

Fun Facts

The flag of Israel was selected in 1948, only 5 months after the state was established. The flag includes two blue stripes on white background with a blue Shield of David (6 pointed star) in the center. The chosen colors blue & white symbolize trust and honesty.

On the afternoon of Jerusalem's liberation, June 7, 1967, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan made the following statement from the Western Wall:

We have united Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel. We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from it again. To our Arab neighbors we extend, also at this hour — and with added emphasis at this hour — our hand in peace. And to our Christian and Muslim fellow citizens, we solemnly promise full religious freedom and rights. We did not come to Jerusalem for the sake of other peoples' holy places, and not to interfere with the adherents of other faiths, but in order to safeguard its entirety, and to live there together with others, in unity.

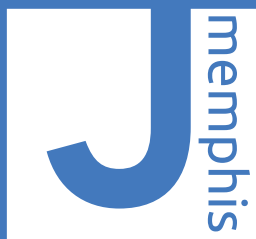
“ As long as deep within the heart a Jewish soul stirs, and forward to the ends of the East an eye looks out towards Zion, our hope is not yet lost. The hope of two thousand years, to be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem.” (*HaTikvah* - The Israeli National Anthem) ”

All about **The Yoms**

(Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron,
Yom HaAtzmaut, and
Yom Yerushalayim)

Collective Responses to Recent Jewish History

April 14, 21, 22, and May 15
Nissan 27, Iyar 5, 4, and 28



*“Not just History; Living Memory
- Mourning, Joy and Hope!”*



Each of the four Yom's (literally: days) was enacted by the modern State of Israel and adopted by Jewish communities throughout the world to collectively recall events of contemporary Jewish history.

The Backstory

1. Yom HaShoah

(*Yom HaShoah V'HaGevurah* – Day of [Remembrance for] the Catastrophe (the Holocaust) and the Heroism is marked each year on the 27th of the Hebrew month of *Nissan* which corresponds to the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, a date selected by the Knesset (Israel's parliament) in 1951 intentionally to convey a specific narrative which departed drastically from the international one at the time.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is marked on January 27, a date selected by the UN General Assembly because it is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Russian forces. However, implicit in this date is a sense of Jewish victimhood and the need for the world to provide strength and salvation.

To the fledgling state of Israel, this message could not resonate. The new Jewish homeland was to be the proud strength of the self-reliant Jewish people who command the fate of their own destiny. Thus, the shift in date and name to something that would call attention to the pockets of resistance, the retention of dignity amid unimaginable circumstances.

A siren sounds throughout the State of Israel, everything comes to a stop for two minutes at sundown and again at 11am. All media broadcasts focus their programming on the memory of those lost, and the heroism of those who survived rebuilding lives and enduring legacies.

In Jewish communities throughout the world, including here in Memphis, *Yom HaShoah* ceremonies recall the tragedy, mourn our shared and personal loss, and honor those who survived – committing to ensure that such horror never happen again.

3. Yom HaAtzmaut

Moments after the sun sets on *Yom HaZikaron*, the flag at *Har Herzl* (the National military cemetery) is raised from half-staff to full height and an emotional switch from tears to joy is flipped. This is the onset of *Yom HaAtzmaut* – marking the anniversary of Israel declaring its independence on the 5th day of the Hebrew Month of *Iyar* in 1948.

Late into the night, people gather in the streets for festive concerts sponsored by the municipalities, or to engage in dancing and singing songs about the love of Israel, of hope, of pride and redemption. By day, Israelis engage in hikes, picnics, and *Mangal* – BBQ's, and the "Israel Prize" ceremony grants recognition to those who've made unique contributions to the countries culture, science, arts, and the humanities.

To many, *Yom HaAtzmaut* has taken on religious significance, with synagogues adapting ritual practices to mark the day and thank God for the miracle of Jewish return to Zion. Even those who do not ascribe religious significance to the day, nevertheless marvel with pride in Jewish peoplehood and the strength-filled reflowering of a once barren homeland so entwined with the very heart of Jewish cultural identity and prayers for millennia.

Throughout the rest of the world, Jewish communities and non-Jewish friends of Israel, join in a celebration of solidarity with Israel and with each other. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Israel's success serves as a mark of Jewish pride in our people's capacity to rebuild, as a reassuring source of Jewish safety and security, and as a place that we'll continue to view as family and our spiritual home.

2. Yom HaZikaron

Yom HaZikaron – 'Day of Remembrance' is Israel's Memorial Day. Only enshrined in law in 1963, unofficially the day has been observed since the state's founding in 1948 as a day of memory for soldiers who lost their lives in battle on behalf of a Jewish homeland.

Celebrated annually on the 4th of the Hebrew month of *Iyar* right before Israeli Independence Day, the juxtaposition serves as a tribute and reminder that freedom and relative safety enjoyed daily in Israel is only possible because of the individual heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice for our people and our shared dream of peace.

With the passage of time and the collective trauma due to ongoing conflict and terrorism, the day now honors not just fallen soldiers, but also security personnel and private citizens who gave their lives to keep the public safe from terrorist attacks, and to remember those who've perished as a result of anti-Israel violence. As on *Yom HaShoah*, the entire country again stops with the siren, followed by a recitation of prayers in the military cemeteries.

In Israel, where virtually no segment of the population has been spared the pain of losing a loved one, relative, friend, or peer in the ongoing defense of the nation, the laws require the closing of entertainment venues, while the cultural tradition sees stores and restaurants closed as well. Instead people attend various public ceremonies, visit the graves of loved ones, and collectively lean on each other for strength, hope, and willingness to persevere and thrive, ensuring that their lives were not lost in vain.

4. Yom Yerushalayim

Literally 'Jerusalem Day', *Yom Yerushalayim* commemorates and celebrates the Jewish return to Jerusalem and its unification under Israeli sovereignty on the 28th day of the Hebrew month of *Iyar* resulting from the 1967 Six Day War.

Jews were denied access to the Old City of Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967, while it was under Jordanian rule. This meant that for nearly 20 years, until the return, Jews could not access the *Kotel* (aka the Western or Wailing Wall) and Temple Mount, locations at the center of traditional Jewish faith. That span of time, however, was short by comparison to the years that had elapsed since 70 CE, where the destruction of Jerusalem and end of Jewish sovereignty there resulted in nearly two millennia of mourning. The sudden reunification of the entirety of Jerusalem under Jewish rule impacted world Jewry, igniting the dreams of Israelis, and Jews the world over, in optimistic hopes, and even Messianic fervor, certain of the future strength and accomplishments of our people.

Just as with *Yom HaAtzmaut*, *Yom Yerushalayim* is viewed by some as a religious holiday, and by others as a purely secular day of contemporary Israeli pride. While the universal jubilation and sense of invulnerability may have cooled over the years, eroded by seemingly endless conflict and sacrifice; and while the topic of Jerusalem may evoke different responses in the varying segments of the Israeli and Jewish population today, complicated by the politics of peace and religion; the choice to recapture the spirit of that moment in '67, one that couldn't but fill Jewish collective conscious, allows us yearly to declare *Yeish Tikvah!* - there is hope! Hope, for a Jerusalem of peace. Hope for a Jerusalem that can yet again unite a diverse people with many dreams and thereby lead to the shared dream of a world redeemed.

