

Yom HaAtzmaut Lesson Plans

Please reserve at least ONE lesson before Yom HaAtzmaut to read one part of *Megillat HaAtzmaut* with your class (as assigned below) and introduce concepts in the suggested scope and sequence so that students in 3rd through 8th grade are exposed to the various topics essential to understanding this foundational document on a deeper level.

Megillat HaAtzmaut learning focus by grade:

- **3rd Grade:** Connection to the land; Exile from the land; Prayers about the Land
- **4th Grade:** Zionism; Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust
- **5th Grade:** The British Mandate; The United Nations; David Ben-Gurion
- **6th Grade:** Freedom, Justice, and Peace; The Challenge of Equality
- **7th Grade:** Arab-Israeli Relations
- **8th Grade:** Exile and Redemption

Use this [slideshow](#) to accompany your lessons:

- **3rd Grade:** Slides 1 - 18
- **4th Grade:** Slides 19 - 29
- **5th Grade:** Slides 30 - 40
- **6th Grade:** Slides 41 - 51
- **7th Grade:** Slides 52 - 62
- **8th Grade:** Slides 63 - 70

THIRD GRADE:

Set Induction (Slides 1-2, 5 min): Today we are preparing for *Yom HaAtzmaut* by reading a part of Israel's Declaration of Independence - *Megillat HaAtzmaut*. We will read the entire *Megillah* ("the whole megillah" as they say) at our *tekes* (ceremony) on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. What is a "Declaration of Independence"? What do you think should be said in Israel's Declaration of Independence? Let's examine the *Megillah* directly now.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 4-12, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

*In the Land of Israel rose the Jewish People, **where their spiritual, religious and political identities were shaped.** Here they first attained sovereignty, created cultural values of national and universal significance, and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.*

בְּאֶרֶץ-יִשְׂרָאֵל קָם הָעָם הַיְהוּדִי בְּהַ עֲצָבָה דְּמוּתוֹ הַרוּחָנִית הַדְּתִית וְהַמְּדִינִית: בְּהַ חַיִּי קוֹמָמִיּוֹת מְמַלְכָתִית בְּהַ יֵצֵר נְכִסֵּי-תִרְבוּת לְאֻמִּים וְכָל-לְאֻנְשֵׁיהֶם וְהוֹרִישׁ לְעוֹלָם כָּל-אֶת-סֵפֶר הַסְּפָרִים הַנִּצְחִי:

How did the spiritual, religious, and political identity of the Jewish people develop in the Land of

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Israel? Pass out a copy of the map (**slide 6**). Review what students know about the *Avot and Imahot*, the Exodus, and sovereignty during the reign of the Kings (focusing on Saul, David, and Solomon, who built the Temple in Jerusalem). Ask students to find and label the following places on the map: Route of Avraham from Ur to Haran to Canaan; Egypt; Jerusalem. Review this information using **slides 7-10**.

How did the Jewish people have an impact on the rest of the world? (Slides 11-12) Discuss the role of the Jewish people as a “light unto the nations” (Isaiah 42:6).

Reading and Discussion (Slide 13-17, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

*After being forcibly **exiled** from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and **never ceased to pray** and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.*

לְאַחַר שֶׁהִגְלָה הָעָם מֵאֶרְצוֹ בְּכַח הַזְרֹעַ שָׁמַר לָהּ אֱמוּנִים בְּכָל אֶרְצוֹת פְּזוּרָיו:
וְלֹא-חָדַל מִתְפִּילָה וּמִתְקוּנָה לְשׁוּב לְאֶרְצוֹ וּלְחַדֵּשׁ בְּתוֹכָהּ אֶת-חֲרוּתוֹ הַמְּדִינִית:

When were the Jewish people exiled from the Land of Israel? (Slide 14-15) Explain that after hundreds of years of living in the Land of Israel the Jews were finally conquered and exiled in 70 CE by the Romans. Over the years, Jews have come to live in countries all over the world.

What are some of the prayers that speak about the Land of Israel? (Slides 16-17) During the exile, prayer came to replace sacrifices at the Temple. The words of the prayers yearned for a return to the connection with God in the Land and a return of centralized leadership, characterized by the monarchy of King David.

Conclusion (Slide 18, 5 min): Listen to the song and discuss the happiness of the melody, which matches the happiness of the imagined return to the Land of Israel in the words. Explain how the modern State of Israel was born in 1948 with great joy for the return to the Land after so many years of exile. We will celebrate the founding of the modern State of Israel on Yom HaAtzmaut. Happy birthday, Israel!

FOURTH GRADE:

Set Induction (Slides 19-20, 5 min): Today we are preparing for *Yom HaAtzmaut* by reading a part of Israel's Declaration of Independence - *Megillat HaAtzmaut*. We will read the entire *Megillah* ("the whole megillah" as they say) at our *tekes* (ceremony) on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. What is a "Declaration of Independence"? What do you think should be said in Israel's Declaration of Independence? Let's examine the *Megillah* directly now.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 22-25, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

In the year 5657 [by the Hebrew calendar] (1897), the First Zionist Congress met at the calling of the visionary of the Jewish State, Theodor Herzl, and proclaimed the right of the Jewish People to national rebirth in its land.

בשנת תרנ"ז (1897) נתכנס הקונגרס הציוני לקול קריאתו של הוגה חזון המדינה היהודית תיאודור הרצל והכריז על זכות העם היהודי לתקומה לאומית בארצו:

What do you know about Theodor Herzl? (Slide 23) Print out copies of **Slide 24** and have students fill it out as you read **Slide 25**. Make sure to discuss the bolded vocabulary words (assimilate, Alfred Dreyfus, anti-Semitism, exile, Zionism).

Reading and Discussion (Slide 26-28, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

The holocaust which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the "Jewish problem" of national homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Yisrael the Jewish State.

השואה שנתחוללה על-עם ישראל בזמן האחרון בה הכרעו לטבח מיליוני יהודים באירופה: הוכיחה מחדש בעליל את-ההכרח בפתרון בעלת העם היהודי מחסר המולדת והעצמאות על-ידי חידוש המדינה היהודית בארץ ישראל:

What do you know about the Holocaust? What could have been different if Israel was established before the Holocaust? (Slide 27) Discuss the difficulties of immigration (costs, paperwork, quotas, learning a new language or trade, leaving family, etc.). Many Jews who wanted to escape Europe during the Holocaust were unable to find a place to go or a way to get there. Today, Israel allows all Jews to immigrate according to the "Law of Return."

Conclusion (Slide 29, 5 min): What would Herzl think of Israel today? Watch this short video for some insights. Conclude by explaining how the modern State of Israel was created in 1948. We will celebrate the founding of the modern State of Israel on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. Happy birthday, Israel!

FIFTH GRADE:

Set Induction (Slides 30-31, 5 min): Today we are preparing for *Yom HaAtzmaut* by reading a part of Israel's Declaration of Independence - *Megillat HaAtzmaut*. We will read the entire *Megillah* ("the whole megillah" as they say) at our *tekes* (ceremony) on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. What is a "Declaration of Independence"? What do you think should be said in Israel's Declaration of Independence? Let's examine the *Megillah* directly now.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 33-35, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

*On the 29th November, 1947, the **United Nations** General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Yisrael.*

**בְּעֶשְׂרִים וְתִשְׁעָה בְּנוּבֶמְבֶּר אֶלֶף תְּשַׁע מֵאוֹת אַרְבָּעִים וְשֵׁבַע קִבְלָה עֲצַרְת הָאֲמוֹת
הַמְּאַחְדוֹת הַחִלְטָה הַמְּחִיבָת הַקְּמַת מְדִינָה יְהוּדִית בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל:**

What is the United Nations? (Slide 34-35) Explain the historic role of the United Nations in authorizing establishment of the State of Israel through the Partition Plan. Examine the maps of the Partition Plan and the subsequent Arab invasion and Israeli counterattacks.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 36-40, 15 min): (Read aloud to the class)

*This is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State. Accordingly we, **members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish Community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist Movement**, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Yisrael, to be known as the State of Israel.*

**זו זְכוּתוֹ הַטְּבֻעִית שֶׁל-הָעָם הַיְּהוּדִי לִהְיוֹת כְּכָל-עַם וְעַם עוֹמֵד בְּרִשּׁוֹת עַצְמוֹ בְּמְדִינָתוֹ
הָרְבוּבִית: לְפִיכֶן נִתְּכַנְּסוּ אֲנֵנוּ חֲבֵרֵי מוֹעֵצַת הָעָם נְצִיגֵי הַיְּשׁוּב הָעֵבְרִי וְהַתְּנוּעָה
הַצִּיּוֹנִית בְּיוֹם סִיּוֹם הַמְּנַדָּט הַבְּרִיטִי עַל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל: וּבְתִקְוָה זְכוּתֵנוּ הַטְּבֻעִית
וְהַיְּסוּדוֹרִית וְעַל-יְסוּד הַחִלְטָת עֲצַרְת הָאֲמוֹת הַמְּאַחְדוֹת אֲנֵנוּ מְכַרְזִים בְּזֹאת עַל
הַקְּמַת מְדִינָה יְהוּדִית בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל:**

Watch the short video "How the State of Israel was Born - Zionism in Animation." (Slide 37)
Who was David Ben Gurion? (Slide 38-40) Print out copies of the worksheet (Slide 39) to fill out as you watch the video (Slide 40) about Ben Gurion.

Conclusion: We will celebrate the founding of the modern State of Israel on Yom HaAtzmaut. Happy birthday, Israel!

SIXTH GRADE:

Set Induction (Slides 41-42, 5 min): Today we are preparing for *Yom HaAtzmaut* by reading a part of Israel's Declaration of Independence - *Megillat HaAtzmaut*. We will read the entire *Megillah* ("the whole megillah" as they say) at our *tekes* (ceremony) on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. What is a "Declaration of Independence"? What do you think should be said in Israel's Declaration of Independence? Let's examine the *Megillah* directly now.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 44, 5 min): (Read aloud to the class)

*The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the **Ingathering of the Exiles**; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on **freedom, justice and peace** as proclaimed by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure **complete equality** of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the community of nations.*

מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּהְיֶה פְתוּחָה לְעֵלְיָהּ יְהוּדִית וְלִקְבוּץ גּוֹלִיּוֹת תִּשְׁקַד עַל-פְּתוּחַ הָאָרֶץ לְטוֹבַת כָּל-תּוֹשְׁבֶיהָ: תִּהְיֶה מְשֻׁתָּת עַל יְסוּדוֹת הַחֲרוּת הַצְּדָק וְהַשְּׁלוֹם לְאֹר חֲזוֹנָם שֶׁל-נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: תִּקְיָם שׁוּיֹן זְכוּיֹת חֲבֵרָתִי וּמְדִינָה גְמוּר לְכָל אֲזַרְחֵיהָ בְּלִי הַבְּדֵל דָּת גָּזַע וְגֵמִין תִּבְטְיֵיחַ חֶפְשׁ דָּת מְצֻפֹן לְשׁוֹן חֲנוּךְ וְתִרְבוּת: אָנוּ קוֹרְאִים לְאַמּוֹת הַמְּאַחְדוֹת לְתַת יָד לְעַם הַיְהוּדִי בְּבִנְיַן מְדִינָתוֹ וְלִקְבֵּל אֶת-מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתוֹךְ מְשֻׁפַּחַת הָעַמִּים:

What important points are being made in this part of the Megillah? What questions does this part of the Megillah raise for you?

Activities (Slides 45 - 51, 20 min): Print out the worksheet (Slide 45) and fill it out while you watch the video "*Ben Gurion and the Mass Aliya Period*" (Slide 46). Discuss the ingathering of Jews from Europe (pre- and post-WWII), from Arab countries (especially post 1948) and more recent *aliyot* from the FSU and Ethiopia. Label areas of immigration and draw arrows to Israel. Discuss challenges that could arise from so many diverse people coming to live in a small land (social, economic, religious, etc.).

What did the prophets say about freedom, justice, and peace? (Slides 45-47) Print out the worksheet (Slide 46) and fill it out using the information provided (Slide 47). How does a Jewish and democratic state ensure these values to all its citizens? (Slide 50) Discuss the challenges of religion and demographics. Watch the short video "Facts about Israelis."

Conclusion: Israel is our homeland! We will celebrate the founding of the modern State of Israel on Yom HaAtzmaut. Happy birthday, Israel!

SEVENTH GRADE:

Set Induction (Slides 52-53, 5 min): Today we are preparing for *Yom HaAtzmaut* by reading a part of Israel's Declaration of Independence - *Megillat HaAtzmaut*. We will read the entire *Megillah* ("the whole megillah" as they say) at our *tekes* (ceremony) on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. What is a "Declaration of Independence"? What do you think should be said in Israel's Declaration of Independence? Let's examine the *Megillah* directly now.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 55, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

We appeal - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - **to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel** to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

אָנוּ | קוֹרְאִים גַּם בְּתוֹךְ הַתְּקֵפֶת הַדְּמִים הַנִּעְרָכֶת עֲלֵינוּ זֶה חֲדָשִׁים לְבְנֵי הָעַם הָעֲרָבִי
תּוֹשְׁבֵי מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׁמֵר עַל-שְׁלוֹם וְלִטֹּל חֵלְקָם בְּבִנְיַן הַמְּדִינָה: עַל-יְסוּד אֲזָרוֹת
מְלָאָה וְשׂוּהָ וְעַל-יְסוּד נְצִיגוֹת מִתְאִימָה בְּכָל-מוֹסְדוֹתֶיהָ הַזְּמַנִּיִּים וְהַקְּבוּעִים:

What do you know about the circumstances of Israel's War of Independence? (Review information about the British Mandate and Partition Plan - See slide 35.) In 1948, approximately 156,000 Arabs living in Israel became Israeli citizens when the State of Israel was declared. Today, there are over 1.9 million Arab citizens in Israel. Watch the video (**Slide 56**) to learn more about these citizens. *What do you know about Arab-Israeli relations in Israel today?* Watch the video (**Slide 57**) to find out more.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 58, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land.

אָנוּ מוֹשִׁיטִים יַד-שְׁלוֹם וְשִׁכְנוֹת טוֹבָה לְכָל-הַמְּדִינוֹת הַשְּׁכֵנֹת וְעַמֵּיהֶן וְקוֹרְאִים לָהֶם
לְשִׁתּוֹף פְּעִלָּה וְעֲזָרָה הַדְּדִית עִם-הָעַם הָעֲרָבִי הָעֲצֵמָאִי בְּאֶרֶץ:

What do you know about the Arab neighbors of Israel? (Discuss the map on **Slide 59**) Print out the worksheet (**Slide 60**) and add information as you watch the video (**Slide 61**).

Conclusion (Slide 62, 5 min): Watch the video and remember that as Jews we pray that Israel will have peace and continue to grow and thrive, with all her citizens. We will celebrate the founding of the modern State of Israel on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. Happy birthday, Israel!

EIGHTH GRADE:

Set Induction (Slides 63-64, 5 min): Today we are preparing for *Yom HaAtzmaut* by reading a part of Israel's Declaration of Independence - *Megillat HaAtzmaut*. We will read the entire *Megillah* ("the whole megillah" as they say) at our *tekes* (ceremony) on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. What is a "Declaration of Independence"? What do you think should be said in Israel's Declaration of Independence? Let's examine the *Megillah* directly now.

Reading and Discussion (Slide 66, 10 min): (Read aloud to the class)

We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for **the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.**

אָנוּ קוֹרְאִים אֶל-הָעָם הַיְהוּדִי בְּכֹל הַתְּפוּצוֹת לְהִתְלַכֵּד סָבִיב הַיְשׁוּב בְּעַלְיָהּ וּבְבִנְיָן
וְלַעֲמֹד לַיְמִינוֹ בַּמְעֻרְכָה הַגְּדוֹלָה עַל הַגְּשָׁמָה שְׂאִיפֹת הַדּוֹרוֹת לְגַאֲלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

What is the "Redemption of Israel"? Review concepts about the connection of the Jewish people to the land (Avraham, Exodus, Kings of Israel - See slides 7-10) and the exile from the land (Babylon, Rome - See slides 15, 17). Discuss the long history of anti-Semitism in the many countries in which Jews have lived, and the birth of modern Zionism (See slides 25-26, 28). Apply this historical perspective to the Jewish texts (**Slide 67**).

Video (Slide 68-69, 15 minutes): Learn more about the history of Hatikvah. Print out the worksheet (**Slide 68**) and fill it out while watching the video (**Slide 69**). Read and discuss the quote from Rabbi Sacks (**Slide 70**):

What is the difference between optimism and hope? Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the belief that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope. Knowing what we do of our past, no Jew can be an optimist. But Jews have never – despite a history of sometimes awesome suffering – given up hope. — **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (1948 - 2020)**

Conclusion: We will read *Megillat HaAtzmaut*, sing *Hatikvah*, and celebrate the founding of the modern State of Israel and all her complexities on *Yom HaAtzmaut*. Happy birthday, Israel!

ALL GRADES: If you have extra time, share one of the musical adaptations of the *Megillah* in the videos at the end of the slideshow (**Slides 72-73**).