

## The October 7th events, which impacted all of us—Israelis and Jews both in Israel and around the world—remain fresh in our minds and continue to cause deep pain.

As educators, both in Israel and the Diaspora, we play a central role in helping the younger generation process these events. The way we teach will shape how they understand the events and their significance, influencing the worldview of today's youth.

In a time when children and teenagers are inundated with information from the media and social networks, we must act as a dam, providing a reliable narrative of these traumatic events. Our role is to foster understanding, emphasize meaningful values, and reinforce a sense of security and hope for the future.

## Why is it important to encourage and initiate conversations about October 7th?

- Exposure to information is inevitable, so it's crucial to learn and understand what really happened in a way that's age-appropriate and grounded in reliable sources.
- In the face of extreme violence and insecurity, it's vital to reinforce faith in humanity and highlight acts of kindness and empathy.
- We should look to role models within our community to foster a sense of pride and personal empowerment.
- It's important to grasp the complexity of the story—acknowledging fear and bravery, brokenness and resilience as integral parts of the human experience. This reflection helps us learn more about ourselves, our community, and our collective identity.

### Embracing Jewish Heritage and Inspiring Action

Connecting with the narrative of our Jewish heritage and the shared values that unite us as a people, while motivating constructive action within our communities and circles of belonging.

### Values

Discuss the events in the context of universal human values—good and evil, compassion, generosity, and empathy.

### Testimonies as an Educational Tool

Through personal testimonies, students can understand experiences in a more personal and tangible way, fostering empathy and providing perspective on the events. These accounts offer an opportunity to appreciate the diversity of Israeli society, challenge prejudiced views, and engage deeply with the stories of individuals and communities.

### Remembering Our Own Trauma as Educators

It's important to create space for discussions about our feelings, emotions, and dilemmas within our supportive communities. By doing so, we can clarify and focus on the educational questions and messages we want to convey to the younger generation, while also addressing our own challenges as adults and educators.

## Tarbut Movement Workshops for Educators and Students

During the war, the Tarbut Movement brought together a group of poets and writers to collect testimonies from survivors of October 7th, which led to the publication of the book ***Shabbat, October 7th*** by Kinneret-Zmora-Dvir Publishing. Based on the materials in this book, an educational program for schools was developed, led by poets, writers, and experienced educators.

# “You Shall Choose Life”

An Educational Discussion on October 7th  
in Light of Jewish and Zionist Values

Based on Testimonies from the Book “Shabbat, October 7th”

## Target Audience:

Educators and Teaching Staff

## Session Duration:

The session is divided into two parts, each 45 minutes long, for a total of an hour and a half.

## Topic:

The lesson plan before us engages in a reflection on the Jewish-Zionist spirit as it was expressed in the events of October 7th—responsibility, mutual support, and love for humanity amidst brutal terrorism and war. The discussion aims to elevate exemplary Jewish and Zionist values through an examination of Jewish sources and expressions of culture and heritage from recent times.

## Goals:

Strengthening the sense of belonging to Jewish and Zionist identity as a source of moral strength while developing an educational and values-driven perspective to engage students in discussions about the events of October 7th.

## Teaching Resources:

- Excerpts from the book *Shabbat, October 7th*
- Artwork by Israeli artists
- Texts from primary sources, including a speech by the President of Israel

## Summary:

### Part A

Background on the Hamas terrorist attack on the city of Ofakim on October 7th.

Reading the personal testimony “A Miracle That God Did for Me” by Officer Itamar Iluz from the book *Shabbat, October 7th*.

Sharing personal feelings, dilemmas, and discussing Jewish values as reflected in the personal testimony.

### Part B

Guided reflection on artwork related to the events of October 7th.

Reading from the testimony “By a Thread” by Omri Shafroni from Kibbutz Be'eri, also from *Shabbat, October 7th*.

Discussion on the Zionist and Jewish values chosen to emphasize in our educational efforts.



## Part A

In this part, we will focus on the personal testimony of Itamar Iluz, a resident of Ofakim and an officer with the Ofakim Police Department.



Provide a brief background on the October 7th attack in the city of Ofakim

### Background: The Terror Attack on the City of Ofakim.

On the morning of Simchat Torah, Saturday, October 7, 2023 (the 22nd of Tishrei 5784), Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched a surprise attack on Israel. Amid a barrage of thousands of rockets, approximately 3,000 terrorists infiltrated numerous Israeli communities and military installations in the Gaza envelope area, engaging in gun battles against limited security forces.

At around 6:45 AM, 22 terrorists entered the city of Ofakim in two vehicles loaded with rifles, hundreds of grenades, dozens of RPGs, explosives, and mines. They approached through the western entrance and made their way to the Mishor HaGefen neighborhood. The terrorists killed anyone they encountered on the streets, in vehicles, and in homes. Mishor HaGefen is the westernmost neighborhood in the city, characterized by old houses that lack secure spaces, leaving many victims vulnerable while trying to reach public bomb shelters or returning from them.

Within minutes, police officers, counter-terrorism units, armed civilians, and off-duty soldiers responded to the gunfire and engaged the terrorists in combat. The city defenders successfully prevented the attackers from advancing into additional residential neighborhoods and taking control of the police station.

On Tamar Street, amidst relentless rocket fire, five terrorists seized a house belonging to the Edry couple and took them hostage. After approximately 20 hours of negotiations led by the Israeli police's negotiation unit, the couple was rescued, and all the terrorists in the house were neutralized. In the massacre in Ofakim, 27 residents were killed, along with six police officers, in addition to other city residents murdered elsewhere in the Gaza envelope area. This brought the total number of Ofakim residents who lost their lives in this surprise attack to 47.



Reading the testimony **"A Miracle That God Did for Me,"** the story of Itamar Iluz, from the book **"Shabbat, October 7th"**, p. 61.



1. Open discussion about the testimony.
2. Write the following four sentences on the board:

**"Therefore, a single human was created in the world, to teach that whoever destroys a single soul is considered as if they have destroyed an entire world; and whoever saves a single soul is considered as if they have saved an entire world." (Sanhedrin, Chapter 4)**

**"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19:18)**

**"All of Israel is responsible for one another."  
(Torah of the Cohanim, as cited in Sanhedrin 27b and Shevuot 40a)**

**"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live."**

**(Deuteronomy 30:19)**

## Discussion:

The facilitator states: These sentences written on the board are taken from Jewish sources.

1. Which of these sentences do you think best describes the story we read?
2. Choose one or more sentences from the testimony that illustrate the statement you chose.
3. Does Itamar believe he will survive the event? If not, what motivates him, nonetheless? What is the moral and spiritual foundation from which he acts?

In many ways, the Zionist narrative begins with the recognition that Jews have the right to defend themselves, a right that gained renewed significance with the establishment of the State of Israel. On October 7, individuals were forced to confront a brutal attack by thousands of terrorists, long before security forces arrived, and for many hours. During these hours, the commandments and values that have accompanied us for generations remained steadfast.

## Personal Reflection



Take a moment to write:

In one sentence—what is the most meaningful insight Itamar shared with you through his testimony?

In one word—what powerful and precise term captures the complex story that Itamar conveyed?

**Share your answers in the circle; there's no need to explain—just listen to the sentences and words resonating from Itamar Iluz's testimony.**

## Discussion:

The facilitator says: Try to define the educational value of reading Itamar Iluz's testimony with students.

1. Are there specific passages you would highlight? Why?
2. Are there any sections you would omit? Why?
3. What background information should students have before reading?
4. What age group would you recommend for this testimony?
5. What is the significance of processing and offering an ethical interpretation through quotes from Jewish sources? Does this help foster a sense of belonging and ethical resilience?



**For more information about consulting and workshops for teachers and students, contact Elad at 050-7327797**

**“Shabbat, October 7th” is available at bookstores and online.**

**Schools that book workshops will receive a free copy of the book for the teachers' lounge, serving as a valuable pedagogical resource.**