

Mission

Contributed by Administrator

The Center for Jewish Education at the University of Haifa is dedicated to the study, critique, and advancement of Jewish, Israeli, and democratic identity in Israel and abroad. In today's multifaceted world, it is no longer a forgone conclusion that youngsters will identify with the values and ideals inherited from their parents. Instead, people create moral, spiritual, cultural, political, and linguistic identities for themselves, based upon a complex and sometimes critical relation to that which they have inherited from the past. In creating these identities, they draw on sources and traditions of a variety of different kinds, including language, literature, culture, religion, and politics. The Center explores how Jewish, Israeli, and democratic sources of different kinds are and can be employed in the process of identity development and offers a variety of programs that assist people in doing so.

Â Â Â In exploring Jewish identity, the Center addresses itself to Jews in Israel and around the world who seek a positive connection with the Jewish People and its traditions. The Center takes no position with regard to religious denomination or Zionist ideology, except a positive stance vis-à-vis the idea of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, with full awareness of the complexities that this entails. The Center is open, therefore, to exploring and promoting all modes of Jewish identification in both Israel and the Diaspora, including those grounded in political thought, Jewish cultural, Jewish religion, Hebrew and other Jewish languages, and other ways in which Jews connect to the Jewish people and its heritage.

Â Â Â In examining Israeli identity, the Center gives voice to the awareness that Israel is home to many non-Jews as well as many Jews. Although many Israeli citizens express their Jewish identities by fulfilling their obligations to the state, for a large minority of Christian and Moslem Arabs, Druze, and others, to be a citizen of Israel is a form of political identity separate from their other linguistic, cultural, and religious affiliations. The Center is concerned with whether and how Israel can serve as a source of Jewish identity for its Jewish citizens and at the same time a source of political and in particular democratic identity for its non-Jewish citizens. Just as the Center takes no stand vis-à-vis Jewish identity, it also takes no position concerning debates as to the proper character of Israel's political and cultural life, and is open to looking at Israeli identity from a variety of perspectives, including those grounded in various Zionist and post-Zionist orientations.

Â Â Â In considering democratic identity, the Center makes plain its commitment to integrating all forms of Jewish and Israeli identity, both in Israel and abroad, into frameworks that fall very broadly into rubrics associated with democratic forms of government and society. The Center is aware that a variety of conceptions of democracy exist in both theory and practice, and is dedicated to exploring these conceptions as they apply to the complexities of Israel as a multi-cultural and deeply conflicted society, in a region of the world not otherwise hospitable to democratic regimes.