



ACTIVITY

Engagement with Israel

Materials and Equipment Needed

- Scrap paper for each small group, for note-taking and general use
- Large pieces of paper for each small group, for visual representation of their group positions
- Pens

Time Needed

30-40 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the amount of time you want to give to group discussion.

Goals

This introductory activity aims to help participants examine honestly their feelings regarding both the idea of a Jewish State and the reality of the State of Israel today. Having considered their own position, they attempt to evaluate the feelings and reactions of their group as a whole, and to compare it with their assessment of the feelings of young Jews in their country as a whole towards these two questions.

Before You Get Started

Look at the list of enduring understandings. Which one would you like to emphasize through this activity?

- The relationship between the Land of Israel and the People of Israel is longstanding, going back to ancient times and finding expression in Jewish Biblical and Rabbinic texts.
- In modern times, Israel is the vision and venture of the Jewish People. The Jewish People's central project in modern times is the building of a sovereign Jewish State in the Land of Israel.
- Being an active participant in the Jewish People implies an ongoing relationship with the State of Israel and a concern for the way it conducts its social, ethical and humanistic affairs and its contribution to global Jewry.
- Even if they don't live in Israel, all Jewish People are "owners" of the State of Israel and have a part to play in contributing to, supporting and being in an ongoing relationship with the State.
- Contemporary Israel boasts a diverse and rich culture that is the product of the varied and diverse immigrant Jewish communities who build and contribute to the State of Israel. Encountering Israeli culture, in all its diversity, is an excellent way to encounter the Jewish People in its various manifestations.

Directions for Activity

1. Have all the participants place themselves on two scales of 0 to 10 in terms of a) how connected they feel to the idea of Israel as a Jewish State (one scale) and b) the society and reality of Israel today (the other scale). Zero means totally uninvolved and disconnected while 10 means totally involved and connected. Give them a few minutes to write an explanation on why they chose particular numbers on the scales. If on either scale they have assigned a number above zero, have them explain what it means. Encourage them to be totally honest in terms of their feelings. If the answer is zero, that is legitimate.
2. In groups of four or five, have them share their "grades" with each other, explaining why they made particular choices.
3. After they have all spoken and questioned each other to clarify positions, let them map the positions of the small group. Explain to them that they are part of a research project into the attitudes of their particular age group in their particular country. If this was a research group, what things could be said about the positions of the group members? What positions are held within the group?

Are there positions representing the majority of people in the group? Is there a minority position? Is there a difference in the two scales? What does this seem to reflect?

4. Have members of each group come together to create a new series of small groups with all of the previous groups represented. Have them do the same thing, but this time they present the findings about their previous group rather than their own personal positions. Their task is to come to conclusions regarding the whole group.
5. Bring the whole group together and let representatives of each of the second groups present their conclusions and analysis for the entire group. From this, try and extrapolate a group position.
6. Ask the group whether they think this position would be representative of their age group of Jews in their country (U.S.? Canada? etc.) Why or why not?
7. What does their position say about the involvement and connection of young Jews in their community? Is it surprising? Does it show high involvement or low involvement and connection? What explanations are there for this sense of connection or disconnection? How do they think it would compare with their parents or grandparents sense of connection? Is there a marked difference between the reactions towards the two different scales? Is there a difference in connection between those who have had contact with Israel through visits and those who have not yet visited? How do they feel about their sense of involvement or uninvolvedness? Is it a natural situation for young Jews and a Jewish State? Why or why not?

Note to Educator

Did the enduring understandings that you set out to teach surface during this activity?