
403.5.1
403 Ideas
Five Goals
One Community
The Nashville Conversations on Israel and Community

Funding provided by the Jewish Federation of Nashville
801 Percy Warner Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37205
www.Jewishnashville.org

Facilitation provided by
Roger Conner, Lead Facilitator
Jean Hastings, Project Coordinator
Marietta Shipley
Abhishek Singh
Michele Maddox
Sarah Smith

Consultation on Project Design and Training provided by
The ARIA Group
Jay Rothman, PhD
Brandon Sipes

ARIA C-3 © Data base and project website provided by
The ARIA Group
www.ariagroup.com
May, 2012

Dear Friends,

As one might expect, our Nashville Jewish community has divergent and often passionate views when issues regarding Israel are raised. In an effort to bring our community together in a spirit of constructive dialogue and mutual respect, the Jewish Federation's Community Relations Committee approached Roger Conner, a Vanderbilt adjunct law professor and respected facilitator, to lead a process that would contribute toward encouraging all Jewish Nashvillians to express and hear opinions regarding Israel respectfully and in a safe environment. The result was the "Conversations about Community and Israel" project. The project was funded by a grant from the New Initiatives Fund of the Jewish Federation.

More than 150 community members responded to the online questionnaire created by Mr. Conner. Nearly 100 members of the Jewish community committed at least three hours to attend one of three grass roots consensus-building meetings. Fifty people participated in a final "Summit" meeting in which three representatives from each of the three initial groups worked to form consensus goals for our community that are acceptable to those on all parts of the spectrum when discussing Israel.

Participants with differing opinions about Israel took their responsibilities seriously. It was not always easy for them to find the words that would encompass all their ideas, but through intense and respectful discussion, they accomplished the task. It was a significant moment for our Jewish community and resulted in the articulation of five actionable goals that are presented in the report. The report spells out how the process worked from start to finish. We now have a consensus developed from a broad spectrum of opinion statements about "how" our community should talk (and listen) about Israel with one another.

We are asking individuals, congregations and Jewish organizations to embrace these goals by signing on and agreeing to strive toward them. We hope the use of the goals and action steps (found at the end of the report) will continue to make this a community that listens, respects and tries to understand all of our opinions on issues about Israel. We urge you to work to implement these goals and strengthen our community's support for Israel.

We extend our thanks and sincere appreciation to the many individuals who gave so much of their time and thinking to participate in this project.

Martin Ted Mayden, President
Irwin Venick, Chair
Community Relations Committee

Mark S. Freedman, Executive Director
Judy Saks, Director
Community Relations Committee
About this report:

In the fall of 2011, the Jewish Federation of Nashville asked us to design a process that would allow members of the Jewish community of Middle Tennessee to answer this question:

What are our goals for the Jewish community when people hold strong and conflicting views about issues related to Israel and its future?

We were given full control over the process and the data. Our team of independent professional facilitators used a tool known as ARIA C-3. ARIA stands for Aspiration, Resonance, Invention and Action. C-3 refers to three ways to “see:” as individuals, as groups and as a community.

C-1: Seeing the issue as individuals. The process began with an announcement in the Jewish Observer on March 2, 2012, inviting everyone in the Jewish community to give their input by answering a web-based questionnaire. They were asked “WHAT are your goals for the community” when people disagree strongly about issues related to Israel? For each WHAT goal, they were asked to explain “WHY is this goal important to you,” as an individual, and “HOW” could the goal be advanced. The 150 participants suggested 403 separate WHAT goals during this first phase.

C-2: Seeing the issues in separate groups. In the second phase, participants were asked to assign themselves to one of three groups, defined by the following statements:

- “The best way to assure that Israel survives and prospers as a homeland for the Jewish people is to support the current Israeli government’s strategy on settlements, territory and negotiations, or to abandon the peace process as not being in Israel’s best interest.”
- “The best way to assure that Israel survives and prospers as a homeland for the Jewish people is to encourage the government of Israel to give much higher priority to negotiations leading to a two-state solution, changing its current positions as needed to facilitate such negotiations.”
- “I want Israel to survive and prosper as a homeland for the Jewish people and both of the above groups have some good arguments.”

The professional staff of Jewish organizations, including rabbis, also provided input into the process, leaving it to community members to sort through the ideas and find answers. Each of the three groups spent an entire evening at the Gordon Jewish Community Center discussing the issues and hammering out an agreement on desired Goals for the community from their point of view. After these meetings, the 403 original WHAT ideas were reduced to 12 goals.

C-3: Seeing the issues from the perspective of the community: On May 2, 2012, fifty people gathered at the GJCC, including representatives from all of the groups, to discuss the unique and shared goals from the different groups and seek consensus in a public forum. The session was by turns passionate and reflective, inviting and tough. It was also
long, lasting more than four hours! By the end, the representatives agreed to all five goals in this report by consensus. Despite the physical and emotional demands, those present demonstrated that passionate people can argue respectfully without sacrificing their principles.

Our report consists of four elements following this introduction. First, the agreed Goals, which appear as a single text on the next page. During each meeting, participants were asked to name a single word—a “passion word”—that best captured WHY they were so passionate about their goals. These passion words make up the background of the cover and the goals.

Second, public commitments. We have invited all members of the community who agree with these goals to endorse them publicly. This report includes a list of initial signatories; the Federation will continue to add more people in the coming weeks.

Third, the stories beneath the words. Even supplemented by the passion words, the Goals cannot convey the complexity and the richness of the conversation that led up to them. We asked each participant WHY he or she felt so deeply about this question. Some answered with the wisdom of a lifetime compressed into a phrase or a sentence. Others shared stories that have shaped who they are. This third section of the report surrounds each of the goal statements with a sample of these WHY stories—commentaries, as it were—through which the readers can know that those who created these goals invested much more than hours; they invested a piece of themselves.

Fourth, a collection of Action ideas. In our mind, the ultimate purpose of this exercise is Action. Thanks to the ARIA C-3 database, we can list together the HOW suggestions relevant to each of the agreed goals. The Action ideas were not discussed or agreed to by the groups, so it is important to treat the lists as a collective brainstorming exercise, a jumping off point for the individual and group effort that will be needed for these goals to become a reality. In this section of the report we are careful to flag contrasting and unique Action ideas in addition the shared ones.

We wish to acknowledge several people worked behind the scenes to help make this project a success. Jay Rothman and Brandon Sipes of the ARIA Group provided guidance at each step of the way, which was extremely important. Judy Saks of the Federation did an outstanding job of support and coordination of the space, food and accommodations for the meetings. The staff of the GJCC was superb. They were unfailingly attentive to our needs and generous to a fault, especially when we stayed late or asked for special attention due to an oversight in our planning!

We are extremely grateful to the Jewish Federation of Nashville and to every person who participated for allowing us to be a part of this remarkable process. We hope that many other groups and communities will be inspired by your example.

Roger Conner, Lead Facilitator

Jean Hastings, Michele Maddox, Marietta Shipley, Abhishek Singh, Sarah Smith, Facilitators
When people hold strong and conflicting views about issues related to Israel and its future, the goals of the Jewish community of Nashville are:

1. To respect each other and uphold Jewish values by carefully listening, hearing each other out and seeking to understand each other’s perspective.

2. To create a safe, inclusive environment in which members, without being pejoratively labeled, vilified or excluded, can freely and respectfully express their viewpoints.

3. To educate ourselves and deepen our understanding of modern Israel, its history, current realities and the quest for peace through the critical evaluation of diverse sources.

4. To stand as a united community in our support of Israel as the homeland for the Jewish people.

5. That the leadership of all Jewish communal institutions will actively take responsibility to support the implementation of these goals.
We, the undersigned, hereby endorse these five goals, and declare that we will work alongside others to translate these ideals into action.

(Signatures still being gathered. This list is current as of May 14, 2012. To add your name, please contact the Federation.)

Shayna Abrams
Delilah Cohn
Michael Dobrin
Michael Doochin
Gay Eisen
Julie Greenberg
Pat Halper
Reva Heller
Leslie Klein
Risa Klein Herzog
Sally Levine

Diana Lutz
Allan Mandell
Judith Mandell
Avi Poster
Judy Saks
Joan Shayne
Rabbi Mark Schiftan
Mary Shelton
Ruth Smith
William Smith
Irwin Venick
Diversity: There are many strong opinions expressed by members of the community, and most have validation for their opinions. I like to hear this, even if I don’t agree.

Empathy: I remember being in a demonstration when I was younger. I was in the “marching band,” and the police were ordered to remove us from the street. Suddenly I was face to face with someone who wasn’t that much older than me, and he started hitting me. He wouldn’t answer my questions about why he was hitting me, or direct me to move to place where I wouldn’t get hit. He didn’t look at me. In that moment I saw what can happen when a person cuts himself off from another. He was able to hit me for playing a drum.

Tradition: Because it is part of our tradition to listen to multiple viewpoints. Because it demonstrates respect for another person as made in God’s image. Because a civil discussion may lead to common ground and a different level of respect.

Belonging: I find that careful, mindful listening helps prevent me from jumping to conclusions and to better see things from the other person’s point of view.

Expression: The more we hear other points of view, whether we agree or not, the stronger we can become.

Willingness to Listen: We all need to be able to talk and to listen. To look at things from a different angle. If people are not willing to listen, anger builds and boils over.

Jewish values: It is a Jewish value. It deepens relationships when people are open and honest with one another.

Hearing/Being heard: I believe everyone has the right to be heard. I believe true dialogue is the beginning of understanding, compromise and resolution.

Respect for voices: It is integral to who I am that I believe everyone should be respected. Everyone has a voice. It’s part of being Jewish - to be moral, to be civil.

Voice: I’m old. I could forget it and not be a part of it. It is basic that we have to speak out.

Tolerance: As someone who moved to this community recently, I knew that I would have to find my way among many different people, to hear all points of view and be able to balance on both feet. But some of what I have heard recently put my teeth on edge.

Being Heard: By listening to others, we, too, can be heard.

Equality. After marrying an Israeli, her family members accepted me even though I wasn’t a Jew at the time. I didn’t speak Hebrew and they didn’t speak English, so there was a language barrier. When it was explained to her grandparents who I was, her grandfather came up to me and gave me a big kiss on the cheek.

Spirituality: To have a strong Jewish community, all must feel welcome, even embraced. The answers for young people today are more diverse than they were in the past.

Differences: I am interested in the number and differing views towards the Jewish people and Israel and how this affects my children. I am worried that current politics is leaving future generations dissatisfied and disconnected. We need to let our younger generation see that we/they may view the actions of her government in different ways.
Connection: In my work life I feel isolation because I'm an artist. I have to go inside myself, inside my own head to create things. Working in a studio is a solitary occupation, so I crave connection. I still remember the first time I went to Israel. At the moment we were landing—we weren't even in the country yet, we were still on the plane—I felt this incredible feeling that “this is my place to belong.” It was almost a feeling of levitation. I forged a sense of identity with the Jewish people. That's the kind of connection I want with my Jewish community here.

Democracy: When I was young, the phrase “my country, right or wrong” was sometimes spoken. My parents and my generation rejected the implication—that one must support anything you’re your government does even if it is grossly wrong. To really love Israel is to be free to support policies that will help it to survive as a democracy and a homeland of the Jewish people and express concern when the government seems to act against those interests.

Hearing/Being Heard: It is difficult for me to be a part of a community that does not value my point of view and is not really open to allowing space or respect for discussion. If the community wants someone like me to be an integral part, it must find ways to value all points of view. Not accept them, just have an open, civil venue to learn about the spectrum of opinions in our community.

Respect: My husband's father's entire family was wiped out in various Polish villages during WWII. During, and before, that time, the Jewish people were viewed by many other people as less than human; over time it became acceptable to treat Jews as if they were trash to be swept away. Out of that terrible experience comes a conviction that never again must this happen to any people. We need to learn to respect all people no matter how much we may disagree with them.

Tradition: One of the things that I like best about the Jewish community is its tradition of conflict within community. There is a tradition of loud disagreement about politics and religion, but there is also a tradition that you're still Jewish and you're still part of the community, even if you believe the wrong thing or nothing. I’m worried that we've drifted so far from our traditions.

Respect/Not Bullying: I am passionate because I can't abide bullying and intimidation. There are enough threats from the outside. I can't abide by it within our community. If your own people silence you, it’s what our worst enemies do.

Tolerance: I am a convert. I was raised as a Catholic in a small southern city where Catholics and African Americans were not treated very well. Those conditions have made me more sensitive to other types of intolerance. I remember once when children in the neighborhood came to the door and said that we needed to be saved, and I realized that they were judging us. That feeling has stuck with me ever since.

Support: Israel has too few allies to achieve its goals alone. It is a stronghold of democracy in the Mideast. If Nashville Jews are unable to have a dialogue concerning Israel without feeling that our words will divide us, how will the country on the whole continue to support Israel?

Acceptance: I don't insult people with whom I disagree in this manner, and I am entitled to similar respectful conduct.

Equality: I feel my voice cannot be heard within the synagogue or religion in general especially being from a younger generation. Just as my family faces dysfunction and disagreement, so I see the same in Judaism and the synagogue.

Tradition: Judaism is a tradition that teaches us to disagree well. Talmudic discussion and debate is central to our spiritual lives, as long as it is done so with respect for multiple narratives and views.
**Knowledge:** Too many people in our community have very little understanding of the need for the State of Israel. This leads to a susceptibility to anti-Israel propaganda, to a rewrite of history, to a lack of support for Israel.

**Truth:** My great grandparents were in Germany when it all exploded. I have the letters that he sent to my grandfather [describing] his efforts to get to America. The one that lives with me is the one that says he could go through Russia to Japan (Germany was not yet at war with Russia), and from Japan to San Francisco. In the letter he says he won't do that because the travel will take too long. He was eventually murdered. He did not survive because he could not accept the truth of his situation.

**Learning:** My view with regard to what is best for Israel is in flux. For me to better sort out how I feel, and possibly help others to do the same, I need opportunities to expand my knowledge, from both experts and peers, and opportunities to converse with people who both share my opinions and those who do not. Only through education and dialogue will I be able to become more grounded in my own thinking, and contribute as a voice of reason.

**Education:** I used to work in Clarksville, and a co-worker once asked me, “are you the ones that believe Jesus has yet to come?” Israel may not survive if the rest of the world doesn't become more educated about Israel.

**Education - I'm younger generation; many of my contemporaries haven't grown up with understanding Israel. It would be helpful for me, us – my generation, to have more education that would help us [give] about Israel higher priority. When I have discussions that involve Israel, many in my age group don't know enough to have an intelligent conversation.**

3. **To educate ourselves and deepen our understanding of modern Israel, its history, current realities and the quest for peace through the critical evaluation of diverse sources.**

**Truth:** I find it extremely challenging to find information about the situation in Israel that is unbiased. Newspapers, nonprofit organizations, and schools—all of them are filtering information in some way. Whoever you ask is going to tell you only the pieces they want you to know to further their cause. It's very challenging to form a solid opinion when the facts are so murky.

**Truth:** I have had a person come up to me and say something about different organizations that just isn’t true. If we educate people, then they can form their own judgments with truth rather than fiction.

**Understanding:** I do not want our children heading off to college to be blind-sided by campus issues reflecting global realities/conflicts and have our students feel betrayed or that we have done them a disservice.

**Diversity:** I think it is so easy for people with strong opinions to gravitate to their respective “sides” without ever exposing themselves to varying perspectives (at least without the filter/veneer of commentary from sympathetic pundits). We would do well to practice patience and do the legwork of shaping our own opinions after the benefit of direct exposure to people and issues.

**Correct Narrative:** I grew up in a large Jewish community. I took my background very much for granted and didn’t have an appreciation for my history. In 2008 I read editorials and heard stories on the radio regarding the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and anticipated all would get along peacefully. Rather than peace, they got rockets. In spite of these gestures, Israel was still vilified and portrayed as Nazis. I read many newspaper articles, many of them anti-Semitic, and it affected me deeply. I see Israel as a critical ally of our country, the only democracy in the Middle East, surrounded by horrible human rights violators in the Middle East, and Israel gets vilified. This is wrong. One of my goals is to be able to respond to these false narratives.

**History:** The history of the Jewish people is my history.
Security: For the first 8 years of my life I lived in Israel. At the time it was fun, actually. Mother taught us if we were between school and home and bombs went off, “dig a hole and bury your head.” I wondered how we could breathe that way. The feeling of vulnerability was always there.

Survival: Growing up, I knew of the concentration camps. I knew of the gas chambers. As an adult I asked my father-in-law why they didn’t do something more quickly to help the people, to stop it. He was from a very affluent family in Poland. They were law-abiding citizens and obeyed. It wasn’t their way to pull out a gun. I believe the Jewish people cannot survive without Israel.

Jewish Identity: I’m 80, and my window of time could be closing. I want the Jewish people to go on, to know their history. I have also toured the Holocaust Memorial. I want people to visit it, these are the Holocaust survivors who came to Nashville, have lived in Nashville, have grown and contributed to the Nashville community, like my relatives would have had they lived. Our survival and our future depend on people, not only us, but also our children. Tomorrow I will tour the Nashville Holocaust Memorial with a group of children. I tell them the future is in your hands; our heritage is in your hands. You are an important part of what happens in America today. Our story, our heritage is important. I want it to survive.

Israel: My parents both came from Poland. They left before the Holocaust. My mother was one of 12 and she would receive letters from her family, and as a young child I couldn’t fathom how this could happen. The passion that my family members had for Israel and being Jewish was in the air that I breathed. I don’t understand why we, as Jews, have been so mistreated. I’m happy that Israel is safe.

Homeland: As a Jew, it is important for me to have a homeland. Also out of respect for my ancestors and current fellow Jews who have sacrificed and created this Jewish state. It is also important the rest of the world see that Jews are in agreement about the importance of having a homeland.

Staunch Advocacy: I remember when being Jewish in Nashville meant dealing with anti-Semitism. Jews couldn’t be part of the country club. When I went to UT I became politically active to counter the lies told about Jews and Israel there. Israel is a part of me. It's all wrapped up. I proud of what Israel has done for the rest of world and medicine, science, proud that they have built a democracy where everyone has a voice, even though it’s not exactly like the one we have in America. Some American say some Jews are too religious. But this is all part of Israel. They are inclusive. This is my country. If I choose I can go there tomorrow and become a citizen.

Jewish Heritage: I experienced the loss of most of my European relatives, they were from Hungary, and many lost their lives. Five people survived. I have cousins who live in Europe. I have visited them, now I know them. They converted to Catholicism for safety. They had to give up their Jewish heritage. One cousin has recently taken back her Jewish name. She wants to know her heritage. Another cousin is thinking of doing the same.

Acknowledge Israel: It just seems so basic to me that the other countries in the Middle East have to acknowledge that Israel has a right to exist. Until they do, I can’t see how anything can be done. Never again. People (Jews) have been killed for thousands of years. Finally we have a homeland.

4. To stand as a united community in our support of Israel as the homeland for the Jewish people.

Support: I think that no matter what people's opinions may be about Israel and how different their politics may be, they can usually find some small piece of common ground (for example, most Jews support a Jewish homeland, regardless of whether or not they support Israel's government, etc.). Progress (in any direction) can only happen if we work together and focus on what we have in common.
Understanding: In 2006 during Israel's second war with Lebanon, I was part of a delegation to the "sister city of the Jewish Federation where I lived at the time. We were aware of the conditions of war in the city, but chose to travel there to bring aid and toys to the children. As we approached city hall, sirens sounded and we sought shelter. We realized we were at risk and hid in a safe place in the city hall building and remained there until the “all clear” sounded. The local Federation's president was on the trip. She was a leader in many groups like Planned Parenthood and other similar organizations. We both realized for the first time, as a result of our visit to the area, what it meant to be in and part of Israel. I had not understood the psychological pressure the people in Israel had been enduring until this trip. I believe it is important [for our leaders to] to understand how Israelis feel and experience life in this environment.

Safe Homeland: It is destructive to the Jewish community when we ostracize, banish, or personally attack individuals whose expression for Israel is different from our own. We spend too much time refereeing ourselves, rather than rallying passionate people to love and support Israel. It is also important that we learn to differ respectfully. Israel is threatened. Israel's existence in safety is the central priority of world Jewry.

Family: I hate conflict.

Peace: I dislike Jews fighting among themselves.

Consensus: There have always been strong and differing opinions about the way Israel needs to handle itself. Strong opinions are part of our culture. Get 10 Jews together and you will have 11 opinions. As a student, that's the way the rabbi taught us. We were taught to argue and disagree, and it often reaches the level of anger. That's a normal part of the process. Jewish culture is a culture of debate and dialogue, so I'm not upset that people disagree so vehemently. But it has reached the point that people are being ugly with each other. That's not in our tradition. That's not the way it's supposed to be. We should agree to disagree and to respect each other, not to have animosity on a personal level.

Love: So much of the world is against the Jews. While this sounds simplistic, just look at our holidays...from the Egyptians at Passover to Haman at Purim and Antiochus at Chanukah and on to the Holocaust and even today...we have foes in every age and around the world. Even some laws in America become anti-Semitic, i.e., the new state law allowing prayer by teachers; this excludes those of other religions and in the end, hurts Jewish school children. We simply have to learn to love ourselves, and to love each other, and our leaders need to support our rights to live as Jews (and this includes accepting all people who call themselves Jewish and choose to live as Jews, whether they fit our ideal or not).

Relationship: Rather than ignore that we have opposing views because of difficulty confronting members of our small community, our leaders should set up forums for expressing our values, perceptions, emotions, ideas, and motivations. Left unattended these feelings will fester and become more volatile.

Consensus: While we recognize that there are many shades of being Jewish as there are colors, to the outside world we are a single color. That is, we are Jewish and are presumably all the same. Jews should embrace our differences, but recognize we have more in common at the end of the day than we do that is different. For our community to splinter, draw lines in the sand, and otherwise build walls between us is to undermine and threaten our success and longevity as a people. This is harmful to all Jews, no matter what “shade”.

5. That the leadership of all Jewish communal institutions will actively take responsibility to support the implementation of these goals.

Jewish Peoplehood: My Rabbi has taught me that we are too small a people to be a divided people. If we are indeed a “Peoplehood” as taught to us by Misha Galperin, then we have to strive to find the way to be united even with our differences. Are we so contentious and “stiff-necked” a people that we can't resolve our internal differences?
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<th>WHAT</th>
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<td><strong>1. To respect each other and uphold Jewish values by carefully listening, hearing each other out, and seeking to understand each other’s perspective.</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Have forums where differing views are expressed:</strong>&lt;br&gt;1.1. Programs about Israel that highlight the diversity of views that exist there. Discussions should include Israelis, ex-patriot Israelis and American Jews.&lt;br&gt;1.2. We encourage people to make their own individual decisions about what to believe regarding Israel. This means creating a wide variety of forums that include representation of varying perspectives on the issue.&lt;br&gt;1.3. Intensive discussion, continuing communication, programming that reflects the diversity of views through the Community Relations Committee and in collaboration with other communal organizations.&lt;br&gt;1.4. I think this needs to be done by a person who is not affiliated with the organizations. Someone who can do the research and present the facts in an unbiased manner...not sure who that is!&lt;br&gt;1.5. To have small meetings in different groups, and larger meetings at the JCC with speakers to talk about issues, and how we feel. Schedule lectures and speakers from Israel. When the pro-Palestinian groups have a meeting or demonstration, make sure someone from the Jewish community is there so listeners will have both sides of the story.</td>
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<td>2. To create an atmosphere in which members of the community can express their own viewpoints without fear of being labeled, vilified, rejected or excluded.</td>
<td><strong>2. . . . but, (according to some participants) there should be limits on the views covered by these goals.</strong>&lt;br&gt;2.1. During the inter-group summit, a suggestion was made that this goal statement should not be read as a demand to create forums for “hate speech.” Some of the representatives expressed concern that this kind of terminology can be used to suppress important viewpoints, however.&lt;br&gt;2.2. We need to open the doors of our institutions to varying views, as long as they don’t cross the red line that would deny the right of Israel to exist.&lt;br&gt;2.3. Threats of reprisal should not be tolerated.</td>
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<td>3. A different type of forum should be developed, departing from the conventional session where different people simply state their positions. To encourage better listening, some suggested formal ground rules and the use of trained facilitators or moderators who help the participants adhere to ground rules:</td>
<td><strong>3.1. Again, perhaps we can talk less and listen more. I have not found panels to be helpful, so maybe brainstorming some creative ways would work.</strong>&lt;br&gt;3.2. In rule-centered dialogue, supervised by a facilitator. I’m eager to see how the plan set out by the newly-formed Nashville Jewish community’s initiative on civility might bring this about.&lt;br&gt;3.3. Use of third party moderators.&lt;br&gt;3.4. Perhaps by a panel discussion or rules similar to marriage counseling where one person must really hear what the other says, repeat it to make sure they heard it right and then the other person has a chance to do likewise and be heard.&lt;br&gt;3.5. In these discussions, the facilitators will need to help speakers support their opinions, if needed, and help people realize when conflicting views are not comparable.</td>
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<td>4. Routine use of designated moderators who have a clear responsibility and authority to keep the public conversational space “safe.”</td>
<td><strong>4.1. A moderator or someone else in the group discussing the subject should be coached or trained so they know how to step in, stop interruptions and remind people to listen to the entirety of what the speaker has to say.</strong>&lt;br&gt;4.2. A strong and impartial Master or Mistress of Ceremonies should always be in control, and access should be denied, if needed.</td>
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<td><strong>(Goals 1, 2, continued)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Note: words in italics are from facilitators. The others are direct quotations from input.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. To respect each other and uphold Jewish values by carefully listening, hearing each other out, and seeking to understand each other’s perspective.</td>
<td>to persons who are not members of our community.</td>
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<td>4.3. We need to enlist hired professionals (therapists/mediators/diplomats) to model and help facilitate these sessions.</td>
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<td>2. To create an atmosphere in which members of the community can express their own viewpoints without fear of being labeled, vilified, rejected or excluded.</td>
<td>5. <strong>Skills training sessions on how to listen to speech that might offend, defuse verbal escalation, and express strong opinions on issues without generating unnecessary resistance.</strong></td>
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<td>5.1. Again, I think people need to learn skills to take someone else aside and remind them about this basic principle, or to defuse unknown language. People need to commit themselves to following it.</td>
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<td>5.2. This is like bullying - people need bullying-resistance training so they know how to let others know that requiring conformity isn’t acceptable and it’s not the Jewish way. Also, perhaps there’s a way to remove some of the fear people have about opinions other than their own, to help people accept that it’s possible to be different and not be misinformed, naive or worse.</td>
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<td>5.3. I am not sure if there is an organization to implement it but whoever does could be advised by the Rabbis into the correct formula for this type of Chevrutah (couple) learning.</td>
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<td>6. Articles or handouts on how to have difficult conversations, perhaps as a supplement to the civility code, should be developed in order to create and reinforce norms of respectful listening:</td>
<td>6.1. There needs to be an appropriate glossary of terminology in how we speak to one another. An agreed upon framework with how to address personal ideas without personal attack or threats of exposure.</td>
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<td>6.2. By adopting an understanding in our community that competing views on how Israel should conduct itself are expected. Toward this end, discussion of opposing viewpoints should be focused on the point of view, not the person. Individual who express points of view should not be subject to attack or disparaged.</td>
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<td>7. Hosting panel discussions or debates in which representatives of competing groups speak with careful ground rules to encourage presentations that foster learning rather than position-taking:</td>
<td>7.1. I am not sure this will ever happen, but in an ideal world, groups like AIPAC and J-Street that are on opposite ends of the spectrum would come together regularly for an organized, peaceful, heavily facilitated discussion of the situation in Israel. At these discussions they would figure out what exactly it is they agree on and disagree on, and they could share why. For those pieces they agree on, they could look for ways to join forces and work together.</td>
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<td>8. Have small, facilitated discussion groups rather than large public forums:</td>
<td>8.1. more dialogues in safe settings.</td>
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<td>8.2. I do believe that forums, conversations and guided dialogue among small peer groups can be effective and mind expanding.</td>
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<td>8.3. I think that institutions need to think hard about how they can do more to provide substantial opportunities for learning about the issues, and I don’t mean just listening to speeches.</td>
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<td>9. Be careful not to make “civility” into a tool to silence passionate, dissenting voices.</td>
<td>9.1. It’s also important to remember that debate can provoke other civil gestures, such as distributing opposing leaflets, picketing, etc. which are part of a democracy, and while distressing, cannot be forbidden. <strong>On the other hand . . .</strong></td>
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<td>9.2. If individuals cannot accept &amp; agree to basic rules of civility &amp; respect as a Jewish community, do they deserve a voice in our community gatherings?</td>
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<td>10. The data also included many observations about how hard it will be to achieve these goals:</td>
<td>10.1. I don’t know. It seems to me to be a national problem.</td>
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<td>10.2. I wish I had a good answer!</td>
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<td>10.3. I’m waiting to see the answer to this question.</td>
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<td>10.4. I don’t know how to infuse the dialogue with basic good manners. Perhaps this series of discussions will promote more respectful speech.</td>
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<td>WHAT</td>
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<td>HOW</td>
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(Note: words in italics are from facilitators. The others are direct quotations from input.)

11. A continuing challenge for the community is that representatives of two specific viewpoints feel that they and their views have been excluded and suppressed in the current environment. Representatives of these viewpoints expressed fear that the general rules of acceptance and listening have not been, and will not be applied for their benefit.

11.1. Education of Jews about the threat of political Islam, and what it means in regards to Jewish survival. Stopping the continued subjugation and silence of mainstream Jewish organizations in regards to this issue.

11.2. I find it very disturbing that voices critical of Israel’s policies in the Occupied Territories are consistently silenced and excluded.

12. Other original ideas in the data include:

12.1. Hold a series of events and utilize technology and then indicate results. I like the impact of polling so that others can learn where they stand in relation to others on an issue.

12.2. Smaller group meetings not more than say 20-25 people or preferably about 15 in which briefings can be prepared for sharing with the entire community.

12.3. Jewish institutions, GJCC, synagogues, need to provide opportunities and model civil discussions and debates about the future of Israel and the role of the American Jewish community.

12.4. Do NOT fall into the trap of labeling groups, people, speakers, programs as “right wing” or “left wing,” and then attempt to balance points of view. This is self-destructive, and assumes reductionist points of view. A speaker may be liberal on one issue, conservative on another.
3. To educate ourselves and deepen our understanding of modern Israel, its history, current realities and the quest for peace through the critical evaluation of diverse sources.

13. Create educational programs about Israel that will attract audiences, especially younger ones.
   13.1. Somehow we have to draw people into educational programs about Israel. And I admit, I am not sure how to do this, especially with people under age 50. If we don’t reach that group, and soon, there could be a precipitous drop in support for Israel within the Jewish community.
   13.2. Developing and implementing a continuing series of educational programs about the history of Israel in the Middle East and the current challenges that are faced by Israel.
   13.3. Expose older high-school students to multiple narratives/talking points and help them navigate current events related to Israel. I think educators and rabbis working together to build community-level programs and classes for our teens is crucial.
   13.4. Developing and implementing a continuing series of educational programs about the history of Israel in the Middle East and the current challenges that are faced by Israel.

14. Create or organize a group, committee, task force or council assigned to identify and summarize “facts” that should be widely accepted as a starting point for debate.
   14.1. Perhaps there is already an organization out there that does this, but someone needs to create a nonprofit, completely nonpartisan and unbiased organization -- one that is forbidden from lobbying or campaigning -- that is solely dedicated to compiling information, verifying facts, and educating the public about Israel. (For example, my Facebook news feed is constantly abuzz with people posting pictures of injured Palestinian children and claiming they were hurt in Israeli bombings, and then a swarm of others claiming the photo was faked. What is the truth? It’s hard to know whom to believe, and there is no one-stop source for verifying such things.) This organization would have to be made up of unbiased academics and journalists... ideally people who have never been involved with Israel advocacy in any way, in order to ensure their neutrality.

15. Create opportunities for members to make presentations about Israel to non-Jewish audiences.
   15.1. This suggestion came up in verbal discussions. Several people mentioned that they only became aware of their own “ignorance” of Israel’s history and current events when asked to give presentations about Israel to classes and adult groups.
   15.2. All organizations have a role in spreading the various words on Israel.

16. Offer programs in how to be an educated consumer of information, especially from the World Wide Web.
   16.1. Federation would be well served to hold an event along the lines of, “Being an Educated News Consumer.” This could be keyed specifically to Israel or not. Obviously, facilitator/panelists would have to be chosen carefully.

17. Encourage, sponsor trips to Israel for adult members of the community.¹
   17.1. Subsidized missions to Israel and subsidized study programs.
   17.2. There needs to be more scholarship money and even fundraisers for people to go to Israel, even if they have to do some sort of volunteer work while there to pay it back. This would require the same type of coordination we do between our federation and congregations and Israeli organizations for the group trips from Nashville. Our community sends a handful of teachers and youth, but as with many programs, we leave out a lot of individuals who don’t fit into the specific categories, which are SO limited. All the group trips to Israel are vacations for the wealthy that have already been there. I’m sure some people would donate to this if it were explained in such a way as to promote Israel. If more people could visit and experience Israel they would become better supporters after they come home.

18. Other original ideas in the data include:
   18.1. We’re trying to get the Jewish community to participate more actively in opportunities at Vanderbilt and the Program in Jewish Studies. There needs to be a way that Jewish educational events are consistently publicized in the community, not just events at the GJCC but at all the synagogues, universities and other venues. People often have no idea about how much is

¹ This suggestion could properly be placed under the category, “Keep up the good work,” below.
available in Nashville because there’s not an easy way to access information.

18.2. For the last two years I’ve been running a book/discussion group that has read some challenging material. What I’ve heard from members of the group is that it is one of the few places that they feel “safe” discussing such issues and really expressing their feelings and opinions. By “safe” I think they mean feeling that no one in the group will attack them, put them down, etc. or carry tales outside the group about them.

18.3. This is a good start. People are often willing to be more candid in writing, more or less anonymously, than they are in person, where they risk attack and contumely.

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<th>4. To stand united as a community in our support of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people.</th>
<th>19. More community-based trips to Israel.</th>
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<tr>
<td>19.1. More community based trips to Israel, more engagement with programs such as Partnership Together (sponsored by the Jewish Federation) stronger ties with the Israeli Consulate and the America-Israel Chamber of Commerce.</td>
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<td>19.2. I think that if we could get each of the Jewish organizations in town to do more joint trips, at reasonable costs, it would be a good way to allow more people to go to Israel. High costs are the main reason many people don’t even consider going. I was at a bar mitzvah at Micah, and they handed the bar mitzvah boy a $250 gift toward a trip to Israel. I know that other communities do that, or even have a sort of savings fund for kids to use on a trip (any trip). I am also grateful that the Federation provides grants and incentives towards trips for young adults and teens to go to Israel on their structured trips. It needs to also be available for those older adults who don’t have large amounts of funds. It’s an educational thing - learn, go, live in the land.</td>
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<td>19.3. Offer different ways for folks to travel to Israel at all ages through all kinds of trips. I think our community does this already.</td>
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20. Identify “common ground” ways that people here can act in support of Israel, that are not connected with the issues in dispute.

20.1. Get lots of input from Israel on its needs and direction. Determine how American Jews can support the government, even when we may not agree with particular decisions.

20.2. Programs, not only reaching out to the Jewish community, but to our neighbors as well would be helpful.

20.3. Identify goals that unite us. Existence of Jewish life, safety and security for Israel, education and Jewish life.

20.4. All Jewish organizations can set their particular agendas aside for the common goal of seeing that Israel receives the respect in the world that it deserves for all the good that Jews and Jewish organizations do to improve the world. Hadassah is one good example, especially when it comes to medical research advances, and also technological advances. I am including Hadassah International in this umbrella organization.

20.5. More interaction is needed between the congregations, as well as encouragement by rabbis and other leaders for their congregants/group members to be tolerant of each other; organization leaders can create opportunities for Jews to help other Jews, encourage our bar/bat mitzvah students to give to Jewish charities that help Jewish people, and so on.
5. That the Leadership of all Jewish communal institutions will actively take responsibility to support the implementation of these goals.

21. **Jewish communal organizations should affirmatively reach out to assure that programming represents a variety of points of view.**
   21.1. In our community, I think the Federation is the perfect organizing address for this kind of programming with the JCC as a location for such events. Welcome speakers and opportunities from across the spectrum on Israel is key without fear of any one individual revoking their financial contributions.
   21.2. Federation could step forward to sponsor speakers on all sides of the issue of a two-state solution. Complete even-handedness would be welcome though may not be possible, given the history of the Nashville Jewish community on the issue of Israel. The Jewish Community Center should be a welcoming venue for a variety of views, and one would hope its board and management would understand that the Center has members with a variety of views, which deserve to be heard in the public discourse. I think the Federation should actively recruit people who have different opinions about Israel (very different from one end of the spectrum to the other) to serve on each board/committee especially fundraising and Israel type boards/committees. All Jewish orgs. should get space for articles and announcements in The Observer.
   21.3. If there is an Israel event with booths, any Jewish organization should be able to have a booth. Disfavored orgs. should not get booths in a small room far away from the rest of the event. If it is a debate or speaking event Jewish groups with opposing opinions should be invited to participate and given the same time to answer the same questions or same time to advocate for their position as other participants.

22. **Community leaders should serve as explicit models for facilitators, moderators and presenters.**
   22.1. Rabbis who have the most visible and audible pulpit need to model respectful behavior and speech as well as encouraging their congregants to accept that there are multiple narratives when it comes to Israel.
   22.2. I think the idea of having a facilitator and informed, and not biased, leader or leaders, to bring each group together and set the model — let the established leadership truly demonstrate this way of interacting. Would love to see our professional and lay leaders act with courage instead of backing away or worse, presenting views that they think they ought to recite because there will be negative financial consequences if they do not express these “mainstream” views.
   22.3. I would benefit from having more discussion with Jews who are informed about Israel and don’t always agree with each other. I’d like to see Jews modeling respectful disagreement, conceding points and agreeing to disagree. I would benefit both from their knowledge of the subject and from seeing them model respectful argumentation styles.

23. **Communal organizations should be accessible to varying points of view.**
   23.1. The issue of which specific organizations and which specific venues should be open to all, or some wide cross section of Jewish organizations was extensively discussed during the face-to-face meetings and in the written data. The following items are illustrative. During the face-to-face meetings, representatives elected not to reach a consensus on specific directives to any specific organization.
   23.2. All Jewish centers- GJCC, synagogues, Jewish Federation- would support and encourage speakers from all sides. The Federation should provide funding, meeting space, equal access and equal benefits/perks to ALL Jewish organizations including, but not limited to, ones like J street. All Jewish orgs should be included on the community calendar.
   23.3. Change policies in the Federation and the GJCC to permit speakers and other events with all views within the Community on Israel.
   23.4. If there is an Israel event with booths, any Jewish organization should be able to have a booth. Disfavored organizations should not get booths in a small room far away from the rest of the event.
   23.5. We need to open up our facilities to ALL Jewish groups who have something to say about Israel, even those we personally despise. But we should maintain balance—if one group comes, we should invite their counterpart.

24. **Allow more individuals to earmark more of their contributions.**
   24.1. Funds donated to Israel should be designated to specific organizations, so that their appropriate use according to my values is guaranteed.
   24.2. The Federation could allow people to designate their donations like the United Way. For example when I donate money to the...
United Way campaign at my office, I can designate that my donation go to Planned Parenthood rather than any other organizations under the United Way umbrella. The federation can do this all it takes is developing a list of organizations and the accounting procedures to go with that list. I would think several accountants could donate their time to set up the accounts for this purpose.

25. “Keep up the good work.” Many of the respondents affirmed the existing programming and called for it to be continued.
   25.1. I believe that the Observer has done a great thing by posting the civility statement. It allows all sides to respectfully submit letters and dialogue in a hopefully civil manner.
   25.2. Congregation Micah does a great job of teaching our children about being Jewish and having a connection to their Jewish community - in Nashville, in Israel and throughout the world. Israel - past, present and future - should be part of all Jewish education, but should not be the only (or event he primary) subject.
   25.3. I believe that the Jewish Federation of Nashville is the organization, as the umbrella organization in our community, to do this. The Federation is the best tool to bring people together.
   25.4. I am hopeful that the methodology Federation is using will bring us to a state of constructive civility, even if we have differences of opinion.
   25.5. I believe that the Jewish Federation of Nashville is the organization, as the umbrella organization in our community, to do this. The Federation is the best tool to bring people together.
   25.6. All of the institutions of the Jewish community, including our synagogues, should make clear that support for the survival of Israel is central to their collective missions. As noted in my response to question #2, I believe that the CRC’s Israel programming this year has been excellent.

26. Different respondents mentioned existing Jewish organizations that, in their individual opinion, deserve support and should be given access to Jewish communal facilities. This is NOT a consensus list! Those mentioned were:
   26.1. AIPAC
   26.2. J Street
   26.3. Middle East Program (MEP)
   26.4. Hadassah
   26.5. NCJA-National Conference on Jewish Affairs
   26.6. Emergency Committee for Israel
   26.7. Israel Religious Action Center
   26.9. B’nai B’rith
Reflections on Important Unresolved Conflicts
Roger Conner, Lead Facilitator

The preceding sections of the report have emphasized the areas of agreement expressed by the participants. The analysis and interpretation of the data is incomplete without a discussion of unresolved conflicts.

The premise of the entire process is that members of the community have serious and deeply felt beliefs about issues related to Israel and its future. The data that we collected confirms that assumption. The divisions within the Jewish community of Nashville on issues such as settlements, two-state solutions and the nature of the threat to Israel from political and religious forces mirror those within the U.S. and in Israel itself.

Beyond these expected sources of ongoing disagreement, I want to highlight two others that surfaced in the data and in the face-to-face meetings.

First, what is acceptable when it comes to public criticism of Israeli government policies? Members of the community draw the line at different places. Some feel that public criticism of Israel is exaggerated and unfair, and that further criticism from U.S. Jews is “fueling the flames” of anti-Israel feeling. This example is illustrative:

I think that one of the great injustices of the day is that Israel, which is one of the most just nations in the world, is so often depicted as one of the least just. People who are attracted to groups like [redacted] feed into this anti-Israel frenzy when they have criticized Israel unjustly in ways that have caused short term and long term damage to the way that Israel is viewed by the world. This anti-Israel frenzy has the potential to make the Middle East a more dangerous neighborhood and to open the door to another Holocaust. It also has the potential to make being Jewish more difficult for Jews around the world.

In my view it is easy to distinguish between well-meaning Jewish critics of the Israeli government and those who do Israel a real disservice in unintentionally fomenting anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment around the world. The former address their complaints to the Israeli government. The later address their complaints to the American government. The former complain to other Jews. The latter complain to the United Nations.

A contrasting viewpoint is expressed by other participants, who report that they have been subjected to pejorative labels for expressing reasonable and appropriate criticism of current Israeli government policies. For example:

Because I'm sick of being told that I'm an anti-Zionist hater of Israel or a self-hating Jew because I think the current government of Israel is acting like an obstacle to peace. I'm sick of having one side of the argument being treated as legitimate and non-controversial and the other as being too dangerous to be hosted by local synagogues or the GJCC.

I find it insulting to be called a “self-hating Jew” in speech and in print. I don't insult people with whom I
disagree in this manner, and I am entitled to similar respectful conduct.

Second, at least two distinct sub-groups with contrasting opinions about threats to Israel’s future, report that others within the community are suppressing them and their views. Individuals who oppose existing Israeli government policies such as settlements and negotiating posture report that they have been labeled and vilified: And those who believe that the dangers to Israel from Islam and hostile neighbors also feel that they are being marginalized. The following three excerpts are illustrative:

Currently, I feel my voice is not heard within our community. As a child, I learned that my maternal grandfather fled to America turn of the last century fleeing from Kiev, Ukraine. I learned that my uncle (awarded a Purple Heart in WWI) was chased through the streets with his brother because they were Jewish, sons of a cantor. The deep impressions from these stories leave me horrified to learn that IDF forces under command of the Israeli government, chase, taunt, and sometimes kill Palestinian mothers, fathers and children.

I am not interested in seeing Israel get destroyed because of ignorance about what the Israeli conflict is about--Islamic Jew hatred. Israel is the only place that is truly safe for all of us. It is not a forgone conclusion that we will stay safe in the USA.

I believe that the survival of Israel is a central “litmus test” of the willingness of Western Civilization to

defend itself against the new Dark Age that is threatened by the spread of fundamentalist Islam.

Third, a theme that runs through the data is a concern over “facts.” Many respondents express frustration that the people who hold contrasting opinions are misstating facts and “getting away with it.” Others are frustrated because they suspect that some factual claims being bandied about are exaggerated, but they lack a mechanism to separate reasonable claims from assertions that lack any reasonable basis in fact. The following are illustrative:

You have a right to your own opinion, but you don't have a right to your own facts. I see the kind of inaccurate or highly biased information that circulates from ideological news sources and e-mail chain letters, and when people don't have the skills to distinguish between reliable and unreliable news, it's hard for them to come to a measured conclusion.

Countries under Islam have a horrendous human rights record, and Islam has the largest religious population in the world – 54 Million. If they're out to wipe Israel from the map, I'm not going to sit still for that. Hitler told the world what he was going to do and no one believed it. I'd like to reach those who can face the facts when presented to them.

People are being accused and their views are being misrepresented. It's wrong.
It is self-evident that the fundamental policy disagreements about issues related to Israel will continue, and that any effort to resolve them within the Jewish community of Nashville would be counter-productive. While affirmative outreach to those who hold views that elicit strong counter-reactions from within the community would be risky, it would directly address the source of some of the undercurrent of bitterness that we heard. Similarly, it seems likely that some sort of multi-partisan, collaborative effort could be mounted to screen out wildly exaggerated assertions or expressions that contravene Jewish values without suppressing valid viewpoints from within the community.

_Nashville, Tennessee_  
_May 2012_