

Last month, I brought a new initiative to MJC. So many members of our community were asking me questions about life in Israel, my thoughts on current affairs, my time in the IDF, and how they can learn more, that I felt it was time to shift some of our programmatic focus to Israel education.

Our new program is called iEngage: Israel's Milestones and Their Meanings, and the material is courtesy of the world-renowned faculty of the Shalom Hartman Institute. I facilitate these course which explore the pivotal moments of Israel's history. Over the course of our meetings, we're learning about 1917, 1947, and 1967 as key moments when Zionism unleashed new thinking about the meaning of Jewishness for generations to come. From learning about these moments in history, I hope to give our participants a larger understanding of the present and tools to think about the future of the Jewish state and what it means to be Jewish in America.

Each session includes a 20-35 minute video lecture and a 20-30 minute roundtable video discussion with senior Hartman faculty, as well as a group discussion that I facilitate. Our sessions are laid-back and casual (you can even BYOB!) and people all different levels of background knowledge are welcome and feel comfortable.

We already had two successful and interesting sessions:

Unit 1: 1917 - The Balfour Declaration: The Idea of a Homeland for the Jewish People

Unit 2: 1947 - The United Nations Partition Plan: The Jews in the World

But more importantly, we still have six sessions ahead of us and I invite all of you to join us:

Unit 3: 1967 - The Six Day War: Power, Land and God

Unit 4: Judea and Samaria: Occupation or Liberation?

Unit 5: One State, Two States: Moral Red Lines

Unit 6: Jerusalem of God, Prayer and Peoplehood

Unit 7: Jerusalem of Responsibility, Loss, and Hope

Unit 8: The Jubilee Year and Beyond: Milestones and their Meanings

If you are interested in coming (and even if you aren't) you can use this as a time to start thinking about the importance of Israel in our lives as Jews in New Jersey. Why is Israel important to talk about? What should our role be? Do you feel connected to current affairs in Israel? Can Israel be a light unto the nations when we have difficult conflict? Is Israel heading in the right direction?

**The next session is on December 18 from 7-9 PM, I hope to see you then.**

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Koas

