



IN YOUR HOME

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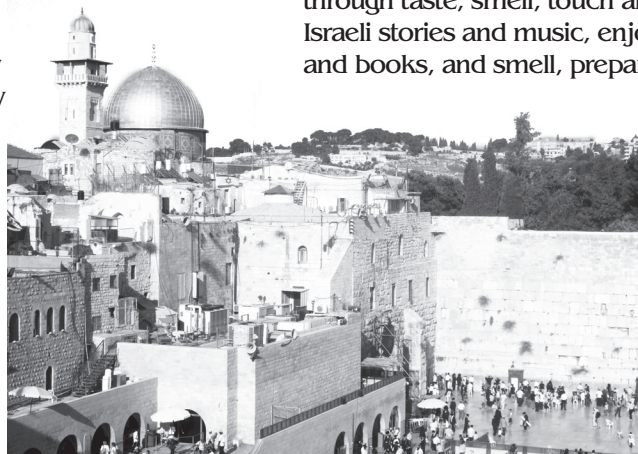
Israel Independence Day *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* •

MAY, 2011 • *IYAR*, 5771

Shalom Parents,

"If you will it, it is no dream." The words of Theodor Herzl express the reality of the existence of Israel today. Tracing our roots to *Eretz Yisrael* (The Land of Israel) back nearly 4,000 years, we know that the Israelites settled on the land in the 13th century BCE, first as roving shepherds and later as craftsmen and farmers. In 586 BCE, following the Babylonian destruction of the Temple, most of the Jewish population was deported to Babylonia, beginning the 2,000 year Jewish Diaspora. Over centuries since that time, Jewish prayers and poetry expressed national yearning to return to The Homeland, while a smaller number of Jewish never left it.

Modern-day Jewish settlers established settlements in the 1880's. With the organization of the First Zionist Congress by Theodor Herzl in 1897, Zionism gained strength. Many who had previously expressed Zionist ideals through prayers, essays and poetry, were ready to realize the nationalistic goals of the Jewish people through *aliyah* (immigration to Israel). Within a relatively short period of time, these early modern settlers established new agricultural settlements, industry and economic and social institutions, improving the lives of many. Most remarkably, Hebrew was restored as the spoken national language. Years of strife, hardship and war did not deter the in-gathering of Jews from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



On May 14, 1948, Israel was established against great odds. Immediately afterwards, anti-Israel Arab forces invaded the newly formed state on all fronts. In a desperate and costly war, Israel eventually repelled attacking armies and thereafter began to develop a safe and secure homeland. Israel today is home to Jews, Christians, Muslims and others from a variety of backgrounds.

Israel, a source of pride for Jews throughout the Diaspora has made great strides educationally, economically and culturally. Many American Jews express ties with Israel by participating in community-wide *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* celebrations, by reading about and visiting Israel, by buying Israeli products and in many other ways.

Strong attachments to Israel can be fostered in early childhood by introducing it through the learning media most appropriate for young children; the senses. Our festivals (including rituals, stories and food) all relate to Israel in some way. Youngsters can enjoy products from Israel through taste, smell, touch and sight. They can listen to Israeli stories and music, enjoy Israeli posters, photographs and books, and smell, prepare and taste Israeli foods.

This year's Israel Independence Day celebration falls on May 10, 2011. Young children and their families can participate with other Jews throughout the world as they celebrate *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*.

HAVING FUN AT HOME

A YOM HA'ATZMAUT SEDER

It's fun to celebrate *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* with a *seder* (just as we do for Passover and *Tu B'Shevat*), by highlighting important symbols of the holiday and creating a fun family environment.

When Do You Do It?

Prepare a meal to serve at any time during the day of the Israel Independence Day celebration.

What Do You Need?

- Decorate the dinner table with Israeli flowers (either Israeli grown flowers found in some local grocery stores or blue and white locally grown ones), Israeli flags, blue and white tablecloth and napkins (the colors of the Israeli flag) and any other items that remind you of Israel.
- Give each participant a small glass of milk and a small dish of honey.
- Prepare a *seder* plate for the table with foods representing the 7 species of Israel (7 food products for which Israel has been known since biblical times): olives, dates, figs, wheat (represented by bread), barley (represented by cereal), grapes, pomegranates (or pomegranate juice). Make sure there is enough of each of the 7 species so that each family member can sample all of them.
- Prepare another plate for the table with foods produced in modern Israel; such as, tomatoes, oranges, persimmons, chocolates, wine, Bamba (Israeli chips), Bazooka bubblegum, chumus, tahina, falafel, jams, nuts, Israeli olives and pickles.
- Serve a meal that everyone enjoys eating, including items produced in Israel.



What Do You Do?

- Start by drinking the milk and tasting the honey. Discuss the reason for doing this (The Land of Israel is referred to as "a land flowing with milk and honey" in the *Torah*, Numbers XIV:8), Ask: What does this mean?
- Eat the meal, occasionally tasting the items from the *seder* plate placed in the middle of the table. Discuss the relationship of each of the items to Israel.
- Take turns going around the table with each family member:
 1. suggesting a song of Israel for all to sing.
 2. saying something she/he knows about Israel.
 3. saying the name of a place in Israel.
 4. saying a word or expression in Hebrew.

Make An Israeli Flag

Materials

- one large rectangular-shaped sheet of white paper
- blue paper cut into two strips and two triangles
- scissors
- glue
- a long plastic straw or wooden dowel (can be purchased in a hardware store)
- masking or scotch tape
- one large paper cup



With your child: Place the white paper horizontally on a table-top. Glue two blue triangles (one on top of the other forming a Star of David) onto the middle of the white paper. Glue one blue strip onto the white paper above and another below the Star of David. You've made a flag. After the glue has dried, tape the flag to the plastic straw or dowel. Turn the paper cup upside down. Poke a hole in the bottom of the cup with the point of the scissors. Place the stick of the flag in the hole and you've made a centerpiece for your dinner table.

Create An Israel Museum

Materials*

- A small table
- Blue and white ribbons
- Photos of familiar people
- Postcards, stamps and maps from Israel
- Hebrew books and newspapers
- Children's books about Israel
- Stickers with pictures of items from Israel
- Israeli products (wine, jams, soups, pickles, olives, etc.)
- Israeli art and ritual objects



**Can be purchased from Jewish book or gift stores, kosher markets and some ordinary food stores or borrowed from synagogue libraries. Tree certificates from the Jewish National Fund*
For more information contact: www.jnftrees.com or phone 1-800-542-8733.

With your child: Gather together as many items that come from Israel, or that make you think of Israel as possible. Place them on a small table that can serve as the "Israel Museum." Decorate the table with blue and white ribbons. Ask her to give family members a "tour" of the "museum," describing each item.

BOOK & MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

Let's Visit Israel by J. Groner, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 2004. This board book with few and simple words and delightful illustrations, presents a tourist's impression of Israel. Two and 3 year olds love it.

A Ticket To Israel by M.S. Gresko, Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 2000. Through photos and well-organized and interesting topics, readers learn about Israel in this beautiful book for 5 to 7 year olds.

It's Israel's Birthday by E. Dietrick, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 2008. Three to 5 year olds enjoy learning of the children in a nursery school class who pretend to take a trip to Israel. Engaging photographs and simple explanations present the children's experiences on the (pretend) flight as well as in (pretend) Israel.

The Never-Ending Greenness by N. Waldman, Morrow Junior Books, 1997. The story is told of living in Vilna during World War II, surviving the War, relocating to Israel, and planting trees there. Five to 7 year olds learn about the importance of trees to Israel's people.

Snow in Jerusalem by D.da Costa, Albert Whitman & Company, 2001. This beautifully illustrated story tells of two young Jerusalem boys, one a Jew and the other an Arab, who meet accidentally and become friends. Four to 7 year olds enjoy it.

Sammy Spider's First Trip To Israel by S. A. Rouss, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., Minneapolis, MN, 2002. We accompany Sammy the Spider as he takes an exciting trip to Israel. Three to 6 year old children love the ideas and illustrations in this book.

Colors of Israel by L. M. Grossman, Carolrhoda Books, Inc., Minneapolis, MN, 2002. Five to ten year olds explore the different colors, presented in Hebrew, English and Arabic, found in Israel's culture, landscape and history as they enjoy this book's lovely illustrations.

Shalom Chaver; Goodbye Friend by B. Sofer, Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., Rockville, MD, 1996. This photo-



essay, dedicated to the memory of the late Yitzchak Rabin, Israel's assassinated Prime Minister, is sensitively and informatively presented and is perfect for 5 to 10 year olds.

Come Let Us Be Joyful: The Story of Hava Nagila by F. Manushkin, UAHC Press, NY, 2000. The story of Moshe Nathanson, the boy from Jerusalem who helped craft the words to one of Israel's most joyous songs, is presented along with the musical score in this exquisitely illustrated book, appropriate for 5 to 10 year olds.

Israel: Country Explorers by M. Gresko, Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. This geography book for 7 to 10 year olds features beautiful photographs, and informative, easy to read text, as well as maps and a "Fast Facts" section.

Zvuvi's Israel by T. Lehman-Wilzig & K. Topaz, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2009. Zvuvi, (meaning "fly" in Hebrew) is a fly! He and his cousin Zahava buzz all around Israel, touring interesting places. This excellent introduction to many wonderful Israeli attractions is exciting to 6 to 10 year olds.

My Cousin Tamar Lives In Israel by M. Shapiro Abraham, URL Press, 2007. A young boy compares his life in North America with his cousin's life in Jerusalem. Three to 6 year olds love this book.

Shalom Israel: A Musical Companion to My Cousin Tamar Lives In Israel is a delightful collection of Jewish holiday songs for 3 to 6 year olds.

CD:

Shalom Sesame is an adaptation of Sesame Street, the children's television show. Produced first in 1986 and again in 1990 for public television stations in the United States, it introduced Israel and Judaism to children. It has been produced again in twelve episodes, and made available since the fall of 2010.

WEB SITE:

www.embassyofIsrael.org/kids/index.html

CREATING CONNECTIONS

Children are in need of role models, and they find them in all areas close at hand (mass media, family, friends and teachers). They need to develop a sense of who they are, and to which group they belong. Awareness of their personal, family and group identities, established at an early age, gives them the security needed for their personal development. Research has shown that children want to be like positive role-models.

Israel provides Diaspora Jews with many positive examples for living a complete and fulfilled Jewish life. Israeli Jews express pride in living a Jewish life in

a Jewish country, while Diaspora Jews generally look to Israel with pride for its accomplishments and leadership.

Diaspora Jewish adults express their positive feelings for Israel in many ways; through attendance at community events, by inclusion of Israeli objects (photos, books, ritual objects, art, etc.) at home and in school and with visits to Israel. Young children are fully aware of the feelings of adults in their lives. The love and respect their Jewish role-models present strengthens children's positive Jewish identity. They feel the specialness of having a (second) homeland just as their parents do.

THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT ISRAEL

- *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day) is the birthday of Israel, just as July 4th is the birthday of the United States.
- Israel's blue and white flag with a Star of David in the center, is modeled on the *tallit* (prayer shawl).
- Eliezer Ben Yehuda revived the Hebrew language when he immigrated to Palestine (as Israel was called at that time) from Lithuania in 1881. Thereafter, Hebrew became a spoken language in everyday life after many centuries of its use primarily in prayers and literature.
- Israel is an exporter of a variety of products in areas of technology, medicine, textiles, and agriculture.
- Israel's great cultural diversity is expressed through varied music, food and historical artifacts.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT ISRAEL

With your child:

- Spend time in Jewish bookstores and gift shops, handling and admiring products from Israel.
- Make an effort to purchase Israeli produced items whenever possible. Display those items in your home, and particularly on your Israel *seder* table.
- Purchase or prepare a meal with foods produced in Israel.
- Learn some Hebrew words with her. If she is learning Hebrew in school, encourage her to teach it to you. Then have fun using the words together.
- Play and sing Israeli music; at home and in the car.
- Gather together photos, pictures, books and posters from Israel and discuss them.
- Purchase and display a map of Israel. Place a marker (pin, or sticker) on it showing a place that someone you know has

visited. Materials may be borrowed from public or synagogue libraries or purchased from a Jewish bookstore.

- Make an Israeli flag and use it as a centerpiece for your dinner table.
- Point out the colors of the Israeli flag, the fact that Hebrew is the language of most Israelis and that we can find lots of items at home that come from Israel or remind us of Israel.
- Play the game: "How many things can we find that remind us of Israel?" Walk around your house together and place a sticker on each item that makes you think of Israel. Ask another family member to locate those items.

