

## BE MY GUIDE: EXPLORE AND REVEAL COMMUNITIES OF ISRAEL

Written by: Susan Eisenstein, Temple Beth El

Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester, in Chappaqua New York, has a wonderful 5th grade curriculum that focuses on teaching the younger generation to understand Israel with all of its complexities. This curriculum allows me to [teach Israel](#), which I absolutely love, since Israel is my heart. Within this program, I seek to foster in my students a deep connection to Israel.

**We focus on knowing Israel, then to love Israel, and connect to Israel, as a nation that is our homeland and to which we are connected through Jewish pride and identity.**

**I want my students to know that Israel is a country of actualizers, of humanity, innovative, alive, and vibrant, and that we are one, we are Am Yisrael.**

This is a great resource for use in a classroom. However it's also great for informal educational settings, like a youth group, or a discussion group.

### PROGRAM GOALS:

- For students to create a presentation about a city/community/area and present it to their classmates.
- For students to learn about the history, settlement and development of different communities in Israel.

**This program is designed to be a student-driven project.** Many varied skill sets are employed in this project, such as verbal, cognitive, kinesthetic, allowing for student expression and growth and sometimes stepping out of their comfort zone. Students are given basic research materials and guidance on how to conduct their own research, and then use what they have learned about Israeli communities/places to present a finished product to teach others about those communities/places.

### TARGET AGES:

Grade 5, ages 10-11 years old

### TIME:

If you have enough time, the project should be completed over several sessions. The number of sessions is up to the educator's discretion. Each session should ideally be approximately 45 minutes in length but can be adapted to each educational format and setting.

### HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR EDUCATOR PREPARATION /BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE:

- Golsrael - <https://new.goisrael.com/>
- The Israel Ministry of Tourism - <https://info.goisrael.com/en/tourist-information>

### SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- [Map of Israel](#) with communities shown on it
- Computers or smartphones, laptops, tablets for student research
- Lined notebook or writing paper
- Pencils or pens, crayons, scissors, markers, sharpies, art supplies
- Poster boards
- Materials as necessary, depending upon the groups choices for their presentations

**LESSON PLAN:**

Open the discussion with questions about strength, teamwork and community building.

- What is a strength? What is a strength that you have?
- How can you use your strength or skill to learn and teach?
- How can you use your strength to collaborate as a team?
- What do you know about community building in Israel?
- Get students to make a list of their strengths: my strengths are

Guide the discussion in the direction of using their strengths creatively to research and present a project that will teach about Israeli communities (cities, towns, moshavim and kibbutzim).

*Show the students a map of Israel and ask them to identify various Israeli communities.* The educator should speak about one or two places and ask the students if they know anything about them, so as to create a framework for what the students will be expected to do. The educator should use personal stories and talk about their experiences in Israel, and/or share one of the stories included in the [Israel Memory Project](#).

[https://israelforever.org/programs/israel\\_memory\\_project/](https://israelforever.org/programs/israel_memory_project/)

Encourage students to voice their connection. Have any students been to Israel? Let them talk about what they saw in each city, the shuk perhaps, Tower of David, glass bottom boat, etc. Ask them why they feel a connection to Israel, and why they think it is important to feel like a [Virtual Citizen of Israel](#)? What does it mean to them?

<https://israelforever.org/vci/>

Emphasize there is old and new in Israel, for example the old and new sections of the city in Jerusalem, old and new Jewish settlements from biblical times, the 1600s, the 1890s and today. Help them understand that every new settlement is built within proximity to its ancient original community of the Israelites/Hebrews (give examples: Jerusalem, Modi'in, Hebron, Tzfat, Old Jaffa/Tel Aviv, Shilo, Tiberias, etc). This will help the students understand that the connection to Israel is not based only on the modern state, but is based on an ancestral connection to our indigenous homeland as a nation and as a people. It will get them excited about being able to delve into the rich history of our homeland and heritage.

**OPTIONAL: SHOW THIS VIDEO CLIP:**

[Sunshine across Israel](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bivYs8oacnA>

Divide into students into groups of 3 or 4. If there is a student who chooses to work by themselves, this is also okay. Assign each group an Israeli community to research, or have them pick out of a hat. You can also have them pick their own place, either by searching for a topic of interest or do a blindfold game and have them pick at random by pointing on a map. Have a combination of urban and rural options, including kibbutzim and moshavim, that run the full breadth of the Land of Israel so that all areas of the country are represented.

Hand out our Communities of Israel research sheets that have a template for the information they should gather. Have the students discuss their ideas among their peers within their groups and decide their approach to the project. Encourage creative thinking.

- What makes each Israeli community unique?
- How does the geography of Israel influence the community/city that you selected?
- Is there a food or sport that symbolizes the community/city you studied?
- If you had to choose something to represent your community/city what would it be?
- Are there any famous Israelis that grew up or live in the community/city you researched?

- Are there any historic connections to the city you studied?
- Explore if you could design a village/community/city in Israel, how would it look? Would it be located in the north, the south, on the Mediterranean Sea, in the Negev, and why? What would you call your village/city? What would the streets be named, etc. What would you find in the town/village/city? What concerns would there be?

Encourage them to seek out interesting and unusual facts about each location, both modern and historical. Have them look for pictures through Google.

*This is a great opportunity to make mention of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, where documents and photographs of the Zionist dream of hundreds of years have been collected and stored to ensure the truth of our history remains protected for future generations of researchers.*

All group members should be encouraged to take part in both the research and the final presentation. Students should be allowed to converse with each other and to be encouraged to use various forms of technology, resources, learning tools and activities so that everyone is engaged and involved. Depending on how many sessions you will be teaching this project, allocate an appropriate amount of research time (e.g. if you have an hour then give the children 15 mins to research etc).

The students will put their project together and show their presentation to the other groups. At the conclusion, perhaps with parents or a school wide display of their projects, students should be gifted with a Virtual Citizen of Israel Certificate of Recognition. For a complete set for your classroom, contact us and we will provide personalized certificates for each student.

#### TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE SESSION

The steps can be separate sessions, for example, discussing strengths and having students find their own individual strengths, can be one session. Dividing students into groups and assigning cities can be another session, along with students beginning to discuss ideas with each other. Research can be another session, and so on. How many sessions depends on the time and flexibility that each educator has.

#### LET THEIR LEARNING MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE ISRAEL CONNECTION!

**Use this project as an opportunity for intergenerational learning with your students' families.** Have them present the final product to their parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, friends and collect stories and memories for submission to the Israel Memory Project.

*Let us know your class is participating, and we will give a prize to the students who collect the most memories!*

#### CLOSING SESSION: Discussion Questions

Ask students what they learned from doing this project:

- What did they learn from working together and collaborating with their peers?
- What did they learn about themselves, their interests and talents?
- How did learning about communities and settlements in Israel inspire them?
- What did their research/presentation teach them about the uniqueness of a Jewish state?
- How does the unique geography of Israel affect settlement patterns? How might it influence Israeli culture?
- What did they learn about similarities or differences from Jewish communal life in their own country? Why do they think these differences exist?
- What did they find most interesting about this research project?

## TIPS FOR EVALUATION OF ACTIVITY SUCCESS:

1. Have each group present before the class and then ask the student “audience” questions and receive answers.
2. Have the student “audience” ask the presenter group questions about their place and have them answer the questions.
3. To make evaluation fun, the teacher could prepare a soft ball, by placing strips with questions on the ball. The students form a circle. The teacher tosses or rolls the ball to different student each time. When the ball is caught, whichever question the student’s thumb lands on, that is the question that they need to answer. There are balls that look like small beach balls with various color stripes. This would be easier to use, as each question can be written on a different color stripe.
4. Hand out or have one extra large blank map(s) of Israel hanging on the wall. Students fill out the map with facts that they learned about the Israeli communities/places. For example, the teacher can have question sheets with questions such as “locate the city of Haifa on the map and write one fact that you learned about Haifa”, or guided questions, such as “tourists love to ride the open cable car in this city. It goes from the port level to the top of the mountain.” Other questions could be, “in which city is the Knesset located? Locate this city on the map”, or “In May of 1910, Ahuzat Bayit was given a new name meaning Hill of Spring. Which city was this and locate it on the map.” Students also indicate the cities on this blank map, by writing in the names of the cities in their correct locations.
5. A “pair and share” activity. Students are given a sheet with blank boxes on it. They share a fact about an Israeli city with a partner and write their name in that box. See who gets the most boxes filled. They can also “interview” their peers to see what facts and cities they fill the boxes with. Remember, it is important for the student to write their name in the box that they write their fact in. This can become a social activity as well as a good means of evaluation, without making any one student self conscious in any way. This can also be a “give one, take one” activity, whereby one student gives a fact and then calls on another student to “take” a fact from them.

Remember, the best evaluation is that the students had fun learning and interacting with each other, and making their projects, and that they keep asking you about when they can do their presentations and telling you what they learned!

Additional resources to enhance the learning experience: provide [Israeli snacks](#) and/or play [Israeli music](#) before, during, or after presentations to help the students feel more connected to the land and people of Israel.

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## ABOUT THE ISRAEL FOREVER FOUNDATION

The Israel Forever Foundation is an Israel Engagement Organization that develops and promotes experiential learning resources that celebrate and strengthen the personal connection to Israel as an integral part of Jewish life and identity.

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITY CREATOR:

Susan Eisenstein is a long time Jewish educator, passionate about creating special innovative activities for her students. A Bonim B’yachad Teaching Fellow, JNF Ambassador and a graduate of the Melton School for Jewish Studies, Susan has two Master’s degrees and a Doctorate in Education from Columbia University. In addition to her involvement with Israel Forever and Stand With Us, Susan is a mentor to adult students for Project Inspire and Aish Academy and is a published author in professional journals for music and music therapy. Her passion is in Judaic studies and the Hebrew language and involving every student in a meaningful adventure of learning: “Israel is my heart and soul and my dream is to help Israel and Israelis in any way that I can.”