



## AND SHIRA IMAGINED

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*The history of the ancient land comes to life when a young girl and her family tour Israel.*

**A**nd *Shira Imagined* portrays Israel as a place of great diversity, from the cities of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to the mountain that is Massada to the historical wonders of Caesarea. Children have always tended to travel to near or distant places in their imaginations that, happily, requires neither packing nor airline tickets! Many of the places which Shira travelled, listed below, may pique the curiosity of your children.

### THE CITY OF EILAT

Eilat is the port city at the southernmost tip of Israel, bordering the Red Sea. A major tourist destination, Eilat is known for its beaches, coral reef, and bird migrations; here one can dive in the Red Sea (actually the Gulf of Aqaba or Gulf of Eilat). Because it typically rains only half a dozen days each year, it is said that “the sun always shines in Eilat.”

### THE KIBBUTZ

*Kibbutz*, (literally “gathering” or “together”) is the Hebrew term for “collective settlement.” While *kibbutzim* (plural) of the past were often based on a system of shared property and centered on agriculture, many have left their socialist roots and have expanded to include other types of industry, such as textiles and plastics. In recent years, a number of *kibbutzim* have become centers for tourism, with guest accommodations and recreational facilities for visitors.

If you have been to Israel, this is a great time to show your children your photographs. If not, search out someone

in your family or friends who will share their photos. Otherwise, the Internet is a great source of pictures.

### THE JEWISH HOMELAND

Shira’s father tells her that Israel is unlike any other country on earth, and mentions the juxtaposition of the ancient and modern. Among Israel’s unique aspects is that regardless of where one may live, Israel is a homeland for every Jew. It was not only during the time following the Exodus from Egypt that the Israelites were wanderers; throughout much of history, Jews had no official home. Then, on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was born, with Chaim Weizmann as President and David Ben-Gurion as the first Prime Minister. Though there has been conflict within the region since the State’s inception, Israel remains proud and free, a permanent place of refuge for every Jew and for many others as well.

Shira’s father hopes that one day their family will make Israel their home. Were they to do so, Shira’s family would be taking part in *aliyah*, or immigration (the literal translation of the word is “ascent” or “going up,” with *aliyah* also referring to the honor bestowed upon those called to recite the blessings before and after the reading of the Torah). While most Jews born outside Israel will never actually live there, it can be a source of pride and comfort—for children as well as adults—that such a place as Israel exists. The more children come to know Israel through books, photos, discussion, study, travel, and community ties, the stronger their lifelong connections will be. Pj