

A Face. A Memory. A Day

P a n i m . Y o m . Z i k a r o n

Facilitator Guide





Introduction

A Face. A Memory. A Day (Panim. Yom. Zikaron) is an artistic venture that commemorates the lives of fallen soldiers and victims of terror through animated short films.

Fragments of memory, small moments from the lives of the fallen that friends and relatives have chosen to share come to life on screen and offer a light touch of eternity. At the core of the project is the belief that these films can provide deeper meaning, personal and national, to Yom HaZikaron, with their focus on glimpses of life rather than moments of death.

Well-known and aspiring animators have captured memories of encounters and grace in the lives of the fallen. The project includes more than 40 films that constitute a virtual collection of Israeli national memory.

The films and educational guides are available on the website in Hebrew as well as in English, and a select number in the [Spanish](#) and Russian translation.

Guides

To commemorate Yom HaZikaron (Israel's Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terror) in a more meaningful way, Beit Avi Chai has created a diverse set of interactive educational curriculums for its *A Face. A Memory. A Day* animated film project.

Each curriculum includes descriptive overviews, activities, questions, and topics for discussion. Each curriculum is also purposely designed to be adapted in different educational settings for different age groups, with tools for educators and Jewish professionals.

We have no doubt that you will find this project as meaningful as we do. Should you have questions or thoughts that you would like to share, we welcome you to write to us at: remember.edu@avichai.org.il.

Separation

Activity Guide for the Animated Short Film “Connections”

Facilitator Introduction:

Learning to tie shoelaces is an important milestone for many children. It is often the first knot we learn to tie. Ask any scout, and they will tell you how important knots can be in life and how many different types there are.

Knots are one of the ways we connect and bind things together.

We all know that a knot which is not fastened well will eventually loosen, but sometimes, we need to undo a strongly tied knot ourselves and sever the bond.

This Activity Guide invites us to connect with Mira Ben Ari who died in battle during the 1948 War of Independence. She left behind a two-year-old son, Danny.

Her story centers upon the courageous separation between a mother and her child. Mira went on to be recognized as a hero for her supreme sacrifice.

Goals:

- * Learn the story of Mira Ben Ari and how she was separated from her son, Danny
- * Consider Mira's courage, the price she paid, and why she paid it
- * Clarify which values or ideas participants would be willing and ready to sacrifice something for

Activity Length:

The suggested length is 60 min. For a shorter activity, please modify. There is an additional activity option at the end of this Activity Guide for a longer, extended activity.

Note to Facilitator:

- The comments in blue boxes are simply points for the facilitator to consider; they are not intended to be used as scripted answers, nor are they intended to limit or stifle a conversation that veers in a different direction. These questions are purposefully broad and are designed to facilitate thoughtful discussion among the students. The comments can be used to aid the facilitator's preparation as a springboard for further thought, or they can be replaced by other observations.
- When participants share observations or conclusions about the films, encourage them to support their conclusions by pointing to the specific details from the videos they have watched.
- Due to the sensitive nature of the material, please familiarize yourself fully with the lesson plan to ensure that the questions and activities are appropriate for the circumstances of the participants. The Activity Guide contains some options and variations to suit different needs; please adapt the questions and activities to the sensitivities of your participants.
- Consider setting up a "Parking Lot" for ideas and observations that the students share, but that won't be addressed in the course of the activity. Students can be invited to explore these items through writing or art and share them with the class at a later date.



Part One

Animated Short Film “Connections”

(20 min)

Facilitator says: Today’s activity is part of the Beit Avi Chai project “A Face. A Memory. A Day.” The project uses animated short films to commemorate fallen IDF soldiers and victims of terror in a way that brings a part of them back to life. The different animation techniques and artistic styles allow us to connect with the stories and values of the fallen. Hopefully, the films will help us reflect upon their lives and their loss and consider how they can inspire us today. Today, we are going to watch one such film and discuss it.

Our film is about Mira Ben Ari who was born in Berlin, Germany and moved to Tel Aviv with her family in the 1930s. After becoming involved as an older teenager in Zionist pioneering activities, she moved to Kibbutz Nitzanim, married Elyakim and had a child, Danny – all by the time she turned 19.

Once the war broke out, Mira’s kibbutz came regularly under fire by the Egyptian army. The kibbutz leaders decided to evacuate children and women to the nearby Moshav Be’er Tuvia, but Mira, who was the radio operator, chose to stay back and help defend the kibbutz.

She was killed by Egyptian forces when the kibbutz surrendered. She was 22.

We are now going to watch the film twice. The first time we watch it will be for you to get your first impressions and to notice how the film makes you feel. The second time will be guided by some specific questions and observations.



Show the film "[Connections](#)" (Length: 2 mins 21 seconds).

1. After screening the film, ask the students to share their observations and initial thoughts.

Before we watch the film the second time, pay attention to the following:

- 1. Which knots are tied, and which are broken?
- 2. Mira holds her baby up in the air at the start of the film, what does the baby morph into?
- 3. Who looks through the window? Are they looking in or out?
- 4. Where do the waves come from and where do they go?
- 5. What happens when the wind blows?
- 6. What else did you notice that I may not have asked about?

These questions can be spoken or written on the board in advance.

2. Show the movie the second time.

3. Review participants' answers to the questions. This can be done as a think-pair-share activity.

There is more information about Mira's life on the [project's website](#).

Note to Facilitator: *comments and questions below are not intended to be used as scripted answers, nor are they intended to limit or stifle a conversation that veers in a different direction. They should be used to aid the facilitator's preparation as a springboard for further thought, or they can be replaced by other observations.*

The film opens with a touching, yet everyday moment of a mother playing with her child at home. As Mira holds Danny up above her head, he giggles and holds his arms out. He looks like an airplane. We then see and hear a group of fighter planes ominously flying overhead.

1. **What messages might the illustrator be drawing our attention to in the opening scene?**

Mira was a dedicated mother with a young toddler. Mira was also a pioneering Zionist. These two elements were key parts of her life. The movie toggles between these essential roles throughout: the domestic/maternal and the national/military.

One example of this is at **1:26** when Mira is portrayed sitting at the radio and then the scene quickly changes to her dressing her son, Danny.

Another example can be seen at **0:52**. You can show this part again. Danny is playing outside and Mira is watching over him and writing but then the music becomes darker as the kibbutz prepares for battle laying sandbags and barbed wire.

? Why do you think the film jumps between these two aspects of Mira's life?

We see Mira on the radio. We also see Mira writing down the radio signals. Her handwriting looks like the waves. There is then a scene showing two boats at 0:26. One of the boats is small and the other is large. Mira ties a knot and then we see the boats move close together at 0:36.

? What do the waves represent? Why do they need to be tied together?

? How might you interpret the movement of the two boats? How does this connect with what we already know about Mira?

One of Mira's main jobs as a radio communicator was to pick up signals from approaching boats. During pre-Independence times, immigration to Israel was heavily restricted by the British, and Jews had to make their way in illegally, many by boat. Mira helped organize clandestine escorts for these boats. The film shows Mira tying knots between the two boats.

Continuing the idea of Mira's life having two different aspects, some people interpret the animation and movement of the small illegal immigration boat as a small child running towards their mother.

In Hebrew, the word for connection or relationship is **קשר**, keshar. The same word is also used for a knot. The word for a radio operator is **קשור**, kashar.

? In what ways are the knots we see in the film significant?

The knots represent the binding together of things. This can be seen allegorically as well as literally.

Mira tying her son's shoelaces toward the end of the film is a poignant moment that illustrates not only Mira's motherhood but also their final time together. As opposed to a knot which ties two things together, here the knot represents their separation. Not only the separation of mother and child but also the breaking down of Mira's attempt to be a parent and protect her son while at the same time defending her nation.

At the end of the film, we see Danny looking into the house from outside. Notice how this is a mirror to the film's beginning where Mira looks out the window, only this time, it happens in reverse. Mira is shown as a silhouette.

? Why is the film framed by Mira looking out of the window at both the beginning and the end of the movie ?

Part Two

Small Group Discussion and Values Activity

(20 min)

Facilitator: Now that we have learned about Mira's life and how she was separated from her son, Danny, we can explore some more general aspects of Mira's decision to stay on the kibbutz.

- ❓ What do you think triggered Mira's tears at the end of the film?
- ❓ How do you think Mira was able to go straight back to the radio and transmit after saying goodbye to Danny?
- ❓ To what extent would you describe Mira's decision to stay back as courageous?
- ❓ What do you think the other kibbutz members thought about her decision and the price she paid?

The consequences of Mira's decision to send Danny away and stay back on the kibbutz were very clear: War, ideology, comradeship, managing risks, instinct, and practicalities all played some part in her decision. We can now help the participants think about their own lives and values:

- ❓ What and who are the things, people or ideas that you would consider sacrificing something for?

Suggested Activity

1. See a sample list of values in [Appendix I](#).
 2. Divide the group into smaller groups of 3-4 people. Ask them to look at the values list and try to reach consensus about their most important values.
- ❓ Can you think of a hierarchy of things we consider worthy of a sacrifice? What would you place at the highest end?

Part Three

Letter Reading and Writing Activity

(15 min)

During the film, there is a scene portraying Mira writing a letter. She signs her name at the foot of the page. A copy of the actual letter Mira wrote to her husband, Elyakim, still exists. She wrote about her strong feelings and the need for the nation, and Mira herself, to overcome many difficulties.

A partial translation can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

Divide the participants into pairs or small groups and ask them to read the letter together before trying to answer the following questions:

- ❓ What would you have expected to read in a letter like this?
- ❓ Can you think of any other circumstances where someone would need to write a similar letter?
- ❓ What does Mira's letter show us about her motivations?

Facilitator: Like Mira, we will now write our own short letter or a paragraph, from our point of view.

Here are 2 suggested letters:

- * Imagine that you are Mira writing to Elyakim before separating from your son Danny. What message would you want to convey?
- * Imagine that you were writing a letter to someone to explain something you were prepared to sacrifice for. Who would you write to? How would you explain your choice?

Conclusion

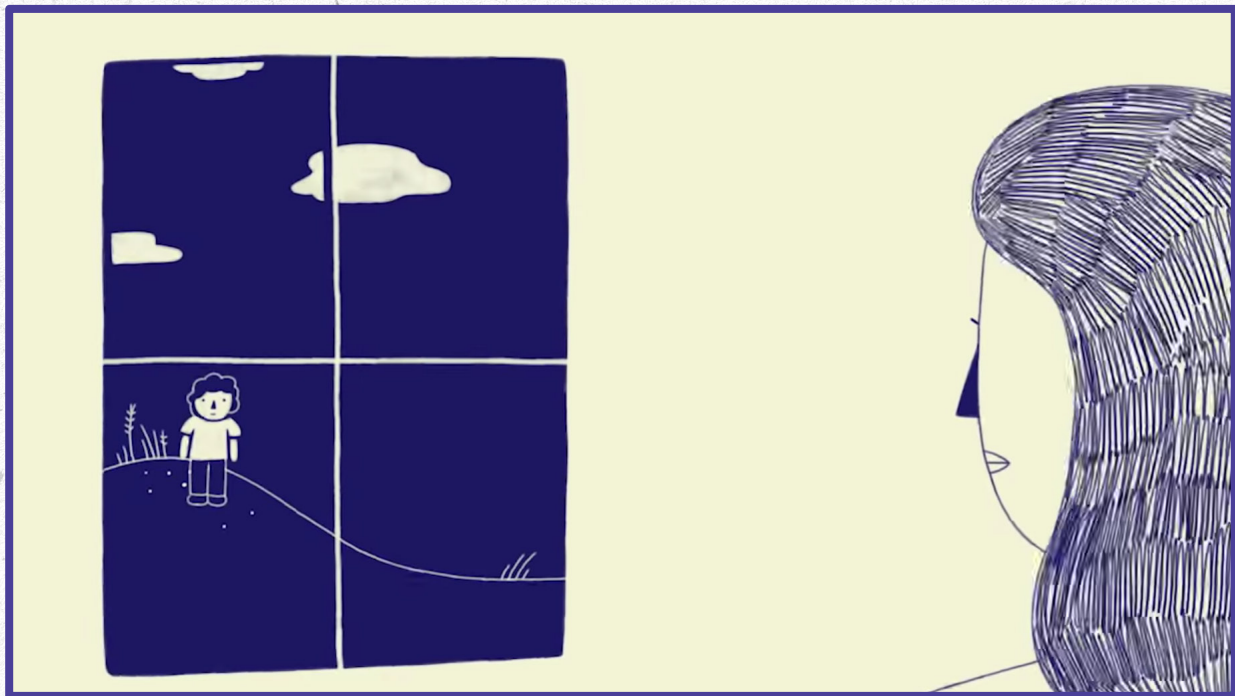
(5 min)

Facilitator: This activity has introduced us to the powerful story of Mira Ben Ari.

The aim of the “A Face. A Memory. A Day.” project is to commemorate Israel’s fallen soldiers and victims of terror in a unique way. The film we watched allowed us to truly connect with one individual, among the many who are remembered each year on Yom HaZikaron.

We learned about Mira’s life, her being a mother and her taking an active role in defending the kibbutz she lived on. We focused on the different knots that connected these different centers of her life.

We considered the difficult, if not impossible, choice she felt compelled to make, reflected on our own values and considered the concept of sacrifice.



Appendix I

List of Sample Values

CAN YOU CHOOSE YOUR TOP 5 VALUES?

Morality

Responsibility

Community

Gratitude

Friendship

Humility

Family

Creativity

Honor

Power

Learning

Growth

Justice

Kindness

Love

Courage

Faith

Leadership

Respect

Generosity

Independence

Perseverance

Appendix 2

Translation of the final part of Mira Ben Ari's last letter to her husband

"There is no separation more difficult than a mother from a child. Yet I have separated from my child so that he can grow up in a safe place and so that he can be a free person in his own land. Visit him often and when you go to him, send him all of my love."

אין פרידה קשה מזו של אם מילדה. אך אני נפרדת מילדי למען יגדל במקום בטוח ולמען שיהיה אדם חופשי בארצו. תבקר אותו הרבה ותמסור לו בבואך אליו את כל אהבתי