



Shalom Hillel Colleagues,

As we continue to show our solidarity with Israel and respond to anti-Israel propaganda on campus, it is important for us to also provide a safe place where Jewish students can express their thoughts and feelings about Israel, in particular about the current situation.

“Israel As We See It” is a facilitated intimate conversation in small groups (approximately 10 students) that aspires to expand personal engagement with Israel, will provide an outlet for concerns, and will foster awareness of a meaningful relationship between Israel and being Jewish.

“Israel As We See It” is a restructured version of the 1st session of “Talkspace Israel,” a ten-week Israel discussion forum that encourages participants to think deeply about Israel and its relationship to Jewish identity by exploring a range of sources in interactive ways.

It is important to point out that this session is not a pro-Israel meeting. This session is not pushing a particular agenda, and has no aim to persuade anybody about what is right or wrong. The outcome of the session will be different for each participant, as there is no goal to have a group agreement and plan for action. For some, this session will help to process feelings regarding what is going on in Israel, while for others, the session will strengthen their level of identification with Israel and its people at this time.

Please let me know if you plan to use this program. I will be very happy to talk you through the session and explain its rationale.

Bi’smachot (on happy occasions),

Doron

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Israel As We See It:

Creating space to explore the personal thoughts and emotions on the situation in Gaza

Israel As We See It

The setup:

- **Assemble** a group of about 10 students (the recommended range is between 5 and 15) for a period of approximately 90 minutes.
Here are possible groups/networks you can run this session for:
 - Birthright Alumni
 - CEI / PNEI
 - Fraternities and Sororities
 - Shabbat dinner participants
 - Hillel Staff
 - Any other group/network you can put together ad-hoc
- **The location** of the meeting should be in a comfortable space without external distractions, for example the living room at a student's apartment.
It should be aimed that the place will be inviting, and gives the sense of a safe haven. Light refreshments may be offered as part of the setting.
- **Download and print** the interpretative maps which can be found in on the following link:
<http://www.jewishagency.org/NR/rdonlyres/1F88F07D-AAB1-4D72-B41A-2DD7C15BE4DC/53627/alhamapa.ppt>

Opening (20 minutes)

Welcome participants and orient them to the nature of the event and its purpose.

Ask the participants to agree to a simple set of guidelines in order to allow candid, meaningful and personal conversation. These should include respect for other's views, complete honesty and a recognition that the goal is not to advocate a position, but to hear and listen each other's voices and views.

Begin the session with names (if not all members of the groups know each other)

Scatter or hang the different interpretive maps of Israel around the room (you can do this before the session starts). Based on the student's background and knowledge, point out that these are interpretations of the map of Israel (not all student know that). You might choose to print out the map of Israel to show the student the basis of the interpretation.

Each participant circulates the room and investigate the maps. Each participant needs to choose one the map that represents their attachment and/or disconnectedness to Israel. It is important to point out that the map they choose should represent their overall connection to Israel and not (necessarily) related to the last few weeks.

Come back together as a group.

Ask each participant to present the map they have chosen and explain why they have chosen this map.

Talkspace (60 minutes)

Now, after the initial comfort zone has been set, and the overall topic is ‘on the table’ it is time to shift and talk about current events.

Here are a few questions and methods to move along the conversation.

- *If you had to make a one line statement on your current feeling or thoughts about what is going on in the south of Israel and the Gaza strip, what would it be?*
- Present an item that has been produced on your campus in relationship to the current situation in Gaza that is supportive of Israel- it can be a flyer or a local newspaper with article/images on the state of affairs (if there is nothing local, you can choose something from more regional or national),
 - *What do you think when you see this publication?*
- Present an item that has been produced on your campus in relationship to the current situation in Gaza that is critical of Israel- it can be a flyer or a local newspaper with article/images on the state of affairs (if there is nothing local, you can choose something from the area or national),
 - *What do you think when you see this publication?*
- *What is the thing that really frustrates you regarding the current situation?*
- *Do you have conflicting feelings about Israel?*
- *What is the thing that gives you hope?*

You can use a poster board, compose a listing of the issues that were common or overlapping in the ways that various people wrote about and spoke about Israel. Also include a listing of unusual or unique perspectives that were voiced in the group.

Wrap Up (10 minutes)

To end this session ask each participants to share a personal topic they want to explore next. These topics could be based on

- The maps they saw
- The conversation that arose
- On any other trigger



Facilitator's Guide

The Goals are:

- To create a safe space for dialogue in which participants can learn and discuss their thoughts and feelings about Israel and the current events
- To examine the personal associations of students to the current crisis in Israel/Gaza.
- To provide a safe place for an open and frank discussion.
- To discern the width and breadth of views regarding the connection to Israel
- To increase the number of Jewish students that engage in discourse about Israel.
- To foster discourse among a diverse spectrum of students with varying levels of connectedness to Israel on the assumption that participation and engagement will strengthen Israel attachment and involvement.
- To better understand the nature and issues regarding the connectedness of Jewish students to Israel.

Other imperative tips:

It is important to keep the conversation moving, ensuring that all the participants have an opportunity to contribute to the conversation, keeping an eye on the clock and maintaining a spirit of candor and respect for the views of others.

The facilitator empowers the participants to discuss their feelings, connections, questions, and points of disconnectedness, if they are brought up.

The overall goal is to help student have the conversation about Israel that they want to have, but may seldom have had. It is also important that the discussion leave a positive impression and have a certain cathartic feel. Obviously, the more uplifting the better, but we have to be aware that candor and divergent opinions may also leave the participants with potent questions. Hopefully, continued conversation may provide a means to further address those questions.

At the end of the session:

based on the participants' comments, you can plan the individual (and possible group) follow through to this session.

Here are a few possible options:

1. Continue one-on-one conversations
2. Help to organize a joint Jewish-Muslim event
3. Create a full Talkspace: Israel program
4. Suggest to get involved in the pro-Israel group
5. Offer program in Israel; a MASA program or short term trip

Success Checklist:

At the end of the session, affirmative answers to these questions will help you know you've been successful:

- ✓ Did every participant take an active part in discussions and activities?
- ✓ Did participants respect and listen to each other's ideas?
- ✓ Do participants accept that it's okay not to know everything about Israel?
- ✓ Are they willing to ask questions that are on their minds?
- ✓ Are you sensing there will be a follow-up to the session?