

For Me Israel is Most Like...

This time of year and many of our festivals contain much of the Jewish genetic coding. The holidays (especially Chanukah and Pesach) have become a part of the core "code" for participating in Jewish life and a relatively high number of Jews, celebrate them. The question that interests us is how to also incorporate Israel into that core Jewish coding –through its holiday celebration: Yom Ha'Atzmaut, or through other moments in Jewish communal/ camp life.

Every holiday has a story behind it. Some tell a story of an historical event, others tell a story that focuses on a value, which is told and relived through the holiday, so that it embodies the meaning of the holiday.

Exercise 1: In the exercise below (**Handout 1**) ask the participants to choose one or two symbols that most closely represents their relationship with Israel or how they see Israel, and one or two symbols that least epitomizes their relationship.

Invite the participants to share their choices and encourage them to give reasons through probing questions

Handout 1

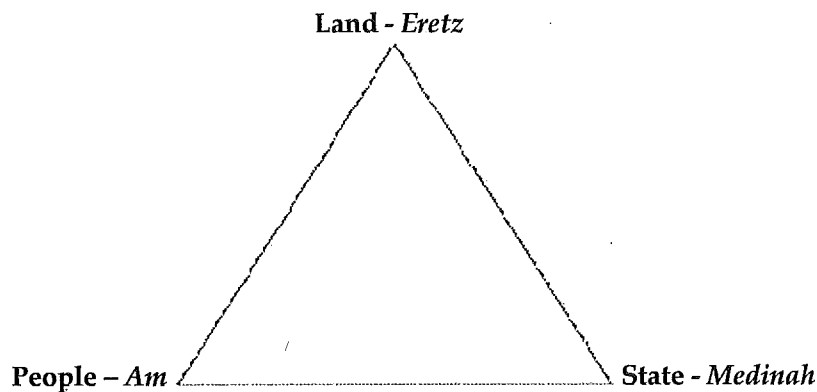
Exercise 1 - ISRAEL IS MOST LIKE.....

- **Kippa:** Every waking hour I feel it with me, identifying me and connecting me.
- **Tallit** (prayer shawl): At certain prescribed times it envelopes me, but at other times it is out of sight.
- **Eruv** (a communal Jewish boundary): It is a constant presence, but I don't see it or feel it viscerally.
- **Huppa** (the wedding canopy): Reserved for special, significant moments in my life. Not a part of my everyday routine.
- **Stars in the sky:** I know Israel is out there, but it is far away and not accessible.
- **Mom:** Nurturing and helpful for many things in my life, but not healthy to stay around all the time.
- **Baseball:** Like a national pastime that you have no say in choosing, Israel is a part of my Jewish communal landscape whether I like it or not.
- **Embarrassing Sibling:** Does a lot of things I wish he wouldn't but I feel like I have to defend him nonetheless.
- **Needy Cousin:** Demanding to the point where I start to bear a grudge against, despite our familial relationship.
- **Childhood Room:** Repository of childhood memories, strong sentimental connection.
- **Failed Experiment:** A noble and valuable but unsuccessful attempt at Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel.
- **Unlit Candle:** Israel is a place full of unfulfilled potential.

Exercise 2

Al-Shlosha Devarim...

1. To begin, outline a large triangle on the ground with tape, chalk, etc. (see image below) and ask each participant to place themselves in the area that most reflects where they feel a connection or relationship to Israel. Alternatively, participants can initial their position within the triangle. It is important that the facilitator not provide explanations. Rather, allow participants to be drawn to the specific areas as a result of their own associations and understanding.



2. After having made their choices, the facilitator should invite some of the participants (in different positions) to share why they are standing or have marked where they are. In doing this, the facilitator should begin to glean the participants' varying understandings of the three terms - Land, People and State.
3. The facilitator then proceeds with (or a paraphrase of) the following:
 "In this program we will be looking at the relationship you have to the State of Israel. We could focus on any of these other two aspects of the triangle, but today we will specifically be focused on this last one – *Medinah*, the State. Israel is a fascinating, exciting, vibrant and confused modern country. It's not accurate to simply portray Israel as a place of turmoil, as the news channels do, nor is it accurately portrayed as either a religious state or secular Zionist entity, as some educators do. It is in fact all of these things; and this is what makes it so compelling! This activity is an opportunity for us to examine the role that the State of Israel plays in the Jewish identity of both ourselves and the campers that we work with." Invite the participants to respond to questions probing their relationship to the *Medinah*;

Sample questions for discussion, feel free to add or change.

- The State of Israel enables me to...
- The State of Israel challenges my Jewish Identity because
- Being in Israel during this time of year has strengthened my connection to the State by...

Stage II

The Year that was

In this closing exercise we want to invite the participants to reflect on how this past year in Israel has impacted their identity and present their goals and objectives for the coming summer. It could revolve around the following questions/statements.

The events in Israel that have had the most impact on me this past year include: _____

In sharing my experiences in Israel with my campers this summer I definitely want to:

The Directors may wish to suggest themes or events that they are particularly interested in being part of the Israel program this summer.