

JNF- Yom Haatzmaut community event – Megilla reading

The idea:

On Yom Haatzmaut we celebrate one of the most important holidays for the Jewish people. After 2000 years of exile, dreams and hopes we are a sovereign people in our land.

And what is the traditional Jewish way to celebrate such an important Jewish holyday? Food, of course, but also – by reading a text. Every Jewish holiday centers around text: on Passover we read the Hagada, on Purim we read megilat Esther, and on Shavuot we read Megilat Ruth.

And what text do we have for Yom Haatzmaut?

For Yom Ha'Atzmaut we have an amazing text, and it even happens to be a Megilla – Megillat Ha'tzmaut- Israel's declaration of independence. The Megilla that was read by David Ben Gurion exactly 67 years ago and marked the magical moment of the establishment of the state of Israel.

In the last 2 years, JNF partnered with Bina, who established for the first time in Israel a new cultural and religious practice in Israel - we held a public reading of the Megilla in independence hall in Tel Aviv, where Ben Gurion read the original declaration. Up until that day, Israel celebrated Yom Haatzmaut with dancing in the streets and open-air concerts of Israeli pop stars. What we did was revolutionary and fresh and even pretentious.

On this coming Yom Haatzmaut, JNF, together with Bina and different other partners, is bringing this practice from Tel Aviv to the US. Together we will read Israel's Declaration of Independence on Yom Haatzmaut. By reading the Megilla we strive to begin the proses of canonizing the Megilla as a significant Jewish text, and create a new tradition for Yom Haatzmaut. Our hope is that this will change the ritual around Yom Ha'Atzmaut for the Jewish people worldwide.

We will choose 4 community leaders that will read the portions of the Megila and share their interpretation with us.

The Megilla addresses all the big challenges that Israel is facing: What does it mean to be a Jewish nation? How do we live Jewishly in a modern context? What should be our ethical code? What are our responsibilities to all of our residents, Jews and non Jews? What is the balance between Jewish and democracy?

We are going to use the Megilla as a platform to talk about the vision of the state of Israel , share different points of view and celebrate Israel!

The goal:

1. To strengthen the connection between the American Jewish community and Israeli Jewish community, and to create a meaningful opportunity to discuss Israel's vision.
2. To establish a new Jewish tradition worldwide, by canonizing the text of Megilat Haatzmaut, the Declaration of Independence, as the official text for Yom Haatzmaut.

Why JNF?

JNF has a central role in the establishment of the state of Israel and in writing the declaration of independence. It was also written in KKL house in Tel Aviv!

A suggested program:

- Reception – Israeli food
- Short Havdala between memorial day and independence day – lead by the Rabbi of the hosting synagogue. Hatikva.
- About JNF and a short explanation about the purpose of the evening. Short YouTube of the declaration by Ben Gurion.
- General consul.
- 4 Megilla readers – read the paragraphs and interpret for 3 minutes each.
- The Rabbis of the partnering synagogues bless Israel in 67 words+a picture.
- 3 Israeli songs that everybody knows.
- Closing – JNF thanks the partners
- Israeli dancing and dessert.

Actions items:

1. To find partners, it's a community event:
- Synagogues- to start with the most important synagogue in your area (speak with the Rabbi) that will host it. To meet with other potential synagogues (rabbis) that will join this historical and important initiative. To decide together what is the date.
2. To meet with day schools and ask them to join (they will have their logo and will have to advertise it among the parents)
3. To ask Jewish organizations to join and co sponsors- AJC, Israel bonds, friends of IDF, JCC, JUF etc.
4. The most important part: to create a committee of JnF board members and representatives of all the partners. To make sure that you have all the age ranges.
5. To chose 4 community leaders that will read and interpret the Megillah. They should be divers (deferent contribution to the community and deferent ages) and it's an opportunity to get to people that we want to make our friends. But not only. It must be interesting and the people have to be a "draw". Examples- important Jewish educator in the community, a big philanthropy in the community, a young activist, an artist/writer/comedian, the mayor etc. we don't pay those people. It's an honor to be selected by the community to read the Megillah. You divide the Megillah and match the paragraph to the reader. You ask them to write interpretation of 3 minutes (important to give them ideas, to read it before and to make sure that it's not too long and it's interesting).
6. To ask the Rabbis of all the synagogues to write 67 words for Israel's 67 birthday. Each one of them chose a picture of Israel and then on the stage she/he will bless Israel with the picture and the 67 words. To get it before the ceremony.
7. To design an invitation with all the names of readers, rabbis, logos of all the partners.

8. To create a Facebook page. Facebook must be very strong.
9. To invite the media. It's a new and interesting concept.
10. To make the power point presentation: YouTube of the declaration, the pictures of the Rabbis.
11. Optional- to make program with all the details of the evening and to collect from all the presidents/professionals that partner- 67 words in the honor of 67 years.
12. Marketing must be "aggressive"- by the committee, rabbis, schools, Facebook(!!!), market it as something totally new, first time, exciting.

Budget:

Israeli food (depends on the number of participants. Around 10\$ for person)

Printed program

Decoration

Security