

## Israel Advocacy Group

This week a group of amazing 8th graders came together to launch our brand new Israel Advocacy Group! Each week the group will meet to discuss the land of Israel, the people living there and some of the controversies and conflicts that the country has faced. Our first meeting centered around the idea of the Jewish people as indigenous to the land of Israel. As we know many people claim that Israel has “colonized” the land. We aimed to uncover who really was there first and what proof exists.

After discussing the ideas of colonization and indigenous people the students were asked what can we look for to figure out who has claim to any land. They quickly were able to answer: historical texts, language, and artifacts. Together we looked at examples of all three.

For language, each student was given a print out of a key to help them decode Ancient Hebrew. They then looked at an artifact written with those symbols. In seconds, students were able to read the artifact. “It says King of Israel”, one student correctly surmised. We took a minute to marvel at that idea. That students living thousands of years after the stone was engraved were able to read it because they still spoke the same language and understood the meaning.

We then spoke about historical texts. We can use the Torah as a historical text for Judaism. We also discussed the importance of using other texts, outside of the Torah. We first looked at texts from the Torah. We spoke about the first Jewish person and when and where he lived. We also touched on the dates of Judaism’s beginning in comparison to other religions.

We then split into groups; each group was responsible to study one category. One group put together sources from the Torah. These sources needed to illustrate where the Jews lived, when they had sovereignty over the land, and what the borders were. Another group investigated texts and artifacts that were not from Jewish sources. We looked at other sources from civilizations that interacted with ancient Jews and primary sources from that time. One artifact we studied was the Menashe Steele created by the Moab people. In it there is a clear description of the King of Moab fighting with the Israelites. Another group of students looked for artifacts and archeology that showed Jewish culture in ancient Israel. The last group investigated artifacts of language, including coins with Hebrew letters. Amazingly, students were able to read these words written in ancient Hebrew. As the groups worked they added their sources, including dates and significance to a form. Once the groups are done with their investigation, we will collaborate to create a timeline that has proof of the Jewish people’s long standing connection with the land. It was unbelievable watching these students uncover history, right before their eyes. We ended our first session with some blue and white Rita’s ices. We are looking forward to our weekly meetings which will cover a wide range of topics.