



# HOW DOES ISRAEL FIT WITH MY (CHANGING?) JEWISH IDENTITY?

## PREP FOR THE SESSION

### Overview

This resource examines **how Israel fits with our Jewish identity** through the value of **Innovation**.

### At-a-Glance:



This resource was created in partnership with Unpacked for Educators.

This resource delves into the complex journey of incorporating Israel into our Jewish identity through the lens of innovation. It explores the challenge of balancing tradition and modernity in understanding Israel, prompting reflection on messages received in the past and how they align with our evolving beliefs. The activity involves creating vision boards to show this integration and encourage deep thinking. Drawing wisdom from "Fiddler on the Roof," the resource addresses when established customs can bend and when they must evolve. Participants commit to deepening their understanding of Israel and personalizing their perspectives, ultimately striving to balance tradition and innovation authentically in their Jewish identity.



### Time Estimate:

45 – 60 minutes



### Materials Needed:

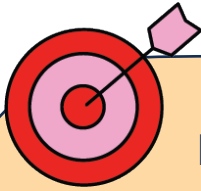
- Digital device to watch the clip from Fiddler on the Roof
- Materials to create Vision Boards: cardstock (or large paper), magazines, photos, scissors, glue, paper, pens, markers



### Best Uses:

- For teen and young adult audiences
- For a conversation with a creative and hands-on dimension
- For all size group settings with an opportunity for individual reflection

## LET'S GET STARTED



### FRAME THE ISSUE

***Read the following for context:***

Israel is often referred to as an “*Old-New Land*,” a place that combines tradition and innovation, serving as a historical homeland as well as a place of vibrant culture and identity.

However, how Israel fits into our Jewish identity is a personal and complex journey. Many of us may have grown up hearing about Israel being a part of our heritage, and a source of Jewish pride. It was a place we were expected to care about, discuss, support, and visit. As we get older and develop our own unique beliefs and experiences, the question of where Israel fits into our Jewish identity becomes much more complicated, especially if our opinions about Israel differ from those of our parents, teachers, and early upbringing.

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***Facilitator prompts the group:***

- How can we honor what we were taught about Israel in the past while adapting it in a manner that aligns with our current authentic selves?
- How might we achieve this if our Jewish identity and our opinions about Israel are still evolving?

8 min





## EXPLORE THE VALUE: INNOVATION

### *Read the following:*

Exploring the value of innovation can help us balance the tension between other people's expectations of our relationship with Israel and defining our own. While certain aspects of what we were taught about Israel continue to resonate with us, there are other elements we may wish to challenge, as we, and our ideas, continuously change and evolve. How can we continue to explore how Israel fits into our Jewish identity in a way that feels authentic to us? How might we navigate this tension between tradition and innovation?

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### *Facilitator prompts the group:*

- Share a time when you have felt a tension between tradition and innovation in your personal life. (ex: your family life, your learning setting...not necessarily related to Israel).

5 min



15 min



## ACTIVITY

**Creating a Vision Board** (*see below for explanation*) about your Jewish identity and Israel:

- **Gather your supplies:** Magazines, scissors, glue, paper, pens, markers.
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**Facilitator prompts the group:**

- Start by **writing down** a list of what you were taught previously about Israel. These could include messages from parents, grandparents, rabbis, educators, blog posts or articles.
- **Circle** the ones that resonate for you, and **place question marks** around the ones you are questioning. You can also write any new points about Israel that you've learned in adulthood in a different color.
- **Create** a vision board (using pictures and words from magazines) that illustrates how Israel fits into your Jewish identity. Your vision board should demonstrate your interpretation of all the different messages you've received about Israel.

*A vision board is a visual representation of images, words, and symbols that are meaningful to you. Be creative and use free-flowing associations. The images and words you use can be abstract and do not have to directly connect to Israel.*

- **Pair up** with a *chavruta* (study partner), **share** your vision boards.



**Facilitator prompts the group:**

- What aspects of this activity did you find challenging? What was easy?
- How did you combine all the different messages you've received about Israel into your Jewish identity?
- Which aspects of the vision board reflected values of tradition, and which showcased innovation? How did you navigate the tension between these two values?



## JEWISH ANCHOR

*Scan the QR code or click here for a clip from the film “Fiddler on the Roof” (4:03 - end).*



*Facilitator frames the clip by reading the following:*

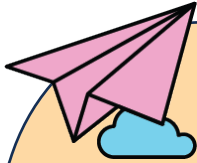
The 1971 movie “Fiddler on the Roof” (based on the story by Sholom Aleichem) tells the story of Tevye, a Jewish peasant living a traditional life in pre-revolutionary Russia, and his three daughters. His daughters move from traditional practices to more modern and open ones. While Tevye begrudgingly accepts the choices of his first two daughters, he is not able to reconcile himself to his youngest daughter’s decisions. His reaction unfolds as follows (in the scene...)

*Watch the clip and then facilitator prompts the group:*

- In the clip, Tevye says, “if I try to bend that far, I’ll break”. Reflect on that statement: When can tradition bend, and when will bending cause it to break?
- How might you explain a newer perspective to someone with a more traditional worldview?
- Given the conflict between tradition and innovation discussed above, imagine explaining your vision board on Israel to someone from a previous generation. What might be their reaction?

8 min





## PROMPT ACTION

*Facilitator shares the following prompt with the participants:*

Look back at your vision board.

- Is there anything missing from your vision board? How might you go about bringing it in?
- Are there aspects of your understanding of Israel would you like to delve deeper into and personalize? How might you go about accomplishing this? List two practical suggestions.

5 min





## CLOSE WITH INTENTION

### ***Facilitator reads to summarize:***

In this resource, we explored the concept of balancing tradition and innovation when it comes to incorporating the diverse messages we have received about Israel. How can we retain the aspects of our understanding of Israel that still hold personal significance while integrating new perspectives into our Jewish identity authentically?

As the famous line from the film suggests, "*without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof.*" However, it's the willingness to embrace this uncertainty that enables us to strike a balance between old and new ideas, constructing an identity that respects our history while remaining true to our present selves. While this task may not be easy, it remains a vital one as we continue to evolve and shape our Jewish identity.



### ***Facilitator prompts the group:***

- Name one aspect of your relationship with Israel that has shifted as a result of this session.

3 min

