

12 INCREDIBLE CONVERSATION-STARTING PHOTOS ABOUT ISRAEL

In this activity, we'll explore 12 powerful photographs from Israel that we hope will inspire a deeper understanding of the people, history and culture of modern Israel. There are two ways to use these photos in your activity.



ACTIVITY

OPTION 1:

Use each picture as a stand-alone lesson, following the discussion questions listed below each photo.

OPTION 2:

Print out all 12 pictures in colour and lay them out on the floor.

1. Ask each participant to choose one image that they want to know more about.
2. Ask the participant to write three questions they want to know about the photo (e.g. Who is in it? Where and when was it taken? What does it mean?)
3. Ask other participants to share their thoughts about the photo.
4. Summarise the conversation by adding any missing historic or cultural context.
5. Conclude by emphasising the importance of engaging with Israel in many ways including photography, film, news and literature.
6. Ask participants to share their favourite Instagram pages from Israel and encourage others to follow them.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES:

Continue the conversation with more amazing photos from here:

<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/picoftheday/MAGAZINE-1.9678325>

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-life-around-the-world-in-2020-month-by-month-in-pictures/>

PHOTO 1: ISRAEL IN THE SKY OF NAHALAT SHIVA

Credit: Elad Gruber

When Israel's President Reuven Rivlin shared this photo on June 18, 2021, he wrote,

"This wonderful picture was sent to me by Elad Gruber - 360 ° photographer.

On one of his trips to Jerusalem, he decided to photograph Yosef Rivlin Street in the Nahalat Shiva neighborhood of Jerusalem, a street named after my mother's grandfather, R. Yosef Rivlin, R. Yosha Shtetl Makher ("Builder of Neighborhoods") who was one of the first to leave the walls of Jerusalem.



'I do not see the result of a 360 ° image during the filming itself,' Elad wrote to me. 'When I got home to edit the picture, I couldn't believe my eyes. The 360 ° photo on Yosef Rivlin Street created the map of the Land of Israel.'

Thank you Elad for this great photo."

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the first thing you notice when you observe this image?
2. How would you caption this photo?
3. Does this photo feel new or old to you?

PHOTO 2: ULTRA-ORTHODOX JEWISH MEN KNEAD THE DOUGH BEFORE BAKING MATZOTH AT A BAKERY IN JERUSALEM, ON APRIL 13, 2016.

Credit: Olivier Fitoussi



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way do you imagine Peasch would be celebrated differently in Israel from the country where you live?
2. Why do you think these men are keen to bake matza themselves rather than buy it from a store?
3. What do you know about Haredim in Israel? What would you like to know more about concerning their lifestyle?

PHOTO 3: HANDSTAND ON TEL AVIV BEACH, APRIL 11, 2016.

Credit: Moti Milrod



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why would one go to the beach in order to do a headstand?
2. Have you heard of the [Feldenkrais](#) method of exercise therapy?
3. This image resonates with many Israelis as it echoes an iconic photo of former Prime Minister David Ben Gurion doing a headstand in the same spot. Read [this article](#) and share three things you learnt about Ben Gurion's exercise routine.

BEN-GURION DOING A HEAD STAND, HERZLIYA, 1957

This iconic photo was taken by Paul Goldman, one of Israel's most prolific photojournalists, who took countless photos of Israel in its early days. He worked mostly for international press agencies between 1943-1965.



PHOTO 4: TRANSLATION AND SPELLING ERRORS ON ISRAELI ROAD SIGNS

Credit: Sandra Kochmann

Any native English speaker who has ever visited Israel will often notice hundreds of road and information signs across the country with incorrect spelling. Those who also speak Arabic will notice that translations are sometimes not the same across the three languages.

In this sign next to the Kotel [Western Wall], the correct English translation should be, "Caution, dangerous potholes!" Yet because the Hebrew word "בורות" can mean either ignorance or pothole with the same spelling, the person who possibly put this into Google translate ended up with a sign that will do little for driver safety, while illuminating a very different point about the dangers of ignorance.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think so many signs in Israel have incorrect spelling or translations in English?
2. Do these errors bother you when you see them, or do you find them humorous or endearing?
3. View the Facebook group, [Weerd, Mizpelt English in Izreal](#) and find three examples of this phenomenon that you find humorous or strange. Share them with your peers.

PHOTO 5: PRAYER NOTES BEING CLEANED OUT OF THE STONES OF THE WESTERN WALL IN JERUSALEM

Credit: Emil Salman



Each year, hundreds of thousands of [prayer notes](#) are stuffed into the Kotel — Judaism's second holiest site — by visitors, tourists, and foreign dignitaries.

The tradition of placing notes in the Kotel dates back to the early 18th century. Twice a year, before Passover and before Rosh Hashanah, the myriad scraps of paper are removed.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever left a note at the Kotel? What do you think about this tradition?
2. Where do all the prayer notes go? Read [this article](#) and share your thoughts about what happens to them all.
3. Since 2007, over 800,000 notes have been sent through the Western Wall [website](#). What do you think motivates so many people around the world to send notes through this website?

PHOTO 6: FANS OF HAPOEL TEL AVIV AND MACCABI TEL AVIV AT THE ANNUAL DERBY IN BLOOMFIELD STADIUM, JUNE 2021

Credit: Nir Kedar



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. While sport rarely makes front page news in Israel, the one time it often does is when Hapoel and Maccabi play for their annual derby. What do you know about these two teams?
2. Why do you think there are so many lit flares on the pitch in this image?
3. Would you ever want to attend an Israeli football match?

PHOTO 7: AN ECO-HUMANISM LESSON AT EIN AMIKAM FOR STUDENTS AT THE ALONA SCHOOL

Credit: Rami Shalosh



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do Israeli schools spend much more time in nature than schools in other parts of the world?
2. What do you imagine the kids in this picture are thinking?
3. Look at the [Alona school website](#). Even if you can't read Hebrew, what do you notice about the images and layout that may be different from your own school's website?

PHOTO 8: MUSLIM WOMEN AT THE NACHALAT BINYAMIN MARKET, TEL AVIV

Credit: Hadas Frosh



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the reputation of the Nachalat Binyamain market in Tel Aviv? What kind of shops and people would you expect to find there?
2. This image was chosen as an "Haaretz photo of the week" at one point in 2021. What do you think made this image unique or exceptional to Israeli readers?
3. What do you know about Muslims who live in Israel, and their feelings about living in a Jewish majority state?

PHOTO 9: JERUSALEM MARCH FOR PRIDE AND TOLERANCE, JUNE 3, 2021

Credit: Tzvi Joffre



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this sign we can see Modern Orthodox Jews at the Jerusalem Pride March with a sign reading "Love your neighbour as yourself," which is a quote from the same chapter of Leviticus that forbids men of the same gender to make love to one other. Why do you think they are marching behind this biblical verse, given how much pain the same chapter has caused to LGBT Jews for centuries?
2. Unlike other marches around the world that have a major festive vibe, the Jerusalem Pride march is sometimes far more of a protest than a party. Why do you think that is the case?
3. This sign was created by an organisation named Hevruta, (Hebrew: חֵבְרוּתָא, from Talmudic Aramaic for fellowship). It is an organization of religiously-inclined Jewish LGBT people in Israel which acts to promote tolerance and acceptance of gay, lesbian, and transgender people in the Orthodox community in Israel. What are some challenges you imagine they would encounter in their work?
4. Why do you think it's so important for Hevruta members to be present at every Jerusalem Pride march?

PHOTO 10: VEGAN BILLBOARD ON AYALON HIGHWAY IN TEL AVIV READS "OUR FIRST AND LAST DAY TOGETHER."

Credit: <https://vegan-friendly.co.il/>



Did you know that Israel was third on Chef's Pencil's [top countries for vegans](#) in 2020, ranking behind the UK and Australia?

Over 5% of Israelis say they are vegan, and the country's vegan-friendly culture and its plethora of plant-based cuisine options have brought Israel to the forefront of discussions surrounding its vegan dominance.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Veganism is so popular in Israel, and especially in Tel Aviv?
2. How do you feel about the human emotions about sensitivity to animals to which this ad plays upon? Do you think it's right for such an ad to appear in such a prominent place seen by thousands of people every day?
3. In what way is the dominant Israeli diet different from that of your home country?

PHOTO 11: THE SIGNS OF JUDAISM, ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Credit: [Haifa Municipality](#)



Sometimes referred to as the Haifa Festival of Festivals and sometimes the Haifa Holiday of Holidays Festival, this annual event takes place in Haifa in December.

It includes two weeks of festivities, cultural activities, markets and fun events celebrating the three monotheistic religions that mostly live in mutual harmony and respect in Haifa. It's a time when Jews around the world celebrate Hannukah, Christians celebrate Christmas, and in some years, Muslims celebrate Ramadan, Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Fitr, as their calendar is lunar, meaning the dates shift each year.

The Festival of Festival was initiated in 1914 by the first Mayor of Haifa - Hassan Shukri. Since then it has grown in size and popularity. This festival hilights the unique flavour of Haifa and its residents. Yona Yahav (previous Mayor of Haifa) aptly described the Festival as one "without boundaries of culture and religion. Just show up and rejoice!"

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you surprised to hear that such a festival exists in a major city in Israel? Why/Why not?
2. What do you know about the festivals of Christianity and Islam?
3. In what way can Haifa be a model for coexistence to other cities in Israel and around the world where religious differences are sometimes a cause of strife rather than co-existence?

PHOTO 12: A MUSLIM AND A JEW TAKE A BREAK FROM SAVING LIVES TOGETHER DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO PRAY FACING MECCA AND JERUSALEM

Credit: Dr. Muhammad Al-Nabari



Covid-19 wasn't the only thing going viral in Israel on March 25, 2020.

Within 24 hours, this photo was shared thousands of times in WhatsApp and Facebook groups across the country to highlight many different points.

Jews in favor of a Gantz-led coalition externally supported by the Joint List (of Arab parties) shared it to show that Jewish-Arab cooperation is possible, especially in times of crisis.

Others shared it to show there is "no Apartheid" in Israel to counterbalance the more common pictures of the occupation which rarely show equality between Israelis and Palestinians.

In a piece for the New York Times, former Jerusalem Bureau Chief, David M. Halbfinger, wrote of this image:

"Avraham Mintz, 43, a Jew from Beersheba, wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and turned north toward Jerusalem. Zohar Abu Jama, 39, an Arab from nearby Rahat, unfolded his prayer rug and knelt facing south toward Mecca.

A co-worker snapped and posted a picture, which appeared to strike a chord far and wide.

But the two men said their back-to-back worship was nothing new.

"We try to pray together, instead of each one of us taking the time for himself, because we have a lot of situations we're dealing with right now," Mr. Mintz said. Five people have died of the virus in Israel so far and one in the occupied West Bank.

"The whole world is battling this," Mr. Abu Jama added. "This is a disease that doesn't tell the difference between anybody, any religion, any gender. But you put that aside. We work together, we live together. This is our life."

Mr. Abu Jama said he'd had his aging mother in mind as he prayed: She is frail, and he has been keeping his distance from her even though they live under the same roof. Mr. Mintz said he had asked God "to let me see the end, the good end. Because I know that it's a good end. And I hope to be there."



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way has Covid-19 both united and divided the world like never before?
2. Why do so many Israelis and Palestinians living within the 1967 borders often speak of hospitals as the place where there is the most tolerance and coexistence of the other?
3. If you could ask Avraham Mintz and Zoher Abu Jama one question each, what would it be?