

# 1

# Welcome

## to Our Homeland

Natan



Shalom. I'm Liat's kid brother, Natan. Liat is smart and lots of fun, but she can be so bossy and annoying. She calls me "The Nudnik," but I don't let it bother me.

Shalom!

My name is Liat, and I live in Israel. I'm in the fifth grade, and these are some of my friends. Please join us as we learn about our country. We will visit with kids from all over Israel.

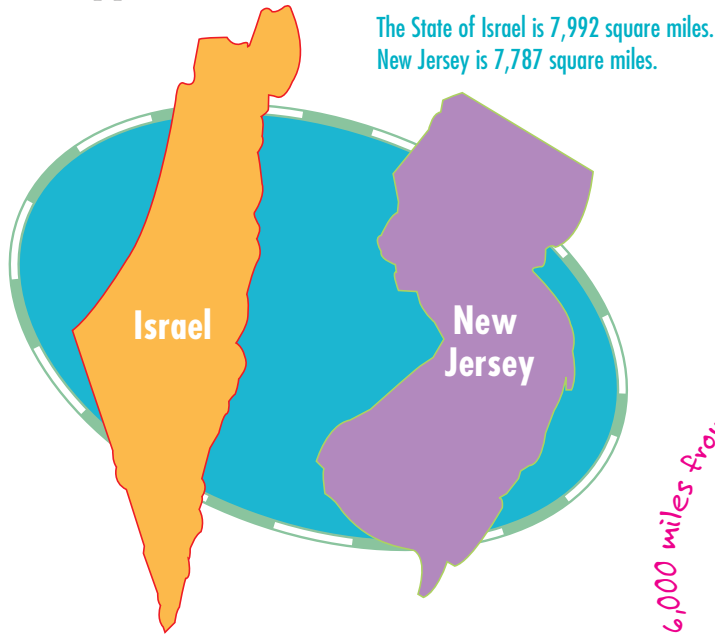
The first thing we will do is find out why Israel has played such an important part in the story of the Jewish people. We will also learn how the modern State of Israel came to be. Let's get started!

I'm Liat



## A Land of Opposites

Israel is a small country—about the size of New Jersey! Yet, for such a small country, Israel is chock-full of opposites.



To begin with, Israel is both very old *and* very new. As we travel around the country, you will see many places that are described in the Bible. So, Israel must be very old. But the modern State of Israel—**Medinat Yisrael**—is filled with airports, highways, video arcades, and fast food restaurants. So, Israel is also very new.

The land itself is full of opposites. The Dead Sea, in eastern Israel, is 1,300 feet *below* sea level. It is the lowest point on earth! Yet, only a few hours drive to the north is Mount Hermon, which has a ski resort. Mount Hermon's snowy peaks rise to over 9,000 feet *above* sea level! Getting chilly? Just drive back south to Eilat, where it is warm enough to go snorkeling, even in the winter.

It's like flying from New York to Los Angeles and back!  
That's a long trip.  
It is 6,000 miles from the United States. That's a long trip.  
Israel is smaller than 41 of the 50 states in the United States.



Look carefully at the keys on this computer keyboard. What do you notice? In Israel, the language of the Bible is also the language of the Internet.

At once very old *and* very new, very low *and* very high, very cold *and* very warm, Israel is full of surprises and full of fun. It is like no other place on earth—and it is just like home no matter where you are from.

*Shalom aleichem!* Welcome to *Medinat Yisrael!* Welcome to our homeland!



Most of Mount Hermon is in Syria. Only about 7 percent is in Israel. The part of Mount Hermon that is in Israel was captured by Israel in the Six-Day War, in 1967.



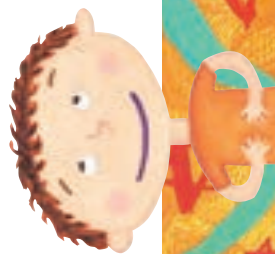
Every week in synagogue, we read a portion, or *parashah*, from the Torah. Many of these portions teach us about the importance of *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jewish people.

## The Bible: A Family Album

The Bible is like a family album. It tells us the stories of our ancestors who lived almost 4,000 years ago in the Land of Israel—***Eretz Yisrael***. In fact, Israel is often called the Land of the Bible.

In Genesis, the first book of the Torah, we read that Abraham and Sarah were the first Jews. Our tradition teaches that Abraham left the city of Ur (in modern Iraq) to settle in Canaan—which is what *Eretz Yisrael* was called in ancient times—because God told him to do so. The Bible also teaches that God promised the Land of Israel to Abraham as a homeland for his descendants.

Did you know that when you say “*Medinat Yisrael*” and “*Eretz Yisrael*,” you are speaking Ivrit—Hebrew!



## Bible Quiz

Abraham and Sarah were not only the first Jews, they were the first Jews to live in the Land of Israel. But they weren't the first to be *born* there. That honor goes to their son. Do you know his name?

Isaac

After a few generations, famine forced the Israelites—the ancient Jews—to go down to Egypt where there was food. At first life was good there, but then a new pharaoh, or king, arose and enslaved the Israelites. The Bible teaches that God heard the Israelites' cries and sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, but died before reaching the Land of Israel. Joshua, the next leader, brought our ancestors into Israel.



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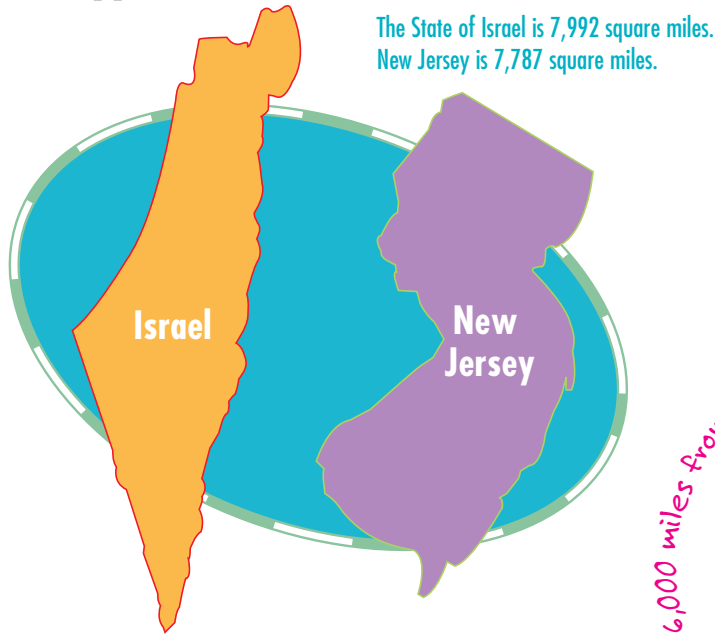
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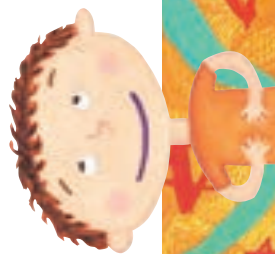
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When the ancient Babylonians conquered Israel in 586 BCE (more than 2,500 years ago), our ancestors were forced to leave the land. While some settled in Babylonia, others went to Egypt, Yemen, Persia, and beyond. This was the beginning of the Diaspora, the Jewish communities living outside of Israel.

Jews were permitted to return to the Land of Israel in 538 BCE by Cyrus, the king of Persia. Jerusalem was rebuilt and the Second Temple was constructed. Then, in the second century BCE, the Second Temple was taken over by the Syrians who followed the Greek ways—dressing in Greek robes, speaking the Greek language, reading Greek books, and playing Greek sports. The Syrians put Greek idols in the Second Temple.

## Did You Know?

There is no remnant of the First Temple except for an ivory staff, or rod, used by a *kohen*, a Temple priest, of the time. The staff is exhibited in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

I made it! I knew Liat wanted to leave without me but I can't miss this—there's so much to see and do.



## What Remains of the Second Temple?

The retaining, or supporting, walls of the Second Temple were built of massive blocks of cut limestone. Some of the blocks—which you can see today at the Western Wall—are 30 feet long and weigh over 200 tons. You also can stand on the steps that led to the Temple, the same steps that were climbed by our ancestors when they worshipped at the Temple during the pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Nearby are piled the limestone blocks that formed the Temple. The Roman soldiers tossed them off the Temple heights 2,000 years ago.

## A Day of Mourning

On the holiday of Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av (which falls in July or August), we mourn the destruction of both the First and Second Temples. Many Jews fast on Tisha B'Av and read the book of Lamentations in synagogue.

Under Judah the Maccabee, the Jews drove out the Syrians in 165 BCE and rededicated the Temple to God, establishing our holiday of Hanukkah. Later, King Herod completely rebuilt the Second Temple so that it was greater and more beautiful than ever. But when the Romans conquered Israel and destroyed the Temple in 70 CE, many of our ancestors were again forced from the land. This time, our people spread out over the entire world. Eventually, almost all the Jews were driven out of Israel, but we prayed that one day we would return.

## Birth of a Nation

Beginning in the 1500s, Jews in many European countries were forced to live separately from other peoples in sections of the cities called ghettos. The Jews lived in poverty and without basic freedoms. Laws limited where Jews could shop and travel, with whom they could visit and do business, and the type of work they could do. Many Jews were killed in riots inspired by anti-Semitism—prejudice against Jews—and their property was taken or destroyed.



Stones from the Western Wall

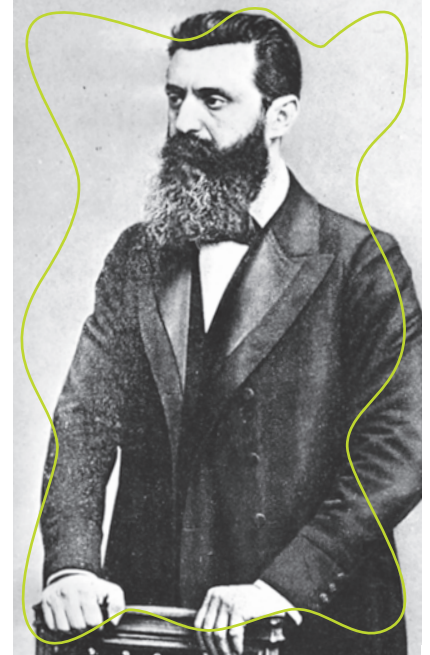


In the late 1800s, Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian-born Jewish writer and journalist, became enraged by the treatment of European Jews. He believed that the Jews must have a homeland of their own and that they should reclaim Zion, the Land of Israel.

In 1897, Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress, which brought together Jewish leaders from around the world. He was elected president of the newly created World Zionist Organization. Herzl dedicated the rest of his life to Zionism—the commitment to creating and supporting an independent Jewish state in *Eretz Yisrael*.

As the popularity of the Zionist movement grew, thousands of Jews from Russia, Poland, and Germany came to the Land of Israel, which was then called Palestine. These early pioneers, or **ḥalutzim**, left their homes to build new lives in a faraway land that was filled with swamps and malarial disease. They wanted to build a nation that would prosper and live peacefully with its neighbors.

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) was the father of the Zionist movement. He coined its slogan: “If you will it, it is no dream.” Barely 50 years after the First Zionist Congress, Herzl’s dream became reality.



Can you imagine leaving your family and friends, and the only home you’ve ever known, to settle in a new land thousands of miles away? Why do you think the **ḥalutzim** were so determined to build the Land of Israel?

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## Israel and Its Neighbors

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to divide Palestine into three parts. One part was to be under Jewish control, another under Arab control, and the third part—made up of Jerusalem and Bethlehem—was to become an international zone. The Zionists agreed to the plan, but the Arabs rejected it.

The modern State of Israel, *Medinat Yisrael*, was established on May 14, 1948. Jews all around the world celebrated. The European Jewish population had been largely destroyed by the Holocaust, but the birth of the State of Israel offered new hope. After almost 2,000 years without a country, we finally had our homeland again.

### Map It Out

Many places in Israel are named after Theodor Herzl. Two such places are Mount Herzl and Herzliya. Mount Herzl, in Jerusalem, is the site of a military cemetery where Israel's war heroes and great leaders—including Theodor Herzl and former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin—are buried. Herzliya is a town on Israel's seacoast.

Turn to the map on page 4 and label Herzliya by writing its name next to Herzl's picture. Name the large body of water off the coast of Herzliya.



When the partitioning, or dividing, of Palestine was announced, Jews celebrated in the streets in cities throughout Eretz Yisrael.

The next day, May 15, 1948, armies from the five neighboring Arab countries attacked Israel. Though a young and struggling nation with limited military equipment and numbers of soldiers, Israel won its War of Independence. An armistice was finally signed in 1949 on the Greek island of Rhodes.

Israel has been plagued with many other wars—the Suez War, also called the Sinai Campaign (1956); the Six-Day War (1967); the War of Attrition (1969–1970); the Yom Kippur War (1973); the war in Lebanon (1982–1985); the Intifada (1987–1993); and the Gulf War (1991). Today, Israel is at peace with some of its neighbors, and it continues to work toward peace with others.



Students from 70 developing countries, including Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Kenya, and Liberia, have graduated from the Hadassah-Hebrew University international public health program. The Israeli government has funded each student with a grant of \$24,000!

This program is just one example of Israel's commitment to fighting world hunger, poverty, and disease.

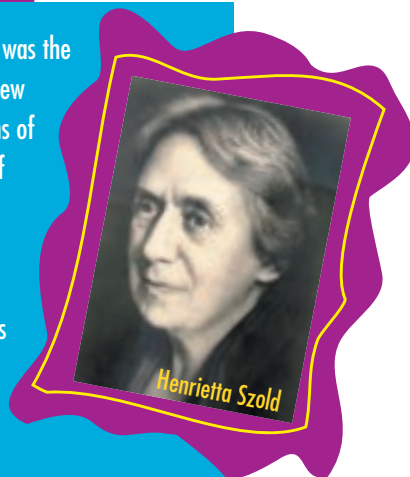


This is the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Ein Kerem, Jerusalem.

## Henrietta Szold, Hadassah's Heroine

Baltimore-born Henrietta Szold (1860–1945) was a strong and determined person. She was the first woman to study the Talmud and other holy texts at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. In 1909, she made her first visit to Palestine. Troubled by the unhealthy living conditions of the children there, Szold returned to New York to form Hadassah, the national organization of Zionist women. For the rest of her life, she worked to improve health care and education in Palestine.

Hadassah Hospital opened in 1925. Today, it has two large hospitals and research laboratories in Jerusalem—one on Mount Scopus and the other in Ein Kerem—and continues to provide quality medical care. The Hadassah Medical Organization has served as a bridge to peace and understanding by treating thousands of Christians and Muslims from neighboring Arab countries.



## The Government

Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East. The prime minister, the head of the government, is elected by the Israeli citizenship. Every citizen 18 and over has the right to vote.

The Israeli parliament is called the Knesset. Its 120 seats are filled by representatives from more than a dozen political parties. The number of representatives from each party is determined by the number of votes each party receives in the national elections.

The president of Israel is elected by the Knesset. Unlike in the United States, where the president is the leader of the government, the role of Israel's president is largely ceremonial. For example, Israel's president may represent the Jewish state at the funeral of an international leader. However, the president does not negotiate treaties with other countries.

Yom Ha'atzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, is celebrated on the fifth day of the Jewish month of Iyar. (Iyar usually falls in April or May.) Every year, Israelis celebrate Yom Ha'atzma'ut with parades and picnics. The day before, Yom Hazikaron, Memorial Day, is observed in memory of the soldiers who died defending Israel and the citizens who were killed in terrorist attacks.

On the morning of Yom Hazikaron, sirens blow all across the country, followed by two minutes of complete silence. Throughout Israel, everything stops—talk, traffic, machinery, all activity—as Israelis remember that they owe their freedom to the courage of those whose lives were sacrificed.

When evening comes and the first stars appear, a long siren blast is heard. Yom Hazikaron is over, and Yom Ha'atzma'ut begins. Why do you think these holidays are observed one day after the other?

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← I really had to think about this one.





Matters of law are decided by Israel's Supreme Court. Members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president on the recommendation of a committee of judges, lawyers, and members of the Knesset. Justices serve until age 70.

Israel's Supreme Court



## What Do You Think?

The word *knesset* comes from the same root as *l'hikanes*, meaning “to enter” or “to gather.” The Israeli Knesset is a place where elected officials gather to work for the good of the country.

A synagogue is a *beit kneset*—“a house of gathering.” When and why do Jews gather in a synagogue?

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## Map It Out

Turn to the map on page 4 and label Jerusalem by writing its name above the picture of the Knesset. What neighboring country is closest to Jerusalem?

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The Knesset is located in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. Where is your national government located?



**Hint:** Think about the times you have come together with other Jews in the synagogue.

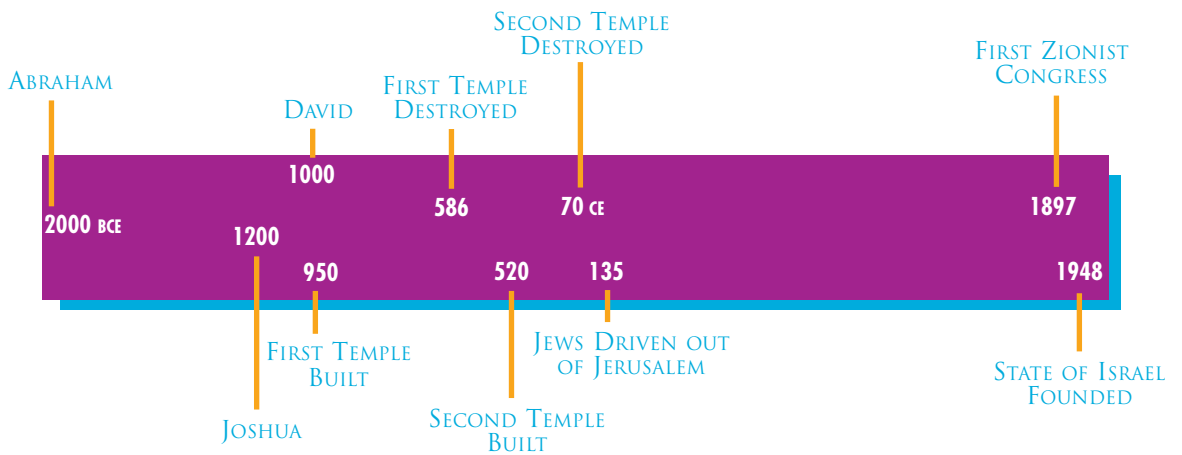




## National Symbols

Israel's unofficial national anthem is "Hatikvah," which means "The Hope." Long before Israel became independent in 1948, the poem "Hatikvah," written by Naphtali Herz Imber, had become the anthem of the Zionist movement. "Hatikvah" begins:

Within the heart  
A Jewish spirit is still alive  
And the eyes look eastward  
Toward Zion.  
Our hope is not lost,  
The hope of two thousand years  
To be a free nation in our land  
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem.



When I have to wait three months for summer vacation or two weeks for my birthday party it feels like forever. Can you imagine what it is like to hope and dream about something for 2,000 years?



What do the words of "Hatikvah" tell you about the Jewish people's continuing love of Israel? How do you think our love of Israel helps Jews around the world—despite the great distances between us—remain as one united community?

The Israeli flag has a white background with two blue stripes, and a blue Magen David—Shield of David, sometimes called a Star of David, or Jewish Star—in the middle. The idea for the flag was based on the tallit, the prayer shawl that Jews wear.

*Flags flying across from the Western Wall in Jerusalem*



*These four Israeli coins, from left to right, are the 1-agarah, 5-, 10-, and 25-agarot coins that replaced the prutah coins in 1960. Can you translate the Hebrew word that appears at the bottom of all four coins?*





*This coin from Eretz Yisrael is 2,000 years old. It is from the time of King Herod.*

Israel's state emblem



The menorah is an ancient Jewish symbol, first described in the Bible. The seven-branched menorah is the centerpiece of Israel's official state emblem. The olive branches stretching outward on either side of the menorah represent Israel's yearning for *shalom*, peace. The *hanukkiyah* we light on Hanukkah is very similar to the seven-branched menorah. Describe how the seven-branched menorah and the *hanukkiyah* are different?

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*Hanukkiyah*

# LIVING JEWISH VALUES

## אהבת ציון

Ahavat Zion

Love of Israel

We express our commitment to the Land of Israel by fulfilling the mitzvah of Ahavat Zion, which teaches us to love and remember Israel, the Land of Zion. When we visit Israel, plant trees to help rebuild the land, and celebrate the State of Israel's Independence Day, Yom Ha'atzma'ut, we are observing Ahavat Zion. We recite words of love for Eretz Yisrael in prayers such as the Amidah and the Birkat Hamazon, Grace After Meals.

How can you observe the mitzvah of Ahavat Zion?

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L.J.V.



One way to show your love of Israel is to learn Hebrew. Some words are easier than others. Can you find the word "ketchup"?



## Road Trip!

Let's take a tour of Israel. If we want to go from the north to the south of Israel while spending as little time as possible on the bus, in what order should we visit these cities?

Safed, Jerusalem, Beersheva,  
Herzliya, Haifa, Caesarea

Look at the map of Israel on page 4.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_



## Did You Know?

Israelis do not use dollars to pay for what they buy. They use the New Israeli Shekel (NIS). There are 100 agorot (plural of agorah) to a shekel—just like pennies to a dollar!

The book of Genesis teaches that Abraham bought a plot of land for 400 shekels. Had they been New Israeli Shekels, how many agorot would Abraham have paid?

400,000 agorot



## Modern Hebrew

For hundreds of years, Jews throughout the world spoke and read Hebrew only when praying or studying holy texts. In their daily lives—when they worked, shopped, studied math, played, or ate—they spoke the languages of the countries in which they lived, or they spoke Jewish forms of those languages, such as Yiddish, a Jewish form of German, or Ladino, a Jewish form of Spanish.

In 1881, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and his family left Russia and settled in *Eretz Yisrael*. Ben-Yehuda and his wife Deborah believed that Hebrew should be used in everyday life. They published the first Hebrew newspaper in the land. But many people didn't take the idea of speaking conversational Hebrew seriously. How could they be expected to speak an ancient language that didn't have words for such modern inventions as the elevator and the steamship?

So Ben-Yehuda created new words from old ones, and Hebrew once again became a living language. Because of Ben-Yehuda's efforts, Jews around the world now have a common language in which to discuss everything from the Bible to soccer to computers to politics to the latest action movie.

## A Living Miracle

Two thousand years ago *Eretz Yisrael* was destroyed; one hundred years ago it was just an idea; today *Medinat Yisrael* is a living miracle! No wonder Jews around the world celebrate Yom Ha'atzma'ut with great joy and sing "Hatikvah" with a full heart.



In almost every Israeli town and city there is a Ben-Yehuda Street, named in honor of the father of modern Hebrew. This Ben-Yehuda Street is in Jerusalem. The street sign is written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English.



## IT'S A FACT

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda insisted that his family speak only Hebrew in their home. His son, Itamar, was the first child to grow up speaking modern Hebrew.

## Borrow and Build

No word for "automobile"? No problem. Ben-Yehuda created the word *mechonit* by borrowing from the English word "machine."

No word for "newspaper"? Try *iton*, which Ben-Yehuda based on the Hebrew root meaning "times," as in The New York Times.

*In 1966, the Israeli author S.Y. Agnon won the Nobel Prize for literature. It was the first Nobel Prize to be awarded to a Hebrew writer.*

# מג

## HEBREW DICTIONARY

שלום	peace, hello, goodbye
מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל	the State of Israel
אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל	the Land of Israel
חֲלוּצִים	pioneers
עִבְרִית	Hebrew
יוֹם הַזְּכוֹרֹן	Memorial Day
יוֹם הָעֵצְמָאוֹת	Independence Day

*Shalom* comes from the same root as *shalem*, which means "whole" or "complete." Our tradition teaches that without peace our world cannot be complete.

I want to win a Nobel Prize, too!







Share what you've learned with a friend.

Shalom,

I just got here, but I've already learned so much about Israel. I can tell this is going to be an interesting trip!

Did you know that Israel is a small country—only about the size of \_\_\_\_\_?

Although it is a modern country, Israel is also very old and is sometimes called \_\_\_\_\_.

The Israeli parliament is called the \_\_\_\_\_, and the leader of the country is not the president, but the \_\_\_\_\_.

I also learned that Israel's flag has a \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle, and that Israel's unit of money is the \_\_\_\_\_, not the dollar.

There is a \_\_\_\_\_ Street in almost every town and city in Israel! Want to know why? Because \_\_\_\_\_.

I can't wait to show you my photos. L'hitra'ot! See you soon!