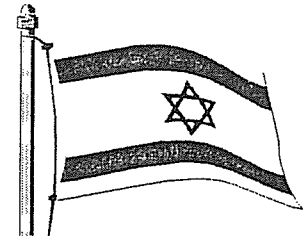


## Yom Ha'atzmaut

Dear Families,






Israel's birthday, known in Hebrew as *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, is celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the Hebrew month of *Iyar*, usually in late April or May.



Since the destruction of The Temple in the year 70 CE and the subsequent dispersion of the Jewish people from its small crest of land on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea, Jews have dreamt of a return to the land of their own. Momentum increased in the 1800's for at least two reasons: the nationalist movements from other countries prodded Jewish thoughts of nationalism (which became known as Zionism), and increased anti-Semitism created a push to leave countries that did not fully feel like "home." Israel officially became a nation when David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister, read the Proclamation of Independence at the Tel-Aviv Museum on the 14th of May, 1948.

Since *Yom Ha'atzmaut* is a modern holiday, there are no restrictions to be followed, or *mitzvot* specified. In Israel, *Yom Ha'atzmaut* is a national holiday during which all businesses and schools are closed. It is celebrated throughout the country by participating in parades, throwing parties, hiking or barbecuing, by wearing copious amounts of blue and white, waving the Israeli flag, and by bopping others on the head with silly, noisy plastic hammers. Jews around the world join in the celebration with local events that often include speeches, dancing, singing, and of course, food.

### THINGS YOU CAN DO AS A FAMILY

-  Attend the community's *Yom Ha'atzmaut* celebration.
-  Think "blue and white!" [These are Israel's colors.] Make a cake with white icing and blue decorations (hmm, or the opposite combination), eat blueberries and bananas, blue and white striped gelatin dessert, blue and white jelly beans, etc.
-  Eat foods we associate with Israel (pita, hummos, falafel, citrus fruits, dates, figs, etc.)
-  Children ages four and older would enjoy the interactive site created by the Embassy of Israel, though they will need an adult to read the words. Go to [http://www.embassyofisrael.org/kids/home\\_page.html](http://www.embassyofisrael.org/kids/home_page.html). Check out the section on Symbols, especially.
-  With your child(ren), look around your house for items made in Israel. You may wish to look at the food in your kitchen, ritual objects, even clothes. Using your "finds" to spark questions or conversations and talk about Israel as a special place to live. For example, if you have sandals from Israel, ask your children about the kind of weather in which one wears sandals, and then connect that to Israel's warm climate and the lifestyle there. [Also, it may be possible to find a picture of a Biblical character wearing sandals in a children's Bible, thus connecting Jewish history to Israeli sandals of today.]



The founders of Israel based the Israeli flag on a very well known Jewish ritual item, the *tallit*.<sup>\*</sup> Included on the white flag are two blue stripes and a Star of David. Point out the Israeli flag at various locations around town (in front of the JCC, in your synagogue, etc.), or see if your child(ren) can identify the flag without help.

<sup>\*</sup>A *tallit* is a shawl worn by Jewish men and some women during prayer. It often has stripes down the side (like the blue stripes of the Israeli flag) and is adorned with fringes on each end tied in knots that symbolically represent each of the 613 *mitzvot*, or commandments.



Israel not only needs emotional support, but economic, as well. Consider buying items made in Israel from:

- a Jewish bookstore
- local grocery stores with a substantial *kosher* section
- the Internet (a Google search will offer a number of shopping sites)



With your children, view pictures of Israel by visiting <http://www.goisrael.com/> [Click on the Photo Gallery on the left side of the page to get a large number of photo collections; young children may enjoy the People segment the best, though feel free to click on the other options as well.]

For additional background information, family activities, and holiday recipes, see:  
<http://www.jccathisnewmonth.org> (click on Iyar)

or

<http://uahc.org/educate/holidayhappenings/haatzmaut03.pdf>