



IT'S ISRAEL'S BIRTHDAY!

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Preschoolers take a pretend trip to Israel to celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day). After taking an imaginary plane ride, the children pick oranges from a kibbutz orchard and visit a Western Wall made of blocks. The youngsters also explore the desert, swim in the Dead Sea, and join a parade.

The vibrant colors and images of this book offer a marvelous introduction to some of the unique and varied features of the state of Israel for young children. It is also a great opportunity for you and your child to explore some of the many ways in which people live around the world. Whether by counting in a different language or by eating different foods, even the youngest child can come to understand that it has taken people of all races, religions, shapes, sizes, and persuasions to make our colorful world!

Young children enjoy pretending to travel, whether to a nearby town or a faraway country. Use articles in your home (chairs, blankets, boxes, etc.) to “travel” with your child to distant places. Get creative! Find clothing in your wardrobe that shows how people in another part of the world dress. Make the act of traveling exciting for your child by this pretend play. And be sure to include Israel on your list of fascinating places to visit!

Many families share the difficulty of convincing their child to try new foods. We hope that this book, with its photographs of young children eating a variety of foods, including *falafel*, salad and pita, encourages your child to eat “outside the box.”

Who doesn't enjoy a birthday card? Provide your child with simple materials to make a birthday card for Israel, and display it in your home. As *Yom Ha'atzmaut* approaches, check to see what celebrations your family might attend.

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) takes place on the day of the Hebrew month of *Iyar* and marks the anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel on May 14th, 1948. In Israel, celebrations include parades, fireworks, flag displays, singing and dancing in the streets, and picnics. As *Yom Ha'atzmaut* approaches, check to see what celebrations your family might attend.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN ISRAEL

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.

Shuk: A *shuk* is an outdoor marketplace. In Israel, the most famous *shuk* is *Mahne Yehudah*, located in the center of Jerusalem. Among the wide variety of goods available for purchase are fruits, vegetables, spices, baked goods, cheese, and fast foods.

Tel: A *tel* (from the Arabic for “hill” or “small elevation”) is a raised mound marking the ruins of an ancient site, often a city. Arguably some of the most famous and productive archeological digs in the world continue to be at sites in Israel. Pj