



# MY HOME IS IN THE EAST

**T**his summer, your campers will explore big ideas about Israel—what it means to feel connected to a place, to call somewhere “home,” and how we carry those feelings with us even when we’re far away. We’ll be using the poem “My Heart is in the East” as a central touch point for all the activities.

Throughout the sessions, campers will think about Israel, about their bunk as a kind of home, and about the values that shape the places we care about. At the end, each bunk will create a mezuzah-inspired art piece to hang near your door—something to remind the bunk of its values regarding and connection to Israel.

These activities are designed for all ages. Also, there are various elements and activities that can be used in different ways and combinations. You know your campers and your schedule best—adapt as needed!

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Main Activities:**

**My Way Home**

**Bunk Mezuzah Activity**

### **Additional Activities:**

#### Optional Prep Activity:

My Heart Is In The East

#### Bonus Mini-activities/stations:

Hamsa

Heart

Flag

Pomegranate

The Letter Mem

# MY WAY HOME



## GOAL:

Campers will explore what “home” means to them by **creating a personal map related to their home**. This connects to the theme of belonging and the idea that even when we’re away, our hearts can still feel tied to a place.

## SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- White paper (one sheet per camper)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Tape or glue (for connecting drawings into a scroll)

## TIME NEEDED:

About 30–45 minutes total

## Step 1: Move Around & Warm Up (5–10 minutes)

Before sitting down to draw, lead a quick, silly walking game in the bunk to get campers thinking about movement and space.

## HERE'S HOW:

- Tell campers: “We’re thinking today about how we move through places that feel like home —like where we go in the morning or the path to our front door.”
- Ask them to walk from their bed to the bathroom, then from the bathroom to the door, then to the place they hang their towel, etc.
- Call it out like a game  
It can go in the more competitive, racing direction, or in the more silly / fun thoughtful direction.
- Silly/fun version can include twists like -
  - “Walk like it’s super early and you’re half asleep.”
  - “Walk like you’re running late for breakfast!”
  - “Walk like you forgot something and have to go back.”



# MY WAY HOME

## Step 2: Map-Making Time

(20 minutes)

Now campers will each create a map or drawing that shows their own home. Have campers create a symbolic map of “what home feels like”—this can include objects, people, smells, places and memories.

### SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

*“Today we’re each making our own little map—something that shows your home, a place you know really well. It could be your room, your whole house, or even the areas around your house. It could be from the top, like a map, or from the side, like a drawing. There’s no one right way to do it.”*

Encourage creative interpretations—some kids may want to label parts, others may just use images or symbols.

## Step 3: Make a Shared Scroll

(5-10 minutes)

Once everyone’s finished drawing:

1. Ask each camper to show their map to the group and describe one thing they included.
2. Then tape or glue all the maps together side by side (or end to end) to make one big scroll.
3. Roll it up and say that we will be using the scroll later.

### TELL CAMPERS:

*“Even though our homes are all different, we’re bringing them together here—just like we’ve come together this summer. This is our scroll of where we come from, each of our own homes.”*

### WRAP-UP + REFLECTION:

(optional)

If you have time, ask:

- *“What makes a place feel like home to you?”*
- *“Is it possible to feel at home in more than one place?”*
- *“How is our bunk a kind of home this summer?”*

That’s it!

Now you’ve got a visual, connected scroll of everyone’s “way home,” which you will come back to later in the program as you build toward your bunk mezuzah.



# MY WAY HOME

## Extra Tips & Ideas

### ✦✦ QUICK ADAPTATION TIP:

For younger campers, have them draw just one part of home (like their front door or breakfast table). For older campers, challenge them to include emotions or memories in their maps.



### JEWISH CONNECTION:

The idea of “finding your way home” is deep in Jewish tradition—think of the Israelites wandering in the desert, or Jews praying toward Jerusalem. We’re always exploring the path between where we are and where we feel we belong.



### FUN FACT:

In ancient times, scrolls (like the Torah) were how people shared long, meaningful stories. There were no books yet! Your bunk’s scroll is kind of like that—a collection of personal stories all rolled into one.

# OUR MEZUZAH



## GOAL:

Campers will create a shared mezuzah-style object that represents their bunk's connection to Israel and the values they've explored together—using both the scroll of “home maps” and a personal decorated symbol chosen and designed by each camper.

## OVERVIEW FOR COUNSELORS:

This activity brings together everything the campers have been learning about Israel as a place we feel connected to—even when we're far away. It also turns those reflections into a physical, visual object they can walk past every day in the bunk.

The mezuzah you'll create is not a traditional one, but it's inspired by the same idea: it's something we place near our doorway to remind us of what we believe in, where our hearts are, and what kind of home we want to create.

Your bunk's mezuzah will be:

- An upright box made of cardboard
- Contain the scroll you made earlier (from the “My Way Home” activity)
- Decorated with colorful symbols created by each camper that express something about their connection to Israel

## SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Cardboard (we recommend to make a box that is 11” high and 5” wide and 5” deep - see illustrations and video for more info; in any case, size is flexible, just make sure the scroll fits)
- Scissors, tape, and glue
- Colored paper, construction paper
- Markers, colored pencils
- Ideally: beads, buttons, string, stickers, natural materials (leaves, flowers, pebbles)
- Optional: printed shape templates; printed box

## TIME NEEDED:

Split into two or three chunks if needed—this works well over a whole day or spread across two days.



# OUR MEZUZAH

## Step 1: Building the Mezuzah Box

(15-20 minutes)

Explain to the campers:

*“We’re going to build something special for our bunk—our own mezuzah. It’s not a real one like you’d see in a synagogue or home, but something inspired by it. It will hold the scroll we made, it will say “East / מזרח” on it, and it will also hold our shared connection to Israel.”*

1. Build an upright rectangular box (about the size of a shoebox turned on its end) using sturdy cardboard. It can be one piece wrapped around itself, or four flat sides connected together. Alternately, you can print the template on an 11"x17" piece of cardstock (available in a separate PDF)
2. On each one of the four sides, write the letters “EAST” and “מזרח” (see illustrations).
3. You can prepare this before the activity, so that it’s ready in advance, or you can create the box together with your campers.

Tape the scroll inside the box or gently roll it and place it in the hollow part of the box as if it’s a hidden message.

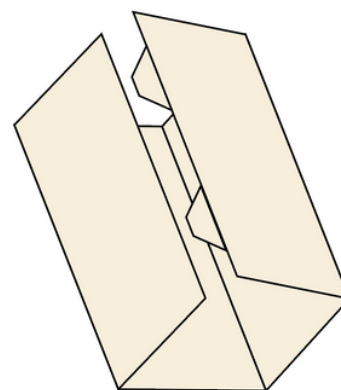
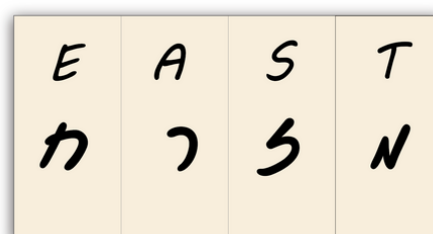
## Step 2: Discussion – “What Lives in My Connection?”

(10-15 minutes)

Gather in a circle and reflect on what they’ve learned so far:

- What have we said or felt about Israel recently?
- How do we feel about it being far away?
- What does it mean to carry part of your heart somewhere else?
- How do we bring those feelings into our space here at camp?

Let kids talk freely and then introduce the five symbols.





# OUR MEZUZAH

## Step 3: Choosing a Symbol

(5-7 minutes)

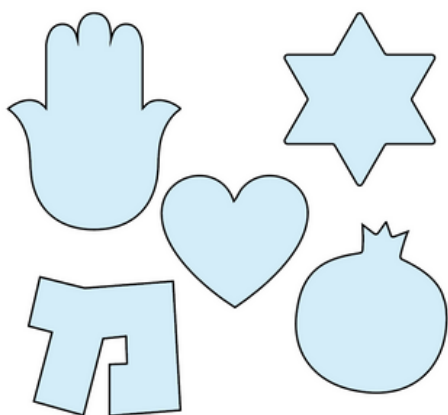
Explain:

*“Each of us is going to choose one shape to represent our connection to Israel. It doesn’t have to be exact—just choose the one that feels right for you.”*

Available shapes:

- Hamsa - protection, blessings
- Pomegranate - abundance, connection to the land
- Heart - love, longing, personal connection
- Star of David - Jewish identity
- Mem (מ) - for “mezuzah,” “mizrach” (east), “makom” (place), “mishpacha” (family),

You can print the page of shapes or encourage kids to freehand or trace from one another. Use cardboard or construction paper and try to keep it colorful!



## Step 4: Decorating the Symbols (Two Approaches)

Once each camper has chosen and cut out their symbol, it’s time to decorate it in a meaningful, expressive way. The goal is for each camper’s shape to become a personal expression of their connection to Israel, their feelings of longing, or what “home” means to them. Counselors can choose between two approaches, depending on time and resources:



# OUR MEZUZAH

## OPTION 1:

### Create-In-the-Moment Collage Session

If you want to do everything in one bunk session:

1. Bring a wide variety of collage materials to your bunk: scrap paper, tissue paper, markers, beads, yarn, stickers, magazines, washi tape, bits of foil, etc.
2. After your discussion, give campers time to explore and choose materials that resonate with their chosen symbol and what it represents.
3. Encourage them to think beyond colors and patterns—ask:
  - What textures remind you of Israel?
  - What images or shapes make you think of longing, distance, or home?
  - Can you include something hidden or secret, like a pocket or flap?
4. Let them fully decorate their symbol, then set it aside to dry before assembling onto the mezuzah box.

This version works well if you have limited time or if you want to keep the focus contained in one session.

## OPTION 2:

### A Day of Collection + Evening Assembly

If your schedule allows for a slower, more immersive experience, try this:

1. Introduce the decorating activity in the morning, telling campers:
 

*“Today, you’ll be on the lookout for things that remind you of Israel—or of what you carry with you when you think about faraway places. Pick things that are meaningful to you.”*
2. Give each camper a small envelope or paper bag (or have them fold a pocket from construction paper) to carry with them throughout the day.
3. Remind them at key moments, like before lunch or during rest hour:
 

*“Have you found anything yet that feels like it belongs on your symbol?”*

Encourage collection from across camp:

- A thread from friendship bracelet-making
- A leaf from a nature walk
- A sticker from art class
- A cool scrap of paper from a snack or packaging
- Bits of string, foil, or buttons

4. Towards the end of the day during bunk time bring everyone back together. Hand out their shapes and glue, and give them 20–30 minutes to assemble their pieces using the materials they’ve gathered.



# OUR MEZUZAH

## Step 4: Assembly and Hanging (10 minutes)

Glue or tape all the campers' shapes onto different spots on the mezuzah box.

Hang or display it in the bunk, ideally near the doorway or somewhere visible but safe from the various bunk-style hazards. As you hang it, everyone can say together - ליבי במזרח Libi bamizrach - My heart is in the East.

## Fun Facts & Extra Tips



### TIP:

You can create as much of a “dedication ceremony” as you want, for the moment when you hang the mezuzah. Each camper can say a word or phrase, or you can read the poem again together.



### MEMORY:

In Jewish tradition, physical objects often help us remember invisible things. These decorated symbols we made using leaves or string or paper scraps can hold just as much emotion and memory as something written in words.

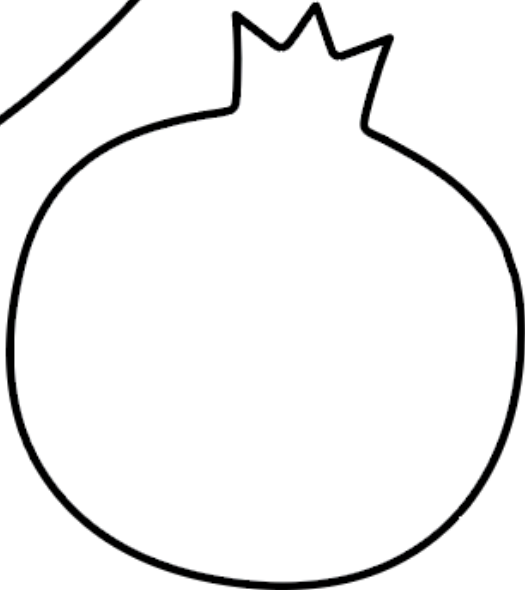
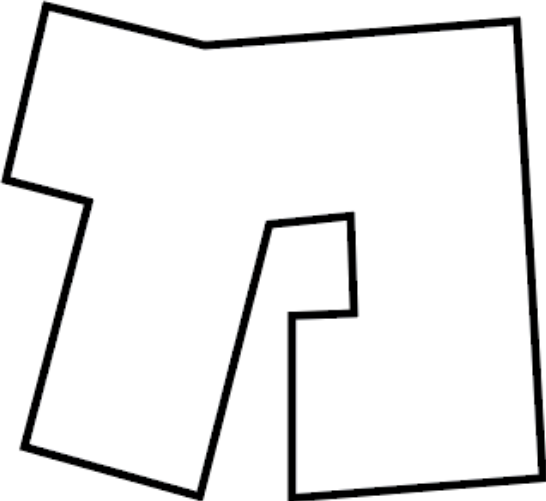
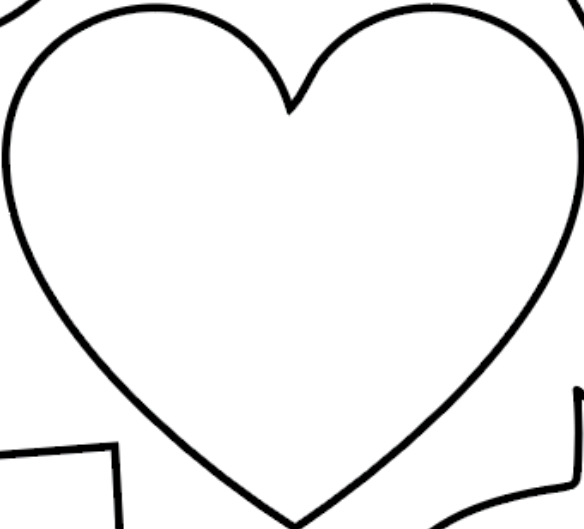
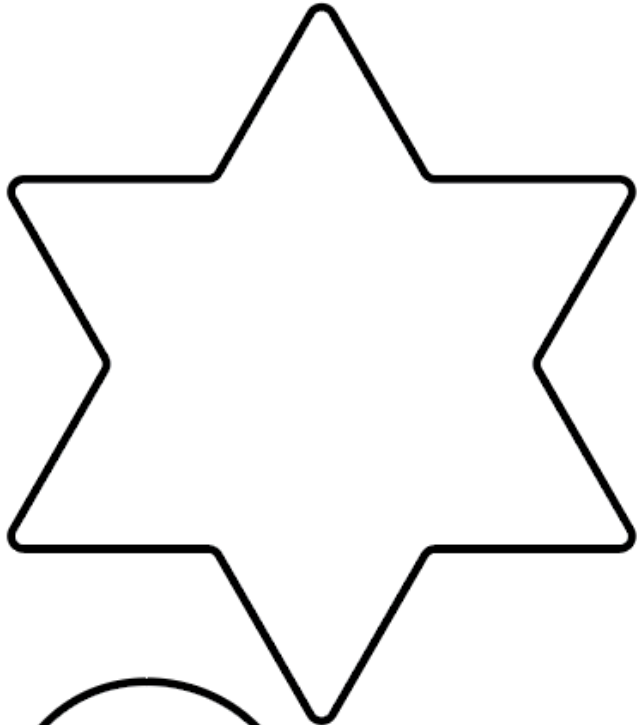
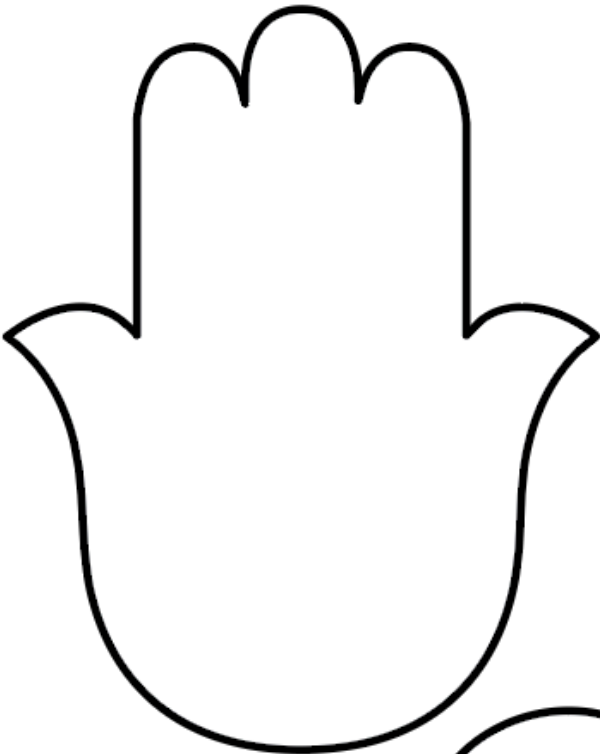


### DID YOU KNOW?

In ancient times, the word mezuzah just meant “doorpost.” The commandment to “write [these words] on the doorposts of your house וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעֲרֶיךָ” (from the Shema) turned into the ritual object we call a mezuzah today.

### ▲ WHY THE LETTER MEM(ן)?

Mem is the first letter of Mizrach (East), Makom (place), Mezuzah, and one of the names of God in Jewish tradition: HaMakom—“The Place.” It reminds us that holy places can be far away... or right here, where we are.



# Optional Activities

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For an in-depth experience with your campers, have a discussion with them about the idea of “My Heart Is In The East”.



If you are looking for a few quick activities or five-minute stations for a larger group to cycle between, then use the five options listed.



# MY WAY IS IN THE EAST



## GOAL:

Campers will reflect on the experience of yearning for a place—whether they’ve been there or not—using the idea “My Heart Is in the East” (originally from a Medieval poem) to open a discussion about connection, distance, and the idea of Israel as a spiritual or emotional home.

## SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- Small slips of paper and pens or pencils (one per camper)
- Optional: world map or globe

## TIME NEEDED:

35–40 minutes

## Step 1: Silent Prompt - The Place I’ve Never Been

(5–7 minutes)

Hand out a small piece of paper to each camper. Ask them not to share out loud, and say:

*“Write down the name of one place you’ve never been—but that you’d really like to go. It could be a real place, like a country or city, or even something more specific, like a certain park, mountain, or place in nature. Don’t show anyone. Just fold it and put it in the box/envelope.”*

Have everyone fold their slips and set them aside. Tell them you’ll come back to these later.



# MY WAY IS IN THE EAST

## Step 2: The Idea

(5 minutes)

Introduce the idea of:

### “My Heart Is In The East”

*“This line is part of a poem was written almost 1,000 years ago by a Jewish poet named Yehuda Halevi. He was living in Spain but dreaming of Jerusalem.”*

## Question

Is it possible to be in one place, but have your heart in another place?

### Optional -

The full poem is included at the end of this activity. If you feel like your campers are able to read it, this will add to the discussion.

We have found that it requires a lot of explanation, so this is for advanced groups only.

## Step 3: Discussion

(10-12 minutes)

Lead a discussion connecting the poem to the campers’ own lives and the idea of longing.

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

- What do you think it feels like to miss a place you’ve never been?
- How does that affect your daily experiences?
- Would you leave behind a luxurious life for a dream?
- What do you think Israel meant to the poet who wrote this line? What does it mean to you?
- Can someone feel at home somewhere they’ve never actually lived?

Encourage all kinds of responses—there’s no right or wrong answer.



# MY WAY IS IN THE EAST

## Step 4: Reveal & Reflect

(10-15 minutes)

Bring back the slips of paper.  
Say:

*At the beginning, you each wrote a place you want to go. You don't have to share it, but if you'd like to, you can. You can also say why that place feels important to you—and if you feel like Yehuda Halevi, with your heart somewhere your body hasn't been."*

Go around the circle and give each camper the option to share their place and reflect on the connection.

## Wrap-up (3 minutes)

Bring the group back together and say:

*"Yehuda Halevi lived long ago, but his feelings are still really familiar. We all carry places in our hearts. Some of us have been to Israel, some haven't—but just like the poet, we can still feel connected to it."*

## Extra Tips & Ideas



### DID YOU KNOW?

In the Middle Ages, Jews in Spain, Iraq, and North Africa would pray while facing toward Jerusalem—even if it wasn't actually in the East.. Synagogues were often built facing Jerusalem, whichever direction that may have been in.



### DISTANCE CHECK

**From New York to Jerusalem:**

5,700 miles

**From LA to Jerusalem:** 7,500 miles

**From Yehuda Halevi's Spain to Jerusalem:** around 2,000 miles—and no airplanes!



### TRAVEL DREAMS IN JEWISH HISTORY:

Jews in Yemen used to sing songs about Jerusalem for generations, even if no one had ever been there. Some families kept a packed bag ready—just in case the Messiah came and they could leave immediately.



### BONUS PROMPT:

Ask campers: *If someone from 1,000 years in the future read your writing about a place you loved or longed for, what would they learn about you?*



# MY WAY IS IN THE EAST

## POEM:

### “My Heart Is in the East”

By Yehuda Halevi

*My heart is in the East, and I am at the edge of the West.  
How can I taste what I eat? How can it be sweet to me?  
How can I fulfill my vows and pledges, while Zion is in the  
power of Edom,  
and I am still in exile?  
I would gladly leave behind all the luxuries of Spain,  
if only I could see the dust of the ruined Temple.*

### “ליבי במזרח”

לְבִי בַּמְזָרְחַ וְאַנְכִי בְּסוֹף מַעֲרָב  
אֵיךְ אֶטְעֶמָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲכַל וְאֵיךְ יַעֲרֹב  
אֵיכָה אֲשַׁלֵּם נְדָרַי וְאֶסְרִי, בְּעוֹד  
צִיּוֹן בְּחֶבֶל אֲדוֹם וְאֲנִי בְּכַבֵּל עֲרָב  
יִקַּל בְּעֵינַי עֵזֶב כֹּל טוֹב סִפְרָד, כְּמוֹ  
יִקַּר בְּעֵינַי רְאוֹת עֶפְרוֹת דְּבִיר נְחָרֵב

# CONNECT THE SYMBOLS



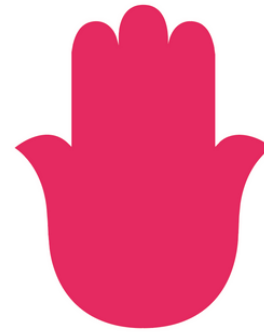
## GOAL:

These five short activities use Jewish symbols from our previous activities—Hamsa, Israeli Flag, Pomegranate, Mem (מ), and Heart—to help campers explore their personal connection to Israel in creative, hands-on ways.

## ACTIVITIES:

- Use as quick, short bunk activities anytime.
- Use as rotation stations in a larger group program.

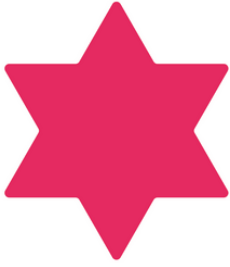
Each activity takes 10–15 minutes, with simple materials, and works for all ages. They're designed to spark conversation, reflection, and fun. Adapt as you like, and as you know your campers will like.



## 01 - PALM READING

**Materials:** None needed

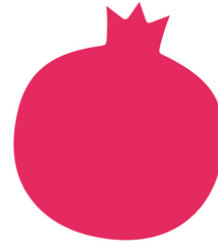
In this fun and personal activity, campers will pair up for a “palm reading” round, inspired by the protective and positive symbolism of the hamsa. Explain that the hamsa is a traditional symbol found in Jewish and Middle Eastern cultures, often used as a charm to protect from harm and bring blessings. But protection isn't just about warding off bad things—it's also about surrounding ourselves with good energy. Campers will take turns “reading” each other's palms—not to predict the future, but to give a creative compliment based on their partner's hand. They might comment on “how these lines show you're a great friend” or “this spot is how we know you're really good at diving.” After a few minutes, rotate pairs so everyone gets to both give and receive compliments. This playful exercise builds connection, boosts confidence, and brings the idea of “seeing the good” to life.



## 02 - FLAG REMIX

**Materials:** Blank paper, markers, colored pencils, optional collage materials (magazines, fabric scraps, stickers, etc.).

Start by briefly teaching campers about the Israeli flag: how its blue and white colors are inspired by the tallit (prayer shawl) and how the Star of David represents Jewish identity, and the horizontal stripes remind us of the sea and sky. But like a person, symbols can have many layers of meaning. In this creative remix challenge, campers will redesign the Israeli flag in a way that reflects their personal connection to Israel. They can change colors, add patterns, or swap in symbols that are meaningful to them. Counselors should encourage imagination: there's no "wrong" version. After creating their flags, campers can share what they changed and why. Seeing a whole wall of varied flags is a powerful visual reminder that Israel means different things to different people, and that diversity of connection is something to celebrate.



## 03 - PASS THE POM

**Materials:** A small red ball, beanbag, or soft toy (to represent a pomegranate); optional music player.

This is a fast-paced, energetic game that gets everyone involved. You'll need a red ball or soft object to stand in for a pomegranate. Gather campers in a circle and explain the pomegranate's traditional symbolism: its many seeds represent abundance, good deeds (mitzvot), and the richness of Jewish life. In this game, the "pom" will be passed around the circle while music plays (or while counselors clap a rhythm). When the music stops, whoever is holding the pom has to share one way they feel connected to Israel. This could be a memory, a food, a song, a family story—or even something they hope to experience in the future. If they're stuck, they can just say "I wanna know more!" The game continues quickly, keeping energy high and answers casual.



## 04 - HEARTBEAT BEAT

**Materials:** Materials: None needed.

This rhythm activity helps campers feel the power of connection, even when people aren't connected physically. Have campers sit or stand in a circle. Talk about how the heart is a universal symbol of love, connection, and longing—whether for people we miss, for home, or even for a faraway place like Israel. Explain that while we each have our own heartbeat and pace, when we're together, those rhythms can blend. One camper begins by tapping a slow, steady beat on their chest (or by clapping softly). After a few beats, the person next to them adds a different rhythm—maybe faster, or in a different pattern. This continues around the circle, layering sounds like a heartbeat symphony. After everyone has joined in, pause, listen to the layered rhythm, and reflect: how does it feel to hear many heartbeats together? End with a short discussion about how, even across distance, we can feel part of a bigger “heartbeat”—a community, a people, a shared story.



## 05 - M-HUNT

**Materials:** A printed picture of the Hebrew letter Mem (מ)

For this quick scavenger hunt, campers will be challenged to look for two kinds of “Mem” connections: shapes and sounds. First, explain that Mem is the first letter of “Mizrach” (East), which is where Jerusalem is, and the direction we face when we pray. Mem is also the first letter of many meaningful Hebrew words—like mayim (water), makom (place), mishpacha (family), and mitzvah (good deed). In a defined area (like the bunk, or a nearby field), campers will look for:

- Objects that look like the letter Mem (an arch, a bent elbow, a folded towel, etc.)
- Objects whose names start with an “M” sound in Hebrew or English (map, mat, marker, etc.).

Each time a camper finds an item, they'll call it out or point it out to the group. Keep the pace brisk and encourage creative thinking. At the end, gather the group and quickly share some of the words found. Wrap up by reflecting how just like the Mem can “point” us eastward, we can find connection and meaning in small, everyday things around us.