

**UNPACKED** FOR  
EDUCATORS

 **THE JEWISH**  
EDUCATION PROJECT

# Unpacking the War and Navigating Israeli Current Events

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Senior Director of Israel Education



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 Providing clarity, calm and perspective amid the breaking news cycle of Israeli and Jewish current events

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Local decimated Iranian drone fleet in February airstrike inside Iran - report

IS AN ACT OF DECOLONIZATION

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Message

Unpacking all things Jewish  
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2,000 year old dates?

2.5M 2.0M 2.2M 1.0M 630.9K 325.2K



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read more war 2023 israel at 75 i/p conflict Jew holid

Read Us 2023 War #Israel75 I/P Holid

The deadliest attack in Israel's history.

16 SELF-CARE TIPS FOR TIMES OF WAR

PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

KIDNAPPED: ORI DANIING

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Why are fallen soldiers a "Silver Platter"?

KIDNAPPED: EDAN ALEXANDER

ISRAEL DEFENDS ITSELF AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA'S GENOCIDE CHARGE

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Anti-Israel Axis

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6 Shows - Updated Weekly

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SOULFUL JEWISH LIVING

WONDERING JEWS

Judaism Updated Weekly

Judaism Updated Weekly

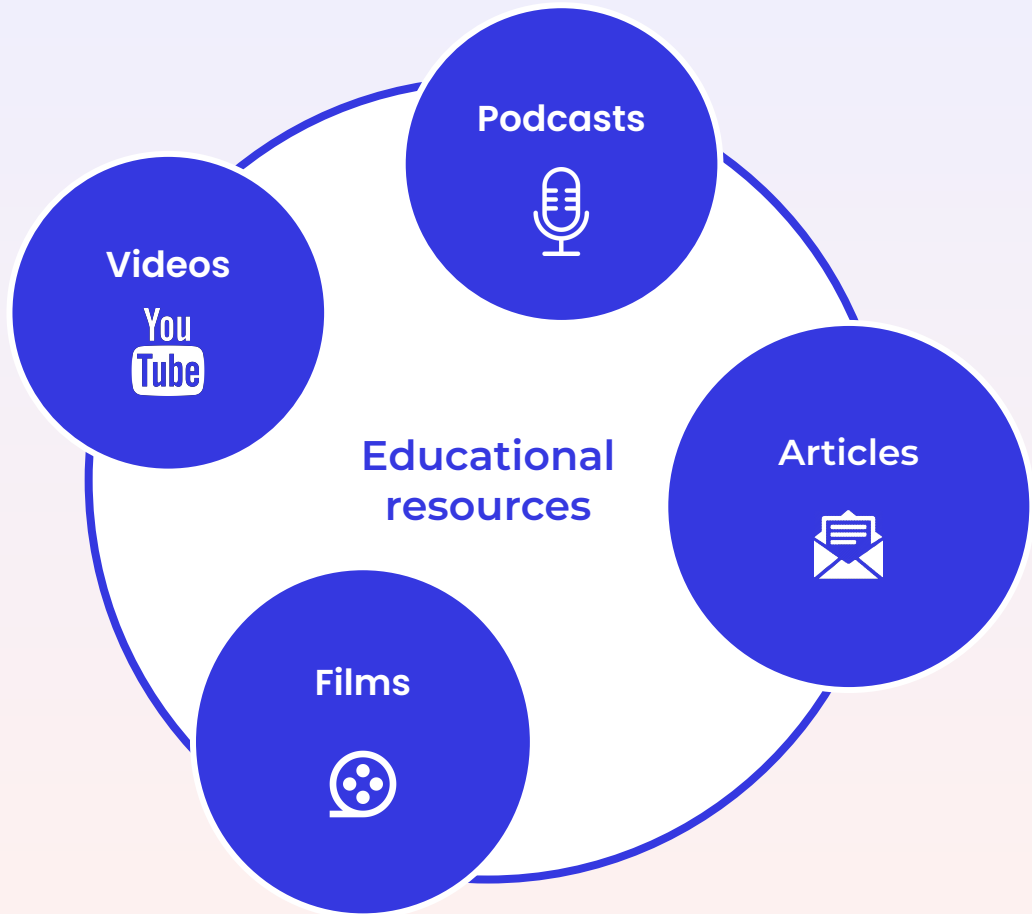
THE POWER of

TEN STORIES / ONE ISRAEL HOMELAND

Judaism Updated Weekly

Judaism Weekly Series

# UNPACKED FOR EDUCATORS



# Unpacked for Educators

Empowering you with e  
tools that bring the bes  
and **Israel** into your cor

JOIN NOW



Teach with Purpose

We are the destination for Jewish and Israel educators looking

**When you think of  
Israeli current  
events, what words  
come to mind?**







# Today's plan

1

Addressing  
current events  
with our students

2

Modeling three  
student  
discussions

3

Takeaways and  
resources

THE MORE YOU KNOW, THE HARDER IT IS TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION.



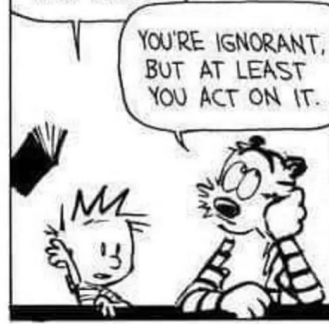
ONCE YOU BECOME INFORMED, YOU START SEEING COMPLEXITIES AND SHADES OF GRAY.



YOU REALIZE THAT NOTHING IS AS CLEAR AND SIMPLE AS IT FIRST APPEARS. ULTIMATELY, KNOWLEDGE IS PARALYZING.



BEING A MAN OF ACTION, I CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE THAT RISK.



# Helping students form their opinions

Understand the  
tensions within  
each issue

Diversity of  
perspectives

Empathy

# Current events in the news

The War in Gaza and the  
Hostages

The Conflict with Iran

Ultra-Orthodox and  
the IDF

# The War in Gaza and the Hostages



The Guardian

SHAME ISRAEL  
LEAVE HAMAS



**ALSO CAME  
WITH A**

# The debate surrounding the hostages



Redeeming captives is victory for the state



With their deaths, they commanded us to achieve victory



Should Israel prioritize the **destruction of Hamas** through continuing to apply military pressure?

**-OR-**

Should Israel prioritize **releasing the hostages** through a prisoner deal with Hamas?

# The debate surrounding the hostages

## Victory is returning the hostages

Hostages first

**“Total victory” is the return of the remaining hostages.**

Despite the danger Hamas poses if left in power, “the only way of getting all of the 101 Israeli hostages home is through an agreement with them.”

Hostages may be in fragile medical condition - time is running out

Hamas has executed hostages when fearing IDF rescue

IDF has severely reduced Hamas capabilities in Gaza and turned its attention to the north. Now is the time for a deal!



## Victory means destroying Hamas

No to an irresponsible deal

**Israel must not make a deal until it has achieved its war objectives against Hamas.**

Only military pressure will lead to the release of hostages.

Releasing terrorists puts Israel at risk for future attacks and kidnappings.

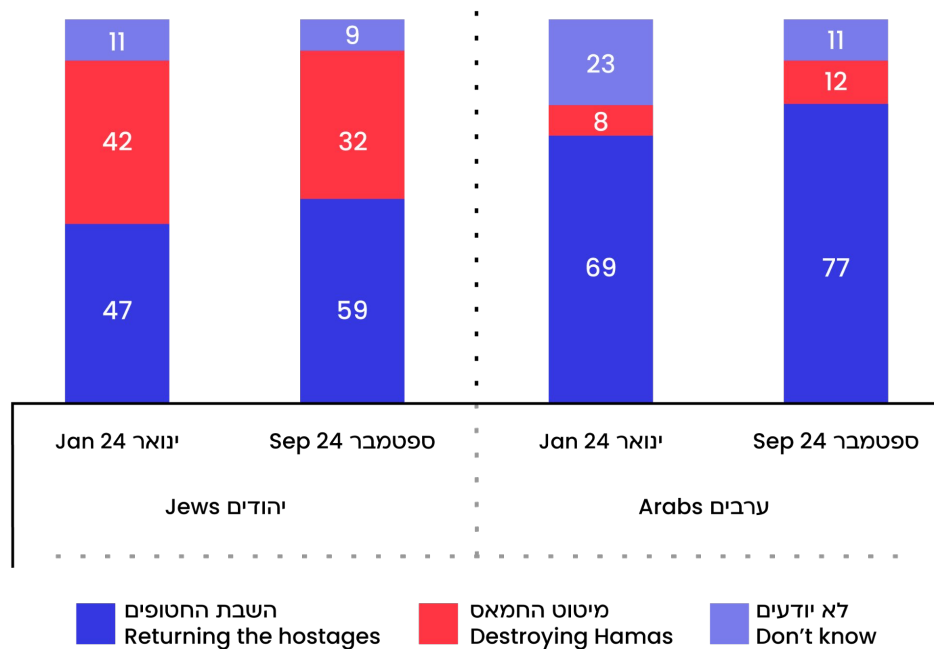
Leaving Hamas in power puts southern residents in danger and risks another Oct. 7th



# Student Assignment Examples

- Spectrum: Agree/Disagree with different statements.
- Think/Pair/Share and then Mentimeter.
- Imagine you are on a Knesset committee tasked to submit a memo that considers both sides, and then take an opinion.
- **Role play:** Ask students to take on roles of different stakeholders (Israeli government official, family member of hostage, IDF officer, resident of the South, US ambassador). What do they think Israel should do? Then, debrief, and consider your own opinion.

# What do Israelis think should be the priority?



# Recap & reflection

Use different access points (pictures, videos) to help students organize information.

Use artifacts (Israeli posters) to show both sides of an issue

Consider: What do Israelis think?

Guide students to three dimensional opinions

Balancing engagement with humility

# The conflict with Iran



A woman with light brown hair, wearing a white sleeveless top, is speaking into a black microphone. She is positioned in the center of the frame. The background is dark and indistinct. The text "THE PALESTINIANS" is overlaid in white, all-caps font across the lower part of her chest. The image has a slightly grainy, video-like quality.

THE  
PALESTINIANS





Was Israel ***correct to attack Iran*** or should it have ***avoided a direct attack***?

Should Israel have ***gone even further in its attack***, striking oil or nuclear sites?

Or, should Israel have ***held back its attack*** to avoid retaliation?

# Was Israel correct to strike Iran directly?

## For striking Iran

**Eliminate the source:** Direct action could neutralize the core of Iran's support for proxy groups like Hamas & Hezbollah, cutting off funding and weapons supplies.

**Deterrence:** A strong response against Iran may deter future aggression from Iran and its proxies across the region.

**Prevent future threats:** A direct strike could be seen as a preemptive strike to prevent Iran from producing further ballistic missiles, however this stopped short of targeting Iran's nuclear program.



## Against striking Iran

**Escalation risk:** A war with Iran could trigger a wider regional conflict, involving multiple countries, Iranian proxies and worsening instability. Iran has also threatened to retaliate.

**Economic toll:** A full-scale war with Iran could drain Israel's resources, disrupt its economy, and strain its military capacity over an extended period.

**International backlash:** Direct confrontation with Iran could isolate Israel diplomatically, especially if civilian casualties rise, leading to loss of international support. The USA specifically asked Israel to limit the nature of its strikes.

**BREAKING: Iran has launched ballistic missiles toward Israel. Civilians ordered into bomb shelters.**



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# Recap & reflection

Zoom out and use maps to provide context

“Red alert” visual: This decision impacts all Israelis directly

Be intentional about how much time to devote to this



# Search Results For "Iran"

[clear all](#)

20 results

Sort by ▾

Per Page: 15 ▾

## TOPICS

[Israeli Culture](#)[Israeli History](#)[Jewish History](#)

## GRADE LEVEL

- High School (20)
- Post High School (20)
- Middle School (18)

## RESOURCE TYPE

- Videos (12)
- Articles (7)
- Podcasts (1)

## SERIES



VIDEO

MIDDLE EAST

**Why does Iran hate Israel?**

VIDEO

MIDDLE EAST

**Is Iran the Greatest Threat to Peace in the Middle East?**

PODCAST

MIDDLE EAST

**Iran's Surprise Attack on Israel: History and Reflections**

VIDEO

MIDDLE EAST

**From Friends to Foes: The Story of**

VIDEO

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

**What is Hezbollah?**

VIDEO

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

**Who Are the Houthis?**

# Ultra Orthodox & the IDF



**Zoom out and give  
historical context**





# The debate surrounding Ultra Orthodox & the IDF

## For drafting Haredim

The IDF needs more reservists to fight this war. Current reservists have spent months since Oct. 7 in the army and need relief.

It isn't fair that some people in Israel have to serve in the army while others don't.

It is possible to combine Torah learning and army service. The *hesder* program (rabbinical academies that combine Torah learning and army service) is proof.



## Against drafting Haredim

Many Haredim fear that the IDF will cause young Haredim to become less religious.

The IDF does not accommodate Haredi religious needs.

The IDF lacks the framework to draft so many new soldiers with specific religious needs.

The Haredim believe that Torah learning is just as important to Israel's survival as the military.

# Essential questions

How can the State of Israel balance the needs of both its secular and religious citizens?

How can Israel balance being both a Jewish and democratic state?

How might citizens balance their responsibility to a state with their own religious beliefs?

How might Oct. 7th impact the way Ultra Orthodox Jews view the State of Israel?

# **Building empathy through Israeli culture**





# Reflection

What did you find powerful about both these clips?

How might you use these two clips with your students?

**No group is a monolith**



**WHAT  
DOESN'T  
KILL US...**



# What do Israelis think?

		לא צריך לשנות את הפטור הניתן לערבים <b>Don't need to change the exemption given to Arabs</b>	צריך לשנות את הפטור הניתן לערבים <b>Need to change the exemption given to Arabs</b>	לא צריך לשנות את הפטור הניתן לחרדים <b>Do not need to change the exemption given to Haredim</b>	צריך לשנות את הפטור הניתן לחרדים <b>Need to change the exemption given to Haredim</b>
כלל המדגם All respondents		43	40	22	64
לאום Nationality	ערבים Arabs	53	28	23	34
	יהודים Jews	41	42	22	70
מיקום על הרצף חרדים-חילונים (יהודים) Place on the secular-Haredi spectrum (Jews)	חרדים Haredim	71	20	68.5	19
	דתיים (Dati) Religious (Dati)	41	35	28	65
	מסורתיים דתיים Traditional Religious (Dati Masorti)	45	32	30	52
	מסורתיים לא דתיים Traditional not Religious	34	46	15	77
	חילונים not Religious	36	51	10	86

# Recap & reflection

Zoom out for historical context

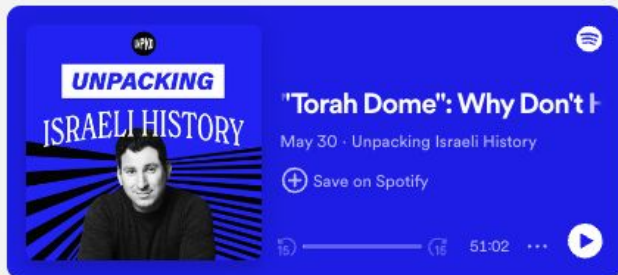
Use Israeli culture (television, songs) as powerful ways to build empathy

No group in Israel is a monolith

Share to  
Google  
Classroom

Share  
podcast link  
with students

Favorite  
podcast



# Who should serve in the Israeli military?

RESOURCE: **PODCAST** TOPIC: **RELIGION & STATE**

[PDF Resources](#) [Lesson Plan](#) [Play Kahoot](#)

**SUMMARY**

**DISCUSSION**

**ACTIVITIES**

**REFLECTION**

**FURTHER LEARNING**

- 1 The responsibility to serve:** As Jews in the Diaspora, do you feel that the responsibility of serving the State of Israel should only fall upon its citizens? If so, what are the implications about the responsibility the State of Israel has, or does not have, to Jews around the world?

**GRADE LEVEL**

High School  
Middle School  
Post High School

**TAGS**

Army Draft Haredi IDF  
Israeli Defense Forces Religious  
Secular Shabbat

# Takeaways

Takeaway #1

**Use a variety of mediums**



42 likes, 12 retweets

cartooningisrael The heart breaks again and again and needs to keep being put back together. A broken heart has been a motif of Reut Bortz's since October 7, symbolizing the many ways that Israeli society has been emotionally and physically shattered.

In today's illustration, the rock smashes the heart as it announces another soldier killed as Reut says that she had just finished taping it back together.

I'm going to stop here and just let the image speak for itself.

Credit: @comicsgirl



54 likes, 1 retweet

cartooningisrael This cartoon by Reut Bortz captures the fears, anxieties and realities that many Israeli kids and parents are feeling as they go back to school this week. As the kids walk under a balloon awning welcoming them to school, their backpacks reveal the traumas they have experienced over the past year. This includes kids who have been displaced from the north and the south, parents who have been wounded or killed, and siblings who have been taken captive. In the background is the illustrator talking to her friend who says "their backpacks get heavier each year".

This cartoon resonates with me because of Bortz's focus on the children and how the war has taken away their innocence and how despite their parents best efforts to normalize things, they carry this baggage with them into their lives. @comicsgirl



33 likes, 5 retweets

cartooningisrael My (cartoon) feeds are mostly populated by cartoons that are either celebrating Israel's military successes in Iran or are critical of the Israeli government for having not yet brought all of the captives home.

What I like about David Palma's recent cartoon is how he tries to strike a balance between the two. Though the cartoon is certainly left-leaning - the pilots plan to rendezvous on Kaplan Street for a protest - the air force is depicted in a way that celebrates its military achievements. Palma's cartoon rejects the binary that one is either for or against what is happening in the country and instead shows that things are much more complicated and nuanced. The cartoon recognizes soldiers' abilities to be committed to a cause or an idea - defeating Iran, bringing back the hostages, loyalty to the state of Israel and its people - even as they oppose the government in power.

This idea is not new and was something talked about very early in the war but Palma is returning to it here at a moment when Israeli society is becoming divided and he reinforces the idea that Israeli soldiers will do everything necessary to protect the Israeli people.

October 27



Takeaway #2

# Modeling critical thinking



**Read a  
range of  
news media**

**הארץ**  
**HAARETZ**

THE  
JERUSALEM  
POST **JPOST.com**

**THE TIMES  
OF ISRAEL**

**+972**  
MAGAZINE

**7** ISRAEL  
NATIONAL  
NEWS





Takeaway #3

# Learn to teach in two time zones

# today UNPKD



Are Israeli Settlers Attacking Palestinians? | Unpacked

4.5K views • 3 days ago



Is Egypt on Team Palestine or Team Israel? | Unpacked

45K views • 1 month ago



The Anti-Israel College Protests | Explained

22K views • 2 months ago



Why Does Iran Hate Israel? | Explained

9.9K views • 2 months ago



Why Did Hamas Really Reject Israel's Ceasefire Plan? | Explained

3.8K views • 2 months ago



Did Israel actually bomb al-Ahli Hospital, killing 500 Palestinians?...

867 views • 3 months ago



5 Viral Myths About the Gaza War | Debunked

7.7K views • 3 months ago



Who's Holding Up a Gaza Ceasefire Deal? | Explained

7.5K views • 3 months ago



Is the US Prolonging the Gaza War? | Unpacked

10K views • 3 months ago

# Using *The Weekly*

THE WEEKLY

## Trump wins U.S. presidency, Israelis targeted in Amsterdam pogrom, Netanyahu shakes up cabinet

NOVEMBER 12, 2024



### Trump sweeps U.S. elections →

#### What happened?

Former U.S. President Donald Trump won a second term in Tuesday's presidential elections, defeating current Vice President Kamala Harris in an overwhelming victory in which Trump won not only the electoral college, but the popular vote as well. What does this mean for Israel and the Jewish community?

#### Why does this matter?

In his first term, Trump was staunchly pro-Israel, recognizing Israel's sovereignty over disputed areas such as the Golan Heights, moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, implementing harsh sanctions against Iran, and finalizing the Abraham Accords between Israel and several Arab states.

However, some of his statements leading up to his victory have raised questions about how his second term will look for Israel.

For one, Trump has repeatedly said that he wants the war in Gaza to end soon, although what exactly he means by that isn't so clear. Some Israeli officials are concerned Trump could use pressure levers such as military aid to force Israel into a ceasefire, no matter the conditions it has to agree to. A spokesperson for the Republican Party stressed after the election that Trump meant that he wants

working with the new administration and Congress to promote our values, fight antisemitism, secure our community, and maintain steadfast support for Israel."

Many Israelis, however, welcomed Trump's win, expressing hope that he would be less critical of Israel than the Biden administration. Billboards congratulating the president-elect were set up right after the elections in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the win "history's greatest comeback" and a "powerful recommitment to the great alliance between Israel and America."

A survey by the Israel Democracy Institute found that nearly two-thirds of Israelis believed Trump would be better for Israel than Harris.

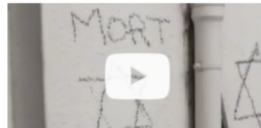
Israel's Channel 14, affiliated with the right wing, [celebrated](#) Trump's win live with singing and l'chaims.

#### Essential questions:

1. What was your reaction to the results of the U.S. presidential election? How do you think it will impact Israel, the Jewish community and the rise in antisemitism?
2. The majority of American Jews supported Kamala Harris for president while the majority of Israeli Jews supported the election of Donald Trump. Why do you think the two communities viewed the candidates so differently? Do they have different priorities? What factors impact these different worldviews?
3. Put yourself in the shoes of the American president. What should U.S. support for Israel look like during this war? Explain your perspective.
  - Supplying defensive military technology to Israel e.g. missile defense systems
  - Fighting with Israel if required e.g. in an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities
  - PR and international diplomacy
  - Holding Israel to account morally
  - Something else

#### Further learning:

- [Does the United States Fund Israel?](#) (video)
- [Why Does Iran Hate Israel?](#) (video)



### **Rioters target Israelis in Amsterdam →**

**What happened?**

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***the Weekly***





Conclusion

**CONCLUSION**

# Helping students form their opinions

Understand the  
tensions within  
each issue

Diversity of  
perspectives

Empathy

Q&A

**Q&A**

# Thank you!

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