

Yom HaAtzma'ut

Guiding question:

What is the Israel you dream of seeing? How do you help make that Israel come about?

This can be taught as one lesson of approximately 45 minutes, two lessons of that length, or a combined lesson for a double period.

Version 1: Single Period

Intro: Prophets	7 min
Megillat HaAtzma'ut	5 min (add more time for vocabulary exercise)
Visions brainstorm	10 min (leave time; this is the core of the lesson)
How America helps	5 min
Wrap-up	10+ min, depending on what activity you choose; if appropriate for your setting, send home for homework

Version 2:

Intro: Prophets	7 min
Megillat HaAtzma'ut	5 min (add more time for vocabulary exercise)
Visions brainstorm	10 min (leave time; this is the core of the lesson)
Israeli dreams— initial reading	10 min

Break here if doing two separate sessions

Israeli dreams—sharing	10+ min
How America helps	5 min
Wrap-up	10+ min; if appropriate for your setting, send home for homework

Materials:

Copies of family portraits

Target age:

5th grade, +/- two years

To adapt for younger students:

- A single, shorter block of time is sufficient.
- Focus on 1-2 family portraits. The Abu Hamad family is probably not a good choice; the youngest kid is 13, so young students may not relate to him. Don't be afraid to try the Wami family; it's ok to be vague about the circumstances of their arrival in Israel, the kids are a good age, and the impact could be great. (Try unpacking the fact that Hillary's best friends are named Yuvi—likely a Jewish Israeli—and Hassan, a Palestinian.) Show the pictures as well.
- Ask age-appropriate questions to get the students noticing aspects of the story and engaged in it. Then ask students what wishes they have for these children.

1. Introduction

Start by singing (or, if need be, playing a recording of) a song with lyrics from the prophets that the kids know. Easiest would be “Lo Yisa Goy,” “Lo yare’u ve-lo yash’chitu,” etc. (These two are from Micah chapter 4.) Ask students if they know what the song means and where its words come from; explain as necessary.

Ask what a prophet is (a person whom God speaks to) and what prophets they can name. Ask what they think it means for a prophet to have a vision.

2. Megillat HaAtzmaut

Share this quote from the Israeli Declaration of Independence, in English (and Hebrew where appropriate):

THE STATE OF ISRAEL...will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged [envisioned] by the prophets of Israel.

מדינת ישראל...תהא מושתתת על יסודות החירות, הצדק
והשלום לאור חזונם של נביאי ישראל...

Side-note: for classrooms where Hebrew vocabulary building/reinforcing is important, you can choose to focus on one or more of the following:

מדינה
יסוד
חירות
צדק
שלום
חזון
נביא

Ask students what they think this means, “as envisaged by the prophets of Israel”? Is a vision something that is already true? For analogy, ask students what great modern visions they can think of. Hopefully someone comes up with MLK, “I have a dream!”

What’s the students’ vision for the State of Israel?

After securing a good brainstorm list, move on to part 3 or skip it and go to 4, depending on time constraints.

3. Israeli dreams for Israel

We’re going to “meet” some Israeli kids who were profiled by the newspaper Haaretz. As we get to know them, think about what their dream for Israel might be. How is it the same or different from yours?

Options for how to handle this next part:

- Break into groups; each group gets a profile; they read it on their own.
 - Groups can jigsaw to teach each other about the person they read about, or can make presentations to the rest of the class introducing their new friends.
- Assign each chavruta pair a profile to read, then have a class discussion where pairs share what they learned and the dreams they think their family has.
- Read the profiles together as a whole class.
- Have someone (yourself, another teacher, a volunteer) act out the role of some of the Israeli kids, based on the profiles. Kids can ask the “Israeli” questions.
- Glue each profile in the center of a larger sheet of paper. Give students pens or markers and invite them to walk around the room, reading the different profiles, highlighting/circling phrases that they think are important, and jotting down questions and ideas, as well as dreams they think these children would have for Israel.
- It’s preferable for students to have exposure to multiple families.
- If you need to stop in the middle here, just tell students they’ll pick up where they were next class.

End this section by sharing ideas about how the Israeli kids’ dreams are similar to and different from our dreams.

4. What do we, as American Jews, do to help create the Israel we dream of seeing? Group brainstorm. (Visit Israel, send tzedakah, vote for American politicians we think will be good for Israel, speak out to criticize and/or defend Israel...)

5. Suggestions for Wrap-up/Synthesis activities

- a. Take the song you opened the lesson with and invite students to write new lyrics to it (in English) that express their vision for Israel, or the vision of one of the Israeli kids they learned about. You can do this even if you’ve skipped the “Israeli dreams” section of the lesson.
- b. Tell the students that the profiles they read all date from 2010 and 2011. That means the kids are now several years older. Ask them to pick one kid they were particularly interested in and write a diary entry or a letter from that kid’s perspective now, imagining how his/her life and dreams have changed in the last number of years.



The Abu Hamad family lives in a huge stone house—three floors and many balconies—near Tel Arad, east of Be’er Sheva. Most people in the village are well-off. They are Palestinian citizens of Israel. The family has eight kids; the youngest two are Haitham (15) and Amir (13).

Haitham is going into 10th grade at a school for the gifted in Be’er Sheva; his report card is full of 100’s. His older sister Amal says he “failed” chemistry because he only got a 99. Amir, “The prince,” finished sixth grade in the village and will go to middle school in Kseifa or Be’er Sheva. He gets up at 5:30 every day and takes the family flock (30 sheep) out to graze (“200 meters from the house”). Haitham gets up last at 7:30, drinks instant coffee, takes a sandwich that his mother prepared (“with meat or hummus”) and heads out.

Their dad is a pastry chef and runs a small desert tourism business. The older kids all have jobs too.

What are their dreams? Haitham—“to be a doctor”; Amir— “to be a millionaire, a model, and a shepherd.”

What do they think about peace? Dad says, “Everyone knows what the solution is: two states for two peoples.” Sister Amal, though, says, “I fantasize about one state for two peoples with Jerusalem as the capital.”

How happy are they (on a scale of 1-10)? Amir - 9; Haitham – 20.



Ya'arit Kana and her six-year-old daughter Avishag Ram live in a tiny house at the edge of Ya'arit's parents' property, on a moshav near the Gaza Strip. They've lived there since Ya'arit got divorced about six years ago. They are Jewish; Ya'arit says, "I adore God," and her prayers are granted, "but with a slight delay."

Avishag goes to Kindergarten on the moshav. Her mother brings her there between 7:30 and 11:00—"it's flexible," Ya'arit says—and her grandparents pick her up at 3:30. Her mom gets home by 6:00 from her many jobs so they can eat dinner together. Ya'arit works as a teacher, director, singer, broadcaster, clown, emcee, lyricist and composer. Avishag likes fitness and nature.

What do they think of peace? Ya'arit says, "I am in favor of two states, but not of giving in - there are tough types there."

How happy are they (on a scale of 1-10)? Ya'arit - 8; Avishag - 7.



The Sayfan Altman family lives in a three-story home in Ramat HaSharon, just north of Tel Aviv. Dad is an electronics engineer; Mom owns her own company designing websites, logos, and computer programs. May and Ilai (10 and 6) go to the same school, a ten minute walk from home. May takes karate after school and tries to surf (a sport her father loves); Ilai prefers the playground to organized after-school activities.

Liam (2 years old) goes to daycare across the street from their house. It costs 2,900 shekels per month, an amount Mom says is “definitely oppressive.” Even though they own their home, all the expenses do add up.

They are Jewish, though they don’t believe in God; Ilai adds, “Neither do I, but in kindergarten they said there is one.” When Mom and Dad got married, they wrote their own ketubah with the help of a Reform rabbi. They argued over whether to recite “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem” as in the traditional ceremony. (“In the end I said it, in order not to upset my parents too much.” - Dad)

What do they think about Israel’s future? “I am connected to the language here,” Mom says. She doesn’t think there will ever be a peace agreement. Dad: “In the end there will be a state of all its citizens.”

How happy are they (on a scale of 1-10)? Dad - 8; Mom - 9; May - 7; Ilai - 10.



The Wami family left Sudan in 2004 because it became too dangerous for them. They lived in Cairo, Egypt for four years, but when life became unsafe there too, they came to Israel. The family is Christian and speaks Arabic at home, though the kids have already mastered Hebrew.

They rent a small apartment in Tel Aviv. It has a kitchen, bathroom, and two rooms. The parents sleep in one; the other is divided between the kids' room and the living room. Dad was a teacher in Sudan but now works cleaning a restaurant; Mom works as a housekeeper at a hotel.

Thomas is in sixth grade and says he has friends – and problems with Hebrew literature class. After school, he plays on a soccer team. Lavina is in fourth grade and likes English and Hebrew; after school, she attends a crafts group. Hillary is in first grade; his best friends are Yuvi and Hassan. He recently decided he wants to be a doctor after getting stitches in his forehead.

How do they feel about being in Israel? Dad says, “The Israelis are good people. If I compare it to Egypt, it is altogether different here.” What drives him crazy is the uncertainty, he adds: “If I get Israeli citizenship I will send the children to the army, like all the Israelis.”

What are their dreams? Dad says, “One day, when our country will be good, we will return to it, and if not, I want to get a permit and stay here.” He also wishes he had a car, “but the Sudanese do not drive in Israel.” Mom says, “All I want is for the government to let us stay. We do not know what will happen tomorrow.”

How happy are they (on a scale of 1-10)? Dad—5; Mom—3.