

CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

The State of the State of Israel, *Elective 1*

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SUMMARY:	A thought provoking, socio-political debate program about the modern state of Israel using various debate formats with a wide range of perspectives. - <i>Submitted by Meir Balofsky</i>
TOPICS:	Communication Skills, Group Dynamics, Israel Programming
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will learn to appreciate other perspectives on social and political issues in Israel, while fine tuning their own. Different debate and discussion formats will be taught and utilized.
AUDIENCE:	Size of group: 20-50 (flexible) Age: High school and above (staff included) Background knowledge: Some degree of Israel social and political issues is helpful.
LENGTH:	60-75 Minutes
APPENDICES:	
MATERIALS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The list of questions for debate. • Participants need paper / pen.
SETTING:	Relatively large room for moving around.

Session Description

Introduction:

Israel is regarded as the “Jewish State”. For many of us who were raised in North America, we have lived in country that separates religions and government (which is what has allowed Judaism to flourish). By calling Israel a “Jewish State” it completely goes against that system we were raised with. To what extent should the laws of Judaism be the laws of the government? What if one is not religious? What if one is not Jewish?

There are many social and political ramifications of this. Together we will explore some of these issues. Take advantage of the fact that this is a safe place to be honest with each other. It can also be rewarding to play “devil’s advocate” and debate a side of an issue that that you may not personally agree with.

STEP A: Go around - Word Association – ISRAEL

STEP 1: Everyone makes a list of 4 different people who they may find in Israel – Consider age, gender, religion, religiousness, and politics – anything.

STEP B: Choose two people off your list. IF they did the same word association , what word would they think of. Write down those two words. Go Around again – and list all three words, yours and the two people you added.

STEP 2: Imagine what a meeting over coffee would look like with those four people and

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themselves in attendance.

Write down some quotes you may have heard during such a meeting

STEP 3: Get in to groups of 3-4 and share the content of your “meeting. 5 minutes

STEP 4: Have everyone then choose a person from their meeting OR from someone else’s meeting to TAKE ON THAT PERSON’S MENTALITY. What they think – what they feel, what they believe.

Introduce speed dating - Rotating after each question. Everyone is to stand in two parallel lines, so each person is facing one other person. IN THE VOICE AND MIND of the person they chose above they are to respond to the questions that follow and argue their views to the person before them.

Allow 90 seconds per question. Then they must rotate, thereby facing a new person and the next question is to be presented for debate.

After 3 questions – must take on a new personality. Repeat for UP TO 3 more questions.

Politics

- **Should there be a 2 state solution where the land is divided into an Israeli state and a Palestinian State?**
- **What would Israel look like if a two state solution came into existence?**
- There are members of Knesset who speak out against Israel’s existence. How should that be addressed if at all?
- In January 2016, Ban Ki Moon of the UN remarked that the wave of knife attacks by Palestinians “is understandable because it is “human nature to react to occupation”. Is that a fair statement – why or why not?

Religion

- **Israel is a Jewish State. Should stores and business have the option to operate on Yom Kippur? Why or why not?**
- Israel Is a Jewish State. Should city buses be allowed to run on Shabbat? Why or why not?
- Israel is a Jewish State. Should same sex marriage be permitted in Israel? Why or why not?

Military service

- **If an Arab Israeli wishes to join the IDF, what would your reaction be?**
- What are your thoughts on Jewish Yeshiva students who wish to learn Torah instead of serving in the army?
- How much liberty should the Israeli Army have in raiding homes in the name of defence and safety of Israeli citizens?

STEP 5:

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After the last debate question everyone is to sit in one large circle. Place 3 chairs in the middle of the circle. Recruit 3 volunteers to sit in the middle. The rule is that only the people in the fishbowl are allowed to speak. If anyone wishes to speak they may relieve one of the people in the middle and take their seat.

For these questions everyone is responding as themselves, and they will naturally only join the fishbowl if they are comfortable contributing.

For these questions, you may use the bolded ones above (the first in each category)

STEP 6: If time allows, give a few minutes for each participant to write down their reflections from the experience. Ask for any volunteers who would like to share their thoughts

CLOSURE: This program was not supposed to reach any ground breaking solutions to the challenges faced in Israel, but to rather be a beginning of healthy discussions. Israel is a culture rich country and there should be a place for all the people and voices we shared here today. Feel free to continue these discussions with each other as the conference continues.

Age	Religion	Occupation	Living Conditions
10	<i>Jewish</i>	Student	Detached modern home
15	<i>Muslim</i>	Bus driver	Homeless
20	<i>Christian</i>	Cashier	Mud huts
30		Doctor	Immigration
40	Secular (J-M-C)	Lawyer	absorption ctr facility
50	Modern (J-M-C)	Market Vendor	Small apartment
60	Ultra-Orthodox (J-M-C)	Vendor	Large apartment
70		Unemployed	Luxury home
80		Cleric	

Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:

The questions can be adapted for any demographic and educational goals. There is a lot of room to tweak the program on the fly with time management - add or take away questions - extend or shorten debate time etc.

This format can also be done to discuss local or community based issues.