

URJ CAMPS STATEMENT ON ISRAEL

Our commitment to a strong, vibrant, Jewish, and democratic state of Israel, secure within its borders, is unyielding. Since October 7th we have repeatedly called for measures that ensure that Israel remains strong and secure, that the hostages are released immediately, that humanitarian aid reaches Palestinians in Gaza, and for a future in which an Israeli and a Palestinian state exist side by side in peace.

[URJ Statement on Israel: The Moment We Are In, The Future We Pray For.](#)

How our Values Help Shape our Thinking About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Rachel Margolis, RJE

The URJ's values are the moral and ethical imperatives that undergird everything we do and inform our approach and thinking about the world. Using our values involves critical thinking, challenge, and reflection. We might understand "justice" differently today than 25 years ago. This is because moral problems cannot always be easily solved. We may manage a question about learning in one way today but approach it differently in five years.

An enduring dilemma occurs when there are two moral answers to the same question. The question cannot be "solved," because there isn't a single solution. Instead, we manage it, recognizing different ideas and acknowledging that our understanding may change over time. How can we hold more than one perspective as equally valid? The rabbis had a Hebrew phrase for this: "*eilu v'eilu divrei Elohim Chayim,*" which translates to, "these and those are both words of the living God." For centuries, Jews have held multiple opinions; part of the Reform ethos is an understanding that the world is always changing, and we can change our practice accordingly, even as we hold tight to certain values and ideals.

Below are the URJ's values accompanied by questions about Israel and the West Bank/Gaza. Just as Jacob wrestled with an unnamed heavenly being and had his name changed to Yisrael – one who wrestles with God – so too do we grapple with different ideas and honor varying perspectives of the world's big issues. At times, our values may be in dynamic tension with one another. Instead of rejecting a value, we grapple with all of them together, finding where we might lean in, where we might question the tension, and where we can affirm our commitment while understanding that ideas change over time.

You might use these questions together with the [Civil Discourse guide](#) to hold conversations about current events. As you do, remember – having a conversation around a challenging idea need not end in shouting or agreement. Carving multiple understandings and paths forward has always been a staple

of Reform Judaism, and we will continue to strive to create communities of belonging, mutual respect, and innovation.

ISRAEL AND JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD

כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה | *Kol yisrael arevim zeh ba'zeh*

“All of Israel and the Jewish people are responsible, one for the other.” (Shevuot 39a)

- How has your relationship with Israel and the West Bank/Gaza changed over time?
- When have you felt a sense of belonging with Jewish people, Israel, and Palestinians?
- When have you felt a sense of separation from the Jewish people, Israel, and Palestinians?
- How has the current conflict impacted your feelings of belonging or isolation?

VALUE: JUSTICE

דַּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט | *Dirshu mishpat* – Seek justice. (Isaiah 1:17)

- What does justice mean to you regarding Israel and the West Bank/Gaza?
- What actions can you take to support justice in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza?

VALUE: SHARED HUMANITY

בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים | *B'tzelem Elohim* – In the image of God. (Genesis 1:27)

- What does shared humanity mean to you?
- How do you feel connected with people who live in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza?
- How do we share humanity when we feel diametrically opposed?
- What can we agree on that helps us find our shared humanity?

VALUE: BELONGING

אֵתֶם נִצְּבִים הַיּוֹם כָּלְכֶם | *Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem* – We build, connect, and enrich communities – congregations, camps, programs, social justice work and more – where youth and adults across all identities, generations, and lived experiences feel a deep sense of belonging. (Deuteronomy 29:9)

- What do you know about the diversity of people and identities in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza?
- How do you feel connected with Jews?
- How do you feel connected with Palestinians?
- What does a mutually respectful community look like to you?
- What does a mutually respectful community feel like to you?
- What do you need to participate as your full self?

VALUE: LEARNING

תלמוד תורה כנגד כלם | *Talmud Torah k'neged kulam* – We honor Torah, wrestle with Jewish traditions and beliefs, including God, and engage directly with the difficult questions of our age. (Mishnah Peah 1:1)

- What experiences have helped you learn about Israel and the West Bank/Gaza?
- How does the current conflict challenge your understanding of Israel and the West Bank/Gaza?
- What do you want to learn more about and how might it help clarify your view?

VALUE: EVOLVING

וגטובו מחדש בכל-יום תמיד מעשה בראשית | *U'vtuvo mechadesh b'chol yom tamid ma'aseh v'raysheet* – With goodness, the Holy One renews creation every day. (“Yotzeir Or,” Daily Liturgy)

- As you consider what's happening in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza, what values are bumping up against one another?
- How are your values pulling you in different directions?
- How have your ideas about Israel and the West Bank/Gaza changed?
- What's prompted this change?