



Explain: Aliyah is an expression of identification with Judaism, with the Jewish people, homeland and state. Aliyah is one way to connect to Judaism and Israel. There are many other ways. How do you connect with Judaism?

Body of activity:

Stage 1: The Magen David Star Of Jewish Identity

Give everyone a piece of paper and pen and ask them to draw a huge Magen David. In each point of the Magen David (6), write factors of your personal Jewish identification (see example in PDF) with your name in the center in Hebrew and English.

Place each factor in the points of the star that are appropriate to how you identify with each one. Examples:

In the top point, put your most important factor of identification/connection

In the points that are parallel, put factors that are of equal importance but may not be as important (on the side). The bottom point, can be the point that you identify with, but not as strongly.

Once they are finished, invite those who wish to share their drawing to do so.

Shabbat Alternative:

STANDING MAGEN DAVID ACTIVITY

Use string or yarn to create a Magen David. On the floor. Run the activity above except ask each person to move to each point of the star and share what they would place in that point.

Stage 2: Discussion

- Have them share their responses and point out that some will have similar factors, simple factors and others will identify completely differently than their neighbors and have more complex factors of identification.
- Also explain that there are more than 6 ways to identify with Judaism and various levels of identification. It is important not to be judgmental, but rather to see the similar and contrasting values.

Stage 3: Levels of Aliyah (Powerpoint slides)

If weekday, provide blank pieces of paper and pens for them to add their own examples. If Shabbat, verbally add your own.

Split the group into three smaller groups.

Activity:



Start this activity with a quote from A.B. Yehoshua, noted Israeli author and advocate. Choose which one you want to read, but first explain that AB Yehoshua made these remarks in 2006, at the American Jewish Committee Centennial Symposium.

Following the quote, explain: The audience members responded with scathing remarks of how dare he tells Americans not to be concerned with life in Israel, that is it not their business to care. Some however, agreed with him that American Jews shouldn't really be too concerned with what goes on every day in Israel...that they can send their checks and make it a vacation destination, but not much else.

What about you? What do you think should be your connection to Israel? Is it an all or nothing thing? Can you be strongly connected to Israel without moving there ("making Aliyah"). If we don't live there, is it our say what goes on there? Is there more than one level of "Aliyah" and connectedness to Israel for American Jews?

Give each group a packet of the Powerpoint slides of the levels of Aliyah.

Explain:

We demonstrated with the Magen David activity that you all connect with Judaism through various factors. You also connect with Israel through various factors, on a varying degree . The goal of this activity is to create an ascending ladder (or pyramid or some kind of schema of stages), of weakest to strongest (or lowest to highest), through which we show our connection to Israel as American Jews. As you make your choices, think of possible issues or dilemmas these choices bring up.

For example: You believe that Israeli food is a great way to connect American Jews to Israel because they can use it to learn all about the different ethnic groups in Israel through food. You don't have to be in Israel to enjoy Israeli food though. Does that still mean you're "engaging with Israel?"

Each group has to present their "levels of engagement with Israel" to the rest of the group and explain their choices.

While each group is working on this (about 10 min) go between the groups and try to guide them.

Example: Ask them if these are examples they chose because they can do them outside of Israel and not live there or something they did as a tourist or another example that is low on the list because it can only be done if you're an Israeli citizen.

Stage 3: Discussion about the levels of engagement.



First, ask how many chose Aliyah as one of their top three choices.

*It is important to show that Aliyah is one of the levels, but not the only one, and also not necessarily the highest one.

- What is the next stage after one makes Aliyah?
- If someone is not going to make Aliyah, what is their highest level of engagement?
- How can we go from stage Z to A when A (the top level) isn't the same for everyone?
- **What is holding us back from climbing the next “wrung” of our Israel engagement or connection ladder?**

Final step in discussion: We can see what this means for American Jews, but what does this mean to you? Where am I on my scale of connection with Israel? Where do I want to be?

Sikkum: Israel is not just a country that is often a hot news topic. For American Jews, it is way more than that. It is a Jewish value and as we saw in the activity with the stars of David, many of us has Israel in one of our triangles. Each one has its own way of connecting with Israel, on varying degrees or levels.

When we tried to define the levels of connection to Israel as a rank of highest to lowest or strongest to weakest, we see that it's not so black and white. It's not that Aliyah is the top level one can get in connecting to Israel, we see that there are many layers to Aliyah than we realized. Aliyah fits on the ladder, but in a series of levels determined differently by everyone. It is all the levels of engagement with Israel we chose today that can be considered stages or the ladder of Aliyah.

Bring it home: when and how can I move to my personal next stage with Israel?

If you take anything away from this discussion, recognize that nothing is holding you back from moving up the ladder of Israel engagement from where you are now to the next step you decided on from there (example from listening to Israeli music to reading Israeli newspapers every night). These answers came from you today, so make it your own by living it!

Attachments:

Levels of Aliyah

Example of the Star of David

American Jewish relationship and the AB Yehoshua debate.

The Great Debate: AB Yehoshua's remarks on the American-Israel Relationship
(*American Jewish Committee Centennial Symposium, 2006*)

TERM TO KNOW: *Shilat Hagola*: Negation of the Diaspora

Once Israel was established, there would be no need for Diaspora (a Jewish community outside of Israel), all Jews would make *Aliyah*. Israeli Author AB Yehoshua negates the need for Diaspora Jews to support Israel and claims one cannot be fully Jewish without living in Israel

1. "I am what I am, I have a clear identity. I don't see the "other." Who is the "other" that I have to like him? It's your problem, not mine"
2. "You are still American, because you live in that framework." You can change [with] your country, but you cannot assimilate. [Similarly] you cannot say there is one Israeli who has been assimilated during the sixty years of [the state's] existence"
3. If...in 100 years, Israel will exist, and I will come to the Diaspora and there will not be... [any] Jews, I would say it's normal. I will not cry for it. Why? Because its very natural that every one of you will be American, and extend his identification with that country in which he's living...
4. I will [and] cannot keep my identity outside of Israel... [Being] Israeli is my skin, it's not my jacket. You are changing jackets – from Argentina you take your jacket to Brazil, from Brazil...to America., from there, then you're moving. You are changing countries like the Jews have done all the time, changing countries like changing jackets.
5. You are not doing any Jewish decisions...All of the decisions that you are doing are done in the American framework. You are not deciding about the Iraq war through a Jewish perspective. You are deciding it according to American interests...You are playing with your Jewishness – plug and play...Not everyone will return to his city, engaging himself in his work, whatever he does in an American context...all his life, he will be engaged in American decisions
6. This is what annoys me why I speak with anger. That in recent years...you [American Jews] are tired of Israel. You are becoming detached from Israel. You are not coming anymore or you are coming in few. Israel...is not [always] a nice story...You can not always be proud of Israel. So [you] detach yourself, and...you will find your Jewishness reading another book of history and going to synagogue.
7. You study the Talmud. What is the Talmud? It is a discussion about practical things. I don't read the Talmud anymore and believe me, most of the people here do not read the Talmud...they think about the Jewish text. The problem with me is not the text. The problem with me is life. Life and life is decisions every day about many things. And this is how Jewishness is done for good and for bad.

8. When you ask me, you are dealing with your Israeli identity and not with your Jewish identity, I don't know what is my Jewish identity, my Israeli identity comprehends all my Jewish identity

9. The Israeli identity is the identity of everything, and this is Jewishness

10. I don't want this term of "double loyalty" I would like you to have ONE loyalty and have many other affiliations.

Levels of Engaging with Israel

To visit Israel

To give money to Israel

To work for a Zionist organization

To make Aliyah

To live in Israel on a program (Nativ, sabbatical...)

To be involved in AIPAC or any lobby for Israel

To serve in the IDF

To raise a family in Israel

To help others to make Aliyah

To work in Israeli politics

To pray for the state of Israel

To go on USY Pilgrimage or any other educational
tour

