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Subject: Some rambling thoughts

Posted by [Mark](#) on Thu, 26 Jan 2012 17:25:13 GMT

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Someone asked the question on Lonely planet how to visit Israel and have a polite political conversation. Here are some of the responses. Not trying to offend anyone but I just thought it was kind of funny.

Here was the question

My understanding is that Israel is an intensely political country and that it is often quite difficult to divorce political discussion from daily life. It is part and parcel of it. As well, as Israel has what some might call a disproportionate place in world affairs, it might not be difficult for a visitor to be drawn into a discussion of politics. Does anyone have any tried and proven pointers on the art and etiquette of participating in civil political discussions in Israel? (Operative word civil) Is there anything a well-intentioned but politically aware visitor should be aware of and avoid so as not to give offence?

Some responses

Using "etiquette" and "Israel" in the same sentence is an oxymoron.

There's a saying among Jerusalem-based diplomats which says: "The first month you'll ask Israelis what they think of the conflict, the second month you'll ask Palestinians what they think of the conflict, the third month on you'll stop asking and you'll get drunk."

There is another saying, that if you visit Israel for a week, you go home and write a book about it. If you go for a month, you write a magazine article. If you go for a year, you don't write anything because you no longer know what to write...

not only do etiquette and israel not belong in the same sentence, i have rarely heard here (in almost 40 years) a civil political discussion! as mentioned, everyone here has very passionate political opinions and is very eager to express them. very very few are willing to engage in a "discussion" , a word that implies dialogue, some sort of give and take, listen and respond. a political "discussion" might be described as more than one israeli offering his/her opinions as holy truth very loudly! and often simultaneously.

Well put. I feel that your advice about week, month, year is true about life as well. The more I learn, the more I realise that I don't know anything. Or as Socrates said, the only thing I know is that I don't know anything.