

# 75 WAYS TO CONNECT

## FIFTEEN THINGS TO SAY IN ISRAEL

Many of these words have come from Arabic into Hebrew

1. **Sababa** comes from Arabic and means excellent.
2. If you hear a glass break in public, you might shout, “**Mazel tov!**”
3. “**Selicha**” is a polite way of asking to excuse yourself when pushing through a crowd.
4. “**Nahag**” or “**naheget**” are the masculine and feminine words for driver. If you’re riding a bus, and the driver closes the door prematurely, this is the word that gets the driver’s attention.
5. **B’t’e’avon** means *bon appétit*.
6. **Mamash** means “really” and takes its accent on the second syllable, unlike the more Yiddish influenced “mamesh” with the accent of the first syllable.
7. **Bagela** are types of bread that aren’t quite a bagel and aren’t quite a pretzel.
8. **Ahalan**—is an abbreviation for Ahalan wa’sahalan—Arabic words of welcoming.
9. **Yalla** is an adaptable expression, meaning anything from “let’s go” to the signal that it’s time to end a conversation not to be confused with . . .
10. **Walla** which can mean “I agree,” or express disbelief such as “huh?!” or “wow!”
11. **Fashla** or **fadiha** are Arabic words that mean something is messed up or outrageous.
12. A **balagan** is a fiasco.
13. A **simcha** is a happy occasion while **b’simcha** is a response to thank you that means “with pleasure.”
14. **Matzav** means situation and often refers specifically to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
15. **Shtuyot** means nonsense.



## FIFTEEN WAYS HISTORY IS ALIVE IN ISRAEL

16. **Tel Aviv**’s name reflects Theodor Herzl’s *Altneuland*, Old-New Country. “Tel” is the word for an archaeological hill created from succeeding eras of life on the same site. “Aviv” is the Hebrew word for spring.
17. Performances in the **Jerusalem Citadel**: from the laser light show depicting the history of Jerusalem to exhibitions of music and the arts, the Citadel is another one of Israel’s old-new spaces.
18. While there are no guarantees of the water parting, **scuba diving in the Red Sea** is one way a site connected to our most ancient stories meets the latest technology.
19. **Ben Gurion airport**, the state-of-the-art international gateway to Israel, was renovated in 2002, yet the ramp that leads to departures and from arrivals is faced with Jerusalem stone.
20. **Baba Sali**—Rabbi Israel Abuhatzaira (1889 to 1984) was from a family in Morocco and moved to Israel in the 1950s, returned to Morocco, and came back to Israel in the 1960s, where he settled in Netivot. He was known as a great counselor and giver of blessings. Some 100,000 people celebrate his life on his Hilula, the anniversary of his death each year, by making a pilgrimage to Netivot. From Etsy items to cell phone cases, his image is one of the most popular of tzadikim (righteous people) that endure in popular Israeli culture.
21. **Hatikvah**, the national anthem of the state, is adapted from Naftali Herz Imber’s poem. Among its verses are the reminder “od lo avda tikvatevu,” we have not lost our hope, a message of optimism even when we struggle.

# WITH ISRAEL AT 75

22. The **Jaffa-Jerusalem railway** was completed about 130 years ago and historically linked to other rail lines in Lebanon and the Arabian Peninsula. Neither terminal of the railway operates anymore, but both the municipalities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Yafo have converted their old stations into places of gathering with shops, restaurants, and performances.
23. The **Port of Jaffa** goes back to the time of the Hebrew Bible. Here, the prophet Jonah famously boarded a boat going away from where he was told to go. Today, Jaffa continues to be a bustling center of fishing and is the home to Nalagaat, a cultural center that includes the world's first deafblind theatre ensemble.
24. **Bet HaGefen** is an Arab-Jewish center in Haifa that hosts a variety of programs. Its 2018 "Third Space" exhibition encourages visitors to go beyond limiting descriptions of their identity, character, or stories, and to embrace the complexity of our experience.
25. **Jews of different colors and backgrounds** live all over Israel and bring with them distinctive foods, stories, and traditions.
26. **Jerusalem's Old City** is barely one square kilometer, yet home to some of the most revered sites in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition. Sites such as the Western Wall, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and Al-Aqsa Mosque are connected to thousands of years of history yet visited by pilgrim and tourist alike to this day.



27. Twelve stained glass windows designed by **Marc Chagall** depicting our twelve ancient tribes are located at the synagogue of Hadassah University Medical Center in Jerusalem, one of the most sophisticated medical centers in the world.
28. In ancient times, Mondays and Thursdays were **market days**. To this day, most Israeli banks keep late hours on Mondays and Thursdays.
29. Recently, several **date palm seeds** were discovered from the Herodian period, approximately two thousand years ago, that have since germinated.
30. For nearly 1,500 years, the Muslim Nusseibeh family has been responsible for **guarding the key** to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



## FIFTEEN ANIMALS/VEGETABLES/MINERALS

31. Five hundred million birds migrate through the **Hula Valley** nature reserve each year on their way between Eurasia & Africa.
32. It is said that if you toss a stone in Jerusalem, you are bound to hit a synagogue...or a **stray cat**.
33. The **Eilat Underwater Observatory** park at Israel's southernmost tip hosts over 800 species.
34. The **Dead Sea** is the lowest place on earth and measures about ten times the salinity of ocean water.



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35. The names of local animals and plants form many **popular Hebrew names** from Tamar and Dekel to Yonah and Ayala.
36. The largest freshwater body in the land of Israel is the **Kineret**, called the Sea of Galilee in English.
37. You **can ask a chicken why it crossed the road** in Jaffa, where many chickens roam free and roosters cockadoodledoo at all times of day and night.
38. **Makhtesh Ramon**, in the Negev desert, is the world's largest erosion cirque at 500 meters deep.
39. Thanks to the seismic activity along the Jordan Rift Valley, there are **hot mineral springs** located in the Golan Heights.
40. **Palm trees** are part of the landscape of the land of Israel. The biblical Psalmist compared righteous people to date palms.
41. The **Mediterranean Sea** runs up and down Israel's West coast from Lebanon in the north to Gaza and Egypt in the South. Tel Aviv beaches contribute to the city's European feel.
42. Jerusalem's Malha neighborhood is the home to over 2,000 animals who reside in the **biblical zoo**.
43. The worldwide Baha'i community maintains the **gardens** that run all the way up Mount Carmel in the City of Haifa.
44. The prickly cactus fruit with a soft inside called **sabra** became has been nickname for Jews born in the land of Israel for nearly 100 years.
45. Israel is home to over **1,700 species of fish!**



## FIFTEEN CULINARY DELIGHTS

46. The Levant has made the preparation of **chickpeas** into an art form. Enjoy a falafel sandwich with hummus and topped with more chickpeas!

47. If it's spice you're after, you might ask for **zhug**, a spicy sauce from Yemen.
48. **Jaffa oranges** predate the founding of Israel by about 100 years. They were developed by Arab farmers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
49. How many times can you say hamotzi? From "ordinary" pita bread, to big, floury loaves, to giant laffa and layered Jachnun, the **variety of breads** you can find in Israel is only matched by their deliciousness.



50. Israel is famous for its savory breakfasts, so the spicy tomato and egg **shakshuka** is a great way to start your day.
51. Sesame seeds form the base of the savory **Tahini** and sweet **Halva** desserts.
52. Letting no part of the animal go to waste, Jerusalemites enjoy the mix of chicken hearts, kidneys, and liver with a savory spice blend called the **Jerusalem Mixed Grill**.
53. Vegetarians and omnivores alike delight in **mujaddara**, a simple but filling dish made up of rice, lentils, fried onions, and a host of spices.
54. **Olive trees** have been cultivated for thousands of years in the land of Israel. Olive and olive oil production make up 70% of Palestinian fruit production.



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55. While dining out, your meal will likely begin with several cold **salatim**—small dishes of salads, pickles, dips, and more.
56. Bite-size savory pastries called **bourekas** are a Sefardi tradition that makes a tasty light snack that can be found in most every bakery.
57. **Sufganiyot** are prepared for Chanukah and year-round with extra-special fillings such as dulce de leche.
58. Jewish and Palestinian Israelis alike enjoy thick, rich **Arabic and Turkish coffees** which are often flavored with saffron, cardamom, or rosewater.
59. **Shawarma**, spiced meats roasted on a rotisserie and shaved in thin slices, is a favorite lunch or light meal.
60. And if meat is not your thing, Tel Aviv is considered one of the most **vegan-friendly** cities in the world.

## FIFTEEN CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

61. Watch a **classic Israeli society movie** from the early days of the state such as *Sallah Shabati* or *The Big Dig*.
62. Watch a contemporary **Israeli television series** such as “Shtisel,” “Fauda,” “Valley of Tears,” or “The Spy.”
63. **Enjoy the verses of Zelda** (1914-1984), whose poem “Each of Us Has a Name” links ancient Jewish traditions with the most important moments in our lives today.
64. Watch a **more recent Israeli society movie** such as *Broken Wings*, *Walk on Water*, *The Band’s Visit*, *the Bubble*, or *Five Broken Cameras*.



65. Get to know the work of **Belaynesh Yitzhak Mekonen**, a visiting scholar in Minneapolis this year, who came to Israel as an eight-year-old from Ethiopia and whose academic work focuses on the transmission of culture through the mother tongue.
66. Read a **Yossi Klein Halevi book** such as *Like Dreamers* (about the paratroopers from the Six Day War) or *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor*
67. Celebrate **Sigd**, the Ethiopian Jewish holiday that is now an official holiday in Israel.
68. Take a close look at the lyrics of “Shirat HaSticker,” the **hip-hop collaboration** between HaDag Nahash and David Grossman whose lyrics are mostly drawn from bumper stickers.
69. Explore some **poetry by Yehuda Amichai**, lauded as Israel’s greatest poet. You can find a lot online and books in English language translation.
70. The New York Times once described **Etgar Keret** as “if Kafka were Israeli and wrote about talking goldfish.” You can enjoy this surrealist writer’s stories as texts and graphic novellas such as *Jetlag*.
71. Follow **Eurovision**, the annual spring song contest that Israel has won four times in Eurovision’s 66-year history.
72. Take a **graffiti tour** of south Tel Aviv or along the West Bank separation barrier to see how art can be a mover for social change.
73. Enjoy **Vardi Kahana’s** collection of photography called *One Family*, filled with images of a family of Holocaust survivors around the world.
74. In 2009, after surveying the public, the Academy for the Hebrew language gave names to the **planets Uranus and Neptune** which were not yet named in Talmudic Hebrew. They are named Oron and Rahab, referring to a dim light and a biblical sea monster.
75. Israel has won a total of **13 Olympic medals**.