

JEWISH  
NATIONAL  
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USA

# SHABBAT FOR ISRAEL

## Host Guide

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# Welcome Letter from Chairs & Committee

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Dear Shabbat for Israel Hosts,

Thank you for joining us in this extraordinary nationwide initiative, Shabbat for Israel. By opening your homes and gathering your communities for a Shabbat dinner, you are playing a vital role in fostering unity, pride, and connection in honor of Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day.

Shabbat for Israel celebrates the vibrancy and diversity of Jewish life while creating meaningful opportunities to connect with one another and show solidarity with Israel. In Jewish tradition, Shabbat is a time to pause, reflect, and celebrate the blessings in our lives. On May 2, 2025, your Shabbat table becomes a beacon of hope, a display of unity, and a celebration of resilience and joy.

As hosts, you are ambassadors of this vision and of Jewish National Fund-USA. We encourage you to share your personal connections to Israel and to JNF-USA's vital work supporting the land and people of Israel. Whether it's through stories, projects you've supported, or your passion for Israel, your words can inspire your guests to deepen their own connections to Israel.

Your role is not to have all the answers or solve every debate but to create a space of warmth and inclusion. Whether your guests are seasoned Shabbat celebrants or joining for the first time, your hospitality and intention will make this evening truly special. To help you prepare, we have created this hosting guide to help you better understand the purpose of the Shabbat for Israel initiative and your role as a host.

This initiative also invites us to embody the Jewish value of *hachnasat orchim*—welcoming guests. As you braid challah, light candles, and share stories around *your* table, you are contributing to something far greater: a collective expression of Jewish unity and love for Israel, echoing across the nation.

We hope this experience brings joy, inspiration, and a renewed sense of connection. Together, we are building bridges between communities and strengthening our ties to Israel in meaningful ways.

Thank you for your leadership, your dedication, and your commitment to this incredible initiative. We are here to support you every step of the way. Should you have any questions or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out at [shabbatforisrael@jnf.org](mailto:shabbatforisrael@jnf.org).

Shabbat Shalom and Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach!

Warmly,

Sara Cannon & Robert Benedon  
*National Shabbat for Israel Co-Chairs*

# What is Shabbat for Israel?

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Shabbat for Israel is a nationwide initiative by Jewish National Fund-USA that encourages individuals and communities to host Shabbat dinners on May 2, 2025, in honor of Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. This program aims to foster unity, pride, and a deeper connection to Israel by bringing people together to share personal stories and insights about JNF-USA's impactful work in Israel.

Whether it's through stories, projects they've supported, or their passion for Israel, hosts can inspire their guests to deepen their own connections to JNF-USA's mission. By highlighting JNF-USA's transformative initiatives, from water innovation to community building and environmental conservation, hosts help spread awareness of the incredible impact achieved together.

By participating in Shabbat for Israel, hosts and guests alike contribute to a collective expression of Jewish unity and love for Israel, echoing across the nation.

1. Recruit your dinner guests and make sure they're registered, too
2. Join us for our Host Workshop on March 25th and special Shabbat cooking demo on April 1st
3. Receive your special JNF-USA Shabbat Box filled with items to make your dinner an unforgettable experience
4. Celebrate and enjoy your Shabbat for Israel dinner!

## Your Role as a Shabbat for Israel Host

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As a Shabbat for Israel host, your primary role is to bring people together around your table for a meaningful and engaging Friday night experience in honor of Yom Ha'atzmaut. This involves setting an inviting atmosphere where your guests feel welcome, inspired, and connected. You are encouraged to share your personal connection to Israel and Jewish National Fund-USA's work, weaving stories or insights about how JNF-USA's projects have made a tangible impact on the land and people of Israel. By doing so, you help foster a deeper understanding of Israel's challenges, triumphs, and the vital role your guests can play in supporting its future.

Hosts are also expected to guide the evening's flow by incorporating elements of Shabbat tradition, such as blessings over the candles, wine, and challah, while leaving room for reflection and conversation. Use the Shabbat for Israel Shabbat Guide (coming soon) as a resource to help plan the evening, from rituals to discussion prompts, that will inspire meaningful dialogue. Whether through storytelling, sharing a favorite Israeli dish, or inviting guests to share their own connections to Israel, your efforts will create a memorable evening that uplifts and celebrates the unity and resilience of the Jewish people.

# Recruitment Strategies

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When planning your Shabbat for Israel dinner, thoughtfully consider who you want to invite. The goal of this initiative is to inspire those who may not yet be connected to Jewish National Fund-USA or who have little foreknowledge of our work in Israel. By bringing together individuals who have positive connections to Israel—whether friends, family, colleagues, or members of your local community—you can help expand awareness of JNF-USA's mission and its meaningful impact.

Think about inviting people who are curious, open, and eager to learn more. Perhaps some of your guests have visited Israel, supported its causes, or feel a special bond to the land and its people. Others may be new to the conversation but share a desire to engage with something meaningful.

Remember, this is not a fundraising event—it is an opportunity for connection, education, and inspiration. If you need assistance identifying potential guests, JNF-USA professionals can provide lists or offer guidance to ensure your dinner includes individuals who will benefit most from this experience.

## What to Expect Next

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As we approach May 2nd, there will be several opportunities to engage with JNF-USA's Shabbat for Israel team and learn more about the organization and the initiative.

**Tuesday, March 25, 2025:** All Shabbat for Israel hosts are invited to join us virtually for a Host Workshop. In this hour-long session, we'll go over the basics of JNF-USA's work and give you the tools you'll need to lead your dinner guests in discussion.

**Tuesday, April 1, 2025:** Food is one of the things people always remember from a warm Shabbat dinner. In this virtual event, Lior Lev Sercarz, chef, spice blender, and founder of the Galilee Culinary Institute, a JNF-USA initiative in northern Israel, will join us for a Shabbat cooking demonstration. All hosts and their guests are invited to participate in this special event where you will learn about GCI and how JNF-USA partners with organizations on the ground in Israel. You'll receive cooking instruction from a master chef and tips on the finer points of Israeli cuisine.

**Mid-April 2025:** Be on the lookout for your special JNF-USA Shabbat Box. This box, provided to all hosts will contain items curated from our partners in Israel, each demonstrating a piece of the JNF-USA story. The box will also contain our Shabbat Guide, filled with blessings, recipes, and JNF-USA information to help you set intentions for your dinner and guide your guests through a meaningful celebration of Israel and JNF-USA's work.

We are so looking forward to partnering with you on this wonderful event. See you soon!

*Need help or have questions?*

Contact: Ben Cook, Director of Marketing Operations

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