# LESSON PLAN 1 Introduction to Zionism - A Nation's Dream for Self-Determination

## CONTEXT:

This is the first lesson in a month-long unit on Zionism. In this introductory lesson, students will explore what Zionism is and why it emerged as a movement. They will also be briefly introduced to the different streams of Zionism, which they will study in depth throughout the unit. The goal is not to master the different streams, but rather to develop a foundational understanding of Zionism's origins, purpose, and core ideas.

## OBJECTIVES:

1) Define Zionism and explain its core idea of Jewish self-determination.
2) Identify key historical factors that led to the rise of Zionism.
3) Recognize that Zionism is a broad movement with different streams and perspectives, which they will explore throughout the unit.
4) Reflect on the importance of self-determination and national identity in shaping modern history.

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

Sources 1 & 2
UED video clip: What is Zionism?

## ACTIVITIES:

### 1) Introduction & Warm-Up Activity (10 minutes): "What Does Home Mean"

**Think-Pair-Share:**

Write the following questions on the board:

a. What does "home" mean to you?
b. Is home where you currently live, or does it mean something deeper (history, culture, family roots)?

Students write a short reflection (3-4 sentences) and then share with a partner.

**Whole-class discussion:**

a. What common themes emerged in our definitions of "home"?
b. Can a person or a people feel a connection to a place they have never lived?
c. How does this relate to the idea of a people longing for a homeland?

**Transition:**
For thousands of years, the Jewish people carried a connection to their homeland, even when they were physically far from it. Today, we will explore the movement that turned that longing into action – Zionism.

### 2) Chavruta/Partner Text Study (10 minutes) - "Defining Zionism"

Students are paired and given a short excerpt from Source 1:
The Basel Program (adopted at the First Zionist Congress in 1897).

The consensus definition of Zionism:
*"The Jewish people's right to self-determination in their historic homeland.*"

**Guiding Questions for Discussion**:

a. What was the main goal of the Zionist movement?
b. Why did the First Zionist Congress focus on practical steps rather than defining Zionism?
c. How does the consensus definition of Zionism reflect the ideas of national self-determination?

**Class Reflection**: Each chavruta group shares one key takeaway.

## 3) Class Discussion & Video Clip (10 minutes) – "Zionism as a Broad Movement"

Watch the UED video, "What is Zionism?"

**Whole-Class Discussion:**

a. What were some of the historical reasons why Zionism emerged as a movement?
b. How does Zionism compare to other nationalist movements?
c. What does the video suggest about the diversity of Zionist thought?

**Key Takeaway:**
Zionism was not just one movement with one idea—it was a collection of different ideas about how to achieve Jewish self-determination. Over the next few weeks, we will explore the various approaches to Zionism in depth.

## 4) Active Engagement Activity #1: What Do You Know About Zionism? (7 minutes)

Divide students into small groups and give each group a piece of chart paper.

Each group writes down what they already know or have heard about Zionism.

This can include historical facts, opinions, misconceptions, or questions they have.

Groups share their charts, and the teacher clarifies or expands on key points.

Highlight a few key themes that will be explored in depth later in the unit (e.g., *political Zionism, religious Zionism, cultural Zionism*).

## 5) Active Engagement Activity #2: Speed Dating Discussion – Exploring Different Perspectives (8 minutes)

Students are given a slip of paper with one of the following perspectives (without going into full historical details yet):

a. A political Zionist (wants a Jewish state for security and sovereignty)
b. A religious Zionist (sees the Jewish state as part of a divine plan)
c. A cultural Zionist (wants a center for Jewish culture and language, not necessarily a political state)
d. A labor Zionist (believes Jews should return and build the land through communal work)

Students rotate and briefly share their perspective with a new partner every 2 minutes.

After 3-4 rounds, **whole-class reflection:**

a. What do these different perspectives tell us about Zionism?
b. Why do you think Zionists had different visions for the Jewish homeland?
c. How might these differences lead to future debates and conflicts?

## 6) Reflection & Wrap-Up (5 minutes) – "Setting the Stage for the Unit"

Ask students to write a short response to one of the following prompts:

a. What surprised you the most about Zionism?
b. How does Zionism connect to the idea of home and self-determination?
c. What are you most interested in learning about in this unit?

**Teacher Wrap-Up:**
Zionism is a movement rooted in history, identity, and the idea of national self-determination. It was not a single idea but a collection of different streams and visions, which we will explore in the coming weeks.
Over this unit, we will learn about the key figures, ideologies, and challenges that shaped Zionism and continue to shape Israel today.

**Key Takeaways for This Introductory Lesson**:

Zionism is the Jewish movement for self-determination in their historic homeland.
It emerged in response to historical, cultural, and political factors.
There are multiple streams of Zionism, each with different ideas about how to achieve the goal of a Jewish homeland.

This lesson is just the beginning—students will explore these ideas in more depth throughout the unit.

## Further Learning: UED videos and educational resources

1. What is Zionism?
2. Six Different Types of Zionist Thought - part 1 and part 2