



# SHMULIK PAINTS THE TOWN

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*Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel Independence Day, is here – and the mayor wants Shmulik to paint a mural to celebrate. But what should Shmulik paint?*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

*Yom Ha'atzmaut*, “Independence Day” in Hebrew, refers to the day in 1948 when Israel became an independent country. It is celebrated on the 5th of Iyar in the Hebrew calendar, falling either in April or May. The establishment of the State of Israel followed almost 2,000 years of regional control by non-Jewish nations. It was a day of exhilarating joy for many Jews around the world who viewed the establishment of the modern State of Israel as the fulfillment of centuries of fervent hopes and prayers.

David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister, remarked on the Jews’ amazing survival and strengthening of identity throughout centuries of exile and persecution. He deemed the “return home as sovereign citizens in their own independent state” to be “one of the most remarkable and inspiring achievements in human history.”

Each year, *Yom Ha'atzmaut* is celebrated one day after *Yom Hazikaron*, Israel’s annual Memorial Day. Following this solemn day of remembering, Israelis then celebrate the freedom and independence won by its soldiers and enjoyed by its citizens with concerts, aerial demonstrations, fireworks, folk dancing, hikes, and barbeques.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In *Shmulik Paints the Town*, Shmulik’s assignment to paint a mural in honor of *Yom Ha'atzmaut* proves to be more difficult than expected! Discuss the story as a family using the following questions:

- Why do you think Shmulik has so much trouble deciding what to paint on the mural?
- What part does Shmulik’s dog play in the story?
- Shmulik decides not to paint the mural on Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath, a day when many people do not work. What does he do instead?

**Celebrating Yom Ha’atzmaut** – *Yom Ha'atzmaut* is celebrated by supporters of Israel throughout the world with parties, parades, music, and dancing. One of the most famous examples is the annual Celebrate Israel Parade held in New York City, attended by thousands of participants and spectators. Your family can join the celebration too:

- Make and decorate Israeli flags
- Listen to/learn *Hatikvah* (“The Hope”), Israel’s national anthem, many renditions of which can be found online
- Put on a neighborhood parade with friends
- Look for community celebrations taking place in your area