



iEngage

SHALOM HARTMAN מכון
INSTITUTE שלום הרטמן

The Engaging Israel Project at the Shalom Hartman Institute



Being part of a people and seeing oneself as part of a people is one of the deepest and most essential aspects of Jewishness. Judaism is not merely or even primarily a system of faith and religious and moral practices, but a connection to a people who have been walking together for over 3,000 years, caring for each other and working together. One of the central motivations of the iEngage Project is to help sustain and maintain Jewish peoplehood in the face of new realities threatening to undermine it.

The iEngage Project provides tools to enable new foundations for a relationship with Israel and for overcoming the deep intolerance around Israel that has infected many of our communities. The iEngage Project is working to generate a conversation that will celebrate Israel for what it is and, more importantly, for what it will become, which will in turn engender a commitment to taking part in building such an Israel.

“The iEngage articles are challenging, the text study (new for many in the program) is fascinating, and the notion of taking a values oriented approach to our relationship with Israel is providing a broad foundation upon which people who stand throughout the political spectrum are able to stand.”

- Temple Beth Shalom, Needham, MA





The Need for a New Israel Narrative

Sixty-five years after the founding of the State of Israel, two vibrant, powerful Jewish communities exist—one in Israel and the other outside of Israel. While in dialogue with one another, each community contributes to and defines the content and future of Jewish life in different ways. In Israel, this life is developing within the context of a sovereign Jewish state with a Jewish majority, while the community that is cultivating Jewish life outside of Israel is an established minority engaging in open exchange with the larger world.

An ever-increasing faction of the world Jewish community is questioning the significance of Israel and the importance of Jewish sovereignty—a rift that threatens the quality and vitality of Jewish life. While Jewish identity without Israel would be impoverished, so too would a Jewish state without World Jewry. Continual collaboration between these two communities has the power to stimulate a renaissance in Jewish life, based on mutual learning, adaptation, challenges, and even criticism that may ensue from the cross-fertilization of two distinct ideologies.

The Jewish Reality Today

The core feature of the "traditional" Israel narrative was the precariousness of Jewish survival. In this narrative, Jewish existence, both in Israel and around the world, was viewed as threatened by inevitable and sometimes imminent danger. This inspired the creation of a Jewish identity in which the survival and perpetuation of the Jewish people and the defense of Jews in danger became central values.

Political, economic, and cultural success among world Jewry, coupled with growth in Jewish vitality and creativity, have diminished the compelling nature of this narrative, as has the success story that is Israel. Without denying the dangers that Israel faces on a daily basis, its military power and prowess, along with its economic vitality, render a crisis narrative, which demands unquestioning support and a rallying around the flag to protect Israel from its enemies, less meaningful.

As Israel flourishes and the old narrative recedes, there is an increased sense that the actual or perceived values represented by Israel do not necessarily coincide with the values that are central to the lives of Jews around the world today. Some people even feel forced to choose between support for Israel and loyalty to their Jewish or democratic values, a choice that leaves their relationship with Israel in a precarious position.

The Jewish community is largely unprepared for today's uncertainties about the relationship between Israel and World Jewry. The time has come to move forward—to construct a foundational narrative that will redefine the relationship between Israel and World Jewry. Free to select their identity, affiliations, and loyalties, Jews will choose to relate to an Israel that generates vitality and meaning in their lives. If Israel is to succeed in reclaiming a central place in the lives of Jews worldwide, it must lay claim to its role as a standard of morality, spirituality, and intellectual excellence.



iEngage Curricula

Led by a team of internationally renowned scholars in the fields of Jewish studies, Middle East politics, and history, the iEngage Project is committed to addressing core questions pertaining to the necessity and significance of the Jewish national enterprise. The members of the iEngage research team are tasked with creating robust and easy-to-use curricula that empower educators and rabbis to lead values-based discussions tailored to the needs of their communities. The *Engaging Israel: Foundations for a New Relationship* and *Tribes of Israel: A Shared Homeland for a Divided People* Video Lecture Series educational tools are in use in hundreds of congregations in North America and around the world. *Jewish Values and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* will be released in 2016.

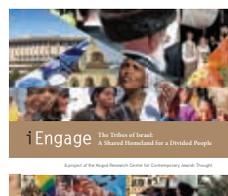
The Images of Israel curriculum, created by Christians for use within their communities, develops a Christian values conversation about Israel that seeks to encourage renewed Christian engagement with, and appreciation for the Jewish state, while confronting the ideologies that continue to hinder such engagement.

Customized study programs for Jewish leaders and change agents, based on the ideas modeled in the program curricula, address issues of collective identity, pluralism and tolerance, unity, and diversity in the public space. Demand for iEngage study has led local and national agencies to train professional and educational leadership in these curricula.

iEngage programs are often developed and presented in partnership with other organizations, from local synagogues, Hillels, and JCC's to major institutions, movements, national conferences, and local boards of rabbis. Reaching tens of thousands of constituents within the Jewish community, iEngage has become the premier educational program on Israel engagement in North America.



Foundations for a New Relationship goes deeper than politics or advocacy to reframe the discussion about the enduring significance of the State of Israel for the contemporary Jewish community. This curriculum aims to elevate the conversation about Israel to one rooted in Jewish values and ideas rather than in response to crisis. Topics include Jewish peoplehood, sovereignty, ethics of power and war, Judaism and democracy, and more.



The Tribes of Israel: A Shared Homeland for a Divided People deepens our understanding of the particular "tribal" identities that constitute the Jewish people and helps to develop a methodology of conversation around the dilemmas of Jewish statehood currently dividing the Jewish world. This curriculum suggests a model of Jewish public space that balances the needs of the collective with the individual aspirations of the "tribes" and foundations for reengagement for Jewish people with the enterprise of Jewish sovereignty.



Coming in 2016: Jewish Values and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict confronts one of the most difficult issues dividing Jewish people today. Participants are invited to engage with the ideas and values that animate different attitudes to the conflict, focusing on the values and ideas that lie at the foundation of our politics. This, in the goal of gaining a greater understanding and respect for each other, without whitewashing differences.

For more information on these video lecture series, visit shalomhartman.org/video

"How fortunate we are to have this class! It is for me the only chance to discuss current life in Israel. I love the background sources, the videos of interviews, and the lecture. The class inspires hope, despite seemingly impossible conflict."

– Donna Jauvits, Temple Emunah, Lexington, MA



In order to reach a wide geographic and demographic audience, iEngage scholarship is frequently showcased in the public sphere through a variety of traditional and new media outlets, community events, and national conferences.

Citywide iEngage study is run in partnership with local agencies and Jewish Federations in New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, the greater Los Angeles area, Boston, Toronto, and Denver. These multi-denominational study partnerships feature public programs with iEngage scholars which draw participants from across the region. The Hartman Institute-Union for Reform Judaism Israel Engagement Initiative brings iEngage to dozens of Reform congregations across North America and provides rabbis and participants with additional resources such as webinars, consultations, and seminars.

iEngage on Campus

One of the goals of iEngage is to reach younger constituencies that generally do not find the traditional crisis narrative to be inspiring. The Hartman Fellowship for Campus Professionals grew out of an awareness that Jewish campus professionals in North America sit at the threshold of the future of Jewish life and leadership. Recognizing the importance of providing resources, content, and training to multiple aspects of the campus community, the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America joined together with Hillel: the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life to create a cutting-edge and transformative fellowship. The Fellowship prepares key on-campus leaders to address the issues that their students face with the hallmark iEngage values-based approach.

Participating campus professionals are trained to think in more nuanced terms about Israel as a core element of Jewish life, enabling them to cultivate substantive and compelling conversations about Israel, enriching students' relationships with the Jewish state, and helping them reach a deeper understanding of themselves as Jews and as members of the Jewish people.

Our range of campus program offerings, which share a common goal of supporting the growth of values-based conversations about Israel on campus, includes ongoing iEngage classes on a variety of North American campuses, a summer research internship for college students in Jerusalem, and an intensive weeklong winter seminar for 150 students from 10 campuses at the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

Hevruta: A Pluralistic Gap-Year Program

Hevruta, a collaboration of the Shalom Hartman Institute and Hebrew College, is a fully integrated gap-year program for North American and Israeli student leaders from a diverse range of Jewish backgrounds and life experiences. This exciting and dynamic learning opportunity addresses both Israeli and North American cultures and contexts as compelling centers of contemporary Jewish leadership and discovery.

Over the course of their nine-month experience, Hevruta participants engage in rigorous inquiry and text study and meaningful internship and community service projects, while taking advantage of Jerusalem's rich intellectual and spiritual resources. Hevruta alumni are well positioned to use their influential voices on campus and beyond to shape the Jewish people's most important conversations and communal decisions.

We are proud that iEngage was named one of North America's top innovative Jewish programs in the tenth annual Slingshot Guide, a resource of innovative projects.



