

ANTISEMITISM - BETWEEN VALUES AND ACTIONS

Helping our learners ground their responses to antisemitism in Jewish values



[1] INTRODUCTION: WHERE ARE YOU NEEDED?

Nave Lax, a soldier in Sayeret Matkal (Israel's elite Reconnaissance Unit) was 21 when he was killed in battle in Kibbutz Be'eri, on October 7, 2023. Attributed to him is a powerful quote that he reportedly said on his way into battle:



במקום שצריך אותי, שם אני אהיה.

In the place where I am needed -
that is where I will be.

The Jewish community faces one of its most difficult and painful periods in recent memory. With the ongoing conflict in Israel endangering the security of our homeland, and a disturbing surge in antisemitism posing threats to Jewish homes, communities, and identity, it's crucial for each of us to consider: Where can I make the most impact? And once identified, how can I best contribute in that space?

[2] CORE COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONABLE RESPONSES

When considering where our presence is most crucial and how we can effectively act, it's imperative to delve into the values steering us and their translation into tangible actions. To facilitate this exploration, we'll utilize two distinct resources: one being a recent essay by Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer, presenting a 'Moral Map' for times of conflict, and the other, the ADL's guidelines titled 'Dos and Don'ts in Responding to Antisemitism on Campus.'

In his essay "Torah for a Time of War: A Moral Map for an Impossible Present," Yehuda Kurtzer, President of the Shalom Hartman Institute, offers "a framework for ethical thinking that consists of a set of concrete moral commitments that can define the uncertain terrain of issues raised by the war."



The commitments that comprise this moral map are **Peoplehood, Sovereignty, Democracy, and Power**, all of which can hopefully lead us to the only possible moral end: **Peace**.

Dr. Kurtzer's moral map was originally crafted to guide responses to the conflict in Israel. However, this exercise aims to inspire educators and learners to adapt and apply its principles to effectively address and respond to instances of antisemitism.

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The ADL released an updated set of 'do's and don'ts' in 2022 regarding responses to antisemitism on college campuses. Although originally directed at students in that setting, the recommended actions can easily be adapted and applied in various environments beyond campuses, at any given moment. [You can view the list here.](#)

[3] CONNECTING VALUES TO ACTIONS, AND ACTIONS TO VALUES

The following exercise can help us to consider and subsequently reflect the moral principles, or core values, suggested by Dr. Kurtzer. The goal of the exercise is to align these values with actionable steps derived from the ADL's list.

As you and your students engage in this process, feel free to substitute values or actions with ones that resonate more personally with you.

- ◆ The first box contains a paraphrased excerpts from Dr. Kurtzer's essay, describing the core values / moral principles that are at play.
- ◆ In the second box, write how this value can help us navigate antisemitism. This could be a thought, a feeling or an understanding.
- ◆ Then, in the third box, write how the response can inform our actions. This is a tangible behavior. Something we can do.



SOLIDARITY

Sharing in a fate and a destiny... alleviating loneliness and providing support... making wide circles of inclusion so as to offer safety and the comfort of belonging...

How can this value help us understand how to navigate antisemitism?
e.g. When another person empathizes with our pain, we start viewing ourselves as integral to a collective, rather than as solitary victims.

Match your understandings of this value to actions from the ADL's list:
e.g. Organize a gathering to explore mutual respect and understanding.

SOVEREIGNTY

To be sovereign is to be in charge...to be responsible for whatever transpires within our borders... it entails the acceptance... that you are not allowed to remain indifferent.

How can this value help us understand how to navigate antisemitism?

Match your understandings of this value to actions from the ADL's list:

DEMOCRACY

Respecting and upholding the structure and values of liberal democracy... investing in the institutions and infrastructure of democratic culture...

Match your understandings of this value to actions from the ADL's list:

Match your understandings of this value to actions from the ADL's list:

POWER

We must use our power to make necessary choices for our own self preservation, while holding a maintaining to compassion as an essential feature of our humanity

How can this value help us understand how to navigate antisemitism?

Match your understandings of this value to actions from the ADL's list:



[4] A ROADMAP TO PEACE

Dr. Kurtzer's essay proposes that amidst the chaos of war and crisis, embracing a moral roadmap may guide us toward our highest aspiration: a steadfast dedication to peace.

"Peace is an anchoring aspiration of the Jewish tradition. Our tradition demands of us that we be both lovers of peace and pursuers of peace. The image of a pious and well-ordered Jewish household is one that is characterized by shalom bayit, a peaceful home. Peace—shalom—is the final request we make in all of our prayers... it is our most profound aspiration for the future..."

Craft your pathway to peace by **selecting one action corresponding to each of the core values** delineated earlier. Consider how, by our individual responses to antisemitism, we can contribute to fostering peace among our communities, nations, and the world.

