphor from our childhood, myths are the lines that connect the dots on the page so that we can see the bunny rabbit, except that now the dots are not pre-numbered. We have to choose the dots that we want to connect (i.e. the ‘facts’), then assign the numbers, then draw the lines… What makes a myth ‘true’? Clearly not because it corresponds to the facts, simply because we have no independent perception of those facts to compare it with.”

This notion of myth is a paradigm in which TaNaKh and Israel can exist in the “stories we tell ourselves about our selves” model. Myths, like the TaNaKh, are not to be bothered with or understood in the context of scientific realities. The TaNaKh exists in a post-scientific framework, independent of the other critical thinking facilities stressed in modern education. Yet what does happen when scientific realities, logic, and other critical thinking facilities are introduced to the mythic structure created in understanding TaNaKh?

Gilman continues, “A living myth is one that works for us, that we embrace as ‘true,’ that makes sense of the world as we perceive it. A broken myth is one that has been exposed as our subjective, human construct. Sometimes broken myths die… Many adults experience the death of their personal myths; for many Americans, Vietnam killed the American myth.”

32 Ibid.
This is a powerful example of something that TaNaKh and Israel education share. Complex narratives can get in the way of a mythic understanding. The story of Vietnam is a complex narrative to Americans, biblical criticism and Documentary Hypothesis are complex narratives in TaNaKh education, and complex narratives in Israel education have been abundantly enumerated in the previous chapter.

Gilman writes that Vietnam destroyed the American myth for Americans. Analogously, biblical criticism and Documentary Hypothesis can destroy the Torah Mi-Sinai (Torah from Sinai) myth, and a whole list of issues in Israel from the Occupation to lack of religious freedom can destroy rose-colored myths that were taught in hopes of connecting students to Israel.33

The Problematic elements of the Comparison:

There are also some problematic elements to the comparison of TaNaKh and Israel in the educational arena. Three particular problematic elements of note will be explored below.34

The most glaring difference is that the TaNaKh is a traditional Jewish text, and Israel is a dynamic living changing place. Israel’s fate and future are not determined—living Jews today and in the future will play a role in shaping its character and reality. The text of the TaNaKh is

33 Note: Gilman would likely personally vigorously disagree with these conclusions and the way his work is being interpreted. He continues in the article, “But broken myths don’t have to die. It is possible to embrace a broken myth as still living. That’s what I try to help my students achieve…” (Ibid.) Gilman is being used to demonstrate that the broken myth paradigm exists. Gilman may personally believe that broken myths need not die, but that opinion is not universally shared. It is possible to understand, appreciate, and adopt Gilman’s “myth” without also adopting the notion that broken myths do not die.

34 I would like to thank Yonatan Ariel for his help in initially bringing these issues to my attention and aiding me in developing them.
set and seemingly not changing. The TaNaKh is a text set in the Jewish past, while Israel is living in the Jewish present and looking to the Jewish future.

There is unity among many Jews as to TaNaKh’s central role in Jewish tradition. No matter one’s beliefs about authorship, it is clear that the TaNaKh is one of the core elements of Jewish tradition. The same cannot be argued about Israel. The idea of a modern Jewish nation-state is a relatively new idea in Jewish tradition. While the Land of Israel is present in Jewish tradition, sovereignty in the form of a nation-state is a new reality, and thus not as central in historical Jewish traditional experience.

Lastly, Israel is a timely issue in the modern world and is often the subject of great contention at high volume. Israel often appears prominently in news publications, is an issue of great import on campus, and is very present in world consciences. While TaNaKh may be present in each of those arenas, the two are not present with the same intensity. Israel often appears on the front page of the New York Times—when was the last time the TaNaKh did at the same intensity? Israel is often the subject of campus protests—Documentary Hypothesis is not often the subject of similar rallies. Israel is discussed at the United Nations far more than critical theories of the TaNaKh.

These problematic elements of the comparison prove that there is not a one-to-one relationship between TaNaKh and Israel education, and thus their comparison will not be treated that way.

The approach with which the comparison is being made is that the way we teach TaNaKh and Israel both cover controversial and challenging issues. How issues of controversy and challenge are approached, even if not a perfect comparison in this case, is still informative. From this perspective, we can understand that successful models of each of these educations can be
instructive and helpful in discussing the other. It is with that lens that the role of biblical criticism in TaNaKh education will be examined.

**TaNaKh Educational Scholarship—Dr. Susan Tanchel:**

Susan Tanchel received her PhD from Brandeis University in May 2006. Her research provides an in-depth look at the kind of TaNaKh education being articulated in this chapter. At the time of writing her dissertation, Tanchel was the head of Judaic Studies at Gann Academy, a pluralistic Jewish high school in the Boston area. Tanchel’s work provides both a rich description of students’ experiences with TaNaKh education and articulates a powerful vision for the role of critical voices in the teaching of TaNaKh. In her work, Tanchel describes her curricular philosophy and discusses how it affects her students’ Jewish identities. This chapter will include examples from Tanchel’s work and will explore her vision for coherent TaNaKh education as a core element to the comparison to Israel education.

Tanchel did seek to use these (and other) examples to make claims about the representativeness and application of her research onto the field of TaNaKh education. It is important to note that this work is articulating a vision for Israel education, not using Tanchel’s (or any other) examples to make claims about representativeness in the field of Israel education.35

Tanchel’s work examined case study descriptions of her students at Gann Academy; some of these students will serve as cases in establishing TaNaKh education as a valid proof of concept of the Matrix. Just as cases were introduced in the first chapter to validate the Right

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35 For further clarification, see the sectioned titled “Clarification of Scope” on page 2.
Angle Vector (and its variations) in Israel education, Tanchel’s cases will help in validating the Matrix of TaNaKh education. This chapter will also explore Tanchel’s approach to TaNaKh education, and begin to evaluate its coherence—examining Tanchel’s approach in its appropriate context.

The Matrix of TaNaKh Education:

TaNaKh education is a milieu that can be demonstrative and model a type of diagonal and proportional education. Just as Israel education mapped onto the Makom Matrix, TaNaKh education can be understood through the Matrix as well.

Like with Israel, on the “X” axis is connection to TaNaKh, moving from “outside” to “inside.”

Outside

Inside

The greater TaNaKh is a part of and impacts one’s identity, the farther “inside” they are. A critical question that arises is the role that belief, specifically the belief in Torah Mi-Sinai (Torah from Sinai), plays in the outside-inside axis. The axis does not measure belief in any particular understanding of authorship; the axis measures how much one is connected to TaNaKh. For the purposes of this analysis, connection to TaNaKh contains the following three measures: the level of impact TaNaKh has on Jewish identity, personal Jewish values, and Jewish behaviors.

TaNaKh impacting Jewish identity is manifested by the way one understands one’s self as a Jew. TaNaKh impacting personal Jewish values is manifested by how much TaNaKh plays a
role in forming and understanding one’s personal Jewish values. TaNaKh impacting Jewish behaviors is manifested by how much TaNaKh influences choices one makes in their life regarding personal Jewish practice. It is important to note that personal Jewish practice is not limited to conventionally understood manifestations of religiosity (observance of commandments, holidays, or other mainstream manifestations of Jewish religious practice), but transcends into choices made in everyday life. If the TaNaKh is an influencer in any way on the way one makes any kind of choice in one’s life (no matter how it influences or the outcome), that is a measure of TaNaKh impacting behavior. This is particularly important, as there is a population that may not practice mainstream Judaism or may be seen as “secular” or “culturally Jewish,” whose behaviors can still be impacted by TaNaKh.

The greater or deeper the extent of each of the three, the greater the connection or the further “inside.”

On the “Y” axis of the matrix is resolution of knowledge of the TaNaKh, moving from low to high resolution.
The deeper the understanding of the nuances of the TaNaKh, the higher the resolution of knowledge. As with Israel, this axis uses the language of Photoshop and digital imagery—the higher the resolution the clearer, less pixilated, and more in focus the picture.

One critical issue in understanding this knowledge axis is the role of biblical criticism and critical scholarship on this axis. This axis is not a measure of knowledge of biblical criticism and critical scholarship alone. Rather, this axis is a measure of the knowledge level of nuances of TaNaKh—of which biblical criticism and critical scholarship are but elements (even if important ones). There are other elements that factor into the knowledge level of nuances of TaNaKh, including traditional interpretations (Parshanut and Midrash) and other non-critical modern scholarship.

It is also important to note that this axis is not a measure of sheer amount of knowledge accumulated, but rather the level of nuance understood in that knowledge. There is a basic level of literacy that is required in order to access a proportional level of nuance, but literacy itself does not guarantee that level of nuance.

As with Israel Education, these two axes come together to form the TaNaKh Education Matrix.
As with Israel education, it is important to note that each axis has a vector on each side—this indicates that each line continues. There are no absolute or ending points—there is always farther to travel, as learning is a lifelong process.

*The Right-Angle Vector of TaNaKh Education*

Just as with traditional Israel education, traditional TaNaKh education has been successful at bringing students “inside,” without regard for resolution. This happens because educators and institutions are worried that teaching critical approaches to TaNaKh will have negative implications on Jewish identity. One example of this approach might be a student who is only taught traditional non-critical approaches to the TaNaKh. Thus, the student bases their entire Jewish ideological understanding (and thus identity) off of that idea. While this student has integrated the TaNaKh (including their beliefs about authorship) into their Jewish identity, the student is at a low resolution (not having been exposed to any critical voices). It is these precise conditions that create the circumstances that lead to the Right Angle Vector.

While it is not ideal (nor educationally sound) that a student should remain in the “inside” “low-resolution” quadrant, without any further exposure to critical voices, it is possible to remain in that bottom right quadrant. Yet, it is seemingly unlikely that a student will never encounter any kind of biblical criticism in their life, even if a critical approach is not taught in many Jewish institutions. With the vast majority of non-Orthodox TaNaKh-educated students attending college and the greater interconnectedness due to modern technology, ideas such as the
Documentary Hypothesis and biblical criticism are more accessible than ever. Thus, when students do encounter critical voices, it is likely after they have left the (Jewish) institutions that brought them inside.

Tanchel, in describing previous research that has been done on teaching the Documentary Hypothesis describes how, in the 1960s, the Jewish Theological Seminary trained prospective teachers to teach their new TaNaKh curriculum, which included Documentary Hypothesis. Tanchel writes, “Ruth Zielenziger, the director of the project, described how problematic it was for these teachers who had long been teaching in Conservative schools to accept the conclusions of the historical-critical method… She found, in retrospect that this was ‘a tall order’ for the students, as they felt as if she ‘had pulled the rug from under their feet’ (Zielenziger, 1989, p.114).”36 Being brought so far inside and then, suddenly, raising the resolution of the students (who were teachers in this example) caused a feeling that the teacher “had pulled the rug from under their feet.”

Tanchel continues that this reaction is neither unique to teachers nor to that time in history, as her own students continue to have similar reactions. She writes, “In my high school teaching experience, almost all students, regardless of denomination, have internalized some version of a belief in the Torah’s divine authorship at the core of their religious worldview. Consequently, learning source criticism can initially be controversial, provocative, even threatening, to students’ religious beliefs and practices. It requires them to confront the possibility that the Torah is the product of human writers, which frequently leads to their questioning the continuing sacredness, veracity, and authority of the text.”37 Tanchel posits that

37 Ibid.
almost all students have some element of belief in the divine authorship of the TaNaKh, and thus, having “the rug pulled from under their feet” is a nearly universal experience for her students.

These two descriptions demonstrate the process of the conditional and sequential process of the Right Angle Vector. What separates the two variations of the Right Angle Vector, is what happens to the students in response to this process.

*Right Angle Vector Variation A*

There are two possible variations of the Right Angle Vector; the two variations differ by the result of the process that led the student to the top right hand corner. The first of these is Right Angle Vector Variation A. In this variation, the student is brought into the top right hand corner in a conditional and sequential way, and once arriving there becomes resentful of the process and the community or institutions that subjected them to the process, but remains “inside.” This means that the level of impact TaNaKh has on the learner’s Jewish identity, personal Jewish values, and Jewish behaviors is still high. Being “inside” is a reflection of personal and not communal expressions or beliefs. In Right Angle Vector Variation A, it is the learner’s relationship and feeling towards the community that is negatively impacted.

The following are three examples of the source of these resentful attitudes:

A. Learners may feel that there is a lack of coherence in the narratives of the TaNaKh between the traditionalist approaches they were taught at a low resolution and the critical
approaches that raised their resolution. This learner might say a variation of, “I fell in love with a TaNaKh that I believed to have divine authorship. Now that I have learned about the Documentary Hypothesis, I’m confused and feel very conflicted.”

B. Learners may encounter compelling content through the raising of their resolution that leads to frustration because such content was never part of their education. This learner might say a variation of, “I was never totally comfortable with the idea of the TaNaKh being from Sinai, and now that I have learned about the Documentary Hypothesis, I can better conceptualize my beliefs about authorship. I wish I had been taught a variety of opinions about authorship from the beginning.”

C. Learners may even feel that that which caused the raising of their resolution undermines that which brought them “inside.” This learner might say a variation of, “I am a person who believes in history and science. I was told that the TaNaKh was a Divinely historically accurate account and I believed that. Now I learned that there is serious evidence that the TaNaKh was written by multiple human authors, and I do not believe in the Divinity of the text anymore.” The result of all three of these reactions can elicit a negative feeling towards the community and institutions of which the learner is a product. Yet, the learner remains “inside” (as the learner’s Jewish identity, personal Jewish values, and Jewish behaviors are still impacted by the TaNaKh).

In her research, Tanchel describes a number of students who fit into Right Angle Variation A. One example is a student Tanchel refers to as Amy. Tanchel reports that Amy writes:

I also don't think that the documentary hypothesis makes the Torah any less valuable and meaningful. Just because there were different authors of the Torah doesn't mean that our morals or the ideas behind the Torah aren't still there. We exist as a people and with our tradition even if God did not write the Torah. My problem is that I feel like I should have
a problem with the documentary hypothesis. The fact that I don't make me think that my faith in tradition and religion isn't strong enough so I am willing to change my ideas without a second thought. I know this sounds silly, but it's true... The documentary hypothesis is not a theological problem for me, and that does not mean that my faith is weaker. I believe in both because that is the only thing that can work for me. I believe that logic applies to text, even if it is a religious text.\textsuperscript{38}

Amy clearly displays her remaining “inside” after encountering the Documentary Hypothesis.

Tanchel continues:

Amy is a rare student who grew up believing in the Torah's divine authorship, but in light of having learned this new material, has shifted her position… She is concerned that her integration of the idea that the Torah is a human composition is indicative of her "faith in tradition and religion isn't strong enough" even though she also says that there is no theological problem, that all this "does not mean that my faith is weaker." She is still working out and working on what her easy acceptance of the documentary hypothesis and integration of this new approach with her religious commitments says about the nature of those commitments.\textsuperscript{39}

Amy is an example of the first kind of case of Right Angle Variation A, in which learners feel a tension or lack of lack of coherence in the narratives of the different approaches to teaching TaNaKh. Amy grew up believing in the Divinity of the TaNaKh but, as a result of learning about the Documentary Hypothesis (raising of resolution), feels conflicted and a lack of coherence with her traditional understanding of the Divinity of the TaNaKh, which has implications on her religiosity and Jewish identity (that which brought her “inside”).

It is also important to note that Amy—and the rest of the examples to come—are products of Tanchel’s educational system, and thus are less likely to harbor the negative feeling previous described as part of Right Angle Variation A, because Tanchel seeks to integrate critical sources into the curriculum in an educationally sound manner. Additionally, all of these learners encountered Documentary Hypothesis and critical scholarship within Tanchel’s curriculum—another non-representative occurrence. This makes frustration and negative

\textsuperscript{38} Tanchel, “A Judaism That Does Not Hide,” 37.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
attitudes difficult to gauge from these examples, as much of the argument that the conditional and sequential introduction of critical voices will lead to negative attitudes is predicated on being exposed to those ideas only once outside of the institution that brought the learner “inside.” Such is not the case in Tanchel’s examples, as Tanchel includes Documentary Hypothesis in the curriculum. Yet, it is still possible that Amy and the other learners may garner these negative sentiments, but further study beyond Tanchel’s published findings is required for an accurate assessment.

Tanchel writes about another student, Sarah, who is an example of the second kind of Right Angle Variation A. Tanchel recounts that Sarah writes:

Surprisingly enough, my theological beliefs matched with the idea of the documentary hypothesis before I had even learned about it. It had always been hard for me to believe that the Torah was given at Sinai because of scientific evidence and the like, but I do believe in divine intervention. Just because the Torah wasn't given at Sinai doesn't mean that it is not holy. The fact that it has survived for this long, is the basis of religious life for the Jews, and is such an amazing piece of work is enough for me to consider it holy above all other texts...The Tanach in relation to the rest of the world just makes more sense when seen through the eyes of the documentary hypothesis. Belief in the documentary hypothesis, or ideas like it, does not diminish my faith and awe of God. In fact, it makes me understand God's role in Judaism more comprehensively. It would be one thing if God were just to give people the Torah, but if he were to enthuse them to write it, then his power and inspiration would have been extremely supreme. The idea that people would have written the Tanach would also teach me about the importance of people in the Jewish religion, and that I, too, can make a difference.40

Sarah has integrated Documentary Hypothesis not only into her authorship beliefs, but also has enhanced her larger system of faith. She finds the Documentary Hypothesis to be compelling and draws inspiration from the Documentary Hypothesis to reinforce her core beliefs. Tanchel writes about student like Sarah:

Most likely this student has… already considered that God did not write the Torah. Studying the documentary hypothesis offers this type of student an opportunity to find

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support for their understandings and to discover that it is an acceptable and accepted Jewish position.\textsuperscript{41}

Sarah clearly exemplifies the second kind of Right Angle Vector Variation A learner; one that encounters compelling content through the raising of their resolution. It is hard to determine fully from Tanchel’s research if Sarah wishes she had learned about Documentary Hypothesis earlier (or if she was frustrated by this lack of previous exposure). Given the fact that Sarah stated that “it had always been hard for me to believe that the Torah was given at Sinai because of scientific evidence,” it is likely that Sarah would have wanted better explanations earlier in order to better substantiate her beliefs.

Gila is another student that Tanchel describes in her work. Gila exemplifies the learners that feel that that which caused the raising of their resolution undermines that which brought them “inside.” Tanchel relays that Gila writes:

I wholeheartedly believe that the Torah is the word of God, that He dictated it for us…If the documentary hypothesis is correct, then this belief goes down the drain and all underlying meaning in the Torah is lost. I wouldn't even know what to make of a bible written by multiple people… It is somewhat disconcerting to be learning this theory in Tanach class. The documentary hypothesis certainly challenges my belief, and in the end I think it also strengthens them… Though this may be harsh, I feel that those who beliefs were changed as a result of learning the documentary hypothesis can't complain, because if people's beliefs can't withstand being challenged, then their beliefs weren't strong enough to begin with.\textsuperscript{42}

Gila’s reflection vividly demonstrates her path of climbing from low to high resolution by being “challenged.”

In this example, Gila feels she must be defensive about her beliefs, as if the way she was confronted with the Documentary Hypothesis (by having it introduced only after she formed her

\textsuperscript{41} Tanchel, “A Judaism That Does Not Hide,” 41-42.
\textsuperscript{42} Susie Tanchel “‘A Judaism That Does Not Hide’: Curricular Warrants For the Teaching of the Documentary Hypothesis In Community Jewish High Schools” (Working paper presented at The Initiative on Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy in Jewish Studies, Waltham, Massachusetts, July 6, 2006): 11-12.
beliefs on authorship, which has implications on her religiosity and Jewish identity) was somehow threatening or challenging to her personal practice. Gila wants to maintain her practices and beliefs and thus feels that she is forced to choose between a traditionalist understanding of authorship (allowing her to maintain her practices and beliefs) and a critical approach to authorship (and therefore be forced to reexamine her beliefs and practices). Gila feels that the Documentary Hypothesis (which raised her resolution) threatens to undermine her traditional understanding of the Divinity of the TaNaKh with implications on her religiosity and Jewish identity (that which brought her “inside”).

_right angle vector variation b_

Right Angle Vector Variation B is the second of the possible variations. Variation B differs from Variation A by the result of the process that led the student to the top right hand corner. While in Variation A, after they raised their resolution, learners remained “inside,” in Variation B the conditional and sequential process of the Right Angle Vector causes learners to move back “outside.” In Variation B learners often undergo what has been described by Robbie Gringras in the Israel education context as “something of a trauma.”

The same three permutations of resentful attitudes as described with Right Angle Vector Variation A (learners feeling that there is a lack of coherence in the narratives, learners

encountering compelling content through the raising of their resolution, and learners feeling that that which caused the raising of their resolution undermines that which brought them “inside”) apply to Right Angle Vector Variation B. In Right Angle Vector Variation B, instead of evoking negative attitudes towards institutions and communities, learners move back “outside.” Moving back in the “outside” direction denotes a drop in the level of impact TaNaKh has on the learner’s Jewish identity, personal Jewish values, and Jewish behaviors.

Tanchel provides the following anecdote to demonstrate an example of Right Angle Vector Variation B:

“A few years ago a student got up in my class and declared, ‘Ms. Tanchel, you are taking away my God.’ Another student less dramatically, but equally emphatically, quietly asked me why she should still bother to keep the Sabbath if God did not write the Torah.”

This student and others show that learning about the Documentary Hypothesis in this case (the process of raising resolution), can in some situations, impact the role TaNaKh has on the learner’s Jewish identity, personal Jewish values, and Jewish behaviors (moving learners farther “outside”).

Tanchel describes another student named Ayelet, who is an example of Right Angle Vector Variation B. Ayelet reflects (as published by Tanchel):

How can I use a history book to create a spiritual and religious connection to G-d?...Yet, sometimes the documentary hypothesis is very compelling...The explanations for the varied writing styles, repetition, and chronological errors are clarified by the acceptance of the documentary hypothesis. However, I still have not fully come to terms with the idea of a non-God crafted Torah. How can I use the writings of five random guys compiled together by another random person in my religious practice? There must be something more sacred and more holy in the Torah.

Tanchel writes in her analysis of Ayelet:

45 Ibid.
Ayelet is feeling troubled and torn by having learned the documentary hypothesis. She is trying to reconcile this new knowledge with her earlier understanding of the Torah as a unique book composed by God. Understanding the Torah as a book of human origin diminishes her sense of its sacredness. The Torah had once served as a religious document facilitating her connection to God, for believing that it was written by God it might have taught her about God or what God demanded of people, but now this was no longer possible. In Ayelet's mind, learning about the characteristics, interests, biases and agendas of the different sources has reduced the Torah to a history book… Thus, the problem she has with learning the documentary hypothesis is not that she does not accept the explanations it offers, but that she does. Her acceptance of these conclusions leaves her with a Torah in which God has had no role. The idea that these authors are average people, that they do not have unique qualification or share a special connection to God, seems very disturbing to her. The seeming "randomness" of the individuals wipes out her sense of the holiness of the text and makes it challenging for her to use the text in her religious practice, for example reading liturgically from the Torah or offering a d'var Torah.

Ayelet underwent the exact path of Right Angle Vector Variation B—her early TaNaKh education was compelling and impacted her Jewish identity, personal Jewish values, and Jewish behaviors in a particular way (basing her “spiritual and religious connection to G-d”). She then encountered Documentary Hypothesis, raising her resolution, and found Documentary Hypothesis compelling as well. Ayelet was then unable to reconcile this newfound knowledge of the Documentary Hypothesis and her understanding of the TaNaKh as the bedrock of her religious understanding. As a result, her religious practice was impacted—one indicator of moving farther “outside.”

**Diagonal Pedagogy: TaNaKh**

Just like in Israel education, it is clear that there is no single answer to the problem of the Right Angle Vector and the challenges it presents in TaNaKh education. The diagonal pedagogy described in Israel education as a possible approach, is of a completely non-conditional and

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sequential, proportional, and directly straight diagonal line,
permeating every level, from largest vision to each individual
element. This is possible in TaNaKh education as well.

Tanchel, while thoughtful in her curricular design, does
not totally exemplify total diagonal pedagogy. Tanchel explains:

In ninth grade, students are taught basic literary skills, including basic biblical Hebrew
grammar. They also develop the intellectual habit of critically evaluating interpretations,
which prepares them to assess the different methods and interpretations they will explore
in the coming years. In tenth and eleventh grades, students are introduced to the works of
medieval Jewish commentators (specifically Rashi, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra), learning
about each commentator's methodology through selected examples and gaining skills for
interpreting the commentator's interpretations. Twelfth grade Tanakh classes begin with
students talking and writing about their beliefs about the historicity, sacredness, and the
authority of biblical texts. Then, they learn about the identifying characteristics, interests,
and vocabulary of each of the five ancient sources and practice assigning particular
sections of narrative and legal texts to one of them. Additionally, they learn different
scholarly theories about the stages of composition of the Torah and critically assess these
theories.\footnote{Tanchel, “A Judaism That Does Not Hide,” 30-31.}

Tanchel only introduces Biblical Criticism in twelfth grade. There is a great deal in the
curriculum that prepares students for this moment, yet by introducing Biblical Criticism as a
theory only in twelfth grade, there still remains some bubble bursting. Stated in the Matrix
language, by introducing Biblical Criticism only in twelfth grade, learners are raising their
resolution after being “inside” at a low(er) resolution—a Right Angle Vector type trajectory.

There is a compelling argument to be made that learners know what is coming in twelfth
grade, and thus there is no bubble being burst. Yet, there is a difference between knowing what is
coming and actually studying it. While it is good that learners know what is coming, until they
are confronted with the actual material, it is difficult for learners to properly absorb and integrate
the ideas. Thus, a problem (even if significantly smaller) still remains.
Tanchel’s curricular design does prepare students as well as possible for the twelfth grade Biblical Criticism moment, planting the seeds for it by teaching the critical skills that hopefully inspire students to begin to wrestle with similar questions before entering the twelfth grade classroom. Yet, the curricular design leaves it up to the discretion of the teacher to insert ideas of critical scholarship into the curriculum. It is possible for a student to progress through the curriculum before twelfth grade without explicitly discussing or being exposed to authorship issues. If done well, educators in lower grades can expose students in a somewhat proportional manner to critical voices while they are building their skills, though this requires great skill on the part of the educator.

It is critical that Tanchel’s curricular design be understood in its context. The curricular design is based on the assumption (previously articulated\(^{48}\)) that students almost all enter the curriculum with a predisposed belief in Divine authorship of the TaNaKh. Pure diagonal pedagogy begins before any such beliefs are formed. Learners are not born believing the TaNaKh has Divine authorship—they are taught that at some age. True diagonal pedagogy begins before any ideas about authorship of any kind are taught. Therefore, Tanchel’s curricular design is the most educationally sound given the constraints of the learner’s background entering it. Additionally, a totally diagonal pedagogy is possible in TaNaKh education, but only if begun at the beginning of life.

\(^{48}\) See the last paragraph on page 34, the quote corresponding to footnote 37 (Tanchel, “A Judaism That Does Not Hide,” 31.)
Chapter Three:  
The Three C’s

One paradigm that helps in working to achieve the diagonal line approach of Israel Education is the Venn Diagram of the 3 C’s. This framework (original to this work) suggests that one way to have a diagonal-like Israel educational approach is to teach towards the cross-section of inspiring a connection to Israel, and teaching Israel as both compelling and complex. It is in this middle area of the Venn Diagram, that peak coherency and holistic Israel education exists. This chapter will describe each circle of the Venn Diagram of the 3 C’s.

The first chapter described how to identify the resolution and connection to Israel on the Matrix. There is no doubt that connection, compelling, and complexity play key roles in that framework. The Matrix is a critical tool in identifying where students are in their Israel educational journey, where they can go, and how to approach a coherent Israel educational approach from the start. It is only this last element, of how to approach a coherent Israel educational approach from the start, that this chapter seeks to address.

This chapter seeks to present a new original framework that undoubtedly deals with many of the same issues as the Matrix. Instead of starting from a place of identifying where students
are on their Israel educational journeys (as the Matrix does), this paradigm seeks to suggest critical elements required in order to teach towards a coherent Israel education. The framework of the Venn Diagram of the 3 C’s, identifies three crucial elements to coherent Israel education, and states that only in the middle cross-section of all three is coherent Israel education truly achieved.

**Inspiring a Connection to Israel**

In the first chapter, in the context of the Matrix, one who is connected to Israel or “inside” was identified by the level of three characteristics: emotional investment in Israel’s successes, a feeling of belonging in regards to Israel, and a sense of responsibility when it comes to Israel. These are three important measures in identifying and placing students on the Matrix.

This chapter seeks to suggest how to teach towards a coherent paradigm of Israel education. This section will focus on three ideas that aid in teaching towards a connection to Israel: teaching Israel as connected to the Jewish story, teaching Israel as being in relationship with (or part of) Jewish identity, and using critical thinking skills.

To answer the question of why Jews should be connected to Israel, we must first examine Judaism. There are many approaches to and understandings of Judaism in the modern world. The diversity of Jewish practice is but one expression of that multiplicity. Jewish identity itself is not monolithic with great varieties of understandings. For the purposes of this exploration, a peoplehood model of Judaism and Jewish identity is most helpful.

In such a model, Judaism is not a religion or system of faith, but rather a peoplehood. Inherent in a peoplehood is a system of existence that has something to say about every aspect of
life, from the most mundane to the most sacred, from the most irrelevant to the most powerful. This naturally includes a commentary on and an aspiration towards a national entity.

Additionally, inherent in peoplehood is nationalism. Even if not every people throughout human history have inhabited a nation, most have had national aspirations and a sense of nationalism.

Zionism is the realization of those national aspirations for the Jewish people. Judaism is also particularistic and tribal. Thus, there are unique characteristics and values that make up the national aspiration and system of national existence. These are the characteristics of Zionism.

Stated more plainly, Zionism is the realization of Jewish values on the national stage. The relationship between Zionism and Israel is also important to understand. Israel is the current attempt at realizing Zionism. The success or failure of such is a subject for later discussion.

In this paradigm, building a connection to Israel is inherently to build a connection to the Jewish story. The deepest connections to Israel are the ones that understand Israel as being in relationship with (or a part of) Jewish identity. To teach Israel as simply another important nation that happens to share a common religion is a missed opportunity for connection, and perpetuates misconceptions of both Judaism and Israel.

Being connected to Israel means understanding that one has a stake in its future. Formulaically, a logic model would dictate, if I am Jewish, and Zionism is the realization of Judaism (or Jewish values) on the national stage, and Israel is the modern attempt to manifest the Zionist dream, my Judaism (and thus myself) is connected to Israel. This model can be called the transitive property of connection to Israel.

Even moving beyond this paradigm, upon engaging with Israel, Diaspora Jews realize that one can live a life that holistically reflects one’s Jewish identity, without siphoning Judaism to the realm of religion. With the realization of a Jewish state, such identity can be expressed on
the national stage, an innovation that can be deeply impactful on the Jewish identity of Diaspora Jews and form the bedrock of their connection to Israel.

Judaism is not a monolithic entity. In this age of individualized Judaism, to be connected to Judaism in a serious way requires personal investment and critical thinking. Outside some of the most fervent Ultra-Orthodox communities (and possibly even there), one is constantly making choices about one’s personal Judaism. To be seriously engaged with Judaism is to be intentional about those choices—which usually requires personal reflection and serious consideration, in addition to an investment in or commitment to the outcome. The same is true about Zionism and Israel. In fact, one is not truly connected with Israel if their relationship ends where critical thinking, identity shaping, or personal investment begins. All three of these attributes are required in order to be truly connected to Israel.

Teaching this model not only inspires a deep connection to Israel, but also lays the foundation for a holistic coherent approach to a healthy relationship with Israel that can see Israel as both compelling and complex.

Israel the Compelling

The age-old truth teaches us that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. While the same is, of course, true about Israel—there are undoubtedly some elements of Israel that, when articulated passionately and taught soundly are compelling to the deep-thinking Jew. The most compelling elements of Israel are those in which Israel lives up to the Zionist dream. To a North American target audience, some of the realities of Israeli life deter—from the lack of lines to board a bus and the amount of screaming that takes place in routine conversation, to the lack of
religious freedom for Liberal Jews and the Occupation. With these realities, the parts of Israel that North Americans, by and large, find most compelling, are the elements envisaged in the Zionist dream of a Jewish state. While Judaism in Israel is sometimes the most problematic to North American Jews, it can also at times be the most compelling.

Three of these Jewish elements that are manifested in Israel that can be compelling to North American Jews are that Israel is a state that runs on Jewish time, is engaged with the Jewish past, and speaks the Jewish language.

Jews in North America miss opportunities by living in countries that do not operate on a Jewish calendar and Jewish time. For North American Jews who miss out because they choose (for religious, spiritual, or other reasons) to operate on Jewish time anyway, and for other North American Jews who only lose the opportunity to engage with parts of Jewish life like the manifestations of Jewish national expression (and everywhere in between), North American Jews must make choices with implications on their Judaism and Jewish identities. In Israel, Jews do not face such choices—there is a societal expectation that Jewish time is the time of the society. This also leads to complex and sometimes creative expressions of Jewish time (most notably going to the beach as a Shabbat practice). Functioning on Jewish time enables individuals and families to better self-define their Jewish experience without the restrictions or possible opportunity loss that exists in North America.

Functioning on Jewish time is not only a logistically compelling advantage, but also is a commentary on identity. For example, on Fridays all of the signs on the buses in Israel say Shabbat Shalom, and one will receive a similar greeting walking down the street. No matter of personal or communal practice (even if not defined as such), Shabbat is a shared national experience. The examples also extend beyond Shabbat. Yom Kippur is a national day of
reflection and cessation from day-to-day tasks; the country shuts down—there is not a car on the road—and the aura of the day consumes the country. On Lag B’omer bonfires are made throughout the country. Instead of living in a country of people who, come winter, greet each other with “Merry Christmas,” the unifying experience is one with a personal (not estranged) connection. Jewish time is about more than dominant culture; it is about expressing the personal, communal, and religious identity on the national stage.

Being engaged with the Jewish past, like Jewish time, is an expression of Jewish identity that in Israel is translated onto the national stage. The examples are abundant. The Israeli Parliament is called the Knesset, based on The Great Assembly or Anshei Knesset HaGedolah, and has the same number of seats. Streets are named after major characters of Jewish history from Biblical figures to Zionist thinkers. The national holiday on which people dress up in costumes is Purim (not Halloween). Additionally, almost all graduates of the Israeli public school system have a basic proficiency in Jewish history. Showing that the history of the Jewish people is living in real people with real lives and is not relegated to a Hebrew school book or a rabbi’s sermon; and that this history is each person’s history, with something to teach her or him about their past and future, makes engaging with Jewish past a compelling element of Israel.

Hebrew is also a compelling element of Israel. A living language with roots in thousands of years of Jewish history. When the Academy of the Hebrew Language (HaAcademia L’lashon Ha’Ivrit) goes about creating a new word in Modern Hebrew, their primary source is the Jewish textual and historical canon. Hebrew is an expression of the Jewish people and Jewish history in language form—just as the words and language one chooses to use are an expression of one’s identity. Two simple examples from many: The word for Hebrew in Hebrew is Ivrit, which comes from (and is the language of) the Ivrim—a word in the TaNaKh referring to the
“Hebrews” or “Israelites.” Also, the word for fuel or gasoline in Hebrew is Delek, which comes from the word L’hadlik (to light). L’hadlik is found in some of the most common practices of North American Jewish life—blessing candles (Shabbat, Chanukah, etc.)— and thus is one of the most known Hebrew words in the North American Jewish community. This intentionality in language together with its personal reflection as part of Jewish peoplehood identity is compelling, and thus Israel as the home of the Hebrew language is one of Israel’s compelling elements.

Teaching Israel as a state that runs on Jewish time, is engaged with the Jewish past, and speaks the Jewish language are three ways to teach Israel as compelling to North American Jews. These compelling elements of Israel are not superficial; they are intellectual non-insulting ideas that help North American Jews to think deeply about the idea of a Jewish state. The teaching of these compelling elements allows for North American Jews to build a meaningful relationship with Israel that also allows space to teach about the complexity of Israel.

Israel the Complex

Coherence in Israel education cannot be achieved without complexity. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines complexity as, “the quality or state of not being simple.”49 The Oxford English Dictionary defines complex as, “Consisting of or comprehending various parts united or connected together; formed by combination of different elements; composite,

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compound.” In other words, complexity is a multi-faceted reality; made up of different parts each of which are not simple.

In May 2014 in the online publication eJewishPhilanthropy, one of the great public written exchanges of ideas in the field of Israel Education took place between Alex Sinclair, Barry Chazan, and Robbie Gringras and Yonatan Ariel, on the idea of complexity in Israel education. This exchange, taken in sum, aids in understanding what complexity means in the context of Israel education.

Robbie Gringras and Yonatan Ariel’s piece provides a helpful frame in understanding that complexity, in the context of Israel education, is actually two different ideas focusing on two different areas of Israel education. Gringras and Ariel explain, “There is the complexity of the subject-matter itself – ‘Israel is endlessly complicated!’ And then there is the complexity of the learners’ response to the challenges Israel presents to them. In this latter sense, complexity is sometimes used as a euphemism for ‘discomfort’ – ‘My emotional and intellectual response to what I have learned about Israel is, for want of a better word, complex…”

Creating these two separate categories of complexity is helpful in understanding complexity in the Israel educational context. The difference and relationship between these two separate categories is poignant. The first, many Israel educators agree is true—one would be hard-pressed (though it is not impossible) to find a thinker or practitioner in the field of Israel education that claims that Israel is not a complex place. Yet, much disagreement in the field exists as to the role and method of

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teaching about Israel’s complexities, as there are fundamental disagreements about the goal of learners’ responses.

These goals are illuminated and enumerated by Sinclair in his initial piece that sparked the eJewishPhilanthropy exchange. Sinclair articulated the beginnings of a typology of Gringras and Ariel’s “response to the challenges Israel presents” (“response”) type of complexity. Sinclair presents six different types of complexity: advocacy, ambivalent, attractive, anguished, analytic, and activist. \(^{52}\) Each of these types of complexity is an expression of learners’ responses, meaning that each of these categories states how the educational outlook views complexity of subject matter. Stated more concretely, each type captures how the educator or institution understands the role of complexity of subject matter and how learners should respond to the challenges the subject matter presents.

Advocacy Complexity teaches the learner to use “subject-matter” complexity (“Israel is a complex place”) as a device towards defeating an argument (not encouraging discussion) and to prove (or advocate for) a particular predetermined position. Sinclair writes, “Israel’s complexity is a tool that can be used in Israel advocacy. Anti-Israel critique is painted as being simplistic and therefore unsophisticated, whereas the reality is much more complex. Complexity, used this way, is a powerful arrow in the Israel advocate’s quiver.” \(^{53}\)

Ambivalent Complexity is uncertain when it comes to teaching about “subject-matter” complexity. If “subject-matter” complexity should be taught at all, it should only be taught once the learner has garnered a deep commitment to Israel; only then can “subject-matter” complexity be introduced. Sinclair writes, “there’s a certain ambivalence about complexity. We can’t ignore


\(^{53}\) Ibid.
it, but we are a little nervous about it… complexity is seen as something that should be shared
with the learner only after we are sure that the learner is already committed to Israel… Only
then, when we’re sure that their identity is solid and ‘established,’ can we reveal that things are
actually more complicated than we may have first let on.”

This approach is highly problematic, as has been described in previous chapters as the Right Angle Vector approach, and the negative implications on learners and their relationship with Israel have been previously enumerated.

Attractive Complexity embraces and is excited by “subject-matter” complexity. The fact
that the subject matter is complex—that the content is nuanced and complicated—is compelling,
enthralling, captivating, and fascinating. Sinclair elaborates, “In this approach, complexity is
something to revel in, to celebrate, and not to be ambivalent about. The complexity of Israel is a
characteristic of the country that actually makes it more attractive and interesting.”

Anguished Complexity believes that “subject-matter” complexity cannot be ignored.
“Subject-matter” complexity is a critical element of Israel’s reality and the learner cannot
understand Israel without it. While not always the most enjoyable or simple task, reckoning with
“subject-matter” complexity is obligatory in order to truly understand Israel. Sinclair writes, “as
with attractive complexity, we see here an approach that takes Israel’s complexities as an
inherent and integral characteristic of the subject matter—but there is less celebration and more
soul-searching. Complexity… requires hard, serious thought. It’s not always easy, it’s not always
fun, but it is essential: Israel engagement without it isn’t true Israel engagement.”

Analytic Complexity understands Israel’s “subject-matter” complexity as a cognitive
exercise that, if approached in an academic and cerebral framework, can lead to a greater

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
attachment to Israel. The more rationally “subject-matter” complexity can be examined, the greater the understanding of the “subject-matter” complexity, and thus the more the learner is able to integrate the “subject-matter” complexity into their identity. Sinclair writes that Analytic Complexity is “interested in understanding the subject matter somewhat academically, in the belief that exploring Israel’s complexities through the brain will ultimately lead to identity engagement and connection.”

Activist Complexity posits that “subject-matter” complexity must compel a learner to act. No matter how the learner understands “subject-matter” complexity, the logical next step in the process is to do something about it. Action (and activism) is seen as part of the same natural process as engaging with “subject-matter” complexity. Sinclair explains, “Complexity on its own is never enough. It must always be a springboard for discussion, conversation, respectful argument, and ultimately, action. Once you understand Israel’s complexities, it’s only the beginning of the job. It’s your role as an engaged Diaspora Jew to articulate your own opinion on the complex issues at hand, and take action. The act of articulation itself… enriches identity and relationship with Israel.”

Critique: Educationally Sound and Unsound Complexity

One of Chazan’s critiques of Sinclair’s paradigm of characterizations is that it creates teams of “bad guys” and “good guys.” Chazan claims that Sinclair makes out that “the good

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57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
guys” are Activist, Analytic, and Attractive complexity, while “the bad guys” are Advocacy, Ambivalent, and Anguished complexity.

However, it does not seem fair for Chazan to assign characterizations of “good” and “bad” to Sinclair’s work; these characterizations could be reframed as educationally sound and educationally unsound. Using this characterization it seems fair to claim that there are some troubling issues with the educationally unsound models of complexity. For example, as Sinclair writes in his response to Chazan about ambivalent complexity, “Many Israel educators still use the ‘yes, but’ or ‘only after’ formulations… ‘We must get young people to love Israel first,’ they say. ‘Only when we are sure that they love Israel can we tell them that things are more complicated.’ This form of “response” complexity is problematic for many of the reasons articulated in previous chapters and in the exploration of the Right Angle Vector approach. This critique is but one example of how the educationally unsound forms of complexity are problematic.

Complexity Summary: Kinds, Types, and Categories

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The above graphic represents a summary of the breakdown of understanding of complexity in this chapter. The following narrative describes the graphic shown above:

As defined by Gringras and Ariel, there are two kinds of complexity: “subject-matter” (content of Israel itself) and “response” (the goal of learners to think, behave, and/or feel as a result of “subject-matter” complexity). Sinclair established six types of “response” complexity. Of those six types, Chazan helps to articulate two categories (with three in each): educationally sound and educationally unsound.

*The Case for the Educationally Sound Complexity*

Now that a deeper understanding of complexity in all its forms and permutations has been established, it is important to discuss why educationally sound complexity is important in Israel education.
Educationally sound complexity is critical in coherent Israel Education for five reasons. First, without educationally sound complexity, educators are creating an idealized, inconsistent-with-reality picture of Israel. Without educationally sound complexity, students may come to understand Israel as a Jewish Disneyland—free of problems and only full of people just like them. This is dishonest, as the educational picture presented does not match the reality of Israel. Second, Judaism encourages critical thinking and question asking in all its other facets, and Israel should not be an exception. Third, as many education experts teach, one should never teach something that she or he will have to un-teach. Fourth, when students encounter the parts of Israel that they do not find compelling, and possibly even deeply disenchanted, as shown by the Right-Angle Vector in Chapter One, without complexity it is likely these students will disengage. Fifth, only exposing students to critical voices of Israel without agency and context is educationally unsound complexity, and thus exposes students to the same risks.

Stated directly, as Alex Sinclair, Bradley Solmsen, and Clair Goldwater write in a 2013 paper, “Israel education that engages with all of Israel’s complexities will ultimately lead to more robust connections between young people and Israel.”

Teaching towards Educationally Sound “Response” Complexity

In their eJewishPhilanthropy piece, Gringras and Ariel ask a critical question. They ask, “what tools and experiences can we educators provide to empower the learner to deal with their complex feelings (response) when they find Israel is more complex (subject matter) than they

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61 Sinclair, Solmsen, and Goldwater, “The Israel Educator.”
had thought?” Adding on to this question, what are common threads that transcend all of the educationally sound (and some educationally unsound) models of complexity that educators can use to empower their learners in “response” complexity? This section will establish three areas to help in answering these questions.

Three ideas and strategies for how to navigate teaching educationally sound “response” complexity are: creating a healthy learning environment, having ideological pluralism, and exploring boundary-less content.

Creating a healthy and inclusive learning environment is one critical element to teaching educationally sound “response” complexity. Lisa Grant and Ezra Kopelowitz, in their book *Israel Education Matters*, articulate some ideas and strategies at how to create a healthy and inclusive learning environment in the context of teaching (educationally sound “response”) complexity (or “complicated” in their terminology). They write, “Complicating also requires extensive use of primary sources and avoiding a frontal approach to imparting information, focusing instead on holistic and relational learning where no question is out of bounds and dialogue is stressed over doctrine.” This outlook is the bedrock for creating a healthy learning environment, and also demonstrates the baseline for the learners’ environment in order to have educationally sound “response” complexity in Israel education.

An ideologically pluralistic approach to content is also required in order to achieve educationally sound “response” complexity. Grant and Kopelowitz explain, “In applying these principles, even in a program with a distinctly ideological slant, a teacher would create curriculum that left room for more conversation, questions, and opportunities to reflect on what

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62 Robbie Gringras and Yonatan Ariel, “Makom Joins the Complexity Conversation.”
all of this means to the individual learners. The learning that takes place in such settings does not focus on espousal of or adherence to correct points of view. Rather, it is designed to open learners up to multiple possibilities for interpretation and construction of personal meaning. This ideological pluralism allows for students to explore their understandings and beliefs about Israel through a vast variety of perspectives without judgment. In this model learners truly grapple with Israel, which empowers learners to better integrate Israel into their identity. Not assigning an ideological hierarchy empowers students to have a deeper and greater understanding of Israel, which translates into a stronger identification with the learner’s vision of Israel.

Lastly, boundary-less content is required in order to achieve educationally sound “response” complexity. Educators need to be unafraid (as long as the two previously articulated ideas are achieved) to cover such topics as: Ashkenazi-Sephardi tensions, religious pluralism, women’s rights in Israel, the African refugee crisis, the Occupation of the West Bank, the cost of living, social inequality, immigration and absorption issues, Israel’s political parties, Zionist history, and more.

At the crux of this perspective on boundary-less content is the question about the role of politics in Israel education and its impact on Jewish identity. Lisa D. Grant, Daniel Marom, and Yehudit Werchow in an article titled “Israel Education for What?” clearly and succinctly answer this question about the political nature of Israel education and offer a proposal for a way forward. They write, “Israel education and all Jewish education are inherently ideological whether that is made explicit or not. The key is for educators to become more aware of their own ideological and political stance towards Israel and make that explicit without attempting to indoctrinate the

64 Ibid.
learners into their own particular point of view." It is important to note that we cannot just hide politics in Israel—be they economics and housing, migrant workers and refugees, or racism and the occupation—because learners are smarter than that. Instead, we must not shy away from the political issues. We should be clear about where we as educators are coming from and expose students to a wide variety of voices that expose the swath of political engagement models and opinions. If we truly believe in the validity and truth of our personal political opinions, then they should be able (and we should encourage them) to stand up to critique. Also, acknowledging educators’ personal biases allows learners to perform their own analysis on the information being presented and allows for learners to compensate in their learning.

Connection to Diagonal Pedagogy

Ultimately, an educationally sound complex Israel education demands the learner to form their own opinions and understanding about Israel by teaching Israel in a nuanced, non-black-and-white, way. Doing so, along with building a connection of substance and teaching a compelling Israel, is critical to a coherent Israel educational approach.

This chapter has proposed a paradigm for diagonal pedagogy. Diagonal pedagogy demands proportionality in bringing learners “inside” and raising their resolution. The paradigm of the three C’s exemplifies one approach that can aid in achieving that vision. One way to realize diagonal proportional pedagogy is to teach towards an Israel educational that is plotted squarely in the middle section of overlap between each C.

Conclusion

Engaging in an Israel education of proportional diagonal pedagogy is not a simple task. Attempting to reconcile difficult subject matter and balance all of the different elements at play is a challenging endeavor. Yet, as has been established, it is necessary to achieve a holistic and coherent Israel educational approach.

In an age of great strife in the North American Jewish community when it comes to Israel, and when Israel itself faces incredibly important decisions surrounding its future, teaching about Israel well could not be more critical. The vision of Israel education articulated in this work—that of proportional diagonal pedagogy—provides a conceptual and philosophical framework to discuss a coherent Israel educational approach. This work also demonstrates the possible consequences should the field of Israel education fail its learners; Israel and the North American Jewish community can ill afford to perpetuate such an educational philosophy.

This work merely offers a conceptual and theoretical reflection and exposition of some philosophy in the Israel educational field. The statistical relevancies and realities that must go hand-in-hand with this work still remain beyond this thesis’ scope. The next great frontier of this work will be to begin to engage in the research to explore the statistical actualities of the concepts and philosophies articulated in this work. May this contribution soon be added to the burgeoning and fascinating cannon of Israel educational scholarship.

Until then, I hope the conversation as to how to teach Israel in a coherent way will continue. This work seeks to add but one voice to that conversation, and show a way forward to teach an Israel that is connected, compelling, and complex in a proportional diagonal manner.
Bibliography


