

ENGAGING IN FAMILY/COMMUNITY EDUCATION

CASE LEARNING ACTIVITY

PANEL DEBATE ON ISRAEL & JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The theme of Jewish Peoplehood and the role that Israel plays has become a central question in Jewish community life today. How does our relationship with the Jewish state impact our connection to feeling a part of the Jewish people – even when we often disagree about how Israel should “behave” in certain situations?

One hundred and fifty years ago, eighty percent of world Jewry lived in undemocratic states of Eastern Europe; today more than eighty percent of world Jewry lives either in Israel or the United States. Understanding the interwoven texture of these two peoples as they preserve their inalienable right to determine and protect their own Jewish futures remains critical to the lives of modern Jewry regardless of where they reside.

This program can be done either as a classroom activity, where students research and take differing points of view, or as an exhibit for a community center, synagogue, or other organization wishing to have participants learn more about the concept of Jewish peoplehood and the role that Israel plays.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

The creation of the State of Israel and the shrinking of the Jewish Diaspora into two major centers has a major impact on Jewish Peoplehood, especially as each major Jewish center (Israel and the United States) has taken different approaches to religion.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does the term “Jewish peoplehood” mean?
- How has the establishment of the State of Israel impacted Jewish peoplehood and the Jewish community in America?
- What role does the Jewish State and/or the Land of Israel play in your *individual* connection to the Jewish people?
- What do you think the relationship between Israelis and Diaspora Jews should be?

OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- Listen to an exchange of ideas among diverse participants
- Ask questions of presenters to clarify their stated points of view
- Reflect on the range of opinions presented and develop an organizational or community action plan

TIME RECOMMENDED:

2-3 45 Minute Sessions (If doing as a classroom activity)

45-60 Minutes (as a community/organizational program)

GRADE LEVEL:

Grades 5-12 (If doing as a classroom activity)

ASSESSMENT:

Create an organizational plan or program for fostering Jewish identity among organization members and Jews in Israel .

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ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

Activity One: This activity is designed for those doing this project as a classroom learning activity or for a camp or youth group that is having participants create the panel debate. If you are putting this on for a group of participants, skip to Activity Two.

1. Divide students into small working groups. Distribute the "[Jewish Nationhood](#)" worksheet and have participants fill it out. (*This can also be done if not doing this activity as a classroom activity, by having program participants fill out the sheet as an opening exercise or as a pre-program "homework" assignment*)
2. After each group has completed the sheet, discuss the common and different answers of each group. This can also be done by creating a word cloud using www.wordle.net or www.tagxedo.com.
3. [Using the population chart](#) – have participants discuss what the current state of Jewish demographics means for Jewish Peoplehood.
4. After discussing their concepts of Jewish peoplehood and looking at the demographic trends, have student groups generate 5 questions for a panel discussion on the theme of Jewish Peoplehood and Israel. If working with older students, questions can be submitted via text messaging using www.polleverywhere.com
5. Students can then brainstorm a list of local experts that they feel would be good representatives for the panel debate. Ideas should focus on local Jewish leaders who they feel are articulate and do not necessarily represent one homogeneous view of the theme of Jewish Peoplehood. Students can then divide the responsibility of creating invitations and inviting speakers to participate. As an alternate educational activity to inviting in outside speakers, select students/participants can be assigned roles with the facilitator/teacher giving each one a brief biography and points of view to represent.

Activity Two: Setting up the Debate/Discussion

As outlined above, you will want to set up your panelists well in advance and provide ample time to market and promote your program. Once the program begins, try and balance the amount of time participants are actively participating versus just sitting and listening. Here are some suggested guidelines for moderating the debate, followed by some sample questions specific to the topic of Israel & Jewish Peoplehood.

1. Guideline for Moderation
 - a. Introduction, description of the educational objectives, and setting the agenda for the session. In a panel discussion, you may want to "set the stage" too by describing why this session is being offered.
 - b. Introduction of panelists and their relevant background
 - c. Opening Statements and Remarks – Each panelist should have 2-3 minutes to set the stage and cover their main point of view in regards to Israel & Jewish Peoplehood, including the role of Israel in developing Jewish Peoplehood and the relationship between the American and Israeli Jewish communities in regards to understanding each other and working together towards Jewish unity. Each panelist should pick up on the main points from the prior speaker and then move to their material.

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ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

Activity Two (Continued):

- d. Questions of clarification followed by questions and discussion. This should be a blend of questions from a moderator as well as questions from the audience.
2. Sample Questions for Panelists:
 - a. What does the term “Jewish peoplehood” mean?
 - b. How has the establishment of the State of Israel impacted Jewish peoplehood and the Jewish community in America?
 - c. What role does the Jewish State and/or the Land of Israel play in your *individual* connection to the Jewish people?
 - d. What do you think the relationship between Israelis and Diaspora Jews should be?
 - e. How have changing Jewish demographics worldwide impacted the notion of Jewish Peoplehood?
 - f. How does the status of non-Orthodox denominations in Israel affect concepts of Jewish Peoplehood?
 - g. What ideas do you have for creating more understanding and cooperation among Jews around the world?
 - h. Is Jewish Peoplehood still a valid concept worth understanding?
 3. The final component of the program will be to divide participants into several small groups. Each group should have a pre-assigned facilitator and will work to create an organizational plan or program for fostering Jewish identity among organization members and Jews in Israel. After a set period set for brainstorming and planning, all groups should come reconvene for a closing session where each group shares their idea. As an alternative, depending on the nature of the organization and attendees, groups can be divided to address this question by specific affinity groups, i.e. youth, educators, teens, young adults, etc.