

Excerpts From:

# REFORM ZIONISM

**AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE**

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# The Circle of Friendship<sup>1</sup>

The circle is an ancient symbol and shape. The properties of the circle dictate the significance attached to this symbol. The circle is a geometrical shape in which each point is at an equal distance from the center — no one comes first and no one comes last. Every person around a circle is “at the center” and has equal value. The circle also symbolizes completion — by definition, a circle must be complete. When a group of people order themselves in the form of a circle, this can be seen as an expression of a desire for completeness and togetherness. When we arrange ourselves in a circle, each individual forms a distinct *unit*, yet together we forge *unity* (note the relationship between the two words). Thus the way to togetherness and unity is through cooperation and mutual assistance (hand reaching out to hand around the circle). Martin Buber claimed that only by living togetherness can we discover the Divine element within humans. The opposite of the circle is the straight line (ABCD). This symbolizes action toward a defined goal. The person in a row or line is a means toward a goal or a symbol. The person in a circle symbolizes the human within society — not as a means, but as an end in himself/herself within society. This is why the Circle of Friendship in Tzofei Telem has replaced drills symbolizing “linear” activity — activity that unites people toward specific goals (war, etc.) These goals are not always compatible with the Jewish approach to the role of the human and the goals of human society. As a reflection of the desire for completeness, the Circle of Friendship in Tzofei Telem is a form of collective prayer.

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1. *Tlamim* 9 (Newsletter of the IMPJ Youth Movement), Adar II, Nissan 5741, March 1981 (translated from Hebrew).