



# Why Maps Matter

*In 2015, J Street will be starting a Maps Initiative, bringing maps of Israel that recognize the Green Line into Jewish institutions. Why do we care? Why do maps matter?*

Maps tell an important story about how we see the world. For many American Jews, our understanding of Israel is shaped by the maps we see on the walls of our Hebrew school classrooms and Jewish community centers. What story have we been telling with our maps? When we close our eyes and picture Israel, what does it look like? Have we been forming a picture of Israel as it really is, or perpetuating an illusion?

As a community we take tremendous pride in Israel as both a Jewish homeland and the Middle East's only democracy. Israel forms a central part of our values and aspirations as a people. We work to build and support a prosperous and pluralistic country that makes us proud.

But the maps hanging on the walls of many of our synagogues and community institutions depict a very different Israel, one which cannot remain both Jewish and democratic and will be relegated to unending conflict. These maps put forward an image of Israel bordered by the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and the Jordan River on the east, without a Green Line to delineate between pre-1967 Israel and the occupied West Bank. In so doing, they deny the reality of Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territory, and of the millions of Palestinians living under that occupation with legitimate claims to a state of their own. Moreover, these maps undercut Israel's own prospects for achieving true peace and security and its future as a Jewish and democratic state.

The maps are a clear symptom of a larger problem. The vast majority of Jewish Americans, including our communal leaders, claim to support a two-state solution, recognizing that it is the only way to safeguard Israel's future. Yet we often talk about and teach about Israel in a way that physically erases the Green Line that forms the basis of that solution. When the Green Line disappears from our maps, it also disappears from our consciousness. If we cannot envision the outlines of the two-state solution on our maps, how can we advocate for it?

The Green Line has long been understood to be the key starting point for negotiation of Israel's final borders. It will form the basis for the outlines of a future Palestinian state, with mutually-agreed land swaps ensuring that the majority of Israelis presently living in the West Bank will be brought within the borders of Israel. By putting the Green Line back on our maps, we are moving the two-state solution back to the forefront of our communal conversation. We are showing our community what a secure, Jewish and democratic Israel looks like and stressing the importance of a two-state solution in realizing it. In the words of Theodore Herzl: "If you will it, it is no dream."

With this map we put forward the picture of the Israel we will work toward, the Israel that reflects our Jewish values, the Israel we want for our children. When you hand someone this map you are reminding them that Israel faces a very serious problem - and that this problem has a real, attainable solution. When you hand someone this map, you are asking them a question: What is the future that you want for Israel? And what will you do to help achieve it?



*Bring the Maps Initiative to your synagogue, day school, youth group or JCC and help your community envision a secure, democratic homeland for the Jewish people.*

J Street has additional resources to help you bring the Maps Initiative to your community and ideas for additional steps participating rabbis and institutions can take.



**Before you bring the Maps Initiative to an institution we ask that you speak with J Street regional staff or e-mail [maps@jstreet.org](mailto:maps@jstreet.org).**

We can assist you and in many instances introduce you to rabbis, chapter leaders or other J Street advocates who are working on the Maps Initiative in your area.

Please let us know if your Jewish institution displays our map, or any map with a Green Line. We are keeping track of institutions being approached and sharing our experiences with those participating in this initiative.



*Additional information about the Maps Initiative can also be found at [jstreet.org/ourfuture](https://jstreet.org/ourfuture).*