



## Zionism is Racism - U.N. Resolution 3379

# Fair and Balanced Judgment & Legitimate Criticism

90-120-Minute Learning Experience

Before beginning, check out our [Facilitator's Guide](#), which explains how to use this learning activity as a set induction prior to watching the video.

In order to gain some personal insight into the difficult distinctions one must consider when exerting a fair and balanced judgement, learners will encounter interactive learning experiences that drive home this point. They will be asked to think about how worldview (perspective) and bias shade our clarity in difficult situations where one is driven to pass judgment on another person or on a situation. Learners will explore the nuance that comes with extending legitimate criticism on authority and how that ties into being fair and balanced even in our most passionate assertions.

## Activities (65-95 min)

*Supplies:*

- [Kaleidoscopes](#) (one per person), [telescopes](#), (one for 50% of participants), [magnifying glasses](#) (one for 50% of participants), large object for group viewing, note paper, pens/pencils
- *Sticky shapes (one per person) of different yet themed sizes, shapes and colors – for example blue small square, blue large square, blue arrow, blue circle, pink polka dot circle, yellow polka dot arrow, blue polka dot large square, yellow polka dot small square etc., projector/laptop/screen/internet/audio – you will be showing photos taken during an exercise shortly after it ends, so cloud folder access will be needed*
- *InGroup Trust Worksheet (one per person)*
- *Assessing the Situation Handout (one per group of 4-5), three notecards per person.*

### 1. Kaleidoscopes, Telescopes and Magnifying Glasses (12-20 min)

- a. Give each participant a kaleidoscope and have them put their eye up to it.
- b. Place a prominent/large object in the center of the room (a large plant, a large sculpture, a mannequin with clothing, etc.)



- c. Have them all look at it through the kaleidoscopes from their positions around the room (equal distances from object).
  - d. Have them write down what they see as they turn their kaleidoscopes [colors, shapes, object(s), height, etc.]. (45-90 sec)
  - e. Share out loud and compare/contrast. (1-2 min)
  - f. Divide the group into pairs.
  - g. Give one person in each pair a magnifying glass and the other person a telescope. Together they should choose one object that they will examine through the instrument they are given.
  - h. Ask them to write down “field notes” on what they observed about the object before coming back to the main room and comparing notes. (2-4 min)
  - i. Ask a few groups to share what they chose, what each person saw, etc. (3-5 min)
  - j. Discuss: (4-8 min)
    - i. How does the lens we look through change how we view what we see?
    - ii. How does the proximity between our eye and the object change what we see?
    - iii. When you compared your notes with your partner, was one person right about what they saw/described and the other person wrong? Why or why not?
    - iv. How can this be a metaphor for how we see people and their personalities? Decisions we make? Social and political issues?
- 2. Say Cheese! (12-18 min)**
- a. Give each participant a different sticky badge (in a variety of shapes, colors and sizes) to place somewhere between their waist and neck.
  - b. Instruct participants to form groups without talking. Don't give any instructions as to what criteria to use to form the groups.
  - c. Once formed, take a group photo of each of the groups.
  - d. Ask them to break up and form new groups. Take new photos.
  - e. Repeat these steps at least three times. (Participants will normally form groups based on shapes, colors or sizes. Rarely do the participants look beyond the badges, and even less rarely do they intentionally form diverse groups in which many shapes, colors and sizes are represented.) (Total 7-10 min)
  - f. Bring everyone back together and discuss:
    - i. How did you determine what groups were “right” to form? What was the process? Did the process change from round to round?
    - ii. Did you look for others to bring you into their groups, or were you the one to determine who was in your group?
    - iii. Are there groupings you felt more a “part” of than others? Explain.
  - g. Display the group photos that were taken on a projector. Discuss:



- i. Review the groupings in each round and what trends or patterns the group sees. (Typically groups are formed based on like-color, size, pattern, shape, etc.)
- ii. Based on what you observe in the photos, what can we learn about how people tend to gravitate toward others?
- iii. What can we learn about how we socially categorize others?
- iv. When you were in your groups, was there any sense of “us” vs. “them” toward the other groups/categorizations?
- v. If you/your group felt a sense of in-group bias (also known as affinity bias), how did that play out (even though you were silent, were there gestures or eye movements, etc. that were an attempt to declare group superiority?)
- vi. Were any of the groupings diverse? Was that intentional in some way? If not, why do you think that—without instruction—our tendency is to form groups based on “like” criteria?
- vii. What benefits exist for groups/teams in striving for diversity? What are the potential benefits of diverse groups?
- viii. What “blind spots” do we create in our “viewpoint/lens/perspective” when we only have like-minded, like-shaped, like-colored people together in our groups?

**3. In-Group Trust (12-18 min)**

- a. Print copies of the chart below on a full sheet of paper.
- b. Pre-fold the handout so that only the “People I Trust” column is showing at first.
- c. Hand out the worksheet and pens/pencils to each person.
- d. Tell them to first list the eight people they trust the most. Instruct them to NOT unfold the paper until they have written all eight names.
- e. Instruct them to unfold the paper and fill out the rest of the chart with checks or X’s in the appropriate columns.
- f. Give them 5-7 min to complete the chart.

People I trust the most	Same Religion	Same Expressed Gender	Same Race	Same/Similar Age	Same/Similar Socio-Economic Status	Same/Similar political/ethical views
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						



7.						
8.						

- g. Have them do the following:
  - i. Stand if you had less than 35 check marks on your sheet
  - ii. Keep standing if you had less than 25 check marks on your sheet.
  - iii. Keep standing if you had less than 18 check marks on your sheet.
  - iv. Keep standing if you had less than 10 check marks on your sheet.
  - v. Keep standing if you had less than 5 check marks on your sheet.
- h. Discuss:
  - i. What can we learn about our own in-group preferences from this exercise?
  - ii. How might this activity help us understand our own biases toward where we think “truth” or “smart decisions” come from?
  - iii. For those of you who had less than 10 check marks, how did you meet the different people you have listed on your sheet?
  - iv. How can expanding our networks help us shift our perspectives? Biases? Understanding?
  - v. How might this help us engage in fair and balanced judgment?

**4. Unconscious Bias (10-15 min)**

- a. Show these two videos to the group:
  - i. [Unconscious Bias Test](#) (1:06)
  - ii. [How to Overcome Unconscious Bias](#) (1:01)
- b. Discuss:
  - i. What are your immediate thoughts/reactions/challenges to these videos?
  - ii. Did you have “gut response” answers to the “how do you feel about....” questions in the first video? A sense of “not me” or “me” as they were listed off? (If you are comfortable, you can list these one-by-one and have people share their gut reactions: own a handgun, don’t speak English, have tattoos, don’t attend ‘church,’ vote differently than you do, on welfare, didn’t go to college, don’t believe in marriage.)
  - iii. Why do you think that you have those gut feelings? Where do those come from?
  - iv. Why is it “normal” to have those?
  - v. How are biases perpetuated?
  - vi. How do our biases reinforce what we believe is right/wrong?
  - vii. How do biases impact our ability to maintain fair and balanced judgement about others?



- viii. Have you ever intentionally tried to shift your own biases? How have you done that?

### 5. Assumptions and Judgements (15-22 min)

- a. Divide the group into subgroups of 4-5 people.
- b. Give each person 3 notecards and a pen/pencil.
- c. Give each group an “Assessing the Situation” handout, which has the following instructions on it:
  - i. Scenario One: There is a young adult woman walking down a dirty street with three young children.
    - Write on your first card what the relationship is between the woman and the children. Describe what you assume about her life choices.
    - Turn it face down in front of you.
    - When everyone in your group is finished, flip them over and share your responses.
  - ii. Scenario Two: You are driving down the road and stop at a stop light. A limousine pulls up in the lane next to you.
    - Write on your second card who you think is in the limo. Describe this person/people. Describe what you assume about his/her/their life choices.
    - Turn it face down in front of you.
    - When everyone in your group is finished, flip them over and share your responses.
  - iii. Scenario Three: You are in the park and an old man is asleep on a park bench. He has a crumpled brown bag on the bench next to him.
    - On your third card, tell us what this person’s work history is. Describe what you assume about his life choices.
    - Turn it face down in front of you.
    - When everyone in your group is finished, flip them over and share your responses.
- d. As a group, discuss:
  - i. How much did assumptions based on stereotypes play into your responses?
  - ii. How much did assumptions based on your own life experiences play into your responses?
  - iii. Was it difficult or easy to “pass quick judgement” on each person/people based on the circumstances around them? Why?
  - iv. Were there any responses to any of the scenarios that you would have never considered? Why do you think that is?



- v. Is there someone else's response you want to challenge as not feasible?
- e. Bring the whole group back together and discuss:
  - i. What can we learn about our tendency to pass quick judgement about situations and about others based on this experiment?
  - ii. What can we learn about our assumptions and ability to make a fair and balanced judgement in a situation where we can't gather more information?
  - iii. How might we recognize and put our assumptions/biases in check before passing judgement?

## Processing: Grade 8-Adult (10-15 min)

- If you had to rate your life experiences on a scale of 0 to 5 as it relates to encountering diversity and diverse experiences, make a fist for zero diversity and then raise fingers 1-5, 5 being the most. Ask a few to explain their answers.
- How can we work to improve the recognition, support, and value of diverse perspectives and experiences when we are in the process of decision-making or passing judgement on something?
- If we adamantly disagree with a decision that someone else is making, how might we express our discontent in a fair and balanced way (taking into account our own biases and perspectives)?
- If we wholeheartedly disagree with the perspective of someone in authority, is there a "right" way to go about challenging it?
- Do we have the right to question, judge or challenge those in authority? Do you have a responsibility to do so? What's the difference?
- Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, instructs us to judge all people favorably, or "*l'kaf zechut*" (1:6). Is judging favorably better than judging fairly? Are there situations in which you think this principle would not apply?

## Additional Processing: Grade 11-Adult

- What life experiences have you had that drastically challenged or changed your opinion or assumption about something?
- Have you experienced a time when you carefully challenged someone in authority and were able to get them to come to your viewpoint? What methods did you use?
- How do you most often express adamant discontent with a decision that someone else is making?
- The Torah writes, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbour, and not bear sin because of him" (Vayikra 19:17). Why does the Torah instruct to "rebuke" your neighbor? And why is this directly after the instruction not to



hate another? When is criticism productive and when is it unproductive? The Talmud in Tractate Erkin 16b states that one must not embarrass someone while rebuking them. How might one go about offering constructive criticism in a respectful way?

## Video Viewing and Post-Video Reflection (15–20 min)

After doing these learning activities with your participants, watch the [video](#) together. Then use these discussion and reflection questions for a final conversation and wrap-up to the program.

- Some people think it is “whataboutism” to bring up the crimes of other countries, like China and North Korea, and distracts from the challenges Israel has within its own borders. Do you see criticism of Israeli policies as legitimate, or do you think it smacks of anti-Semitism if Israel is the focus of criticism as opposed to other countries?
- Similarly, what do you make of the fact that when other countries, like Syria or the former Soviet Union, engage in murderous behavior toward its own citizens or have racist policies like segregation in the U.S. and Apartheid in South Africa, the world calls for the behavior to cease but does not call into question the legitimacy of the country to exist? This is essentially what happened in 1975 when Zionism—the right for Jews to have self-determination—was equated with racism.
- Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said: “When countries single out Israel for unfair treatment at the U.N., it isn’t just a problem for Israel, it is a problem for all of us... No country is immune from criticism, nor should it be. But when that criticism takes the form of singling out just one country, unfairly, bitterly and relentlessly, over and over and over, that is just wrong—and we all know it.” Why is the U.S. such a staunch supporter of Israel in the U.N.? What do you think it’s like to stand up for a cause when most people around you disagree? Have you had this experience?
- Although the U.N. repealed the resolution in 1991, the damage had been done. Today, people still call Israel/Zionists racists. How could you articulate why Zionism does not inherently mean racism?