



THE CENTER
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF JEWISH EDUCATION

Celebrating 80 Years of Bringing Learning and Leadership to Life

ISRAEL CORNER



The Robert Russell Early Childhood Department of CAJE: The Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education in Miami is excited to introduce a new initiative aimed at enriching your children's understanding of Israel through engaging and thought-provoking content. Starting this November, you will receive a monthly article penned by two early childhood education experts: **Rabbi Dr. Meir Muller** and **Alana Gelnick**.

With a combined half a decade of experience working with young learners, and each raising their own children, they have so much to offer us! Alana was an early childhood principal for a decade and has since founded the company **Dreamearly**, committed to helping people help kids. Meir's career includes serving as a rabbi in a Chabad shul in South Carolina, where he headed the Jewish community school for thirty years and works as an early childhood professor.

These articles will be presented to you as part of CAJE's commitment to enhancing Israel education within our early childhood settings. One of the key objectives of these articles is to help you engage with your children in learning about and connecting to Israel through practical insights and resources that empower you to teach your young children.

Expect to find varied media examples -- including books, songs, and activities -- that resonate with our community's values. We believe that, together, we can cultivate a strong connection to Israel that will inspire and educate our children!

A Journey of Exploration and Connection

Think about a place that is special to you. Often, these memories are tied to our senses —the food we tasted, the aromas in the air, and the sounds around us. This is true for many Jewish holidays, whether it's smelling an etrog on Sukkot, hearing the sizzle of latkes on Chanukah, or tasting bitter herbs on Pesach.

Jewish traditions are deeply connected to sensory experiences, allowing us to feel these moments on a deeper level. For many Jewish people, experiences like a Birthright trip create a meaningful, sensory connection to Israel, our ancestral homeland. For others, various resources help foster and build this connection.



Throughout the year, in this monthly column, we will take you and your children on a journey of exploration and connection to the land, people, and culture of Israel. Each month, we'll link our article to a special theme of the month, offering books, art, songs, or stories to help your young children develop a love for Israel.

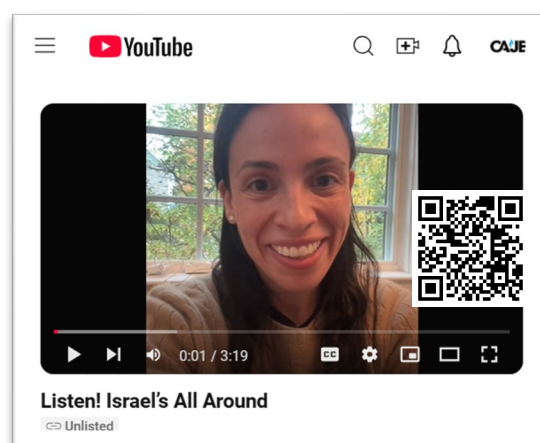
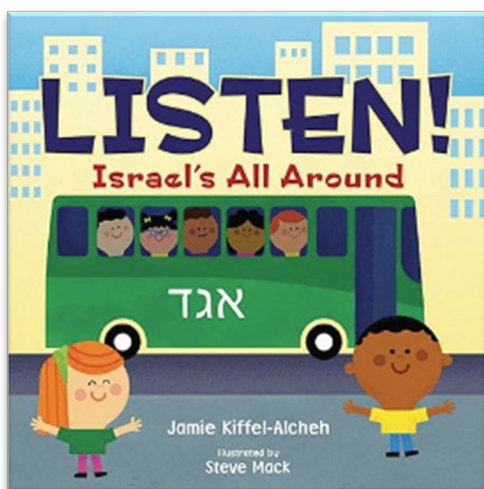
Together, we will explore how to engage your children's senses to make Israel a special and meaningful part of their lives, even from a young age.

Families can instill emotional joy in young children even before children fully understand a concept cognitively. When it comes to Israel, we believe this connection can begin as early as infancy.

During this month of November, when many of us are reflecting on thankfulness, we offer a curated set of resources to help you create joyous family memories and nurture a positive connection to Israel.

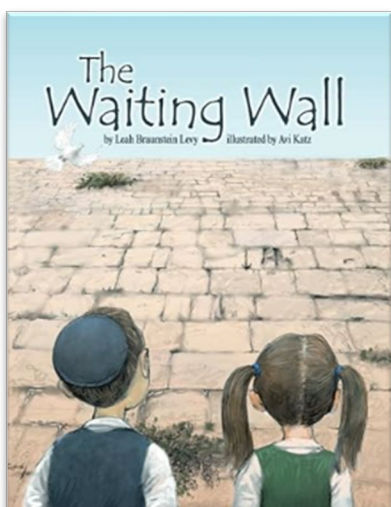
SELECTED READING

#1 For infants and toddlers, we suggest [Listen!: Israel's All Around](#) by Jamie Kiffel-Alcheh. This lively colorful board book introduces toddlers to Israel through vibrant sound effects and key cultural words, offering a fun, sensory-filled journey that highlights various activities, from tractors on a kibbutz to playing *matkot* (Israeli paddleball).

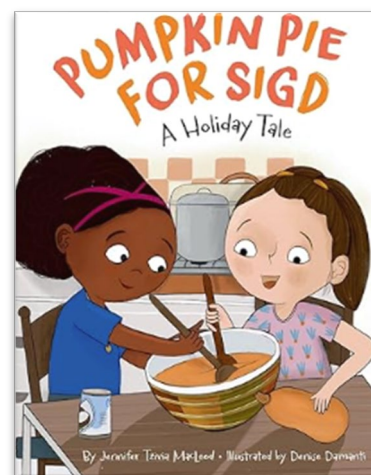


[Read Along with Alana Gelnick](#)

#2 Books like [The Waiting Wall](#) by Leah Braunstein Levy can be used to learn about the holy places in Israel like the Kotel (Western Wall).



#3 For older preschoolers, introducing them to [Pumpkin Pie for Sigd](#) by Jennifer Tzivia Macleod. This book describes how Maddie moves to Israel and with the help of her new friend Orly, an immigrant from Ethiopia, they try to make a pumpkin pie for Sigd (an Ethiopian Jewish holiday), drawing from Maddie's love for Thanksgiving. Through their creative cooking and shared experiences, they discover the commonalities between their holidays and the joy of celebrating together.



MUSIC

For music, we suggest [Uzi Hitman](#), a beloved Israeli singer, songwriter, and composer known for his many children's songs. One of his most famous songs, "Todah" (The "Thanks" Song), is all about gratitude.

*"Thanks for all that You've created,
Thanks for what You've given me.*

*For our eyesight,
A friend or two,
For what I have in the world.
For the song which flows,
And a forgiving heart -
Because of all this - I exist.*

*Thanks for all that You've created,
Thanks for what You've given me. "*

You can listen to it here: [UziHitman – Todah](#) and read the lyrics in transliteration, English and with a link to Hebrew [here](#).



[Listen to Uzi Hitman sing "Todah" \(The "Thanks" Song\) on YouTube](#)



Lastly, as we focus on thankfulness, you can teach your children how to say "thank you" in Hebrew—***Todah!*** And if they want to say, "thank you so much," they can say ***Todah Rabbah!***



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