

From Remembrance to Independence: Behind the Scenes of Israel's Founding

Facilitator's Guide

Toldot Yisrael, in cooperation with the Rabbinical Council of America, has produced a complete ready-to-use one hour [Yom HaZikaron-Yom Ha'Atzmaut program](#) designed for individuals, congregations, and communities to watch together, from home.

The program is built around eyewitness accounts to Israel's founding by Harry Truman, Rabbi Norman Lamm, Yehuda Avner, and others. In addition, it includes inspiring words from Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Ahavath Torah in Englewood, NJ, and a moving *El Maleh Rachamim* by noted musician Rabbi Shlomo Katz.

Suggestions for Using this Program

1. This program is designed to be used as a טקס מעבר, a bridge from Yom HaZikaron to Yom Ha'Atzmaut. However, other than the *El Maleh Rachamim*, the content is not time-sensitive. It is pre-recorded and can be watched whenever you want, either as part of an organized program, or at your leisure anytime during this festive season.
2. Synagogues or schools are invited to send out the link with a recommendation to watch as a community together and "meet" for continued programming and/or a celebratory tefillah, before or afterward.
3. The program is not a live broadcast. If you would like to incorporate this film into your own local programming, you can stream the YouTube link via Zoom using the share screen feature, pausing the YouTube playback to add explanations, poetic readings, additional films, etc.

Supplementary Prayers for Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaut

Koren Publishers has generously provided a downloadable [pdf of the special supplementary prayers for Yom Ha'Atzmaut](#), in Hebrew with English translation.

[Prayer for the Welfare of IDF Soldiers](#) (מי שברך לחיילי צה"ל) by Lieutenant Colonel Shai Abramson, Chief Cantor of the Israel Defense Forces.

[Prayer for the State of Israel](#) (תפילה לשלום המדינה), by Lieutenant Colonel Shai Abramson, Chief Cantor of the Israel Defense Forces.

Additional Toldot Yisrael Playlists

[Eyewitness 1948](#) is a five part series (English, 10–15 minutes per film) produced by Toldot Yisrael and the History Channel. Each movie weaves together stories from several Toldot Yisrael interviews to give a behind the scenes account of a specific event or theme. The films were made possible by the generous support of the Jim Joseph Foundation and others.

[Eyewitness 1948: The American Contribution](#), is a twenty part short film series (3–4 minutes per film) about the critical, yet little known role American Jews played in Israel's founding. These films were produced with the support of the Ruderman Family Foundation using interviews made possible through a grant from the William Davidson Foundation.

[The Founders: The Story of the 1948 Generation](#) is a twenty part short film series of 2 minute films (Hebrew with English subtitles) produced with and broadcast on the History Channel in Israel for Yom Ha'Atzmaut a few years ago. Each film shares one poignant story or anecdote from the years leading up to the State being founded.

[Jerusalem and the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War](#) is a series of brief (1–3 minute, Hebrew with English subtitles) clips prepared by Toldot Yisrael, in cooperation with Yad Levi Eshkol. Biographical information of the interviewees included in the series and a brief glossary of terms is available [here](#).

Additional Resources about the Lamed Hey and Gush Etzion

A companion [teacher's guide](#) to [A Bravery Fiercer than Death: The 35 Heroes of Gush Etzion](#), a film about the *Lamed Hey* featured in the program, including background information, discussion questions, and additional resources.

A powerful account from [Ruma Falk](#), the telegraph operator in Jerusalem who received the last broadcast from Gush Etzion before it fell the day before the State was declared.

Moshe Perlstein was a twenty-three-year-old Yeshiva University graduate from Jersey City, New Jersey, who became the first American to fall in Israel's War of Independence. More information is available [here](#) and in an excerpt from a letter written by Zipporah Porath, an American friend of his, [here](#).

Joshua Stampfer was the scion of illustrious families on both sides. On his father's side, he was named for his great-grandfather Yehoshua Stampfer, who walked from Hungary to Jerusalem in 1869 at the age of 17 and was one of the original founders of Petach Tikva. His maternal grandfather, Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank, was Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem for several decades. In 1947, Joshua Stampfer was studying at the Hebrew University when he was recruited by the Haganah. A last minute decision by his commander saved him from being one of the *Lamed Hey*, as told [here](#).

Sample Poetry Readings

[מגש הכסף](#) ("The Silver Platter,") written by Natan Alterman, Israel Prize winning poet and playwright. The poem describes the sacrifice being made to bring the Jewish state into being. This poem is often featured in Yom HaZikaron ceremonies.

[Bab al-Wad](#), written by Palmach veteran and poet Haim Gouri. The song commemorates the battles for access to Jerusalem in 1948 along the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway.

Select Quotes from the Program / Concepts for Discussion

Sol Baskin: "This is the sum total of the active fighting in the War of Independence. The advantage that the Arabs had against us with the meager equipment makes me think that there was a fickle finger of chance or the chance of the finger of God that saw us through."

Harold Katz: "And there was an imbalance here, a real imbalance. I had the good life and they had horror. It was an imbalance that had to be righted."

Rabbi Lamm: "You have to do things sometimes, even if it's done quietly, even if it's against the law, but there is a higher law we had to obey."

Yehuda Avner: "Whereas for those 20 centuries we Jews were always the objects of history, that is an object where others made the decisions for us, as of that date onwards we suddenly become again the subjects of history, where we make the decisions for ourselves."

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin: "Dance in your minds with those who are dancing in the streets on your screen. Dance, as you experience and recognize what it means to have a state for the first time in centuries. To control our destiny. Relive that moment, and then come back to our time." (This is reminiscent of the experiential component of the Passover seder that obligates a person to see him or herself as if they themselves left Egypt —
(חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים)