



Carpool

Conversations

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Conversations

Sometimes the most appropriate moments for an exploration of an idea with our kids is in the car. During that dead time between home and school, or home and sports practice, lies an untapped opportunity for meaning.

Here we offer you a suggestive guide for three key conversations about Israel. The developmental level of these conversations ranges from five years upwards, but the topics under discussion underlie some of the most adult and complex issues about Israel today.

The discussions are not designed to lead anyone to any specific conclusions. What they are designed to do is to give you and your child the opportunity to develop a shared language that allows you to address complex ideas together.

Fences and Freedom

You may be wondering:

This morning there was a piece on TV about the Separation Wall. It's clear that the kids want to talk about it. Israel looked really bad. To be honest, I think the reporter's approach was right – the wall is a terrible thing. At the same time, I don't want to completely trash Israel for my kids. What's an intelligent way of talking about this, without letting Israel off the hook, but also making sure my kids get how complicated it is?

The conversation you may hold with your child:

Where are there fences or walls in your life? (Home? Community? School? etc)

With each of these fences or walls – what is good about them? (keep you safe? Protect? Clarify?)

With each of these fences or walls – what is bad about them? (Keep you out? Lock people in?)

*Who do you think decided where the fences/walls should be?
Why do you think they decided to put the fences/walls where they did?*

*Is the front door to your house always locked?
What do you feel about that?*

*Do you lock the door to your bedroom?
Why? / Why not?*

*Are any rooms ever locked in your house? (Parents room, bathroom, etc)
Why?/Why not?*

*Have you ever come up against a locked door in your house?
What did you feel?*

Perhaps leading to:

At its root, the conversation you've just had is about the security and protection that walls and fences can offer on the one hand, and the exclusion and indignities that they can cause on the other hand.

The language you and your children share is now sufficiently enriched for an ensuing (or later) conversation about the Security Barrier. Why was it built? Who does it benefit and who does it damage? Where has it been built? etc

Loyalty beyond me

You may be wondering:

I know we should be loyal to Israel, or at least keep our criticisms of Israel to ourselves. But I'm not sure what that means any more – let alone explain it to my kids. I wish I could just tell my kids that they have to love Israel and that's it, but I can't. It's more complicated than that. How do I get them to understand that you can bitch about a country that's so important to you?

The conversation you may hold with your child:

Who is your best friend?

What makes them your best friend?

In what way are they your best friend because of what they think of you, and in what way are they your best friend because of what you think of them?

In what way are they your best friend because of the way they behave to you, and in what way are they your best friend because of the way you behave to them?

If your best friend were to do something you thought was wrong, would you tell them?

(For example, if your friend were to do something unkind to someone who didn't deserve such treatment.)

Would you stop them before they did it, or would you tell them afterwards?

Would you tell them in private, or in front of others?

Why? Why not?

Perhaps leading to:

An analogy has been established. We now have a complex example to draw on, where the particularly adult concept of "critical loyalty" lives in your child's frame of reference. Now begins the real work, of helping your kid become friends with this country that may occasionally upset him...

Home and Homeland

What you may be wondering:

What is all this stuff they keep telling me and my kid about 'homeland'? What, am I supposed to completely ignore the fact that I was born in the US? I mean I do connect to Israel, and I'd really like my kids to do so as well, but this whole connection between people and place just makes me feel uncomfortable.

The conversation you may hold with your child:

Do you live at home, or at house?

What do you think is the difference between your house and your home?

Do you have more than one home?

If our family were to move to a new house, would you still feel at home?

Are there other places where you feel 'at home'?

Can you imagine walking into a house you've never visited before, and discovering that it looks exactly like our own home. The same furniture, same rooms, same pictures on the wall, even the same smells – but different people live there. Would you feel at home?

Are there degrees of feeling at home? For example, are there places you feel very 'at home', places you feel slightly 'at home'?

Does home mean a place, an atmosphere, people? Other things? A combination of them?

Have you ever heard of the word 'homeland'?

(In what way) do you feel the USA to be your homeland?

(In what way) do you feel Israel to be your homeland?

Perhaps leading to:

Either a family trip to Israel, or a conversation about the trip you already took...! Beyond this, any conversation about Israel from now on can draw on this range of emotional connections that you have sketched together.