

## Talkspace:Israel

*A Makom-Hillel Program for Post-Birthright Programming on Campus*

### Introduction

The State of Israel, with all of its complexity, challenges, triumphs and shortcomings, is one of the most significant collective Jewish projects of all times. The return of the Jewish people to their historic homeland, the creation of a majority Jewish, sovereign society, the development of a vibrant Hebrew speaking cultural milieu and accompanying largely secular sense of Jewishness are among the central distinguishing parameters of the unique, epoch making nature of the Zionist movement and of the State of Israel.

In the life of peoples and nations, and especially in light of the Jewish people's multi-millennial history, sixty years of Israeli independence is a short span. However, sixty years of independence is also a unique opportunity for celebration and self-appraisal, for recognizing where hard work, fortitude, and vision have born fruit; and for marking those areas of Israeli life where much work is still at hand. The **Talkspace:Israel** program cannot be a comprehensive guide to all that is Israel, but hopefully, it can be an eye opening, informative, and provocative look at several of the central issues that are part of the ongoing formation of the State of Israel, its politics, society, and culture.

For participating students, the **Talkspace:Israel** program offers space for a thoughtful circle for members of the campus community to discuss and debate their thoughts and feelings about Israel. Through active conversation, exposure to challenging learning materials, and through the cultivation of a safe space for agreement and disagreement, **Talkspace:Israel** hopes that students will further their own understandings and commitments regarding Israel and Israel's place in the contemporary Jewish experience.

### Three Learning Stages

The session flow suggested below is based on three learning stages:

- Foundational Issues

The first three meetings (each meeting approximately 90 minutes) will focus on issues meant to set the stage and provide a shared informational and conceptual baseline for the ongoing seminar meetings. The first three meetings will focus on both students' personal ties to Israel and the ways in which those personal ties are impacted by and impact on larger arenas of the historical-ideational contexts of Jewish connections to the Land of Israel and the unfolding of modern Zionism.

- Interlocking Challenges

As alluded to in the above introduction, no course of 10-15 hours can possibly cope adequately with all of the complex challenges faced by Israel's polity and society. However, [Talkspace:Israel](#) does seek to at least introduce some of the most challenging, ongoing dilemmas of Israel's dynamic reality. In that vein, the interlocking challenges presented below may be done in any order, and rather than devoting a single session to each topic, facilitators are encouraged to choose to focus on particular topics and perhaps devote two sessions to them. Each topic provides a window into Israeli life and allows for the learners to cope with the complex and intriguing issues that life in Israel highlights.

- Summing Up

A look at the ongoing grappling with challenges of the past, and the challenges of the future; as well as an opportunity for personal reflection - How do I respond to the learning journey of [Talkspace:Israel](#)?

## Learning Unit Titles

- Israel As We See It:  
Establishing A Baseline Of Personal Connections To Israel
- Textual Intimacies:  
Jewish Connection And Ambivalence In Relationships With Israel
- In Motion Across The Ocean:  
Our Jewishness And The Jewishness Of Israelis
- “What Is It Good For?”  
The Development And Impact Of Zionism
- “And Who Knows If Abraham Was Not Black?”  
Israeli Society’s Immigration And Growth, Difference And Solidarity
- Standing, Not Singing:  
Israeli Arabs, Hatikvah, And Symbol-Making In The Jewish State
- *Mee-Dor La-Dor* - From Generation To Generation: Presence Of The Conflict In Israeli Society
- Israel And the Diaspora(s):  
Centers And Peripheries Of Jewish Life And Thought
- Israel Towards The Next Sixty:  
Old And New Challenges Of The 21st Century
- Wrapping Up & Moving On - Israel In Our Lives

[http://www.hillel.org/israel/learn/talkspace\\_israel/default](http://www.hillel.org/israel/learn/talkspace_israel/default)



Scott Copeland 03-01-2008/כ"ה טבת תשס"ח