

# Masorti Olami's

Zionist, Modern & Inclusive Simchat Torah Flag



Educational Activity Booklet

Masorti Olami acknowledges significant support from  
The World Zionist Organization  
for this and many other projects





## Why we made this flag?

There is a 300 year old history of Simchat Torah flags and why they carry the designs they do. In October of 2011, the Eretz Yisrael Museum in Tel Aviv held an exhibition of Simchat Torah flags starting in 1940 with the establishment of the State of Israel. The flags were a microcosm of the changes that Israel has been through in the last 60+ years.

Over the past few years we have received several requests from our Masorti/ Conservative kehillot (communities) around the world for Simchat Torah flags that were suitable for their congregations. They voiced frustration that they could only find flags that were suitable for the orthodox Jewish world.

So we set out to create a flag that spoke to modern, pluralistic and liberal Jews, in the hope that it too would recognize the change that Judaism has undergone in modern times. Our aim was that with just one look at the flag, people all over the world would know who we are and what we believe in. Flags of the world – **Jewish peoplehood**. Prominence of the Israeli Flag and Hebrew writing – **Zionism and the centrality of the State of Israel**. Women wearing tallit and holding a Torah – **Egalitarianism**. Different Ethnicities and a Sephardi Torah – **Diversity**. Kids in youth group shirts – **the importance of investing in the next generation**. Physically challenged young woman in a wheel chair – **Inclusivity**. Historical Figures – **Ties to Tradition**. A circle of dancers that includes grandparents, parents and children – **l'dor v'dor – from generation to generation**.

We hope that you find this flag interesting, relevant and useful for all kinds of celebrations in your community. In this booklet are some suggestions of activities that you could run for elementary to high school students and adults around the theme of Simchat Torah and the flag. We've also included in the center of this booklet a line drawing of the flag in black and white that you can copy and give to younger children to color-in.

We would love to hear your feedback or stories of how you have used the flag.

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# 1. Geography Quiz

Can you name the country for each flag on the Simchat Torah flag?

Can you name the capital of each country?

Do you know anyone from any of these countries?



The flags/countries on the Simchat Torah flag are :

Top row (*left to right*)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Capital</u>
Argentina	Buenos Aires
Australia	Canberra
United States	Washington DC
United Kingdom	London
Belgium	Brussels
France	Paris
Netherlands	Amsterdam or The Hague
Spain	Madrid
Mexico	Mexico City
Brazil	Brasilia
Uruguay	Montevideo
Germany	Berlin

Bottom row (*left to right*)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Capital</u>
Canada	Ottawa
Chile	Santiago
Sweden	Stockholm
Ukraine	Kyiv (or Kiev)
Paraguay	Asuncion
Columbia	Bogota
Peru	Lima

There are Masorti/Conservative kehillot (communities) in each of these 19 countries as well as many more.

For information about Masorti kehillot around the world go to [www.masortiworld.org](http://www.masortiworld.org)

## 2. I Spy....



Can you find the following ?

- An orange hairclip
- A tambourine
- A blue scarf
- 3 Israeli flags
- A pair of earrings
- Sandals
- 2 Ten commandments
- The word 'Torah' written in Hebrew letters
- An orange kippah
- The flag of your country
- A Sephardi style Torah
- A large wheel
- A small wheel
- A watch
- 3 necklaces
- Flags with the colors blue and red (8)
- Flags with the colors yellow and blue (5)
- 4 Sefer Torahs

### 3. Who am I?



- I am a journalist who was the “Father” of Modern Zionism.
- In Israel, there is a city named after me north of Tel Aviv.

*Answer : Theodore Herzl*

- I am Moses’ sister
- I led the women of Israel song after the crossing of the Red Sea.
- I watched over Moses while he was floating in a basket on the Nile.
- I am the son of Amram and Yocheved.

*Answer : Miriam*

- I once lived as a prince of Egypt.
- I received the 10 commandments on Mt. Sinai.
- Miriam is my sister and Aaron is my brother.
- I brought the Israelites out of Egypt after the 10 plagues.

*Answer : Moses*

- I am designed to look like a tallit
- I have a *magen david* (star of david)
- I became official in 1948
- My colors are *Kahol v’lavan* in Hebrew.

*Answer : Flag of Israel*

- I have 5 books.
- You have to roll and unroll me.
- I live in an *Aron Kodesh*.
- This holiday is all about me!
- Inside me there are 613 mitzvot.

*Answer : The torah*

*You can find biographies of Herzl, Miriam & Moses on pages 8 to 10.*

#### 4. Discussion points for Simchat Torah & the flag

- Talk about the different designs on each of the Torah Scroll covers. What do they represent? Why does a Torah have a cover? What would you put on a Torah cover if you were designing it?
- *Sisu v'simchu* (Celebrate and Happy) is a popular song sung on Simchat Torah. How do you celebrate the Torah? Is it something you can do every day or only on holidays or only on Simchat Torah? The end of the song says "*utnu kavod laTorah*" – and give honor to the Torah. What are some ways you can honor the Torah?
- Why do you think Moses and Miriam are included on the flag? What is their connection to the Torah? What is Miriam's connection to celebration and joy?
- Looking at the flag, what kinds of values are important to the *kehillah* (community) that is celebrating Simchat Torah in the picture?
- Which person do you think represents you the best? Why?
- Why is Theodore Herzl on the flag? You can use the Torah cover that says *Ki Mitzion tetzei Torah* (and From out of Zion [Israel] shall come Torah) ... What connection does Israel have to the Torah?
- What connection do all of the different flags have to do with a Jewish holiday? Why is the Israeli flag in the middle and bigger than the others?
- What's different about the Sephardi Torah?
- What do Moses and the Ark share in common?

**And finally ... why not create a story for each person, how they got to the Simchat Torah service and they decided to come – **send us your story and we will post it online!****



## Biographies



### Theodor Herzl

Theodor (Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl, the visionary of Zionism, was born in Budapest in 1860.

In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, was unjustly accused of treason, mainly because of the prevailing anti-Semitic atmosphere. Herzl witnessed mobs shouting “Death to the Jews” in France, the home of the French

Revolution, and resolved that there was only one solution: the mass immigration of Jews to a land that they could call their own. Thus, the Dreyfus Case became one of the determinants in the genesis of Political Zionism.

Herzl concluded that anti-Semitism was a stable and immutable factor in human society, which assimilation did not solve. He mulled over the idea of Jewish sovereignty, and, despite ridicule from Jewish leaders, published *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State, 1896). Herzl argued that the essence of the Jewish problem was not individual but national. The Jews are one people, he said, and their plight could be transformed into a positive force by the establishment of a Jewish state with the consent of the great powers. He saw the Jewish question as an international political question to be dealt with in the arena of international politics.

Herzl's ideas were met with enthusiasm by the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, although Jewish leaders were less ardent. Herzl appealed to wealthy Jews such as Baron Hirsch and Baron Rothschild, to join the national Zionist movement, but in vain. He then appealed to the people, and the result was the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, on August 29, 1897.

The Congress was the first inter-territorial gathering of Jews on a national and secular basis. Here the delegates adopted the Basle Program, the program of the Zionist movement, and declared, “Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.” At the Congress the World Zionist Organization was established as the political arm of the Jewish people, and Herzl was elected its first president.

Herzl died in Vienna in 1904, of pneumonia and a weak heart overworked by his incessant efforts on behalf of Zionism. By then the movement had found its place on the world political map. In 1949, Herzl's remains were brought to Israel and reinterred on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

Herzl coined the phrase “If you will, it is no fairytale,” which became the motto of the Zionist movement. Although at the time no one could have imagined it, Zionism led, only fifty years later, to the establishment of the independent State of Israel.





## Moses

Along with God, it is the figure of Moses (*Moshe*) who dominates the Torah. Acting at God's behest, it is he who leads the Jews out of slavery, unleashes the Ten Plagues against Egypt, guides the freed slaves for forty years in the wilderness, carries down the law from Mount Sinai, and prepares the Jews to enter the land of Canaan. Without

Moses, there would be little apart from laws to write about in the last four books of the Torah.

Moses is born during the Jewish enslavement in Egypt, during a terrible period when Pharaoh decrees that all male Hebrew infants are to be drowned at birth. His mother, Yocheved, desperate to prolong his life, floats him in a basket in the Nile. Hearing the crying child as she walks by, Pharaoh's daughter pities the crying infant and adopts him (Exodus 2:1-10). It surely is no coincidence that the Jews' future liberator is raised as an Egyptian prince. Had Moses grown up in slavery with his fellow Hebrews, he probably would not have developed the pride, vision, and courage to lead a revolt.

Moses marries Tzipporah, one of the Midianite priest's daughters, and becomes the shepherd for his father-in-law's flock. On one occasion, when he has gone with his flock into the wilderness, an angel of the Lord appears to him in the guise of a bush that is burning but is not consumed

Once He has so effectively elicited Moses' attention, God commands-over Moses' strenuous objections-that he go to Egypt and along with his brother, Aaron, make one simple if revolutionary demand of Pharaoh: "Let my people go." Pharaoh resists Moses' petition, until God wreaks the Ten Plagues on Egypt, after which the children of Israel escape.

Months later, in the Sinai Desert, Moses climbs Mount Sinai and comes down with the Ten Commandments.

Moses impressed his monotheistic vision upon the Jews with such force that in the succeeding three millennia, Jews have never confused the messenger with the Author of the message. As Princeton philosopher Walter Kaufmann has written: "in Greece, the heroes of the past were held to have been sired by a god or to have been born of a goddess ... [and] in Egypt, the Pharaoh was considered divine." But despite the extraordinary veneration accorded Moses — "there has not arisen a prophet since like Moses" is the Bible's verdict (Deuteronomy 34:10) — no Jewish thinker ever thought he was anything other than a man.



## Miriam

Miriam was Aaron and Moses's older sister. According to some sources, she was seven years older than Moses, but other sources seem to indicate that she was older than that. Some sources indicate that Miriam was Puah, one of the midwives who rescued Hebrew babies from Pharaoh's edict against them (Ex. 1:15-19).

Miriam was a prophetess in her own right (Ex. 15:20), the first woman described that way in scripture (although Sarah is also considered to be a prophetess, that word is not applied to her in scripture). According to tradition, she prophesied before Moses's birth that her parents would give birth to the person who would bring about their people's redemption.

Miriam waited among the bulrushes while Moses's ark was in the river, watching over him to make sure he was all right (Ex. 2:4). When the Pharaoh's daughter drew Moses out of the water, Miriam arranged for their mother, Yocheved, to nurse Moses and raise him until he was weaned (Ex. 2:7-9).

Miriam led the women of Israel in a song and dance of celebration after the Pharaoh's men were drowned in the sea (Ex. 15:20-21). She is said to be the ancestress of other creative geniuses in Israel's history: Bezalel, the architect of the mishkan (the portable sanctuary used in the desert) (Ex. 31:1-3) and King David.

According to tradition, because of Miriam's righteousness, a well followed the people through the desert throughout their wanderings, and that well remained with them until the day of Miriam's death.

Like her brothers, Miriam was not perfect. She led her brother Aaron to speak against Moses over a matter involving a Cushite woman he had married (Zipporah, or possibly a second wife) (Num. 12:1). They also objected to his leadership, noting that he had no monopoly on Divine Communication (Num12:2). For this, Miriam was punished with tzaaras (an affliction generally translated as leprosy) (Num. 12:10). However, Aaron pled on her behalf, and she was cured (Num. 12:11).

Like her brothers, Miriam died in the desert before the people reached the Promised Land (Num. 20:1).

*All biographies were excerpted from the Jewish Virtual Library website and are © by the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*

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