



—LIVING DOCUMENT—

Who are we?

Achvat Olam: Diaspora Community Day School (Achvat Olam meaning universal/eternal solidarity/siblinghood) will be the first of its kind in Jewish history. Weaving ancient and contemporary Jewish tradition(s), liberatory thinking and skill sets, and holistic approaches to academic excellence, Achvat Olam Diaspora Community Day school will nurture generations of Jews who will transform our world. Rooted in love, diasporism, and the Torah of justice, we will connect our students to their ancestors, to communities fighting for liberation, to each other, and to themselves.

We will celebrate the **multi-racial/ethnic/lingual facets** of the Jewish people.
We will decouple **Judaism from nationalism** and work toward the collective well being, safety, and liberation of all people.
We will model ways of Jewish life that are **compelling and accessible!**
We will create a **joyful, expansive, and playful** exploration of Jewish tradition.
We will bring **equity and justice** to the classroom and day-to-day operations and policies.
We will offer a **loving and age-appropriate container** to understand the historical and political dimensions of Israel/Palestine.
We will **illuminate the Torah's mandate of justice**, community care, solidarity, and political participation.

What do we mean by diasporist?

Our choice of the word diasporism is meant to convey three messages:

1. We will explore, uplift, and celebrate the wealth of histories, languages, and cultures of Jewish lineages from across the world. We will de-center the modern nation-state of Israel from Jewish identity-building, while holding that half of global Jewry lives there, including many of our family and extended community members.



2. In the diasporist traditions of “Doykeit” (a celebration of “hereness”) of the Jewish Labor Bund and the “Convivencia” of the medieval Middle Eastern Jewish diaspora, we will invest in our roles as residents, neighbors, and community members of Greater Boston, building people-power to create change within our Jewish spaces and as Jews working in solidarity with other communities.

3. Our teaching around Israel/Palestine will not adopt ethnonationalism as a pathway to Jewish safety and well being. Instead, we will lead with an embodied understanding that our future is inextricably bound to the future of all people.

How will we generally approach Israel/Palestine?

We will be a community of justice-seeking families who share an understanding that no one is free until everyone is free, who believe that the pursuit of justice, dignity, and thriving for all people is a Jewish moral imperative. We intend for this philosophy to permeate everything we do at our school, but especially in our approach to Israel/Palestine.

Our community’s relationships to Israel/Palestine will inevitably vary in terms of our familial connections and histories, our knowledge of and involvement in solidarity work, and our different orientations around strategies for paths forward for Israelis and Palestinians. We commit to creating a learning environment that inspires our students to become informed and invested change-makers for collective liberation at home, globally, and in Israel/Palestine.

People

We aim to live by our ancestral teaching of the inalienable dignity of all humankind, as the Mishnah in Sanhedrin teaches, ‘Adam was created alone so that no creature can claim “my father is better than your father”’ (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5). We work to dismantle all forms of colonialism, racism, ethno-nationalism, and other forms of systemic violence that harmed our ancestors, that continue to harm us, and that we perpetuate, including in Israel/Palestine. This includes an age-appropriate, honest confrontation with Zionism and the ongoing Nakba against the Palestinian people. In considering accountability, we consider the role of the State of Israel, Western colonialism, Christian imperialism, and the complicity and support of the US government and Diaspora Jews.

While many in our community have been marginalized by mainstream Jewish life for their political values around Israel/Palestine, our approach to Jewish peoplehood and to Israel/Palestine **will not be** one that cuts us off from our histories, our people, or the land. On the contrary, we hold true to our ancestral teaching, “*kol Yisrael arevim/ot zeh ba[zo]*”(bTalmud Sh’vuot 39a), which enlists us to share in the collective responsibility for the dignity and actions of the Jewish people, including the forty-six percent who live in Israel/Palestine.

Example: One diasporist approach to Yom Ha’atz’mat (Israeli “Independence” Day) might be to act as if it is not happening and treat it like any other week day. Our approach emphasizes the importance of understanding ourselves in relation to the rest of world Jewry. Our students will learn about Yom Ha’atz’mat and other Zionist Israeli holidays, including how they are understood by Israelis and Palestinians, how we understand them as a justice-driven community that stands against colonialism and nationalism, why our school will not celebrate them from a values-perspective, and age-appropriate opportunities to take alternative action toward justice and repair on that day.

Land

We affirm the profound and unending spiritual and historical significance of the Land of Israel/Palestine, or Eretz Yisrael as it is referred to in our religious contexts, as a holy place to our people across time and space. We also celebrate the deep and rich history of other peoples who have lived there throughout the millennia, and lament that our unique relationship has been used as justification for colonialism and ethnic cleansing. Our *Tanakh** curriculum will carefully, critically, and authentically engage with our textual tradition’s orientation to this sacred land, including the morally troubling Tanakh texts about destroying other peoples in order to conquer and settle it.

**canonical collection of Hebrew texts, comprising the Torah, the Nevi’im (Prophets), and the Ketuvim (“Writings”).*

Example: Some Jewish holidays such as Hoshanah Rabbah and Shemini Atzeret emphasize the biblical, ecological, and profound spiritual significance of rain in Eretz Yisrael. Our students will practice the traditional prayers and rituals



associated with those holidays, while also exploring the intersections of water and (in)justice in modern day Israel/Palestine and in our own community of Greater Boston.

Language

Our school's orientation to Jewish languages, Hebrew in particular, will be intentional and complex. Students will learn Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew in order that they study our religious texts in their original languages. Additionally, the Hebrew language has continued to develop over millenia through the publication of other critical Jewish works, and is recognized as the language that has connected our people to one another across time and space.

We also recognize that Modern Hebrew was standardized through the project of Zionism, which harmfully elevated it as the singular and most "authentic" Jewish language, and used it to marginalize other Jewish languages, pronunciations, and vernacular. Modern Hebrew will have a right-sized place in our curriculum, in order that our students can still engage with Jews all over the world.

Thus...

- Students will learn the Hebrew language's complicated history, including its use as a tool of marginalization
- Modern Hebrew will be secondary to the Hebrew taught in service of the religious studies program
- Students will be exposed to various pronunciations
- Gender and other forms of linguistic hegemony will be explored in prayer and as students develop their unique identities
- Students will be exposed to other Jewish languages such as Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, etc.

Example: Diasporic Jewish languages will be integrated into school signage and celebrations of Jewish holidays and may also be offered as middle school electives.

Evolving thinking

Learn more: info@achvatolam.org



As is true with any component of our nascent school, our thinking around this is ever-evolving, with consultation and input from various communities across an array of lived experiences.