

18 Ideas ARZA Can Share With Your Congregation



If you are looking for creative ways to expand your congregation's Israel programming, the following topics are sessions that ARZA can help you organize to deepen your connection with Israel. Depending upon your needs, our assistance can range from a quick phone consultation, on-going consultation for new Israel/ARZA committees or a congregational visit from one of our lay or professional leaders. ARZA can help you plan Israel related programs, your first congregational trip, provide a guest speaker for an evening or even a scholar-in-residence for an entire ARZA Shabbat. Contact us so that we can be helpful to you in meeting your congregation's specific Israel needs.

1. What Is Reform Zionism Anyway? Zionism: This controversial yet powerful word in the Jewish lexicon continues to baffle many as they search for its meaning. Through the use of classic and contemporary texts, ARZA can help youth and adults explore the meaning and mission of Zionism in general, and Reform Zionism in particular.

2. The Greening of Zion: Reform Kibbutzim and Environmentalism

It's been 30 years since the founding of Yahel, the first Reform Kibbutz. Yahel and its younger sister, Kibbutz Lotan, have had a profound impact, not only on the ongoing experiment in building Reform Jewish communal life in Israel, but also on Israel's environmental movement. This is a crucial window into Israeli society and the Israeli Reform movement. ARZA can help you learn more about them and even help you visit!

3. Israel's Minorities: Living With the Other

Almost 25% of Israeli citizens are not Jewish. These Israelis sometimes find it hard to negotiate their own identity and ensure their rights in the Jewish and democratic State of Israel. The Torah repeatedly warns us to treat the stranger amongst us just like a full citizen. ARZA resources and speakers can help you get to know this side of Israeli society which is a crucial step toward understanding the challenges of sovereignty and the dreams of molding a state based on the values of our ancient heritage.

4. (Almost) Everything You Wanted to Know about the Israeli Reform Movement

Many people are under the impression that the "only" Jewish choice in Israel is strict Orthodoxy. But in fact, there is a Reform movement there too, as well as a Conservative movement and a growing number of other religious choices. ARZA



can introduce you to the opportunities and the challenges embraced by Israel's Reform Jews as they build congregations, grow their institutions, and slowly change the Jewish culture of the Jewish State.

5. Not Your Grandfather's Zionism: Creating the Next Generation of Zionist Leaders

With NFTY joining NETZER Olami, the international progressive Reform Movement, an important symbolic step towards greater connection to Israel was initiated. But what are the special issues and challenges faced in trying to plant the love of Israel deep in the soul of today's Jewish youth? ARZA is addressing this crucial question on both a theoretical and a practical level and can provide resources for your kids – preschool through college.

6. Israel Across the Congregational Curriculum

With demographic studies showing that Reform Jews are growing distant from Israel, it is important that we adopt a strategic approach to the Israel engagement agenda. Our tradition never envisioned Israel as a once in a lifetime experience that could only be accessed by a first-hand visit; Israel is an integral element of Jewish life that is reflected in our Torah, our liturgy, ritual life and customs. ARZA can help you answer the central question: How can a deep connection to Israel be woven throughout every level and stage of our congregation's life of learning?

7. Building Bridges: Dialoging with Christians and Muslims about Israel

Building bridges of understanding with other faith communities can be challenging when it comes to talking about Israel. Each group comes to the discussion with its own historical, cultural, and theological lenses. Yet if we are to work for peace, it is very important that we explore the complexities and dynamics of those lenses so that we can create different, flexible models of Jewish dialogue with Christians and Muslims. ARZA can help you prepare for such dialogue in your own community.

8. Making Your Congregation's Israel Trip a SUCCESS!

The number one reason congregations do not sponsor trips to Israel is a fear of failure. We can provide you with sound strategies to ensure that your trip is effectively envisioned, planned, marketed, and implemented. Additionally, we can provide you with valuable ideas for pre-trip and post-trip programming. Don't put that trip off any longer!

9. Hebrew Language: A Key to Israel Engagement

What role does Hebrew play in forming our relationship with Israel? What role could it play? Do these questions affect congregational policy? What kind of Hebrew should we be teaching in our schools? Prayer-book Hebrew? Biblical Hebrew? Modern conversational Hebrew? Considering the importance of language in human identity, there are few questions that are more important for us as a Jewish people.

10. Israel and the Social Action Agenda: Jewish Values Tested in the Jewish State

"No one is poor or hungry in Israel" – true or false? As a movement committed to Tikkun Olam, it is incumbent upon us to look at the social, economic and political challenges of Israel, so that we can better understand the confrontation between real world social ills and Jewish sovereignty. ARZA significantly supports the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the Israeli Reform Movement's agency dedicated to making Israeli life more just, more pluralistic, and more humane for all inhabitants.

11. Making Aliyah: A New Look at a Scary Idea

Being called to the Torah is one form of Aliyah. But for some, Aliyah is a permanent life-changing experience. In today's world, however, Aliyah is no longer seen exclusively as moving to Israel forever. ARZA, the Reform Movement and our partners at the Jewish Agency for Israel are developing a range of experiences that can help Reform Jews find ways to connect to Israel on a first hand basis and explore the options of short-term and long-term Aliyah.

12. The Place of Israel in *Mishkan Tefila*

Is your congregation making the switch to *Mishkan Tefila*? Our new siddur takes another step forward to integrate Israel and Zionism into the liturgy of our Movement. We can guide you through careful study of how and where Israel appears in this new volume can help your community better understand how our movement's relationship to Israel, and our worship experience are evolving.

13. Yom Ha'Atzmaut: Israel's Independence Day in Your Congregation

In May 2008, Israel will celebrate her 60th birthday. What does this historic event, or, for that matter, any of Israel's birthdays, mean to your congregation? Is Yom Ha-Atzma'ut a Jewish religious holiday or an Israeli secular/patriotic day? And if it belongs in our Diaspora synagogues, how should we be celebrating? These are not just practical questions. Rather, they go to the heart of the relationship between



Diaspora Jews and the State. Let us help you plan a Yom Ha'Atzmaut celebration that is meaningful to your community.

14. A Compass for the Jewish Soul: Making a Mizrach

A *mizrach* is a Jewish ritual object, a decorative wall-hanging that points the way to Israel. We can help your congregation offer a workshop that will combine text study with an arts-and-crafts project that will send participants home with a *mizrach* to hang on their walls, and to deepen the Israel consciousness in their daily lives.

15. One Heart, Two Homes

ARZA has produced a five-session adult education curriculum called *One Heart, Two Homes*. This interactive exploration of how American Reform Jews *feel* about Israel can be used in a variety of settings in the congregation.

16. Women in Israeli Society

Israel has produced its own legion of women of valor. ARZA could help you plan a careful study of fascinating traditional and contemporary texts that could shed light on the interaction between women and the land, as well as the complexities of women's roles in a pluralistic Israeli society.

17. Israelspeak – A Candid Conversation about New Paradigms for Israel Engagement

It is so important to create a safe space in which Jews feel that they can ask deep questions and think in new ways about Israel and about the Israel-Diaspora relationship. ARZA can model the beginning of such a safe conversation in a way that will open your congregants up to new ways of envisioning Israel.

18. Discovering Israel through Contemporary Israeli Culture

One of the most powerful ways to explore what Israel is and how we relate to it is through contemporary Israeli culture. Music, books, short stories, poetry, and films are widely available, and ARZA can help you plan a single session or an ongoing program for their use.

To contact ARZA, visit www.arza.org or call 212-650-4280