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**Community Mission to Israel**

*April 28-May 4, 2025*

**Pre- Trip Information Sheet**

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1. **PASSPORTS & VISAS**
	* All travelers must have a passport valid at least through **six months after your departure date from Israel**. U.S. and Canadian passport holders need no visa to enter Israel. For other nationalities, check with the nearest Israeli consulate.
	* **NEW: Beginning this summer, visitors from visa-exempt countries (including the US) are required to obtain an ETA-IL (Electronic Travel Authorization) to enter the state of Israel. An approved ETA-IL, indicates that you are allowed to travel to Israel and stay for up to 90 days per visit.**

**All travelers to Israel must have a valid**[**visa or ETA-IL approval**](https://israel-entry.piba.gov.il/visa-option)**before they start their journey. If you are eligible, obtaining an ETA-IL is a simpler and faster process – simply go into this link:** [**https://israel-entry.piba.gov.il/**](https://israel-entry.piba.gov.il/)

* + **Israeli citizens** must enter and leave Israel on their Israeli passport. If you are an Israeli citizen or if one or more of your parents is an Israeli citizen or if you lived in Israel previously, please contact the Israeli consulate to determine your legal status in Israel and to procure an Israeli passport if needed.
* If a **child is accompanied by only one parent**, the parent should have a note from the child’s other parent. For example, “I acknowledge that my wife/husband is travelling out of the country with my son/daughter. He/She has my permission to do so.” If a single parent has sole custody, a copy of the court custody document can replace a letter from the other parent.
* At passport control at Ben Gurion Airport each passenger will receive a printed entry card/visa. **Please keep the entry visa card with your passport as you will need to present it at each hotel to avoid paying the Value Added Tax (VAT) from which tourists are exempt.**
1. **HEALTH & MEDICAL CARE IN ISRAEL**
	* There are no particular health issues associated with travel to Israel. If you have any special **medical issues**, please consult with your physician before traveling.
	* While almost all **prescription drugs** are available in Israel, if you are taking a prescribed medication please bring a sufficient supply with you (and extra eye glasses and contact lenses). It is recommended to bring along copies of your prescriptions and, if you have an unusual prescription, carry a letter from your physician explaining your need for the drug. As an extra precaution, carry the generic names of your medications with you because pharmaceutical companies overseas may use different names from those used in the United States. To prevent problems if your luggage is lost or misrouted, keep medications in their original containers and pack them in carry-on luggage.
	* While Israel has the highest ratio of doctors to potential patients in the world, we do hope that you will not give them any business during your trip. If a medical problem does arise in Israel, Keshet will arrange medical care for you at your expense. Please check with your health insurer regarding coverage for foreign travel.
	* If a participant becomes ill or feels sick once in Israel, the Keshet staff will help arrange for examination, testing and treatment as determined by medical professionals and if needed, isolated accommodations - at the participant’s expense.
2. **TRIP INSURANCE**
* Keshet urges you to purchase cancellation insurance and supplemental medical coverage (which covers preexisting conditions). The medical coverage included in most travel insurance is a secondary, supplemental policy, which means that in case of a medical claim, you will first need to file with your own US medical insurance before filing for coverage of medical expenses covered by the travel insurance.    Please note that most insurance policies require purchase within 14 days of your date of registration for the trip.
1. **SAFETY AND SECURITY**
	* Generally speaking, Israel is as safe as or safer than most US cities.
	* We recommend that you take **usual traveling precautions**, such as keeping a separate photocopy of your passport, not carrying open bags which are a temptation to pickpockets, not leaving your property lying around, etc. We particularly advise keeping your cash and credit cards in money belts.
	* Please **do not accept parcels** from strangers who ask you to deliver them to Israel. You will be asked about this by airline security before boarding the plane, and it is best to be able to answer truthfully. While in Israel, do not leave parcels, knapsacks or other baggage unattended in public places.
2. **CELLULAR PHONE RENTAL**
	* In order to have phone and internet service while in Israel, it may be easiest to contact your home provider to see if they can provide you with a hassle-free plan for Israel.
	* While in Israel, you may wish to have the convenience of a SIM card for your phone, a Pocket WiFi with unlimited internet for your laptop or tablet, or a basic cell phone. While you are free to order from any company that you wish, Keshet has made arrangements with **019 Mobile** to provide discounted rates for unlimited calls, text, data and phone options during your stay in Israel.

You can place your order through the website that has been created for you: <https://019mobile.com/?company=keshet>

After you are done ordering your phone plan, you'll receive an invoice sent to your email with an invoice number.
When you land in Israel, you must go to the shop at the exit of the airport and you'll receive your package there.
019 is open 24 hours a day, 6 days a week (closed on Saturday), so even if you are landing at night, the sim will be there for you.
To qualify for these specials, please be sure to order your package up to **3 days before** yourarrival.

For more information, please send an email to info@019mobile.com or call their customer service representatives at 19292371682 (08:00 AM – 10:00 PM, Israeli hours).

1. **MONEY**
	* You can obtain Israeli shekels from most Israeli ATM machines with your US or Canadian issued ATM or credit card. Many Israeli Banks are part of the PLUS Network; some are also on CIRRUS. This means that if you are bringing an ATM card there is no need to bring large amounts of cash with you. Please contact your bank prior to your departure to be sure that you are able to use your card overseas and for clarification of fees and withdrawal limits if any. We do NOT recommend bringing Travelers’ Checks.
	* You may also use VISA, MasterCard & American Express cards for nearly all transactions in Israel over $20. Please contact your credit card company prior to your departure to let them know that you will be travelling in Israel and for clarification of fees if any.
	* There are also many official moneychanger establishments throughout the country should you wish to exchange American cash dollars for Israeli shekels. The best exchange rate can usually be obtained at ATM machines and via credit card purchases. Currently the exchange rate is about 3.60 shekels to the US dollar (2.50 shekels to the Canadian dollar) which means that a shekel is worth about 28 US cents (40 Canadian cents). Of course, this rate is variable and will likely change. Download the **Pali Social Money Exchange app** from your smart phone’s app store to find fellow travelers to exchange currencies with or to find the nearest money exchange spot with the best rate.
	* For meals on your own: An average dinner is $25 - $50 at a reasonable restaurant, and fast food meals of pizza or falafel run about $12. Standard tip for waiters is 12%.
2. **TIPS**
	* Standard gratuities for your Keshet Israel Tour Educator/Guide, Bus Driver, Hotel Bell staff and Waiters at included meals have already been included in your pre-trip payments. (Of course, you should feel free to add to these amounts if you wish).

1. **COMMUNICATIONS**
	* The **country code** for Israel is **972.** The **area code** for Jerusalem is 2, for Tel Aviv 3, for the south 8 and for the Galilee 4. Example: A call from US to Jerusalem would be dialed as follows: 011-972-2-phone #
	* If you are planning to bring your laptop computer, tablet or smartphone with you, **wireless connections** are generally available at the hotels that you will be staying at. There are also internet computer stations at the hotels.
2. **UPON ARRIVAL**
* You will be arriving at Terminal 3 at Ben Gurion International Airport. After passing through passport control, you’ll find yourself at the baggage claim area. **A Keshet representative will meet you at the baggage claim area** and escort you through customs to the arrivals hall where you will find your Keshet Israel Tour Educator waiting. **Please stay together as a group.**
* Upon arrival in Israel, you will receive a printed tourist entry visa instead of having your passport stamped. **You must keep this visa in order to receive any VAT refund when departing from Israel at the end of your stay.**
1. **ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES**
	* The electrical current in Israel is the European standard **220 volts** rather than the US standard 110 volts. Please make sure that whatever electrical appliances you plan to use in Israel (Camera/video chargers, laptop computers, tablets, etc.) can accept 220 volts electricity.
	* You will also need a **plug adapter** to match the Israeli electrical outlets. You may also run appliances on a currency transformer that will convert the 220 volts to 110 volts but for the welfare of your appliances, we do not recommend this.

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| **Plug Type** | **Picture** |
| Plug type C has two round pins  | Power plugs and sockets type C are used in Israel |
| Plug type H has three pins in a triangular shape. | Power plugs and sockets type H are used in Israel |

1. **WEATHER**
	* Israel has a Mediterranean climate characterized by **long, hot, dry summers** and **short, cool, rainy winters**, as modified locally by altitude and latitude.
	* **Spring** time in Israel can be quite hot, with daytime temperatures in the 70’s and 80’s throughout the country. In the coastal areas like Tel Aviv, the humidity starts to be felt, making it feel hotter than it actually is. Chances of rain are low, but you may want to bring a windbreaker or light rain jacket just in case. Evenings in the mountains – like Jerusalem, Tzfat and the Golan – can be quite cool and could require a sweater or sweatshirt. Don’t forget to pack sunscreen, sunglasses, water shoes for the Dead Sea, your bathing suit and a sun hat/cap.
2. **WATER**
	* The arid climate in most of Israel means that one loses fluids without necessarily noticing. In other words, your body can require you to drink without making you thirsty. Keshet will be providing an insulated water bottle carrier and an initial bottle of water for each participant upon arrival. Tap water in Israel is generally as fit to drink as tap water elsewhere and bottled water is widely available for purchase.
3. **HOURS & TIME**
	* **Time Zone:** GMT/UTC+02:00
	* **Time Format:** 24-hour (i.e. 3:00 PM is 15:00)
	* **Date Format**: Day, Month, Year (i.e. June 1, 2010 is 1/6/10).
	* The Israeli **workweek** is Sunday through Thursday with the “weekend” falling on Friday and Saturday, coinciding with the Jewish Sabbath. Stores are generally open Sunday thru Thursday 9 AM -7 PM and on Fridays from 9 AM – 1 or 2 PM. Most stores, banks, and offices are closed on Shabbat.
	* **Jewish Holidays** such as Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succot, Hanukah and Purim are National Holidays in Israel. **Israeli National Holidays** such asYom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), Memorial Day, and Independence Day occur in the late spring. On Jewish Holidays and Shabbat, all government offices and most shops and services are closed.
4. **NEWS**
	* There are two printed Israeli English language daily newspapers - **The Jerusalem Post**, and **Ha'aretz** (which comes together with the International Herald Tribune). Some hotels have cable TV that includes CNN and/or FOX and Sky/BBC.
	* Online Israeli news sources in English:

The Jerusalem Post <http://www.jpost.com>

Haaretz <http://www.haaretz.com>

Arutz Sheva <http://www.israelnationalnews.com>

The Times of Israel <http://www.timesofisrael.com/>

Ynet News <http://www.ynetnews.com>

1. **PACKING RECOMMENDATIONS**
	* Remember to check with your airline prior to departure to confirm the number, size and weight of luggage you are permitted to bring on the flight. Remember: The less you bring with you the easier it will be for you and the group.
	* Israel is a fairly informal country and the style of dress is mostly casual. In general, you should pack casual clothes in which you will be comfortable and not mind getting dirty during touring.
	* **Shabbat attire:** Men generally wear casual dress slacks or khakis and a dress shirt, open collar, with comfortable shoes. Women generally wear a dress or skirt and blouse with comfortable shoes.

**Suggested Packing List**

**Clothing**

* undergarments and socks (including thick socks for walking)
* 5 -7 comfortable shirts/blouses
* 4 -5 pairs of jeans/comfortable pants/shorts/skirts
* *For women*: A knee length skirt (a wrap-around is handy) and a shirt with sleeves (not long sleeved but not sleeveless) for some of the religious sites that require them
* Bathing suit
* 1 - 2 pair of comfortable walking/hiking shoes
* 1 pair of water shoes/sandals that you can wear in the Dead Sea (not flip-flops)
* 2 sweaters/sweatshirts
* 1 light windbreaker jacket
* 1 hat (Sun or baseball caps can work well) You will also receive a Keshet baseball cap in Israel

**Other**

* Small knapsack or day pack for daily use
* Siddur, Tallit and Tefilin if desired
* Kippah (men should bring one, women are welcome to as well)
* Sunglasses
* Prescription glasses, contacts and contact lens solution if applicable
* Camera, memory cards and batteries/chargers
* Laptop, tablet, cell phone and chargers (if desired)
* Toiletries: toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, sunscreen, medications, favorite soap and shampoo (There will be soap and shampoo at each of our overnight accommodations)
* 1 Towel

**I’d like to bring supplies for the evacuees or soldiers.  What do you suggest?**

That’s great! (but not required in anyway) Here is a partial list:

* Socks and underwear for men, women, and children in all sizes
* Coloring books for adults and children
* Colored pencils, crayons
* Travel sets of backgammon, checkers, or chess or other games that don’t require English
* Teddy bears
* “Leatherman” multi-tools
* Head lamps (flashlights with head straps) plus batteries
* Olive colored Fleeces
* Cellphone charging cables for iPhones (USB to lightning) and Androids (USB to type C)
* Portable chargers and Power Banks for cellphones

Should you bring items for others, make sure that you have “packed them yourselves” in your luggage since you will be asked this question by El Al security before check-in. There is a good chance security will want to see any items you are bringing to soldiers so make sure that they are easily accessible in your luggage.

**16. SUGGESTED RESOURCES**

Coming to the program with some background, knowledge and awareness about Israel and its history will greatly enhance your enjoyment of the experience. Your local library, video or bookstore, and the Internet are excellent resources.

Below you will find a list of our suggestions. If you are looking for just a few books, we suggest:

* Klein Halevi, Yossi, *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation*. Harper, 2013.
* Klein Halevi, Yossi, *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*, Harper, 2018.
* The Bible. In our opinion, The Jewish Publication Society translation – JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh - is the easiest to read.
* Feiler, Bruce, *Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses.* William Morrow Paperbacks, 2005.

**History & Zionism**

Avner, Yehuda, *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership.* The Toby Press, LLC; First Edition (US), 2010.

Collins, Larry and LaPierre, Dominique, *O Jerusalem*. Simon & Schuster, 1972.

Dimont, Max I., *Jews, God and History*. Signet Classics; Second Edition, 2004.

Gilbert, Martin, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century*. Pimlico, 1996.

Gordis, Daniel. *Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End.* Wiley, 2009.

Hazony, David, Hazony, Yoram and Oren, Michael (Eds.), *New Essays on Zionism*. Shalem Press, 2007.

Hazony, Yoram, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul.* Basic, 2001.

Kaniuk, Yoram, *Commander of the Exodus.* Grove Press, 2001.

Klein Halevi, Yossi, *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation*. Harper, 2013.

Laquer, Walter.  *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of The State Of Israel*. Knopf Doubleday, 2004.

# Leibovitz, Liel, *Aliya: Three Generations of American-Jewish Immigration to Israel*. St. Martin's Press, 2013.

Oren, Michael, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Shapira, Anita, *Israel: A History*. Brandeis, 2014.

Shavit, Ari, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel.* Spiegel & Grau, 2013.

Vilnay, Zev, *Legends of Judea and Samaria*. Sefer Ve Sefel, 2006.

**Memoirs & Biographies**

Begin, Menachem, *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun.* Steimatzky Agency Ltd, 1977.

Ben Gurion, David, *Letters to Paula*. University of Pittsburgh Press; 1st Great Britain Edition, 1972.

Feiler, Bruce, *Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses.* William Morrow Paperbacks, 2005.

Friedman, Thomas L., *From Beirut to Jerusalem.* Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1989.

Gordis, Daniel, *Menachem Begin: The Battle for Israel's Soul.* Schocken*,* 2014.

Halkin, Hillel, *Jabotinsky: A Life*. Yale University Press, 2014.

Klagsburn, Francine. Lioness: Golda Meir and the Nation of Israel. Schocken Books Inc, 2017.

Lapid, Yair, *Memories After My Death: The Story of Joseph ‘Tommy’ Lapid.* Elliott & Thompson, 2011.

Meir, Golda, *My Life.* Putnam, 1975.

Netanyahu, Jonathan, *The Letters of Jonathan Netanyahu: The Commander of the Entebbe Rescue Force.* Gefen Publishing House, 2001.

Senesh, Hannah, *Hannah Senesh: Her Life and Diary,* Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004.

Shapira, Anita, *Ben-Gurion: Father of Modern Israel*. Yale University Press, 2014.

Singer, Alex, *Alex: Building A Life.* Gefen Publishing House, 1996.

**US-Israel Relations**

Indyk, Martin, *Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East*. Simon & Schuster, 2014.

Oren, Michael, *Ally: My Journey Across the American-Israeli Divide***.** Random House, 2015.

Oren, Michael, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: The United States in the Middle East, 1776 to 2006*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2007.

Ross, Dennis, *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 2015.

**Novels**

Arthur, Kay, *Israel My Beloved*. Harvest House Publishers, 2001.

Ben-David, Liat Taiber, *Yahrzeit.* Gefen Books, 2005.

Diamant, Anita, *The Red Tent*. Picador, 2007.

Grossman, David, *The Yellow Wind.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

Grossman, David, *To the End of the Land.* Vintage, 2011.

Helprin, Mark, *Refiner’s Fire*. Harvest Books, 1990.

Hoffman, Alice, *The Dovekeepers.* Scribner, 2012.

Kaniuk, Yoram, *1948.*NYRB LIT, 2012.

Kashua, Sayed, *Dancing Arabs.* Grove Press, 2004.

Leshem, Ron, *Beaufort.* Delcorte Press, 2007.

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Moed Kass, Pnina, *Real Time.* Clarion Books, 2004.

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Oren, Michael, *Reunion*. Plume, 2003.

Oz, Amos, *A Tale of Love and Darkness.* Mariner Books, 2005.

Oz, Amos, *Panther in the Basement*. Mariner Books, 1998.

Richman, Alyson, *The Lost Wife*. Berkley, 2011.

Sabato, Haim, *Adjusting Sights.* Toby Press, 2006

Shalev, Meir, *The Loves of Judith.* Schocken, 2012.

Steinberg, Milton, *As A Driven Leaf.* Behrman House, 1996.

Uris, Leon, *Exodus*. Bantam, 1983.

 Wouk, Herman, *The Glory.* Little, Brown & Company, 1994.

Wouk, Herman, *The Hope.* Little, Brown & Company, 1993.

 Yehoshua, A.B., *Mr. Mani.* Doubleday, 1992.

Yehoshua, A.B., *The Lover.* Doubleday, 1978.

**Modern Israel & Culture**

Ezrahi, Yaron, *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel.* University of California Press, 1998.

Halkin, Hillel. *Letters to an American Jewish Friend: A Zionist’s Polemic.* Gefen Publishing House, 2013.

Segev, Tom. *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust.* Picador, 2000.

Senor, Dan and Singer, Saul, *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel’s Economic Miracle*. Twelve, 2009.

Siegel, Seth M., *Let There Be Water: Israel’s Solution for a Water-Starved World*. St. Martin's Press, 2015.

Ottolenghi, Yotam, *Jerusalem: A Cookbook.* Ten Speed Press, 2012.

Zalmona, Yigal, *A Century of Israeli Art*. Land Humphries, 2013.

**Poetry**

Amichai, Yehuda, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai.* University of California Press, 1996.

Keller, Tsipi, *Poets on the Edge: An Anthology of Contemporary Hebrew Poetry.* State University of New York Press, 2008.

**The Arab-Israeli Conflict**

Bard, Mitchell G., *Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict****.*** AICE; Revised & Updated edition, 2011.

Dershowitz, Alan, *The Case for Israel*. John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

Gilbert, Martin, *The Routledge Atlas of the Arab Israeli Conflict.* Routledge, 2003.

Grossman, David, *Sleeping on a Wire: Conversations with Palestinians in Israel.* Picador, 2003.

Morris, Benny, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict.* Yale University Press, 2010.

Peters, Joan, *From Time Immemoria*l: *The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine.* J Kap Publishing, 1984.

**The Arab World**

Ajami, Fouad.  *Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation’s Odyssey*. Vintage, 1999.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror.* Random House, 2004.

Said, Edward.  *The Edward Said Reader*. Vintage, 2000.

**Websites**

* Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mfa.gov.il>
* Eretz: The Magazine of Israel <http://www.eretz.com>
* Is Peace Possible (outlines the main issues of the conflict) <http://ispeacepossible.com/>
* ISRAEL21c (highlights Israel’s contributions) <http://israel21c.org/>
* Honest Reporting <http://honestreporting.com/>
* The Israel Forever Foundation <http://israelforever.org/>
* Official Site of Danny Gordis <http://danielgordis.org/>
* Green Prophet (green news in the Middle East) <http://www.greenprophet.com/>
* No Camels (highlights Israeli innovation) <http://nocamels.com/>
* Fathom Journal https://fathomjournal.org/

**Videos & YouTube Channels**

* The History of the Middle East Conflict <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZY8m0cm1oY>
* TED Talks about Israel <http://www.ted.com/search?cat=ss_all&q=israel>
* The Jerusalem Center <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheJerusalemCenter?feature=watch>
* Stand With Us <http://www.youtube.com/user/standwithus>
* Honest Reporting <http://www.youtube.com/user/HonestReportingVideo>
* The Jerusalem Center <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheJerusalemCenter?feature=c4-overview-vl>
* The Israel Forever Foundation <https://www.youtube.com/user/IsraelForeverFndtn>
* The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs <https://www.youtube.com/user/IsraelMFA>
* The Official Channel of the State of Israel <https://www.youtube.com/user/Israel>
* Boycott Israel Parody <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHwyW9xOyI>