

A Brief Guide

NAVIGATING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ISRAEL

Navigating challenging conversations around Israel isn't a new concept, but sometimes there is a tendency to focus on the events of the day, rather than the bigger picture. How can we as educators link timely events coming out of Israel—sometimes everyday, it seems—as well as ongoing realities, to the timeless values of our people and our story?

We should strive to help our learners and ourselves view Israel within a broader, timeless context, to reinforce, and sometimes introduce, our core values and the essence of who we are—as individuals, as a camp community, and as part of the Jewish people.

These tips and best practices can help you create opportunities for staff—and older campers—to engage around tough issues that most likely are on their minds. We believe they'll appreciate the opportunity to have open, honest, and fair discussions with their peers in their beloved camp home.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUDIENCE

- > Most staff members have just spent the year on a college campus where the subject of Israel often arises. Acknowledging that the topic is on their minds shows that you care about their lives and challenges, and providing a framework for open discussion will be appreciated.
- > Communicate your expectation that staff will separate their personal, perhaps emotional, perspectives from their role as camp educators and role models.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- > Be clear about the goals and parameters for any conversation.
- > Help staff understand your camp's goals for Israel education and how it plays out at different ages.
- > Help staff understand how they can bring their personal connections with Israel to their campers' experiences.



PROVIDE CONTEXT FOR ALL CONVERSATIONS

- > Help staff understand conversations around Israel within the larger context of their ongoing, developing relationship with Israel.
- > A tough discussion about controversial Israel-related issues or policies shouldn't be the only staff program that focuses on Israel.
- > Provide opportunities for staff to both celebrate Israel, as well as more generally explore its place in their lives.
- > Encourage conversation. At the end of a panel discussion or other exploration of difficult issues related to Israel, you might want to provide an Israeli-themed snack that sets the scene for staff members to linger and continue the conversation informally.
- > The Aleph Bet of Israel Education can serve as a guide for framing the discussion: <https://www.theicenter.org/aleph-bet>.

CREATE SPACE FOR MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND AUTHENTIC VOICES

- > Frame the conversation by reminding staff that although we are united in our shared values, we don't need to be uniform in our expressions of them in our everyday lives.
- > Bring together Israeli and North American staff members whose viewpoints and experiences cover a wide spectrum, and reinforce the importance of working in partnership to bring these perspectives to campers.
- > If bringing in voices from outside your camp community, help presenters or panelists prepare their remarks in advance.
- > A senior staff member or visiting faculty member can meet with each presenter once or twice to help them clarify their message and the best way to present it. Don't hesitate to push presenters to plan; the entire staff will benefit!

