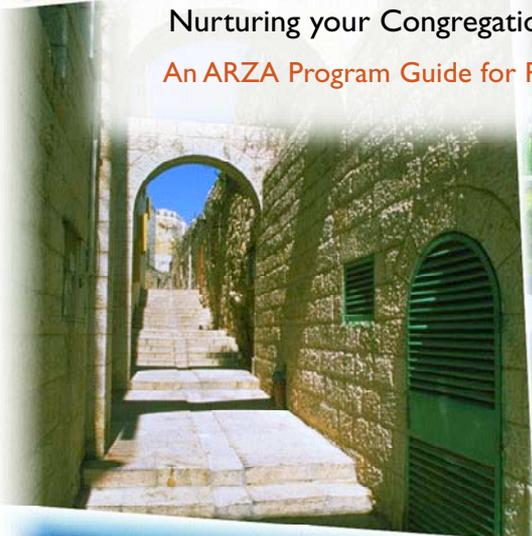


ישראל תמיד

Israel Always—Israel Tamid

Nurturing your Congregation's Connection to Israel

An ARZA Program Guide for Pre-and Post-travel to Israel



Connecting Reform Jews and Israel

ישראל תמיד

Israel Always—Israel *Tamid*

Enhance Israel's effect on your congregants; extend the experience beyond the number of days your group is physically in the land.

Specialized programs before and after the trip—such as social networking opportunities, informal education sessions, and congregation-wide events—enrich the overall trip experience for participants and reinforce their connection to Israel.

Pre-trip events prepare participants for the travel experience and are an important opportunity to form initial bonds that will be strengthened while in Israel. Further, participants are more likely to retain their momentum and enthusiasm after the trip if they are regularly reminded of the reasons why it was a significant experience in the first place:

- It affects the individual and collective Jewish identity;
- It fosters a greater sense of community;
- It nurtures the development of long-term, personal relationships with Israel.

What's Inside?



On the following pages, you will find a menu of programming options for use before, during, and after your congregation's Israel trip. By leading a congregational trip to Israel, you are paving the way for a deeper, more meaningful connection to *Eretz Yisrael*, *Medinat Yisrael*, and *Am Yisrael*.

נסיעה טובה

Nessiah tovah!

Have a wonderful journey!

Before Your Trip



Pre-trip marketing and preparation is not just about recruiting individuals already committed to traveling to Israel; it is a unique opportunity to engage the entire congregation. ARZA's DVD "Making it Happen: Your Congregational Trip to Israel" is an excellent resource for engaging your entire congregation, in addition to providing a guided approach to planning your congregational trip.

The DVD has three parts:

- A half-hour instructional film for congregational leaders on planning trips from start to finish
- A short promotional film for congregants, showing Reform Jews engaged with Reform Judaism in Israel
- A brief promotional film produced by the Israel Ministry of Tourism

If you haven't received a copy of the DVD, please contact us so that we may send you one. See the back cover of this guide for contact information.

In order to establish productive and meaningful group dynamics, all trip participants should meet at least once prior to your Israel trip for special programming. These meetings will introduce the trip as a long-term experience, despite the short amount of time you will actually spend abroad. Ice-breakers, text studies on Israel, and discussions of trip expectations are excellent ways to bring everyone onto the same page before departure. Some pre-departure programming ideas for trip participants and the entire congregation are listed on the following page.

Linking the Israel Trip Through Jewish Ritual and Education:

- Host a Shabbat dinner and offer a congregational blessing before the trip departs;
- Begin a tzedaka project for an Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism congregation or other appropriate organization in Israel; you can visit this congregation or organization while on the trip to personally connect participants with their hard work;
- Run a mini-course on Israel's geography, history and her political system;
- Administer a mini-Ulpan or conversational Hebrew course to familiarize travelers with common words and phrases;
- Facilitate a discussion and study session around subjects such as:
 - a. Israel in our texts; the Tanakh, Talmud and modern commentaries
 - b. Why do we go to Israel as religious Jews?
 - c. What is Reform Zionism?

Connecting HaAretz to HaBayit

Connecting Israel to your congregation:

- Designate an "Israel Wall" in your building where trip participants and other congregants can post questions, expectations and notes to each other about traveling to Israel. This will both enhance exposure to the trip and create a focal point for Israel engagement once the trip returns;
- Build relationships with the people and organizations you will visit in Israel by having them send updates to the groups about their activities;
- Review the itinerary together, make suggestions and answer questions about specific locations;
- Send weekly countdown emails with interesting facts to the entire congregation;
- Subscribe to Israeli publications such as *The Jerusalem Post*, *HaAretz*, *the Report* and *Eretz Magazine* and have copies available in visible locations around the congregation;
- Twin each traveling family with a non-traveling family. Partner families should be in communication before, during (if possible) and after the trip to share experiences.

In the Land of Israel



While touring, suggest follow-up programs for the group to plan upon their return. Regularly remind participants that programs such as the ones in this section will be great opportunities to reunite after the trip, to relive their experiences and to build upon the friendships and sense of community that they feel while in Israel. While in Israel:

- Make a conference call to your congregation's religious school or youth group;
- Bring copies of your congregation's bulletin to distribute;
- Visit a few of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism congregations with the goal of finding a sister congregation—your group will be the “fact-finding” group;
- Create a trip journal while on the road and post it to your temple's website or web-log;
- Provide time for, and guidance on the art of journaling (see included journaling reference page);
- Participate in a social action/tikkun olam project that can be continued or shared once at home;
- Bring back stones from Israel for graves of loved ones in the US;
- Purchase art and other visual items such as a Mizrach to place in prominent locations in the building;
- Daily Torah moment—find some aspect of a spiritual lesson in everyday life, each day of the trip, as it relates to Eretz Yisrael and the Jewish community at home.

After Your Trip



Present the Israel experience as a way of reflecting on and strengthening Jewish life at home. Consider using at least one of the following program options within a month of returning from Israel; run at least two more programs within the first six months of returning to maintain the energy and momentum of the Israel experience.

Jewish Identity and Group Cohesion

- Demonstrate to the congregation and reaffirm to the trip participants the importance of Israel's connection to Jewish life by recognizing the participants at events and High Holidays. During the Rabbi's sermon or Aliyot la-Torah, ask the participants to stand up and commend them for having made a deep connection to their heritage by journeying to Israel;
- Have the group read the Prayer for the State of Israel at High Holiday services or at any service during which the prayer might be recited; Shabbat, Yom HaAtzmaut, etc.;
- Schedule a Shabbat service and dinner during which participants can lead prayers or make a presentation about their trip. The readings at this service can be Psalms about Jerusalem, Israeli poetry, or writings on Reform Zionism;
- A few months after the trip, invite participants to discuss the question "How did our Israel trip affect my Jewish life now and for my future?" Continue to check in with participants throughout the year;
- If your group visited a social action site in Israel, start an ongoing Social Action/*Tikkun Olam* project to benefit that organization. Ideas for projects:
 - a. Collect books for an English library for the elderly in Israel
 - b. Collect Chanukah toys for disadvantaged children
 - c. Collect toiletries for IDF troops
 - d. Assemble care packages for soldiers, the elderly or disable individuals
 - e. Make a special table at your temple's "Mitzvah Day" to benefit an Israeli charity
 - f. Bring back items to add to your Israel Wall at your congregation

Social, Cultural and Educational Programs

- Ask participants to bring photos (digital and printed) to a dessert reception and photo reunion. Create a group album to keep in the temple, or copy digital prints to make a virtual album on the synagogue's website;
- Have an informal Sunday bagel brunch with an Israeli speaker, artist, author or musician;
- Bring back a taste of Israel by hosting a progressive Israeli Dinner or gourmet cooking demo, and/or compile a list of places to purchase Israeli food and wine in your locale;
- Create a celebration to parallel the one Israelis have on Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. Trip participants can reflect upon and share their answers to "Now that I've been there, what does Israel mean to me?" More suggestions available on ARZA's website, www.arza.org;
- Host a speaker from the Israeli Consulate, ARZA or other Israel organization. Israeli consular offices around the country can provide local speakers and educators, many are provided free of charge;
- Show an Israeli film. Several video chains carry popular Israeli films, such as "Turn Left at the End of the World", "Yossi and Jagger", "The Wisdom of the Bagel", "Yom Kippur", and others;
- If your congregation meets with an HUC student or an Israeli reform Rabbi while in Israel, try to arrange a visit by that individual to your congregation at home;
- Develop an adult education series based on the different forms of Zionism, using the range of philosophies outlined in *The Zionist Idea* by Arthur Hertzberg. Contact ARZA for curriculum materials such as "Our Israel," "Where the Heart Is" and "What is Reform Zionism?"

Planning Your Next Trip



As soon as you return from your trip, begin planning the next one. Encourage participants to act as recruiters—fellow congregants won't want to miss the next spectacular, life-changing trip! Begin a sign-up list of past and future participants and schedule regular Israel trip meetings so they have a hand in planning the itinerary.

Let the spark from one trip ignite the next!

In addition to your regular mission, you might want to consider the following trip themes:

- Follow Jewish History from southern Israel to northern Israel
- Adult Jewish learning
- Family and multi-generation
- Intermarried couples and their families
- Special-interest groups from your congregation
- Youth trips for bnei-mitzvah, confirmation and high-school students
- Sports/adventure: biking, hiking, scuba-diving, climbing, etc.
- Art history and museum hopping
- Israel's architecture
- Interfaith or dialogue
- Culinary exploration and wine appreciation
- Environmental/eco-tourism, including the Reform Kibbutzim Lotan and Yahel
- Politics and government in Israel

ARZA is proud of its relationships with Israeli organizations specializing in the themes listed above. We will happily assist you in adding value to your Israel adventure from the birth of the idea, to your day of departure and beyond. Contact us at 212-650-4280 or arza@urj.org.

Keeping an Israel Travel Journal

One meaningful way to enhance your trip is to schedule time for journaling. The gift of a personalized journal to each congregant will be cherished by all.



What are the benefits of journaling?

Regular journal time lets us record our experiences and helps us digest and reflect upon them. A travel journal provides context to pictures and videos, and makes the memories that may fade over time more permanent.

Journaling Tips

Make sure to show, not tell your experience. Demonstrate the day's events through active words and rich descriptions. Important moments will make themselves known through your writing. When you read your entry in the future, you will be more vividly transported to the time of the memory than if you just simply listed the day's events. Some methods and exercises for writing are:

- **Verbal Snapshot**—write all that you see in front of you. Upon rereading, you will be taken back to that exact place;
- **Self-correspondence**—send a scenic post-card or write an email to yourself. Paste the pages in your journal or album;
- **Speed Journaling**—in 5-10 minutes write down as much as you can about your day. What do you remember?
- **Site-Specific Writing**—what feelings and memories do you have from Israel's special places? From the Tel Aviv boardwalk, the *tayelet*? Metzada?
- **Personal Interactions**—write about the people you met and the ones you didn't have a chance to meet; Israel has a unique hybrid culture to explore through writing.

For more tips on journaling:

"Writing the Inner Journey," Dave Fox, available online at www.davethefox.com
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Journaling, Joan R. Neubauer

ARZA and Your Congregation

The programs in this guide can add value to your congregation's Israel experience by reinforcing Israel's lasting effects. Please use the program suggestions as they are, or modify them to suit your congregation's individual needs. If you create other programs please send them to ARZA so that we can share your initiatives to inspire others.

If you are in need of additional resources, or would like help planning and preparing events, please contact our Israel Travel Specialist by email or phone, as listed below.

As the definitive Israel resource for the Reform Movement, ARZA is eager to help bring Israel closer to your congregation and to help bring your congregation to Israel.

What is ARZA?

ARZA, the Israel arm and voice of the Reform Movement in the United States, endeavors to make Israel fundamental to the sacred lives and Jewish identity of Reform Jews. ARZA champions activities that further enhance Israel as a pluralistic, just and democratic Jewish state.

Stay in Touch

Ask for our Israel Travel Specialist

Phone: 212-650-4280

Email: arza@urj.org

www.arza.org



Israel Tamid is a project developed through ARZA's partnership with the Israel Ministry of Tourism. This partnership is dedicated to increasing the number of Reform Jews making travel to Israel an important part of their Jewish lives.