



Resources for Teaching about Israel with Care, Love and Nuance

Framing

Teaching about Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories can be challenging. How do we navigate such a sensitive and complex topic, while ensuring we hold space for the diverse emotions this issue evokes? For many, these conversations touch deeply on personal, political, and historical layers.

This resource has been created ahead of Yom HaAtzma'ut 2025 but is designed to be adaptable for year-round use, offering educational tools, programs, and texts that support ongoing learning within your community.

T'ruah is here to offer resources to help you — our clergy — as well as your communities meet this moment. This guide includes three different text source sheets with guiding questions and suggested programs related to each question. We hope it helps you run programs and learning opportunities that enable your community to engage with the many questions that come to the surface when discussing Israel, deepen their relationship to the land, and add nuance to their understanding of Israel. The activities are meant to be adapted for different age groups. You are the expert on your community. Feel free to adapt these resources to meet your community's needs. Yom HaAtzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, marks the establishment of Jewish sovereignty after nearly 2,000 years of exile and serves as a symbol of refuge for Jews fleeing persecution.

For many Jews, this day holds particular significance in the wake of the October 7 terror attacks, the year-and-a-half-long struggle to bring home the hostages, and the mounting global rise of antisemitism, which has made Jewish safety feel especially tenuous. Yet, it is also crucial to remember that the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 resulted in the displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians during the ensuing war. This historical reality continues to reverberate, as the ongoing violence in Gaza has led to tens of thousands of deaths and nearly two million displaced people, while the Israeli government's policies of annexation and expulsion persist in the West Bank.

This year, Yom HaAtzma'ut may feel especially fraught, as it falls amidst the ongoing war, Prime Minister Netanyahu's assault on Israeli democracy, and the looming threat of full annexation of the West Bank. Just as July Fourth or Canada Day in the U.S. and Canada offer a chance for both celebration and reflection, Yom HaAtzma'ut is a day that intertwines joy, pain, longing, and hope. By creating space for deep engagement with the complexities of Israel's history and its future, we renew our commitment to building a future grounded in empathy, understanding, and shared responsibility for all peoples.

Before You Start

Do Your Own Reflecting: How are you feeling about Yom HaAtzma'ut this year? What personal questions are alive for you? If you were to create your own Yom HaAtzma'ut experience, what would that look like? This will help you model reflection for your community and create an authentic space for shared learning.

Pick a Guiding Question: There's so much that we can teach about and explore ahead of Yom HaAtzma'ut this year, but it is important to limit the scope so you don't overwhelm your community. Select one question that will guide your learning experience. It might be a question about the meaning of independence, the complexity of the day, or how to create a more just future. Having a central question will focus your approach and give your community a clear framework. Once you've picked your guiding question, ask yourself: What are three clear learnings or ideas you want your community to understand or have explored by the end of Yom HaAtzma'ut?

Know Your Community: Since you are the expert on your own community, reflect on where your community is emotionally and intellectually. What can they hear? What are they ready to engage with? Tailor the resources and questions to your community's specific needs and readiness. You can offer multiple types of programs to meet different people's needs. How can a nuanced program fit into the types of program your community is already used to having?

Adjust for Different Age Groups: Who is your audience? What can they hold and understand developmentally or emotionally? If you are teaching kids, how can the content you teach about Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories be a tool to foster critical thinking skills rather than a particular agenda? How can your content be the next step on the learning journey of people in your community?

Align with Your Values: Consider your community's core values and how this learning can resonate with them. Whether it's a commitment to justice, compassion, or understanding, find ways to incorporate those values into the conversation.

Integrate Multiple Narratives: If you plan to talk about the history of Israel, use multiple narratives. There are many resources that provide dual narrative history and are split by particular historical moments. Find the moments that you would like to focus on and read them yourself. Explore what is meaningful to you and what makes you uncomfortable. Use that as the base of the learning with your community.

Two books we recommend are:

- ["Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine"](#) published by Peace Research Institute in the Middle East
- ["Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue"](#) edited by Paul Scham, Walid Salem and Benjamin Pogrund.

The Learning Doesn't Have to End Here: The learning doesn't have to begin or end on Yom HaAtzma'ut. This can be the beginning (or next step) of a larger conversation and experience in your community. How can this Yom HaAtzma'ut lay the foundation for larger community learning or conversation? Where do you want your community to be in one year? In two? What kind of learning needs to happen to help your community get there? Can you make a plan for the next touchpoint to continue these conversations?

Programs and Source Sheets

Below you will find a series of text sheets and suggested activities designed to engage your community around three core topics. Each source sheet includes a selection of Jewish texts, along with activities at the bottom of the source sheet that relate to the topic at hand. These resources are intentionally expansive, allowing you to choose the texts or ideas that resonate most with you and your community.

At the end of each sheet, you will find suggested activities that help bring the theme to life. We recognize that for some communities, text study is an essential tool, while for others, hands-on, experiential activities may be more effective.

Feel free to adapt these resources to suit the unique needs of your community, and to make them accessible to learners of all ages.

- [Spiritual Visions of "The Land"](#)
- [Jewish Peoplehood, Morality, and Israel](#)
- [Accessing Imagination to Dream of a Better Future](#)

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