



ACTIVITY

A Tale of Two Zions

Materials and Equipment Needed

- Video clip
- Internet connection and screening device
- Poster board and markers
- 2 cartons (or something that can serve as a soap box)

Time Needed

45 minutes-1 hour

Goals

- To explore how both the Israeli Jewish experience and the American Jewish one can be sources of learning and inspiration to the other.
- To learn about organizations and individuals in both communities who are influenced and inspired by the values of the other.

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. On a board write out "American Jewish Community" and "Israeli Jewish Community". Ask participants to brainstorm words that characterize these two groups. Focus the list on what Jews in each community may do, believe in or care about. (Try to steer the group away from generalizations or stereotypes that might be amusing but not entirely helpful.)
2. Extrapolate generalizations from the list, which touch on American Jews' prioritizing individual choice and universalist values and Israelis prioritizing distinctly Jewish values and ingroup loyalty. Draw a "Ying/Yang" drawing around these two columns.
3. Introduce and view the video clip of Rabbi Mishael Zion's ELI talk entitled "A Tale of Two Zions." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wsu3U8EVlbU> – cue from 9.22 to the end)
4. Ask the participants to share their general reactions to the clip. In particular, share these quotes from the video and ask them to think about how his perspective resonates with your experience of these two communities.

Americans ask: Why be Jewish? Israelis answer, Jewish identity thrives when immersed in Hebrew language, culture and geography.

We learn love, dignity and ethics, from our family first.

[Israeli Jews] are struggling to find room for the voice of the individual. They are challenged by an American Jewish project that says, that the dignity of the individual is a supreme Jewish value for Jews and non-Jews alike. And that a healthy modern Jewish identity must rest in free, individual choice.

5. Put the hypothesis to the test! Can the Jewish community in Israel answer American Jews' deeply held questions about being Jewish? And does the American Jewish experience offer insight into a basic challenge facing many Israelis, that of individual dignity? Ask for two representatives who can "make the case" about how this can work. Make it fun and have them stand on a "soap box" to make their case.
6. To conclude, encourage your participants to learn about an organization in Israel and America that are incorporating the ethos of the other community into their work. In Israel examples include, Shatil, the New Israel Fund and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. In America the organizations include Taglit-Birthright Israel, Israel Cultural Centers in JCCs across America like this one (<https://paloaltojcc.org/icc>).

Note to Educator

Did the Enduring Understandings that you set out to teach surface during this activity?