

Operation Magic Carpet

Operation Magic Carpet was an 8 yearlong secret operation in which the State of Israel rescued and gave home to approximately 50,000 Jews from Yemen and Eritrea. The operation began December 1948, 7 months after the state was founded. This was a rescue Aliyah - the Jewish communities in Yemen were in danger and they needed to move.

The state of Israel was very young and did not have much funding. In the beginning the state sent undercover spies to see what the living conditions were in Yemen. They then decided Israel must use all of its possible resources to save their lives. Israel's Prime Minister David Ben Gurion supported the operation even though it was risky, stating that this is the real purpose for the Jewish state.

The operation had 3 steps and at the end of it only a few Jews remained in Yemen. The rest were flown to the new-found state of Israel and placed in temporary housing called Transit camps (מַעְבְּרוֹת).

In Hebrew, the operation is called "עַל כַּנְפֵי נְשָׂרִים" (On the wings of eagles).

This name was taken from the Bible verse "וְאֶשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל כַּנְפֵי נְשָׂרִים, וְאָבִיא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי" "I shall carry you on the wings of eagles and bring you to me" (Exodus 19:4).

It was named Operation Magic Carpet because of the mode of transport - airplanes.

This HaMoadon edition is also linked to the celebration of Passover. The history of Operation Magic Carpet can connect with the Exodus story.

Trigger questions for discussion:

- What is the connection between Operation Magic Carpet and the story of Passover?
- How do you think the Israelites felt having to leave their home? How did the Yemenites feel?
- What are some of the struggles these two communities had to face when moving?
- What do you think made these two communities have hope and continue to take the risk of the journey?

