



Zionism 101

Learn the basics of Zionism with this easy to understand article on how you can best advocate for Israel.

In our modern time, being a Zionist does not necessarily mean supporting Israel blindly. As Zionists, it remains our responsibility to educate ourselves and those around us on the issues that Israel confronts. Only then can we take action on these issues!

How can you better advocate for Israel?

The greatest tool you can use when planning programs and projects on exploring and expressing one's Zionism is CURRENT EVENTS! If you already have a background on Zionism and its history, you are then able and informed enough to express explore Israel's current dilemmas. Just as you would for North American current events, read the Israeli newspapers, stay up to date on political issues as well as on social issues. Also remember that while Israel has its troubles, a key to advocating for Israel is recognizing her strengths. In times where she is subject to so much criticism, it is crucial to remind those around you that Israel has had major accomplishments as a nation. Israel, in its short existence, has become a thriving country with growing economy, advancing technology, and thriving culture.

Zionism as a topic alone is not only a broad but quite intimidating for a programmer and for a program participant. It is important to focus your efforts when designing a program that encourages Israel advocacy. Your greatest secret weapon can be to use the current events as a way to catch a participant's attention. Whether these topics revolve around the recent disengagements, Wars, social issues, is up to you as the programmer. Social issues that are often ignored in the midst of conflicts with Israel's Arab neighbors revolve around religious pluralism in the government, recognition of non-Orthodox marriages, discrimination against Ethiopian Israelis, Russian immigrants, etc. Remember that the URJ, as well as other organizations like the Israel Religious Action Centre (IRAC), ARZA, and ARZA Canada are constantly updating their information on current events and the Reform or Progressive Jewish stances on issues. Looking to these resources can give you direction on the Reform Jewish opinion.

- www.irac.org
- www.arza.org
- www.arzacanada.org

Procedure for deciding and implementing a program:

1. Decide the topic of interest and narrow your focuses on a specific issue that can fit into the time frame you are allotted.
2. Research the topic, finding not only relevant background history, but avenues for advocating for or against the issue.
3. Talk to sources that are either knowledgeable on the topic and/or are Israelis or have lived in Israel and can offer additional insight on topic you are researching.



4. Brainstorm ways that a programming participant can gain insight to how the topic or issue affects Israelis and their every day lives. (i.e. when doing a program on the IDF (Israeli Defense Force), simulate an army experience so Jews of the Diaspora may get a taste of the basic training.)
5. Write a program using as much factual information as possible that presents several viewpoints of an issue and give your audience an opportunity to decide where they personally stand. It is always productive to open a dialogue on a topic so that people may share their views in an appropriate and constructive manner.
6. End your program with ways to further the cause. Whether that involves a fundraiser, a letter of approval/ disapproval of the Israeli government, recreating the program for you synagogue, setting up an advocacy booth, creating an art project to promote a cause, etc.

These programs that encourage the formation of one's own opinion through reliable facts stray away from the common sermons on Israel. They serve as active and exciting ways to advocate for Israel while educating one's community. Remember that just as Israel changes and adapts as a country, your programs should similarly adapt to the evolving situations.

But what can you do in the meantime?

- **Stay informed!** Read an Israeli newspaper regularly so that you may keep an eye out for current issues that your community can get involved with. Both *Haaretz* and the *Jerusalem Post* are reliable and credible Israeli newspapers that can be found online.
- **Keep close watch on the news!** See if Israel is receiving harsh reports from the media. While Israel is not perfect, the media tends to harshly criticize her actions. Make sure that you can provide a balance in your own community so that CNN is not the only influence! This is probably the greatest gift you could give Israel.
- **Simply talk about Israel!** Mention Israel in discussion at your synagogue and at youth group events. When Israel becomes a part of your daily conversation, Israel becomes an important aspect of your life. The best way to teach is by example and if Israel plays an important role in your life and your TYG's life, then Israel can play an important role in the lives that you effect.
- **Advertise for trips to Israel!** When someone experiences Israel for themselves, they can truly understand the importance the State of Israel has for the Jewish people. Check Out www.rjisrael.org for more information about trips to Israel!