
Can We Talk About Israel? (Revised & Updated): A Guide for the Curious, Confused, and Conflicted

Daniel Sokatch

A J Street Book Club Companion for Friends, Family & Community

How to use this guide

This reading companion is for anyone who wants to read the following book and turn that reading into a real conversation — with a group of friends, a J Street chapter group, or a synagogue community.

You don't need to be an expert on Israel, Jewish history, or politics. You just need to be willing to read and to talk.

A few suggestions for a good book club conversation:

Start with what stayed with you — a passage, an idea, a moment that stuck.

Make space for disagreement — the best conversations don't end in consensus.

Connect the book to your own life — not just to the news.

You don't have to finish the book to have a meaningful conversation.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Originally published before October 7, this revised edition from the CEO of the New Israel Fund is updated for the current moment — offering a fair, comprehensive, and accessible guide to the history, politics, and emotions surrounding Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sokatch writes for the genuinely curious and conflicted reader, presenting competing narratives honestly rather than arguing for any single position. It is widely used as a starting point for difficult conversations in synagogues, Jewish organizations, and classrooms.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before reading this book, how would you have described your own relationship to Israel — engaged, conflicted, exhausted, committed, alienated? Did the book shift anything?
 2. Sokatch presents the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as genuinely complex, with real narratives on multiple sides. Did you find that framing helpful or frustrating? Is there a narrative in the book you hadn't fully considered before?
 3. The title asks: can we talk about Israel? In your own circles — family, friends, community — what makes that conversation so difficult? What would make it easier?
 4. Has October 7 and the war that followed changed your relationship to Israel, Zionism, or the Jewish community? If so, how? If not, why not?
 5. What would you want someone who completely disagrees with your views on Israel to understand about where you're coming from?
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TO GO DEEPER

Consider bringing one of these prompts to close your conversation:

- What is one thing from this book you want to remember a year from now?
 - Did anything in this book make you want to take action — in your community, your relationships, or your own life?
 - What question does this book leave you with that it doesn't answer?
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