



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

# Fair and Balanced Judgment & Legitimate Criticism

40-60-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.

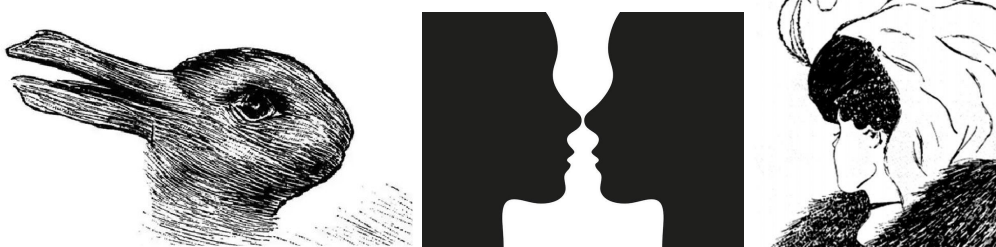
In order to gain some personal insight into the difficult distinctions one must consider when exerting a fair and balanced judgement, learners will encounter interactive learning experiences that drive home this point. They will be asked to think about how worldview (perspective) and bias shade our clarity 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 (20-30 min)

*Supplies: Copies of the set of optical illusions illustrations in a folder (one folder for each pair or triad with full-size images); a copy of Different Perspective Handout for each pair or triad; large butcher paper (2 pieces), blue tape, markers; a headband, a shoelace and a spoon.*

### 1. Optical Illusions and Different Perspectives (20-35 min)

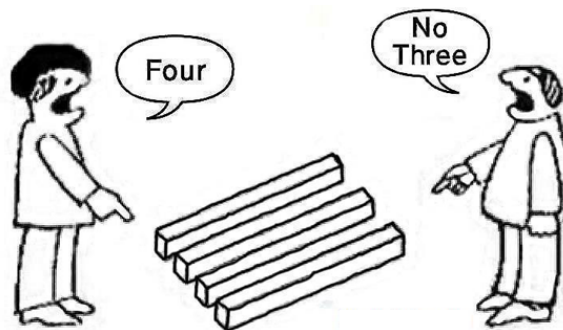
- a. Divide the group into pairs and give each of the pairs a folder with copies of each of the following optical illusions (images should be full-size).



- b. Have participants discuss in pairs: (5-8 min)
  - i. What image do you see immediately?



- ii. Did they see the same thing? If they did, have them search for the “other” image. If they don’t, have them show their partner the other image.
- iii. What TWO images exist in each single image?
- c. Discuss as a whole group: (8-12 min)
  - i. How is it possible for two different people to look at the same image and see two different things? What influences that?
  - ii. Do you feel the need to convince someone to see the image the way you see it? Why or why not?
  - iii. How can two people look at the same problem/challenge and see a way to fix it differently? What influences that?
  - iv. Do you think less of someone who sees the images differently than you do? Why or why not?
  - v. Do you feel the need to convince someone to see a solution the same way you do? Why or why not?
  - vi. How can two people look at the same political issue and see it differently? What influences that?
  - vii. Do you feel the need to convince someone to see a political issue the same way you do? Why or why not?
  - viii. Do you think less of someone who sees political issues differently than you do? Why or why not?
  - ix. If you didn’t feel the need to convince someone to see an image the same way you do, but you do feel the need to convince them to see a political issue the same way – why would that be different for you?
- d. Create a Different Perspectives Handout in which all of these images are on one side of the paper. Hand these out to the pairs.





- e. Have them examine the images in pairs and consider: (3-7 min)
  - i. Go through each one and talk about what it is telling us and then what these images collectively are telling us.
  - ii. How are these cartoons different than the optical illusion images?
  - iii. In the Prison Art Studio, which character do you identify with the most? Why?
  - iv. If the pairs in the first two wanted to “solve” their disagreement, what could they do?
- f. Bring the whole group back together and discuss: (4-8 min)
  - i. How can your life experiences influence your perspective on specific issues?
  - ii. How can “where you stand” influence your perspective on life and on specific issues?
  - iii. If we were to brainstorm ways to help others to see our perspective on high-stakes issues, what could we do?
  - iv. Consider this: if the person you are trying to get to see your perspective is an authority figure rather than a peer, how might your strategy change?
  - v. Consider the reverse: a peer or a person in power/authority is trying to get you to change your perspective. How might you respond differently to each?

## 2. Authority, Power, Perspective and Persuasion (8-12 min)

- a. Select six volunteers and make three pairs. Assign each pair a different item (headband, shoe lace or spoon) and a different power scenario.
  - i. Team one: the two people represent peers discussing a “headband.”
 

Person A: In reality, what is it? What does it do?

Person B: It’s not a “headband,” it’s a \_\_\_\_ and it can be used for \_\_\_\_
  - ii. Team two: One person is a school principal and one person is a teen student discussing a shoelace.
 

Student: In reality, what is it? What does it do?

Principal: It’s not a “shoelace,” it’s a \_\_\_\_ and it can be used for \_\_\_\_



- iii. Team three: One person is a police officer and one person is an adult who has had some minor criminal trouble in the past and they are discussing a spoon.  
Adult: In reality, what is it? What does it do?  
Police Officer: It's not a "spoon," it's a \_\_\_\_ and it can be used for \_\_\_\_
- b. Have them stand on opposite sides of the room in front of the group. The less dominant person holds the item (in the peers, either one) and they face each other.
- c. Have them start walking toward each other stating information about this item - first in increased tone and emphasis, arm movements, adamant facts, etc. But as they get closer to each other they may (depending on the role they are playing), start to adjust their point, be less adamant, consider the point of view of the other. When they cross-over, they stop and look at each other (in character) as the item is handed to the other person. As they walk away, they look over their shoulders at each other and as they speak they start taking on the opposite perspective and tone from what they started with.
- d. Discuss: For the actors...
  - i. How hard is it to hold your own point of view when you are simultaneously hearing a different perspective?
  - ii. How hard it is to let go of your own point of view when you are confronting someone in authority about their perspective?
  - iii. When you are the "authority," what is it like to give up your judgement/perspective a little?
  - iv. What body language differences did you notice in people who had different authority levels? What about tone differences?
  - v. Was anything different about how the people of authority took on/listened to a different perspective than those that were not in authority positions?
  - vi. Did the people in "inferior" positions easily back down? Explain.

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

- Do you think there is ever a situation in which we don't bring our own bias? Explain.
- Can there be a situation in which there are two right answers (consider the first images we looked at)?
- How important is it to try to see someone else's perspective before passing judgment on it?
- What role does authority and power play in extending a fair and balanced judgment?
- What role does authority and power play in our ability to challenge an authority figure's judgment?
- How can we strive to extend fair and balanced judgment to people of authority?
- When someone is adamant that something is "fact" but you, in your gut, know it is not, how does that feel?



- Does your approach to challenging “fact” change if the person asserting it is in a position of authority? Why or why not?
- Do you judge a person more harshly if s/he is in an authority position and is “wrong”? Why or why not?
- In what ways can we be very critical of someone else’s opinion or viewpoint but still offer a fair and balanced rebuttal?
- Do we have the right to question, judge or challenge authority figures? Do you have a responsibility to do so?
- Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, instructs us to judge all people favorably, or *“I’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**

- Consider a time when you felt that wrong information was being presented as fact. Did you stand up to correct the information? Why or why not? Was the person asserting that fact from a position of authority? Does that change anything?
- How does it feel when someone you genuinely like has a perspective you adamantly disagree with?
- How might we utilize someone else’s perspective in developing a fair and balanced judgment of a situation?
- 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?