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Country Profile

Introduction

With a total area of 7,850 square miles (20,330 square kilometers)¹, Israel is one of the world's smallest countries.² Its role in world geopolitical affairs, however, has been and continues to be, large. Enveloped in conflict and controversy since its independence from British rule in May 1948, Israel and the adjoining areas of Palestine (sometimes referred to as the Occupied Territories) is home to some of the holiest sites of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Since 1948, the country has been through several short wars with its neighboring countries and has suffered numerous periods of escalating violence with pro-Palestinian groups and militias. Despite the continuing state of political uncertainty, Israel has made great strides economically and has the third highest per-capita gross domestic product in the Middle East (behind the United Arab Emirates and Qatar).³

¹ This value includes Jerusalem but excludes other territories under Israeli control since the 1967 war.

² "Background Note: Israel." May 2006. US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>

³ "Rank Order – Per Capita – GDP (PPP)." 19 December 2006, The CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>

Geography

Regions

Israel⁴ has five major geographical regions, defined by both topography and climate: the Mediterranean coastal plain, the central and northern highlands, the Plain of Esdraelon, the Great Rift Valley, and the Negev.

Mediterranean Coastal Plain

The coastal plain extends along the entire Israeli coast, with the widest portion to the south near the Gaza Strip. The narrowest coastal section is at Haifa, where the Mount Carmel range runs nearly to the coast. The coastal plain region is the agricultural heartland of Israel.⁵ It is also where two-thirds of Israel's population lives.

The Central and Northern Highlands

The northern Galilean Highlands and the southern Judean Hills are part of a mostly continuous north-south chain of hills and mountains whose central portion (the Samarian Highlands) lies entirely within the West Bank. The eastern portions of the dry Judean Hills also lie within the West Bank. Israel's largest city, Jerusalem, is located within the Judean Hills.

In the north, the Galilean Highlands are separated from the Samarian Highlands and Mount Carmel range by the Plain of Esdraelon.⁶ Mount Meron, located in the northern Galilean Highlands near the Lebanon border, is the highest point in Israel at 1,208 meters (3,963 feet).

Plain of Esdraelon

This roughly triangular-shaped valley lies between the Galilean Highlands to the north and the Mount Carmel range and Samarian Highlands to the south. To the west, it is bounded by the Mediterranean coastal plain, and its eastern border consists of hills and the entrance to the Great Rift (Jordan River) Valley through the Bet-She'an valley. Historically the Plain of Esdraelon has been important as a lowland passage between the Mediterranean coastal areas and the Jordan River Valley.

The Great Rift Valley

The eastern border of Israel is part of the northern extension of the Great Rift Valley, a geological feature that marks the splitting apart of crustal plates. The Great Rift Valley extends discontinuously from Mozambique in southern Africa to Lebanon. The Israeli portion of the Great Rift Valley is called the Hula Valley in the north near the Golan Heights, the Jordan River Valley where the Jordan River bisects it, and the Wadi Arabah

⁴ References to Israel throughout this report are, except as noted, specific to the country as defined by the armistice boundaries of the 1947-48 war (the "green line").

⁵ "Israel: Geographic Regions." Israel Online Publications, ThinkQuest.com, <http://library.thinkquest.org/26823/georegions.htm>

⁶ "Plain of Esdraelon." 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9032999/Plain-of-Esdraelon>

(Ha-‘Arava) south of the Dead Sea. At the southernmost end of Israel, the valley forms the narrow Gulf of Aqaba (Eilat), which separates Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula to the west from Jordan and Saudi Arabia to the east, before veering to the southeast as the Red Sea.

The Negev

The Negev is a southern desert region that contains over 50 percent of the total area of Israel. This sparsely populated region is strikingly barren in its southern reaches, having caused Mark Twain to comment in 1867 that the Negev is “a desolation that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action.” Agriculture has taken hold in the northern portions of the Negev by means of drip irrigation (which was developed in Israel) and large-scale water projects that transport water southward from the Galilee region.⁷

Climate

Despite its small size, Israel has a surprisingly diverse climate. Prevailing winds blow from the southwest, and in the north they come in over the Mediterranean Sea, bringing significant moisture. Further south, however, these same winds come in from the Egyptian Sinai Desert, resulting in the extreme aridity that characterizes most of the Negev.⁸ The moisture cycle is Mediterranean, with almost all rainfall coming in the late fall, winter, and early spring. Rainfall totals tend to be higher in hill and mountain regions than along adjacent coastal areas. Near the beginning and end of the summer season, Israel is sometimes blasted by khamsin winds (known as *sharav* in Hebrew). These hot, dry winds blow westward from the Arabian Desert.⁹

Plants and Wildlife

Flora

While much of Israel has been deforested over time, natural forest patches still exist in some of the mountainous areas of northern Galilee, such as Mount Meron. In addition, reforestation efforts since independence have added millions of trees throughout the country, creating strands of pines, carobs, tamarisks, and eucalyptuses. In the southern part of the country in the Negev, most trees are acacias.¹⁰ Altogether, over 2,780 plant species grow within Israel.¹¹

7 “Focus on Israel: Israel’s Agriculture in the 21st Century.” 24 December 2002, Fedler, Jon. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/economy/focus%20on%20israel-%20israel-s%20agriculture%20in%20the%2021st>

8 “Climate and Variations in Climate (from Ch. 3 of *Watershed: The Role of Fresh Water in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.” 1994, Lonergan, Stephen C. and Brooks, David B. International Development Research Centre, http://www.idrc.ca/openbooks/719-1/#page_20

9 “Country Guide: Israel.” http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/country_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT002440

10 “Acacia Trees as Keystone Species in Negev Desert Ecosystems. (abstract)” April 2002, Munzbergova, Zuzana, and Ward, David. *Journal of Vegetation Science*, BioOne.org, [http://www.bioone.org/perlserv/?request=get-abstract&doi=10.1658%2F1100-9233\(2002\)013%5B0227%3AATAKS%5D2.0.CO%3B2](http://www.bioone.org/perlserv/?request=get-abstract&doi=10.1658%2F1100-9233(2002)013%5B0227%3AATAKS%5D2.0.CO%3B2)

11 “Flora and Fauna in Israel.” 3 September 2001, Helliman, Wendy (based on reports submitted by Dr. Reuven Ortal). Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2001/9/Flora%20and%20Fauna%20in%20Israel

Fauna

Efforts are underway throughout Israel to reintroduce animal species that once were native to Israel. At the Yotvata Hai-Bar Nature Reserve in the Ha-'Arava, for example, onagers (Asiatic wild ass), African asses, ostriches, and Arabian and scimitar oryxes are some of the mammals that are being bred for reintroduction into the Negev and adjacent areas.¹² Other animals populating the Negev include the Nubian ibex, leopards, hyenas, gazelles, wolves, foxes, and hyraxes, as well as various species of rodents and reptiles.¹³ Numerous bird species use the Great Rift Valley as a natural flyway, including storks, eagles, and hawks. In addition, 270 other species of birds are native to Israel.¹⁴

Water Bodies

Water is a precious resource in Israel, a country with a growing population that has long committed itself to agricultural self-sufficiency. The use and diversion of the water resources in Israel and the adjoining Israeli-controlled areas has long been one of the key issues in the ongoing political conflict in the region.

Jordan River

The Jordan River (Ha-Yarden) is Israel's longest river. In its northern stretch, it flows near but fully within Israel's pre-1967 eastern boundary with Syria. South of the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan forms the boundary between Israel and Jordan until it reaches the northern edge of the West Bank. From here until it flows into the Dead Sea, the Jordan River separates the West Bank region from Jordan. Located in the Great Rift Valley, much of the Jordan lies below sea level, making it the world's lowest river.

At its northern end, the Jordan is fed by the Hasbani River flowing south from Lebanon, the Baniyas River flowing southwestward from the Golan Heights, and the Dan River, which begins in Israel's northern highlands. Further south, the Yarmuk River, the Jordan's principal tributary, flows in from the east along the Jordan-Syria border.¹⁵

Sea of Galilee (also known as Lake Kinneret and Lake Tiberias)

The Sea of Galilee is actually a below-sea-level lake fed on its northern end and drained on its southern end by the Jordan River. It is a major attraction for Christian pilgrims owing to its association with the life of Jesus. In 1964, Israel completed the National Water Carrier, a massive water project that pumps water out of the Sea of Galilee depression and carries it via aqueducts and tunnels to areas in central and southern Israel. Subsequent to its completion, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan began plans for a water project

12 "Yotvata Hai-Bar (Wildlife Preserve) Nature Reserve." Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority, http://www.parks.org.il/ParksENG/company_card.php3?NewNameMade=48&from=116&CNumber=422155

13 "Ramon Park Complex." Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority, http://www.parks.org.il/ParksENG/company_card.php3?NewNameMade=47&from=116&CNumber=853754

14 "Israel: The Bird's Eye View." Mandell, Sherri. Lotan Center for Creative Ecology, http://www.kibbutzlotan.com/creativeEcology/articles/The_birds_Eye_View.html

15 "Jordan River." 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, 2007, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9043979/Jordan-River>

that would divert the Hasbani and Banias Rivers into the Yarmuk River, thus bypassing the upper Jordan River and Sea of Galilee. This showdown over water control ultimately was one of the main causes of the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day War.¹⁶

Dead Sea

At 418 meters (1,371 feet) below sea level, the water surface of the Dead Sea is the lowest point on Earth. The Dead Sea is also Earth's saltiest body of water. The eastern half of this water-covered depression on the Jordan River is part of Jordan. The western side of the Dead Sea is split between the West Bank (the northern portion) and Israel (the southern portion).

The Dead Sea has been drying up in recent years as upstream water diversions on the Jordan and Yarmuk Rivers have reduced the amount of water flowing into it. In reaction to this increasing problem, Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority signed an agreement in May 2005. This agreement authorizes a feasibility study for a canal project linking the Red Sea to the Dead Sea. One additional expected benefit of this project would be the generation of hydroelectric power by the gravity flow of Red Sea water to the Dead Sea.¹⁷

Aquifers

Approximately 30 percent of Israel's water needs are supplied by the Jordan River via the National Water Carrier that originates on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Most of the remaining water comes from two large aquifers. The Coastal Aquifer underlies the coastal plain from the Gaza Strip to south of Haifa near Mount Carmel. (A smaller portion of the Coastal Aquifer lies in the coastal area north of Haifa.) It has been over pumped and increasingly suffers from saltwater intrusion. The Mountain Aquifer lies east of the Coastal Aquifer beneath the Samarian Highlands and Judean Hills. Much of the Mountain Aquifer (83 percent) recharges in land within the West Bank, but many of the natural discharge areas lie within Israel. Thus, an even higher percentage (93 percent) of Mountain Aquifer water is used by Israel. This fact has severely complicated efforts to establish an Israeli-Palestinian peace.¹⁸

¹⁶ "Water and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process." 16 November 1999, Ammons, Mike. Department of Government, University of Texas, Austin, <http://www.la.utexas.edu/chenry/mena/studpubs/ammons/ammons.html>

¹⁷ "Dead Sea Canal Hopes to End a Dry Argument." 10 May 2005, Urquhart, Conal. The Sydney Morning Herald, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/World/Dead-Sea-canal-hopes-to-end-a-dry-argument/2005/05/09/1115584909842.html>

¹⁸ "Geography of Water Resources." WWS 401c Task Force. Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, <http://www.wws.princeton.edu/wws401c/geography.html>

Major Cities

Tel Aviv-Yafo

Tel Aviv-Yafo (2006 population: 382,500)¹⁹ is Israel's commercial and financial center as well as the focus of its cultural life. It is the core of Israel's largest metropolitan area and is second only to Jerusalem in population. Headquartered in Tel Aviv are most industrial organizations, the stock exchange, the Israel Diamond Exchange (in suburban Ramat Gan), major newspapers and publishing houses, and almost all international embassies. Recently, high-tech and scientific-research firms, many located in the suburban ring of cities around Tel Aviv, have helped modernize the metropolitan area's economic profile.²⁰

Tel Aviv, the first all-Jewish city in modern times, was founded in 1909 as a suburb of Jaffa, one of the most ancient port cities in the world.²¹ In 1934, Tel Aviv was granted municipal status, and in 1950 it was renamed Tel Aviv-Yafo, the new municipality absorbing old Jaffa. Jaffa (Yafo), the former core city, is now mostly known as a tourism center.²² Modern Tel Aviv is the most secular city in Israel, and in this sense, is a striking contrast to Israel's largest city, Jerusalem. As almost any tourism guide will point out, there is a well-worn Israeli adage that "Tel Aviv plays while Jerusalem prays."

Jerusalem

Israel's largest city (2006 population: 729,100), Jerusalem is also the political and spiritual center of the country. Like Mecca, Varanasi, and a handful of other world cities, Jerusalem is a major religious pilgrimage site. Unlike the other cities, however, pilgrims from three religions—Jews, Muslims, and Christians—come to Jerusalem to visit and worship at some of their religion's holiest sites. Many of these sites are in the Old City, a walled compound with four distinct quarters (Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Armenian). Israel's oldest and most famous university (Hebrew University) makes Jerusalem a major educational center as well.

In 1950, the Israeli Government made Jerusalem the capital of Israel, although only the western part of the city was within Israeli-controlled boundaries at the time. (Jordan controlled the eastern part of Jerusalem, including the Old City.) Planning immediately began for the construction of the Knesset, Israel's parliament building, which was inaugurated in 1966.²³ After the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel took control of the entire city. In 1980, the Israeli Knesset passed a Basic Law declaring Jerusalem, "complete and

19 "Population of Localities Numbering Above 1,000 Inhabitants and Other Rural Population on 09/30/2006." 30 September 2006. Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Israel, http://www.cbs.gov.il/population/new_2007/table3.xls#G339

20 "Tel Aviv: Facts and Figures." Cities Guide. Economist.com, http://www.economist.com/cities/findStory.cfm?city_id=TLV&folder=Facts-Figures#Economic_profile

21 "Tel Aviv: Historical Background." Cities Guide. Economist.com, http://www.economist.com/cities/displayobject.cfm?obj_id=5080851

22 "Jaffa." Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/geo/jaffa.html

23 "The Knesset Building in Giv'at Ram: Planning and Construction." 2006. The Knesset, http://www.knesset.gov.il/building/architecture/eng/art1_prologue_eng.htm

united,” to be the capital of the country. Subsequently that year, the United Nations passed a nonbinding resolution that, among other things, advised member states to remove their embassies from the city.²⁴ When the UN resolution was passed, 13 countries had their embassies in Jerusalem. In 2006, the last two nations with Jerusalem embassies (El Salvador and Costa Rica) moved them out of the city.²⁵

The U.S. does not officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In reaction to the Government policy, the U.S. Congress has enacted legislation granting Jerusalem capital status “in particular instances,” and in 1995 passed a law requiring that the U.S. State Department move their embassy to the city by May 1999.²⁶ However, the law has never been implemented owing to successive six-month security waivers signed by Presidents Clinton and Bush.²⁷ The U.S. does have a consulate in Jerusalem.

Haifa

Located at the base of Mount Carmel, Haifa is Israel’s third largest city (2006 population: 267,000) and the largest city in northern Israel. The city is the industrial center of Israel, containing plants devoted to steel, chemicals, food processing, and oil refining. Haifa is also home to the country’s largest port and two of its eight universities (University of Haifa and Technion-Israel Institute of Technology). The city has a diverse population, including significant Muslim and Christian Druze minorities. Appropriately, Haifa is the center for the Bahá’í faith, a worldwide religion that stresses the unity of all religious teachings and messengers.^{28, 29}

Beersheba (Be’er Sheva)

Beersheba (Be’er Sheva) is the capital and largest city (2006 population: 185,300) of Israel’s large Southern District, which encompasses all of the Negev and areas to its north. Since Israeli independence, the city has grown rapidly as Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and other countries have moved to the area.³⁰ Beersheba is presently the sixth most populous city in the country. The Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, which hosts a major center for desert research, is located in the city.³¹ Although Beersheba has sprawled with new neighborhoods, its roots as a desert caravan oasis can still be glimpsed at a weekly market held for the many Bedouins who live nearby in the Negev.

24 “UN Security Council Resolution 478, Israel.” 1980. Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11226/>

25 “El Salvador to Remove Embassy from Jerusalem.” 25 August 2006, Reuters. Ynetnews.com, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3295745,00.html>

26 “Israel: Background and Relations with the United States.” 31 August 2006, Migdalovitz, Carol. Congressional Research Service, US Library of Congress, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/IB82008.pdf

27 “Bush Signs Tenth Waiver to Avoid Moving Embassy to Jerusalem.” 15 June 2006 (Presidential Determination No. 15-2006), Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/waiver11.html>

28 “Haifa.” 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9038803/Haifa>

29 “Bahá’í Faith.” 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9001542/Bahai-faith>

30 “Israel: Beer-Sheva.” International Partnership for Service Learning and Leadership, <http://www.ipsl.org/programs/israel.html>

31 “About the Institute.” The Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, <http://bidr.bgu.ac.il/General.aspx?ItemId=3005>

Beersheba has been occupied, and then later abandoned, numerous times throughout history. The latest rebuilding of the city began in the early 1900s when the area was still ruled by Ottoman Turks. In the 1947 UN partition plan for Palestine, Beersheba was planned to be part of the Arab state. However, the city was later captured from occupying Egypt during the 1948-49 war between newly founded Israel and neighboring Arab countries.³²

Ashdod

Israel's fifth largest city, Ashdod (2006 population: 203,300), is a relatively new city, built about 7 kilometers (4.5 miles) north of the ruins of ancient Ashdod. Located south of Tel Aviv-Yafo, Ashdod is home to the country's second-largest³³ and most modern port, which is the export center for much of Israel's citrus crop. Ashdod is primarily known as an industrial city. Textiles, power generation, and oil refining are some of the city's larger industrial activities.

History

Introduction

Israel occupies a land that has seen countless tribes, civilizations, and empires come and go over many millennia. At one time or another, all or part of the ancient Land of Israel, also known as Palestine and Canaan, was ruled by Arab Caliphs, Assyrians, Babylonians, British, Byzantines, Egyptian Mamelukes, Greeks, Hebrews, Israelites, Ottoman Turks, Persians, Philistines, and Romans. Today, a discussion of the ancient history of this region can quickly become controversial, given that modern claims to the region's land and sites are sometimes based on historical precedence. A further complication is that regional geographic terms, such as Israel, Palestine, Judea, and Samaria, have modern and ancient boundaries that often vary considerably and were never as well delineated in ancient times as some Biblical atlases might suggest.³⁴

The modern state of Israel, on the other hand, has a relatively brief history, one whose roots lie in the late 19th century.

Zionism and the Path to Statehood

Although Jewish emigration to Palestine from Eastern Europe took place throughout the late 1800s, a turning point came in 1897, when the First Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland. Organized by Theodor Herzl, the author of the influential book "The Jewish State," the Congress announced plans to create a Jewish home in Palestine. During the Fifth Congress in 1901, the Jewish National Fund was established to provide money to purchase the initial Jewish settlements.³⁵ These settlements were mostly farm

32 "Beersheba." Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vie/Beersheba.html>

33 "PA Cargo Traffic by Port: 2004." Israel Ports Development and Assets Company Ltd., <http://www.israports.org.il/cargo/2.asp>

34 "Transcending the Boundaries: Expanding the Limits." 2001, Whitelam, Keith W. Guild for Academic Images Research, Case Western Reserve University, <http://www.case.edu/affil/GAIR/papers/2001papers/kww.html>

35 "1901: It All Started with a Dream." Jewish National Fund, <http://www.jnf.org/site/PageServer?JServSessionIdr012=ndxffq6vs1.app20a&pagename=history>

collectives and small towns, but gradually Jewish immigrants increasingly moved to cities. In 1909, Tel Aviv was founded as a Jewish suburb to the Muslim city of Jaffa.

World War I brought the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled Palestine more or less continuously for 400 years.³⁶ During the war, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour wrote a letter to Lord Rothschild, a prominent Zionist supporter, promising British support for a Jewish national home in Palestine. In a series of letters written at around the same time, Palestinian Arabs felt that British High Commissioner for Egypt Sir Henry McMahon and Emir of Mecca Husayn ibn 'Ali had promised them independence in exchange for their support in the war against the Turks.³⁷ Thus, were planted the seeds of a conflict that continues today.

After the war, Britain and France split the former Ottoman Arab states between them, with Britain receiving the mandate for Palestine. The British mandate originally defined Palestine to include the Transjordan (modern Jordan) region but was later narrowed to the area west of the Jordan River.³⁸ As part of the Palestine mandate, the British were responsible for establishing “political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home...and the development of self-governing institutions.”³⁹

During the early 1920s, European Jewish immigration to Palestine continued to increase, as did conflicts, often boiling over into violence, with Palestinian Arabs. A period of relative calm between 1923 and 1929 was shattered in August 1929 by riots in Jerusalem, Hebron, and other cities.⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, in the 1930s, Jewish immigration to Palestine once again increased quickly as the Nazi Party ascended to power in Germany. Tensions between the Arabs and Jews continued to escalate, culminating in the Arab Revolt of 1936-39. Thousands died before the British were able to finally quell the worst of violence by bringing in additional forces and declaring martial law.⁴¹ In May 1939, the British government issued a White Paper limiting Jewish immigration to 75,000 people over the next five years and stating that an independent Palestinian state should be established “in which the two peoples in Palestine, Arabs and Jews, share authority in government in such a way that the essential interests of each are shared.”⁴² Neither side

36 “Palestine: The Crusades.” 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45064/Palestine>

37 “Palestine: World War I and After.” 2007, Khalidi, Walid Ahmed, Pickerton, Ian J., and Khalidi, Rashid Ishmail. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45067/Palestine>

38 “A Brief History of Israel and Palestine and the Conflict: The British Mandate for Palestine.” 30 December 2006, Isseroff, Ami. MidEastWeb.org, <http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm>

39 “Palestine: The British Mandate.” 2007, Khalidi, Walid Ahmed, Pickerton, Ian J., and Khalidi, Rashid Ishmail. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45068/Palestine>

40 “The Jewish Community under the Mandate.” December 1988, Lewis, Mark A. Country Studies, India. Library of Congress Federal Research Division, <http://countrystudies.us/israel/16.htm>

41 “Palestine: The Arab Revolt.” 2007, Khalidi, Walid Ahmed, Pickerton, Ian J., and Khalidi, Rashid Ishmail. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45069/Palestine>

42 “The British White Paper of 1939.” 1939. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/paper39.html>

embraced the White Paper, but Zionist leaders such as David Ben-Gurion vowed to actively fight against its implementation.⁴³

Shortly thereafter, Britain was drawn into World War II. During the War, the British actively sought to prevent illegal immigration to Palestine, despite the increasing suspicions that systematic extermination of Jews was taking place in Eastern Europe. After two boats carrying illegal Jewish immigrants sank in 1940 and 1942, killing hundreds, a Zionist splinter group known as Lehi carried out several attacks on the British. These attacks included the assassination of Lord Moyne, the British minister of state for the Middle East.⁴⁴

As World War II came to an end, Jewish and Arab positions further hardened. Zionist leaders continued to push for increased immigration and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Arabs, although publicly expressing regret for the horrors visited upon European Jews during the Holocaust, declared that there “can be no greater injustice and aggression than solving the problem of the Jews of Europe by another injustice, i.e., by inflicting injustice on the Arabs of Palestine of various religions and denominations.”⁴⁵

Britain, already strained by the war effort and grappling with the final stages of their departure from India, finally decided that the Palestinian situation had come to an impasse. In 1947, they referred the Palestine question to the United Nations (UN), which subsequently recommended that the region should be partitioned into an Arab and a Jewish state. Arabs immediately voiced their unwillingness to abide by the UN plan. The result was that Palestine was embroiled in full-scale civil war by the end of the year. By March of 1948, the UN reported that the hostilities had made it impossible for the partition plan to be carried out.⁴⁶

Independence and the 1948-49 War

The British left Palestine on May 14, 1948, followed several hours later by the Jewish declaration of the independent State of Israel. The next day Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, and Egypt moved their armies into Palestine and full-scale war broke out. Over the next year a series of campaigns, alternating with short truce periods resulted in Israel taking control of all of Galilee and the Negev and a finger of land leading to west Jerusalem. Arabs were left with a coastal area around the city of Gaza (the “Gaza Strip”), administered by Egypt, and east Jerusalem (including the Old City) and the area known today as the West Bank, both under Jordanian control. The new boundaries of control were formalized by a series of armistices between Israel and its Arab neighbors in 1949, and today these are known as the pre-1967 borders, or “green line.” The war resulted in somewhere between 520,000 (Israeli sources) and 800,000 (Arab sources) Arab refugees moving from areas

43 “World War II.” December 1988, Lewis, Mark A. Country Studies, India. Library of Congress Federal Research Division, <http://countrystudies.us/israel/18.htm>

44 “Palestine: World War II.” Khalidi, Walid Ahmed, Pickerton, Ian J., and Khalidi, Rashid Ishmail. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45070/Palestine>

45 “The Alexandria Protocol.” 7 October 1944. MidEastWeb.org, <http://www.mideastweb.org/alexandria.htm>

46 “Palestine: Civil War in Palestine.” 2007, Khalidi, Walid Ahmed, Pickerton, Ian J., and Khalidi, Rashid Ishmail. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45072/Palestine>

controlled by Israel to Gaza, the West Bank, and elsewhere. A smaller number of Jewish refugees were forced to relocate from their homes in the West Bank and Gaza after the war.⁴⁷ Today, nearly 60 years later, the question of Palestinian refugees' right of return continues to be one of the thorny issues that hinder the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

The Six-Day War and Subsequent Events

In June 1967, after several weeks of increasingly belligerent but nonviolent acts and statements by Egypt and its leader Gamal Nasser, the Israeli military launched a preemptive air assault on Egypt and Syria. The results of that six-day war changed the map of the Middle East and had repercussions that continue to this day. After Jordan decided to enter the war, Israel pushed eastward, conquering East Jerusalem and the entire West Bank. To the north, the Syrian highlands known as the Golan Heights were invaded by Israel, and to the east, the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula were taken from Egyptian control. Following the 1967 war, and especially after the Likud Party took power in 1977, the Israeli government allowed the development of settlements in the newly obtained areas beyond the pre-1967 borders. The majority of these settlements were in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank.⁴⁸

The 1967 war was followed by a subsequent invasion of Israel by Syria and Egypt on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur in 1973. After suffering heavy casualties early, the Israeli military was able to regroup and reverse their losses. After hostilities ended, Israel still retained control of virtually all the regions that it had held since 1967. In subsequent disengagement talks with Egypt, Israel agreed to move their front lines in the Sinai Peninsula away from the Suez Canal. In 1979, Israel signed the Camp David Accords with Egypt and began the process of returning the remainder of the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian control, formally ending the state of war between the two countries. Fifteen years later, in 1994, Jordan and Israel also normalized relations. This agreement occurred shortly after Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the group recognized by the UN and most nations as the political representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, started the Oslo peace process.⁴⁹ The two sides agreed to a staged Israeli withdrawal from areas in the West Bank and Gaza that would then move to Palestinian governing control. Left for later was a permanent peace treaty determining the final status of the remainder of these territories.⁵⁰

Despite these promising first steps in the early 1990s, major issues still remained between the Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. During July and later December 2000/January 2001, US-sponsored peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians by all accounts came close to a peace agreement⁵¹ but ultimately foundered. Much of the blame for the ultimate

47 "The Palestinian Refugees." MidEastWeb.org, <http://www.mideastweb.org/refugees1.htm>

48 "Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories: A Guide." March 2001. Foundation for Middle East Peace,

49 "Treaty of Peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." 26 October 1994. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/isrjor.html>

50 "Palestine: The Move Toward Self-Rule." 2007, Bickerton, Ian J., Khalidi, Rashid, Ishmail. . Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-45103/Palestine>

51 "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Statement." 27 January 2001. US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/22699.htm>

failure of these peace talks was later cast on PLO leader Yasser Arafat, although others argue that all parties to the talks made significant tactical mistakes and miscalculations.⁵² Issues addressed, but ultimately left unresolved during the 2000-01 talks included the status of Jerusalem, the need for contiguous borders within any Palestinian state, and the refugee right-of-return question.⁵³

The disposition of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem is another issue that continues to divide the two sides, as does concerns about access to water sources. Since the talks in 2000, some unilateral moves have been made by Israel, most notably their closing of settlements and pull-out from Gaza. However, as of early 2007, the future of the peace process remained cloudy. Certainly the recent political success of Hamas, a Palestinian militant movement that has been steadfastly anti-Israeli, did not bode well for an early resumption of negotiations.⁵⁴

Government

Although Israel is a democracy, it does not have a Constitution. Instead, the country's legal framework rests on a series of Basic Laws as well as other legislation and executive orders that have been executed over time. To date, 14 Basic Laws have been passed, three of which superseded earlier Basic Laws.⁵⁵ The head of government is the Prime Minister, who forms the country's Cabinet. Cabinet members do not have to be members of the Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset. As in many other parliamentary systems, the position of President also exists but is mostly ceremonial in function. The President is elected for five-year terms by the Knesset.

The Israeli legislative branch is unicameral, consisting of only the Knesset. Members are elected for terms of four years, but may serve longer if Knesset votes of "no confidence" lead to early elections. The Knesset consists of 120 members, and any political party that obtains two percent of the parliamentary vote is guaranteed proportionate membership. In the current Seventeenth Knesset, twelve parties hold seats. The largest number of seats are held by the Kadima party (29 members), followed by the Labor-Meimad (19 members), Likud (12 members), Shas (12 members), and Yisrael Beiteinu (11 members) parties.⁵⁶ Twelve members of the current Knesset are Arabs.

No Israeli party has ever won a majority of the Knesset seats, so the governmental majority is always formed by a broad coalition of parties that sometimes have disparate goals and beliefs. The current government is headed by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of the Kadima Party, who became Prime Minister 100 days after previous Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in April 2006 suffered a stroke and was unable to continue in office.

52 "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors." 9 August 2001, Agha, Hussein, and Malley, Robert. New York Review of Books, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/14380>

53 "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors." 9 August 2001, Agha, Hussein, Malley, Robert. New York Review of Books, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/14380>

54 "Backgrounder: Hamas." 14 June 2006, Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8968/#6>

55 "The Existing Basic Laws: Summary." 2003. http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_yesod2.htm

56 "Current Knesset Members of the Seventeenth Knesset." The Knesset, http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/MKIndex_Current_eng.asp?view=1

Israel's judicial system consists of both secular and religious courts. Unlike the U.S., the courts have very limited ability to review legislation. The Israeli Supreme Court members are appointed by the President upon the advice of the Judicial Appointments Committee.⁵⁷

Israel is divided into six districts (Northern, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Central, Jerusalem, and Southern), with each district containing up to four subdistricts. The administration of the districts is coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior.

Economy

Introduction

The Israeli economy, after over three years of slightly negative to sluggish growth, grew at a rate of 5.25 percent in 2005, and was expected to grow at a rate only slightly lower during 2006.⁵⁸ Since 1990, Israeli's economy has, to some extent, mirrored the ups and downs of the peace process. Progress in peace talks during the 1990s helped usher in unprecedented amounts of foreign investment and opened up new markets for trade.⁵⁹ The years following the collapse of the 2000 Camp David talks saw an unprecedented wave of terrorist bombings (known as the second *Infitada*) that severely affected Israeli tourism. The most violent of these years (2001-2003) saw numerous bombings in Israeli cities and were also the worst in recent memory for the Israeli economy.

Resources

Israel is overall a resource-poor country. The country does have significant reserves of oil shale in the northern Negev, although there are still major economic and environmental hurdles to overcome in extracting the oil from the rock.⁶⁰ Although oil deposits have recently been found in the Dead Sea area and natural gas deposits off the southern Israeli coast are now being developed, most of Israel's energy needs must be filled by imports of oil and coal.^{61,62, 63} Alternative energy sources, particularly solar, are an increasingly attractive option in the sunny Negev and may produce a higher percentage of Israel's energy needs in the future.⁶⁴

57 "Background Note: Israel." May 2006. US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>

58 "Israel Could be One of the World's Most Prosperous Economies." 8 December 2006, Krawitz, Avi. The Jerusalem Post.com, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1164881847771&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

59 "Background Note: Israel." May 2006. US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>

60 "Survey of Energy Resources: Oil Shale." World Energy Council, <http://www.worldenergy.org/wec-geis/publications/reports/ser/shale/shale.asp>

61 "The Dead Sea is Getting a New Life After Small, Encouraging Oil Find." 6 October 2006, Lake, Eli. The New York Sun, <http://www.nysun.com/article/41039>

62 "Background: Natural Resources and the Environment" 7 September 2006, The Economist Intelligence Unit. VoIP Services, TMCNet, <http://voipservices.tmcnet.com/news/2007/01/05/105373.htm>

63 "Israel: Oil and Gas." MBendi, <http://www.mbendi.co.za/indy/oilg/as/1/p0005.htm>

64 "Israeli Solar Startup Shines." 14 February 2006, Sandler, Neal. BusinessWeek Online, http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/feb2006/tc20060214_533101.htm

Israeli mineral resources include potash, bromine, magnesia, and manganese deposits mined from the Dead Sea and phosphate deposits from the Negev.⁶⁵ The potash and phosphate deposits help make Israel a leading fertilizer producer.

Industry and Manufacturing

Much of Israel's recent economic success has been fueled by growth in the high-tech industrial sector. With a highly educated workforce and several world-class science and engineering research universities, Israel has aggressively promoted growth in this sector via start-up funding and research grants. Hundreds of Israeli and multinational companies are now involved in the production of semiconductors and other electronics (2004 exports: USD 3.3 billion⁶⁶), telecommunications equipment (2005 exports: USD 3.25 billion), software (2004 exports: USD 3 billion), and life science areas such as medical devices, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology (2005 exports: USD 3.4 billion). Much of the high-tech industry is located in the ring of suburban cities and towns surrounding Tel Aviv.⁶⁷

Given Israel's long history of conflicts with its neighboring countries and Palestinian militias, it is not surprising that the country has developed a robust defense industry that has become a major source of export revenue. In 2006, Israeli military exports were valued at over USD 4.4 billion, making the country the one of the world's top five defense exporters. Over half of the foreign sales were to India and the United States, the two largest customers.⁶⁸

Another industry associated with Israel is diamond cutting and polishing. Approximately half of the world's diamonds pass through Israel on their way to jewelry counters around the world.⁶⁹ In 2006, Israel exported USD 9.3 billion of polished and rough diamonds, although much of this value was offset by diamond imports (USD 8.72 billion).⁷⁰ Israel itself has no diamond sources, and thus Israeli diamond companies must purchase all of their stock from the world market. Increasingly, Israeli companies are outsourcing the polishing and cutting of diamonds and becoming resellers of the finished diamonds.⁷¹

Israel is also a significant producer of textiles and clothing, chemicals and chemical products, processed foods, and transport equipment.⁷²

65 Israel: Mining." MBendi, <http://www.mbendi.co.za/indy/ming/as/il/p0005.htm>

66 All export data in this section are from The Israel Export and International Cooperation Institute, <http://www.export.gov.il/eng/>.

67 "Facets of the Israeli Economy – The High-Tech Sector." January 2001, Griver, Simon. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/2000_2009/2001/1/facets%20of%20the%20israeli%20economy-%20the%20high-tech%20secto

68 "2006: Israel Defense Sales Hit Record." 1 January 2007, Katz, Yaakov. The Jerusalem Post.com, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1167467639780&pagename=JPPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

69 "Israel Diamonds Exports Grow by 6%." 5 July 2005, Israeli News Agency Staff, <http://www.israelnewsagency.com/diamondsisrael7550705.html>

70 "Israel Dec. Polished Diamonds Exports -12%." 3 January 2007, Goldman, Jeanette. Rapaport News, Diamonds.net, <http://www.diamonds.net/News/NewsItem.aspx?ArticleID=16427>

71 "Market Reports: Israel Diary." April-May 2006, Katz, Sheryl. Solitaire International, http://www.gjepc.org/solitaire/magazines/Apr06_May06/Apr06_May06.aspx?inclpage=Israeldiary§ion_id=2

72 "Background Note: Israel." May 2006. US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm#econ>

Agriculture

Following independence, agriculture played a great role in forging the Israeli national identity. As Jewish immigrants continued to stream into the country and Arab neighbor states instituted trade boycotts against Israel, a period of food rationing and general hardship, known as *tse nah*, took place in Israel.⁷³ Rural farm collectives, known as *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*, took on an increasingly larger role in absorbing the new population and in increasing agricultural productivity. Water projects such as the National Water Carrier were planned and then constructed to move Jordan River water to dry areas. Later, innovative irrigation techniques, such as drip irrigation, were developed as a means of stretching limited water supplies and increasing agricultural acreage in the dry south. In addition, brackish groundwater supplies have been treated through means of a network of desalination plants, many located in the Ha-'Arava region south of the Dead Sea.

As a result, Israel over time became largely self-sufficient in food production. However, in recent decades agricultural production has become a reduced part of the Israeli economy and food exports have noticeably declined relative to other sectors of the Israel economy. For example, over 30 percent of Israel's exports during the 1960s came from agricultural products, primarily citrus fruit, such as the famous Jaffa oranges. Today agriculture contributes only four percent of Israel's exports.⁷⁴ Israel's largest agricultural exports are processed foods, peppers, potatoes, and fructose. Although not a food item, cut flowers, ornamental plants, and plantings are a significant part of Israel's agricultural economy.⁷⁵ The country is also one of the world's top exporters of avocados, grapefruit juice, and persimmons.⁷⁶ Israel's primary agricultural imports are processed foods, cereal grains (wheat, barley, rice, and corn), soybeans, beef, and refined sugar.⁷⁷

Media

Israel has a diverse structure of media outlets. There are 38 AM and FM radio stations (1998 data), 17 broadcast television stations (1995 data), and 1.25 million internet hosts (2005 data).⁷⁸ Numerous daily and weekly newspapers are published in Hebrew, English, Russian, and other languages. The large number of Israeli immigrants from other parts of the world has helped sustain the readership of the non-Hebrew newspapers. The newspaper with the highest circulation is *Yediot Aharonot*, a Tel Aviv daily published in

73 "To Make the Desert Bloom: Seeking Sustainability for the Israeli Agricultural Adventure." 11 August 2005, Tal, Alon. Program in Agrarian Studies, Yale University, www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/papers/01desertbloom.pdf

74 "Focus on Israel: Israel's Agriculture in the 21st Century." 24 December 2002, Fedler, Jon. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/economy/focus%20on%20israel-%20israel-s%20agriculture%20in%20the%2021st>

75 "Floriculture." 14 December 2006. Israel Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, www.moag.gov.il/news/Isr_Agriculture/010_011.PDF

76 "Exports: Commodities by Countries." 2004. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, <http://www.fao.org/es/toptrade/trade.asp?dir=exp&country=105&year=2004>

77 "Imports: Commodities by Countries." 2004. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, <http://www.fao.org/es/ESS/toptrade/trade.asp?country=105&year=2004>

78 "Israel: Communications." 19 December 2006. CIA Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/is.html#Comm>

Hebrew. The largest English language daily is The Jerusalem Post. There is one national Arabic daily newspaper, *Al-Ittihad*, which is published in Haifa and is the voice of the Israel Communist Party.⁷⁹ Several local Arabic newspapers are also published in Nazareth, Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

Israel is generally credited with having the freest press in the Middle East. However, there have been several reports of harassment of Arab press members reporting from the West Bank.⁸⁰

Religious and Ethnic Groups

Jews

Over 80 percent of Israelis are Jewish, with the remaining 20 percent mostly Arab Muslims. Small Christian and Druze minorities are located mostly in the northern part of the country. Within the Jewish population, several groups are distinguished based primarily on the area from which they or their ancestors immigrated to Israel. The two largest of these groups are the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim.

The Ashkenazim migrated to Israel either directly from eastern Europe or via western Europe after leaving eastern Europe during persecutions and pogroms. Their ancestors mostly lived in the Rhine River area of Germany and France until riots and massacres in the 12th and 13th centuries caused an eastward migration to Poland, Moravia and Bohemia (Czech Republic), Lithuania, and other areas.⁸¹ The Ashkenazim differ from other Israeli Jewish groups in their cultural traditions, their liturgical rites, their wide use of Yiddish up until the 20th Century, and their pronunciation of Hebrew.⁸² They also use a different source for Jewish law.⁸³

Sephardim are descendants of Jews who lived comfortably with the Muslims in Spain and Portugal until Christians defeated the Muslims in 1492. The remaining Jews were called to convert to Christianity on pain of eviction or execution. Those Sephardim who were not killed or did not convert to Christianity initially relocated to North Africa, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and other areas in the Mediterranean region and former Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, many Sephardim migrated northward to Amsterdam, London, Bordeaux, and other areas of western Europe, where they enjoyed relatively elite status compared with the Ashkenazim.⁸⁴ Throughout their many relocations, the Sephardim have been able

79 "The Printed Media: Israel's Newspapers." 16 October 200, Limor, Yehiel.

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/culture/the%20printed%20media-%20israel-s%20newspapers>

80 "Israel – Annual Report 2006." 2006. Reporters Without Borders, http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=17231

81 "Ashkenazim." Schoenberg, Shira, Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise,

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Ashkenazim.html>

82 "Ashkenazi." 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9009835/Ashkenazi>

83 "Ashkenazim." Schoenberg, Shira, Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise,

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Ashkenazim.html>

84 "Sephardim." Weiner, Rebecca, Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise,

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Sephardim.html>

to maintain their unique language known as “Ladino,” a combination of Spanish and Hebrew. Today, however, the language is seriously endangered. Most remaining Ladino speakers are older Sephardim living in Israel, and there is little indication that the language is being passed down to younger generations.⁸⁵

Today, the Sephardim are a small percentage of the worldwide Jewish population. However, because most Sephardim or their descendants have migrated to Israel, they enjoy relatively equal numbers, if not always status, with Ashkenazim within Israel.⁸⁶ The many Sephardim who came to Israel from Arab and other former Ottoman Empire countries during the 1950s and 1960s in general had less education and were often relegated to the lower positions within Israeli society. This group of Jewish immigrants from Muslim lands is sometimes referred to as *Mizrahim*. Even though they practice Sephardic religious rites, the *Mizrahim* are distinguished because of their significantly different cultural backgrounds compared with the European Sephardim. Even more difficult assimilation pains are occurring with the Ethiopian Jews (*Beta Israel*), who came to Israel via airlifts in the 1980s and early 1990s.⁸⁷

Arabs

The remaining 20 percent of non-Jewish Israelis are Arabs, three quarters of whom are Sunni Muslims. The remainder are Christian or Druze. All Israeli Arabs, no matter what their religious affiliation, speak Levantine Arabic. They all have full rights of Israeli citizenship, with the exception of some limitations on military service for certain Arab groups.⁸⁸

Of the Israeli Arab Muslim population, 10 percent are Bedouins, the semi-nomadic desert dwellers of the Negev. After the 1947-48 war, 11,000 Bedouins remained in Israel. Until 1966, the Bedouin population within Israel was placed under military control in a region northeast of Beersheba known as the Siyag (“enclosure”). During the mid-1960s, planning had begun to centralize the Negev Bedouin population into seven towns within the Siyag limits. This program has been controversial and today only half of the present Bedouin population lives in the Siyag towns. The remaining Bedouins live in small villages that are not officially recognized by the Israeli government and receive no government services.⁸⁹

An even smaller subgroup of Sunni Muslims in Israel are the Circassians, a non-Arab group that migrated from the Balkans in the 1880s and who are primarily located in two Galilee towns (Kfar-Kama and Rihania) in northern Israel. Like the Druze, and unlike

85 “UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages: Europe: Ladino.” 1993-1999. Salminen, Talpani. 22 September 1999. Helsinki.Fi, http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_report.html

86 “Ashkenazi.” 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9009835/Ashkenazi>

87 “Ethiopian Jews Struggle in Israel.” 7 January 2007, Teibel, Amy. Chicago Sun-Times, <http://www.suntimes.com/news/world/200580,CST-NWS-immi07.article>

88 “Israel: Arabs.” 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23078/Israel>

89 “Bedouin Arabs and the Israeli Settler State: Land Policies and Indigenous Resistance.” 14 June 2003, Yiftachel, Oren. Department of Geography and Environmental Development, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, [www.geog.bgu.ac.il/members/yiftachel/new_papers_eng/in%20Abu-Saad%20and%20Champaign%20\(2003\).pdf](http://www.geog.bgu.ac.il/members/yiftachel/new_papers_eng/in%20Abu-Saad%20and%20Champaign%20(2003).pdf)

Israeli Arab Muslims and Christians, male Circassians are required to serve in the Israeli military.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ "Circassians in Israel." May 2001, Edris, Abzakh, CircassianWorld.com, <http://www.circassianworld.com/Israel.html>

Religion

Overview

Israel is the only nation in the world in which Judaism is the dominant religion. However, it is not the state religion, and several significant religious minorities make up the country's population. The most recent statistics find that 76 percent of Israelis are Jewish with another roughly 4 percent not officially designated as Jewish but mostly family members of recent Jewish immigrants. Non-Arab Christians make up less than 0.5 percent of Israel's population. The remaining 20 percent of Israelis are mostly Arabs, of which nearly 83 percent are Muslim, with the rest of the Arab population evenly split between Christians and Druze.⁹¹

One other religion is associated with Israel: the Baha'i faith. Haifa and the city of Acre to its north contain the major pilgrimage sites for the religion, and thousands of members from around the world make the nine-day pilgrimage each year. However, there is no Baha'i community in Israel. In fact, the teachings of the religion do not allow anyone to convert to the faith within Israel.⁹²

Among the roughly 80 percent of the population who are classified Jewish, most adhere to some religious traditions, but only a small number follow all of them. At the most religiously conservative end are the *Haredim*, or ultra-Orthodox Jews, who constitute 4.5 percent of Israeli Jews, and Orthodox Jews (13 percent). The remainder of the Jewish population is labeled "traditional" or "secular." These Jews form a wide spectrum in terms of their adherence to traditional religious teachings.⁹³

91 "Table 2.1. Population, by Religion and Population Group." 2006 Statistical Abstract, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton57/st02_01.pdf

92 "The Fourth Faith: Who are the Baha'is and Why did They put Their Sacred Shrine in Haifa?" 3 April 1998, Harrison, Donald H. Originally published in the San Diego Jewish Press-Heritage, Jewish Sightseeing.com, http://www.jewishsightseeing.com/israel/haifa/shrine_of_the_bab/19980403-shrine_of_the_bab.htm

93 "Israel and the Occupied Territories: International Religious Freedom Report, 2005." 8 November 2005. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/51601.htm>

The Role of Religion in the Government

While Israel does not have a state religion, Judaism does play a major role in the workings of the government. Nearly six decades after Israeli independence, the Knesset continues work on creating a constitution, and several recent drafts contain preambles that declare Israel to be a Jewish state.⁹⁴ There is little certainty that any of the current drafts of the constitution will ever be approved, but nonetheless there remains a strong undercurrent within the country to more formally align the state of Israel with Judaism.

The plethora of political parties in Israel, which almost guarantees that any government will consist of a coalition of several parties, ensures that religious viewpoints will receive a voice in the government. Currently, three Orthodox or *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) political parties/unions make up 27 of the 120 members of the Knesset, and one of these (*Shas*) is part of the current governing coalition.⁹⁵ While myriad political differences exist both between and within all of these religious parties, collectively they are still able to influence the debate, and sometimes laws, that defines Judaism's role within the Israeli state.

94 "You Say You Want a Constitution." 26 March 2006, Mazie, Steven. Op-Ed Page, New York Times,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/30/opinion/30mazie.html?ex=1301374800&en=3f2bb54bfe50b15d&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

95 "Israel's Shas Council Approves Coalition Deal with Kadima." 1 May 2006, Xinhua. People's Daily Online,

http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200605/01/eng20060501_262392.html

Separation between Religious and Secular Laws

One of the goals of the religious parties, as well as other political groups not officially religious in nature, has been the “preservation of the status quo.” This phrase has become a shorthand description of the agreements reached by Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion and religious groups in 1948, reinforcing arrangements going back to Ottoman rule in Palestine. Under the status quo, the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) is honored by restrictions on transportation and commerce. The Chief Rabbinate has authority over marital and dietary laws (*kashrut*) for Israeli Jews, as well as having certification powers for kosher foods. Non-kosher food imports are banned. In addition, governmental financial support for separate Jewish religious schools (*yeshivot*) is guaranteed. By law, *yeshiva* students are exempted from mandatory military service while pursuing their studies.

Secular Jewish Israelis have pushed for reform of the status quo. The absence of a civil marriage alternative, for example, has made it impossible for some Israelis to marry within the country.⁹⁶ While civil marriages performed outside the country, often in Cyprus,⁹⁷ are recognized by the government, they are not recognized by Israeli rabbinical courts. Divorce proceedings for Jewish couples must also proceed through rabbinical courts.

Law of Return

A particularly contentious issue recently has been the question of who may claim Jewish ancestry and thus be allowed to obtain Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. Passed in 1950, the Law of Return originally granted the right to Israeli citizenship to any Jew. A 1970 amendment later extended Law of Return immigration status to spouses, children (and their spouses), and grandchildren (and their spouses) of Jews, even if they were not Jews. The amendment also defined a Jew according to the Orthodox definition in which either one’s mother must be Jewish or one has converted to Orthodox Judaism, with the added restriction that one has not converted to another religion.⁹⁸

The Law of Return has been a magnet for criticism by non-Jewish groups both within and outside Israel. Palestinian Arabs see the Law of Return as a way to increase Jewish demographic dominance within Israel, further marginalizing the Arab minority. They also cite it to counterpoint the Israeli Government’s stance against a Right of Return for Palestinian refugees who left Israel during the 1948 and 1967 wars.

The Law of Return and how it is interpreted has also spawned controversy within Israeli Jewish religious groups. Orthodox Jews are critical of a March 2005 Supreme Court ruling that allowed individuals who had converted to Judaism in non-Orthodox denominations outside Israel to be considered Jews and thus qualify for the Law of Return. The debate has stirred up lingering resentments by non-Orthodox Jews of the Orthodox Rabbinate’s “status quo” control over all matters related to Jewish law and

96 “Court Asserts Legality of Civil Marriages of Israeli Jews Who Marry Abroad.” 22 November 2006, Izenberg, Dan. The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1162378452854&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

97 “Israel: Hundreds of Thousands Denied Marriage.” 27 November 2006, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, IRINNews.org, http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=56522&SelectRegion=Middle_East&SelectCountry=ISRAEL

98 “Law of Return 5710-1950.” Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Politics/Other_Law_Law_of_Return.html

conversion within Israel.⁹⁹ The religious *Shas* political party has also called for the repeal of the so-called “grandchild clause” in the Law of Return, which allows grandchildren of Jews to immigrate to Israel. They argue that this clause could eventually lead to a substantial number of non-Jewish immigrants coming to Israel, particularly from the countries of the former Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰

99 “Conversion in Israel: New Developments.” 2 May 2005, Ashley, Sharon. Originally published in The Jerusalem Report, InterfaithFamily.com, <http://www.interfaithfamily.com/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=ekLSK5MLIrG&b=297411&ct=871371>

100 “Non-Jewish Immigrants Forcing Israel to Choose Between Being a ‘Jewish’ State and a Democracy.” April 2000, Brownfield, Allan. Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, <http://www.washington-report.org/backissues/042000/0004066.html>

Influence of Religion on Daily Life

For non-practicing Jews within Israel, religion plays little role in their daily world, except indirectly through the areas of overlap between religion and state defined primarily by the “status quo” laws (e.g., Sabbath restrictions). At the other extreme are the *Haredim*, in which their religion as much as anything defines their life.

Many *Haredim* shun the conveniences and fashions of modern life. They often live in their own communities or neighborhoods, with separate economies, medical facilities, and schools. Their lives are dominated by family and by study of the Torah. Some *Haredim* denominations, most notably the *Hasidim*, wear distinctive clothing reminiscent of their ancestors from 19th century Europe. Other *Haredim* groups, such as the *Neturei Karta*, are anti-Zionist, believing that Jews can only take sovereignty of Israel at the coming of the Messiah.¹⁰¹

Orthodox Jews (*dati*) are more accommodating to the secular world, although their lives, too, are grounded in adherence to religious beliefs. They practice strict conformity to the teachings of the Torah and oral law but are usually more Zionist in their beliefs than the *Haredim*.¹⁰²

Other branches of Judaism include Conservative (known as *Masorti*, or traditional, in Israel) and Reform Judaism. Both allow some modern interpretation of the Torah and Jewish law (*halacha*), unlike Orthodox Judaism. Both the Conservative and Reform movements are based in the U.S. and are minority movements within Israel, where Orthodox Judaism is dominant.¹⁰³

101 “Ultra-Orthodox Judaism: Haredi Jews.” Katz, Lisa. About: Judaism, <http://judaism.about.com/od/denominationsofjudaism/a/haredi.htm>

102 “Branches of Judaism: Orthodox Judaism.” Katz, Lisa. About: Judaism, http://judaism.about.com/library/3_intro/level1/bl_denom_ortho.htm

103 “The Future Role of Religion in Israel.” Elazar, Daniel J. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles2/relinisr.htm>

Influences of Religion on the Interactions between Males and Females

While gender relations between secular Israeli men and women are similar to the norms of most modern Western countries, they are significantly more conservative for Orthodox Jews. *Haredi* men and women, for example, are forbidden in having physical contact of any type prior to marriage. Their marriages are often arranged by a third party in the community, and courtships can be quite short, often only a few weeks.¹⁰⁴ Non-related men and women are also not allowed to have physical contact.

Haredi women dress very modestly, allowing only their hands and face to be visible and married women must cover their hair. All men, married or single, must also cover their heads, often done with a *kippah* (*yarmulke* in Yiddish). In public gathering places, such as synagogues, men and women are separated into sections. Men are not allowed to hear women singing, although there are differences of opinion as to whether this restriction applies to recordings.¹⁰⁵

Modern Orthodox Judaism allows a bit more leeway on some of these religious laws regarding relations between the sexes (collectively known as *tznius*, or “modesty”). Within the Conservative and Reform branches, the laws of *tznius* are mostly not observed.

Within Orthodox Judaism, there has been increasing receptiveness to women pursuing religious study, although there are continuing barriers to the ordaining of women as rabbis. The first woman rabbi was ordained by the Reform movement in 1972, followed in 1983 by the ordaining of the first Conservative woman rabbi.¹⁰⁶

As many *Haredi* men are involved in religious study at *yeshivot*, only 44 percent are in the labor force, considerably less than any other religious group in Israel. By contrast, 59 percent of *Haredi* women are working, even though employment opportunities for them are generally restricted to Orthodox working environments.¹⁰⁷ One solution, although not yet widely implemented as yet, has been to develop ultra-Orthodox employment centers for the highly educated, relatively low-wage *Haredi* women.¹⁰⁸

104 “A Wedding Story: Jerusalem.” February 2002, Weiss, Tamara. The Mitzpeh Online, <http://www.studentorg.umd.edu/Mitzpeh/oldsite/feb2002/art3.html>

105 “Tznius Basics.” Davening.org, <http://www.davening.net/tznius.html>

106 “A History of Women’s Ordination as Rabbis.” Hein, Avi. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/femalerabbi.html>

107 “Only 44 Percent of Haredi Men in Work Force.” 14 September 2006. YNetNews.com, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3304032,00.html>

108 “Indian Labor? Matrix is Hiring Orthodox Women.” 17 January 2005, Galit, Yamini. Haaretz.com,

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=527920&contrassID=1&subContrassID=7&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>

Buildings of Worship

Besides numerous Jewish synagogues, as well as Christian churches and Muslim mosques in Arab communities, Israel has a multitude of other holy sites. Not surprisingly, many of them lie in or near Jerusalem.

In general, anyone may enter a synagogue, as long as they are respectful of the customs and traditions. For mosques, it is always advisable to ask permission before entering.

Exchange 1: May I enter?

Soldier:	May I enter?	aanee yaaKhol leheekanes?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Temple Mount (Mount Moriah)

Lying within the Old City, and thus not part of Israel as defined by its pre-1967 borders, is Mount Moriah, or Temple Mount, one of the holiest sites in the world. It is also one of the most controversial and remains an ongoing symbol of the divisions between Israelis and Palestinian Arabs. Besides being the location of the First and Second Temples of the Jews of ancient Judea, Mount Moriah is currently topped by the Dome on the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which together form the third holiest site in Islam.¹⁰⁹ The Dome on the Rock is one of the great architectural treasures of Islam, marking the spot where Muslims believe that Muhammad ascended to Heaven. It is also one of the most recognizable landmarks within Jerusalem. To the west of these Islamic holy spots, on the western edge of Mount Moriah, lies the Western Wall (Wailing Wall), a segment of the outer retaining wall of the Second Temple and the holiest of currently accessible sites for Jews. Every thousands of Jews come to pray at the Wall.¹¹⁰

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Only several hundred meters from the Dome of the Rock, within the Christian quarter of the Old City, lies the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. For Christians, it is one of the most significant pilgrimage sites in the Holy Land. Most Christians, but not all, believe the church is built on the site of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.¹¹¹

109 "Islam FAQ: Muslim Holy Sites." Cline, Austin. About: Agnosticism/Atheism, http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/islam/blfaq_islam_holysites.htm

110 "Western Wall: Yesterday and Today." 4 November 2002, Simmons, Rabbi Shraga. Aish.com, http://www.aish.com/jewishissues/jerusalem/Western_Wall_Yesterday_and_Today.asp

111 "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre." The History Channel/UNESCO World Heritage Center, http://www.history.com/classroom/unesco/jerusalem/about_sepulchre.html

Tombs

Israel contains the tombs of many famous figures from Biblical and other ancient times, many of which are pilgrimage spots and places of worship. In some cases, historians have discovered that these burial sites are incorrect, but this information has generally not lessened the perceived holiness of the tombs. As many of these sites lie within East Jerusalem or other parts of the West Bank, they have, from time to time, been the locations of violent confrontations between Israelis and Palestinian Arabs.

Among the most famous of these religious sites are the Tomb of David on Mount Zion, just outside the Old City in Jerusalem; Joseph's tomb in Nablus, the largest town in the West Bank; and Rachel's Tomb in the southern Jerusalem neighborhood of Gilo, near Bethlehem. On Mount Meron in Galilee, lies the burial site of the Jewish Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, who is credited by some as being the author of the Zohar, the group of books that define the teachings of mystical Judaism (*Kabbalah*).

The town of Hebron, located in the southern Judean Hills of the West Bank, is famous as being the site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs (also known as the Cave of the Patriarchs or Cave of Machpelah). Among those said to be buried here are the Biblical couples Abraham and Sarah, Issac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah. (Some also believe that this is the burial site of Adam and Eve.) The Tomb is holy to Jews and Muslims, and, like Mount Moriah (Temple Mount), today shares tensely-divided shrines for these two religions.¹¹²

112 "The Cave of Machpelah: Tomb of the Patriarchs." Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/machpelah.html>

Behavior in Places of Worship

While much of Israel is generally casual in terms of dress, one should plan to wear conservative clothes when visiting religious places of worship or holy shrines. Women should not wear pants and should wear clothing that covers their legs and shoulders; men should wear shirts and full-length pants. Men and women entering synagogues or Jewish shrines should cover their heads.¹¹³ In many synagogues, head coverings (*kippot*) are available for use at the back of the building.

Exchange 2: May I have a head cover?

Soldier:	May I have a head cover?	anee yaaKhol lekaabel keesooee rosh?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Men going to services at Orthodox synagogues wear *tallitot* (prayer shawls), but this is not mandatory for non-Jews.¹¹⁴

In mosques and Orthodox synagogues, men and women sit on opposite sides.¹¹⁵ When visiting mosques, shoes should be removed and women should cover their heads.

113 "Entering a Synagogue: Tips for the Novice Shul-Goer." From *The Second Jewish Catalogue* (1976), Jewish Publication Society. MyJewishLearning.com, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/daily_life/Prayer/TO_Synagogue/EnteringSynagogue.htm

114 "Visiting a Synagogue." Rabbi Scheinerman's Home Page, [scheinerman.net](http://www.scheinerman.net/judaism/synagogue/visiting.html), <http://www.scheinerman.net/judaism/synagogue/visiting.html>

115 "Entering a Synagogue: Tips for the Novice Shul-Goer." From *The Second Jewish Catalogue* (1976), Jewish Publication Society. MyJewishLearning.com, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/daily_life/Prayer/TO_Synagogue/EnteringSynagogue.htm

Religious Holidays and Events

There are numerous Jewish religious holidays and festivals in Israel, some of which are public holidays. Even secular Jews celebrate the religious festivals, although often in ways quite different from Orthodox Jews. Most are celebrated in a family or community setting.

There are also four national holidays associated with the history of modern Israel, some of which are considered religious holidays by at least some of the branches of Judaism. All Israeli holidays are tied to the Jewish lunar calendar, which means that the dates change each year. Muslim, Christian, and Druze holidays are celebrated by Israeli Arabs who belong to these faiths.¹¹⁶

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)

This holiday marks the beginning of the Jewish year and falls between middle September and early October. This is a two-day holiday in which businesses are closed both days. People greet each other during this time by saying “*Shana Tova*” (“a good year”). On the first day of Rosh Hashanah (or second day if the first day falls on the Sabbath), the devout will go to lakes or streams, say prayers, and then toss pebbles or shake out their pockets, symbolically casting away their sins.¹¹⁷ The more secular will celebrate with large, festive meals. As in many Jewish festivals, various foods have symbolic meaning. Apples dipped in honey refer to the sweet new year, pomegranate seeds symbolize the hundreds of Torah commandments, and round *challa* bread references the cycle of life.¹¹⁸

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

The holiest holiday in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur is a day of fasting and prayer that follows Rosh Hashanah by ten days. Like Christmas in the Christian community, Yom Kippur is the one day of the year in which even generally non-observant Jews might be found attending synagogue. It is the final day of the Jewish “high holidays” starting with Rosh Hashanah, and it is a last chance for Jews to offer repentance for their sins of the previous year. Religious Jews often spend the entire day in the synagogue, offering prayers.¹¹⁹

116 “Holidays.” Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays.htm

117 “Rosh Hashanah.” Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders,

http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Rosh+Hashanah.htm

118 “Customs of Rosh Hashana.” Treistman, Robin. World Zionist Organization, Hagashama Department,

<http://www.hagshama.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=254>

119 “Yom Kippur.” Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm>

Sukkot (Feast of Booths)

Also known as the Harvest Festival, Sukkot is a seven-day festival in which the first and last days are public holidays. It is one of three pilgrimage festivals (Passover and Shavu'ot are the other two), periods in ancient times when all Jews would come to Jerusalem. Unlike Yom Kippur, which it follows by five days, Sukkot is a joyful holiday.¹²⁰ It gets its name from the *sukka* (“booth”), a temporary dwelling that is mentioned in the Torah’s description of the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt. During Sukkot, religious and even some non-religious Jews build *sukkas* in their yards and eat their meals in them.¹²¹

Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah

These two holidays are the two days immediately following Sukkot and are often associated with that festival. They are primarily important to religious Jews and celebrated with Torah readings and processions within the synagogue.¹²²

Chanukah (Festival of Lights)

Although Chanukah (Hannukah) is one of the better known Jewish holidays, it is not a Torah-ordained festival and thus is not nearly as sacred to Jews as most of the other religious holidays. In Israel, none of the eight days of Chanukah are official holidays, although children have vacation time from school.¹²³ The celebration usually falls in December, although it sometimes starts in late November and occasionally extends into early January. Because Chanukah falls near the Christian holiday of Christmas, some of the Christmas traditions, such as gift giving to children, have over time become woven into the fabric of the Jewish holiday during the long Jewish diaspora in primarily Christian countries.

The origin of Chanukah begins with the Maccabees, a group of Jews living in Judea, who defeated their Greek rulers, reentered Jerusalem, and re-sanctified the Jewish Temple. Although they only had enough sacramental olive oil to keep the Temple candelabrum (*menorah*) burning for one day, the oil miraculously continued burning for eight days. Today, Jews celebrate this miracle by lighting menorah candles each night of Chanukah and reciting blessings. Because of the holiday’s connection with olive oil, several fried foods such as *latkes* (potato pancakes) and especially *sufganiyot* (jelly- or custard-filled doughnuts) are associated with the Chanukah season. During Chanukah, children (and sometimes adults) also traditionally play a game using a square top known as a dreidel (*sevivon*).¹²⁴

Tu B'Shevat (New Year of Trees)

Tu B'Shevat is considered the beginning of the new year for trees, and at one time was tied to Jewish law for purposes of determining which tree fruit should be tithed to Temple

¹²⁰ “Sukkot.” Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday5.htm>

¹²¹ “Sukkot.” Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Sukkot.htm

¹²² “Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah.” Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday6.htm>

¹²³ “The Festival of Chanukah.” Embassy of Israel, London. <http://www.israel-embassy.org.uk/web/pages/chanukah.htm>

¹²⁴ “Chanukkah.” Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday7.htm>

priests. The modern traditions for Tu B'Shevat include tree plantings and *seders* (ceremonial meals) featuring fresh and dried fruits. This non-public holiday generally falls between late January and mid-February.¹²⁵

Purim

Purim is the most celebratory of all Jewish holidays, one that has been likened to Mardi Gras by some, although others have described Mardi Gras as the “Catholic Purim.”¹²⁶ In any event, parades, masquerading, eating, and drinking alcohol are all associated with this holiday, which usually falls in March. Food delicacies associated with the day are three-sided, nut- or fruit-filled cookies known as “Haman’s ears,” or *osnei haman*. (Outside Israel these cookies are often known as *hamentaschen*.)¹²⁷

Purim commemorates the events described in the Bible’s Book of Esther, in which Esther saves the Jews of Persia from an extermination plot launched by Haman, advisor to the Persian king. In Israel, Purim is not a business holiday, although schools do close.¹²⁸ The day before Purim is a day of fasting.

125 “Tu B’Shvat.” Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders,

http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Tu+B'Shvat.htm

126 “Mardi Purim.” Kamenetz, Rodger. Beliefnet.com, http://www.beliefnet.com/story/68/story_6802_1.html

127 “Hamentaschen Cookies.” Rogov, Daniel. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Food/Hamentaschen.html>

128 “Purim.” Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Purim.htm

Pesach (Passover)

Many, if not most, Jewish holidays are connected to foods that symbolically represent each holiday's messages. Perhaps no festival is more associated with symbolic foods and kosher foods than Pesach (Passover), a week-long religious holiday that comes in late March to middle April. Even generally non-practicing Jews attend *seders* on the eve of the first day of Pasach. The *seders* are family meals in which the story of the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt is retold. The meal intersperses blessings and stories with the eating of ceremonial foods, including unleavened bread (*matzah*), saltwater-soaked parsley or other vegetable, and horseradish.¹²⁹

In Israel, the first and last days of Pesach are holy days and thus public holidays. Children typically have the entire week off from school, although most businesses stay open at least part-time during the five middle days of the holiday.

Exchange 3: Will you celebrate Passover tomorrow?

Soldier:	Will you celebrate Passover tomorrow?	aataa taaKhgog et peysaaKh maKhaar?
Local:	Yes.	ken

During Pesach, most of the larger Israeli restaurants outside the Tel Aviv area follow the kosher food laws of the holiday. Smaller restaurants, in which it may be difficult to prepare the kitchen for such cooking, will simply close for the week.¹³⁰

129 "Pesach: Passover." Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidaya.htm>

130 "Pesach." Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist-Information/Discover-Israel/Holidays/Pesach.htm

Shavu'ot (Festival of Weeks)

The last of the three pilgrimage festivals on the Jewish calendar, Shavu'ot falls 50 days after the beginning of Pesach, which means it is celebrated in the last half of May or early June. Historically, it marks the period of seven weeks that began with an offering of barley (Passover) and ended with an offering of grain (Shavu'ot) at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The agricultural aspect of the festival has remained over the many centuries. A more recent custom, often followed by even non-religious Jews, is to eat a meal consisting of dairy products during Shavu'ot.¹³¹

Shavu'ot also has deep religious connections. Specifically, it marks for Jews the time of the giving of the Torah from God. The Book of Ruth from the Bible is commonly read in synagogues on Shavu'ot day, and all-night Torah study is performed by Orthodox and other religious Jews. Even secular Jews in Tel Aviv may spend the night going from one lecture to another on topics that connect Jewish teachings to the modern world.¹³²

Tisha B'Av

Tisha B'Av, like Yom Kippur, is a fasting day and commemorates and mourns the destruction of the First Holy Temple of the Jews. However, unlike Yom Kippur, very few secular Israelis fast on Tisha B'Av. For religious Israelis, the Book of Lamentations, which describes the razing of the Temple, is read in synagogues. In Jerusalem, many Israelis go to the Western Wall, a remnant of the Second Temple, to read Lamentations. Throughout the country, restaurants and entertainment venues close for the day (and are subject to fines if they don't), although other businesses may stay open.^{133, 134}

131 "Shavuot." Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Shavuot.htm

132 "All Study, All Night." 12 May 2004, Lev-Ari, Shiri. Masorti.org, http://www.masorti.org/media/archive2004/05272004_h.html

133 "Tisha B'Av." Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders,

http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Tisha+B'Av.htm

134 "Tel Aviv Restaurants to Be Fined if They Stay Open on Tisha B'Av." 17 July 2002, Shuman, Ellis. Israeli Insider.com

<http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Culture/1249.htm>

Traditions

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

“Politeness” can sometimes be a relative term, and thus behavior that some people view as rude, impolite, or inconsiderate is considered more a way of being direct by others.

Exchange 4: Good morning.

Soldier:	Good morning!	boker tov!
Local:	Good morning.	boker tov

Israelis, in general, fall in the latter category. Israelis may not immediately extend their hand for a handshake, but they do respond if one offers a hand with a smile.¹³⁵

Exchange 5: How are you?

Soldier:	Good afternoon!	'erev tov!
Local:	Good afternoon.	'erev tov
Soldier:	How are you?	maa shlomKhaa?
Local:	Fine, thank you.	tov todaa

In conversations, eye contact is important, and it is normal to stand close to one another.

Exchange 6: Good evening.

Soldier:	Good evening.	'erev tov
Local:	Good evening.	'erev tov

¹³⁵ “An American in Israel.” 2007, Weiner, Rebecca. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/weinerinis.html

Using first names even in first conversations is acceptable and probably best for establishing rapport.

Exchange 7: Are you doing well? (Informal)

Soldier:	Hi, Mr. Sherman.	hi sherman
Local:	Hello.	shaalom
Soldier:	Are you doing well?	aataa beseder?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Personal subjects or problems are generally not discussed until a closer relationship has been established. Discussing army service is prohibited by Israeli law and thus a topic to avoid.

Exchange 8: Good night.

Soldier:	Good night.	laayla tov
Local:	Good night.	laayla tov

Queues for public transportation or in other crowded places are virtually non-existent, and thus gentle use of one's elbows is commonly practiced as a way of entering.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ "Doing Business with Israel, Israel Culture." Leyden Communications (Israel), <http://www.israelmarketing.com/doingbusiness.html>

Male and Female Interactions

Women in Israel are as highly-educated as their male counterparts and are found in all parts of the government and business world, although their percentages in some of the higher-level positions are lower than for men. Israeli Jewish women, like Jewish and Druze men, are required to serve in military, although they generally do not take combat roles. A significant percentage of Israel Jewish women are granted exemptions from military service based on religious, marital, pregnancy, or family grounds.¹³⁷

The average number of children per woman (2.89) in Israel is one of the highest in the Western world, but this number is somewhat skewed by the exceptionally large families of Haredim and some Orthodox Jews.¹³⁸ Relations between Haredim men and women are very structured by religious rules and teaching, and family is a major priority in their lives.

Arab women of Israel are very much shaped by traditional Middle Eastern values. Similar to the situation for Haredi women, modesty in dress and behavior are the norm. In interactions with men, Arab women will generally avoid prolonged eye contact and defer to the man's opinion if there is a disagreement. Some of these women walk a fine line, wanting "to enhance their personal freedom, while not alienating themselves from their own society." One path has been through education. Besides the obvious benefits of learning, educated Israeli Arab women make themselves more attractive to educated Arab men, who often are worldlier and more likely to encourage increased personal freedom for their wives.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ "Women in the Military—International." 30 May 2006, CBCNews Online, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/military-international/>

¹³⁸ "Women in Israel." 19 November 2004 (from the *Jerusalem Post*). Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/women2004.html

¹³⁹ "We Will Open Our Hearts." 2002, Arnow, Mike. Continuum, The Magazine of the University of Utah, <http://www.alumni.utah.edu/continuum/spring02/openourhearts.htm>

Dress Codes

Children

Israel has strict dress codes for school-aged children. A school uniform typically includes a white polo shirt and blue cotton slacks for the boys and white polo shirts and either blue or grey cotton skirts for the girls.

Haredim

Many of the Haredim, the most Orthodox of all Israeli Jews, follow dress codes of their ancestors in 19th-century Eastern Europe. Haredi men and women are easily identified by their dark-colored clothing, wide-brimmed hats, long skirts and long sleeves. Many Haredi men wear beards.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ “An American in Israel.” 2007, Weiner, Rebecca. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/weinerinis.html

Non-Religious Holidays

There are four holidays on the Israeli calendar that commemorate recent events in Jewish or Israeli history. Like Israeli religious holidays, all of these days are tied to the Jewish lunar calendar and thus change each year.

Yom Hasho'a (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

Each year in late April to early May, one week after Pesach (Passover), Israelis mark the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising with a day dedicated to the memory of the millions of Jews killed during the Nazi atrocities. Memorial services are held and restaurants are closed, although otherwise it is a normal business day. In schools, children participate in programs and ceremonies tied to the Holocaust history.¹⁴¹

Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day)

A week after Yom Hasho'a, Israelis pay tribute to the losses that they have suffered in wars and terrorist actions. As most adults in the country know friends, family, or acquaintances that have been killed either while in the military or by random violence, the day carries special significance for many people. Flags fly at half-mast, and ceremonies are held at military cemeteries throughout the country. Except for entertainment venues, most businesses stay open on this day.¹⁴²

Yom Ha'atsma'ut (Israeli Independence Day)

Yom Ha'atsma'ut celebrates the day in which Israel declared its independence in 1948. It is the only Israeli public holiday that is not tied to hundreds or even thousands of years of tradition. The holiday occurs in late April to mid-May. Unlike some religious holidays, in which most businesses may stay open but restaurants and places of entertainment are closed, the opposite is true on Yom Ha'atsma'ut. It is a festive day, filled both with patriotic and purely social events such as barbeques and fireworks, and thus is in many ways, celebrated similarly to the American Fourth of July.¹⁴³

Jerusalem Day

The most recently created Israeli holiday commemorates the liberation (or "occupation" according to some) of eastern Jerusalem during the 1967 war. Most of the commemorative events occur in Jerusalem, including the central one on Ammunition Hill,

¹⁴¹ "Holocaust Remembrance Day." Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Purim.htm

¹⁴² "Yom Hazikaron." Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Yom+Hazikaron.htm

¹⁴³ "Independence Day – Yom Ha'atsma'ut." Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23072>

the site of a Jordanian army position that was captured after a long battle in the 1967 war. Businesses generally do not take this day as a holiday.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ “Jerusalem Day.” Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Wonders, http://www.tourism.gov.il/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+Information/Discover+Israel/Holidays/Jerusalem+Day.htm

Weddings

A traditional Jewish wedding is full of rituals that symbolize the new relationship of husband and wife and the couple's obligations and vows to each other and to their Jewish faith.

Before the wedding, it is customary for the *chatan* (groom) and *kallah* (bride) to not see each other for a week. On the day of the wedding, both the *chatan* and *kallah* begin a fast that lasts from dawn until after the marriage ceremony has ended. As guests begin to arrive, the *chatan* and *kallah* receive them in separate receptions called *Kabbalat Panim*. The next step of the pre-wedding ceremonies is the *badeken*, in which the *chatan*, accompanied by family and friends, goes to the *kallah's* reception room and places the veil over her face. This ancient custom is the first of many actions in which the *chatan* symbolizes his commitment to protect and take care of his wife.

Exchange 9: Congratulations on your marriage.

Soldier:	Congratulations on your marriage.	mazaal tov le-neesoo-eyKhaa
Local:	Thank you.	toadaa

The wedding ceremony itself takes place under a *chupah* (canopy) and is usually held outside. In a wedding ritual symbolically referencing the seven days that it took to create the world, the *kallah* circles the *chatan* seven times under the *chupah*. As the world was created, the *kallah* figuratively creates the walls of the couple's new home in this ritual.

The first of two glasses of wine is drunk by the couple after the recitation of the betrothal blessing. Wine is associated with the *Kiddush*, the sanctification prayer recited on the Sabbath, and marriage, called *Kiddushin*, is the sanctification of a man and woman to each other.

The *chatan* then takes the wedding ring, declares his betrothal to his wife, and places the ring on the forefinger of his bride's right hand. The couple is considered fully married at this point.

The *Ketubah* (marriage contract) is then read in the original Aramaic text. In it the *chatan* accepts marital responsibilities such as providing food, shelter, and clothing for his wife. The document is signed by two witnesses.

Seven blessings (*Sheva Brachot*) are then recited by the rabbi. At the conclusion of these blessings, the couple finishes the second glass of wine and place one of the glasses on the floor, where the *chatan* shatters it by stepping on it with his foot. This act symbolizes the sadness of the Jewish people at the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and connects the couple with the destiny of all Jews.

Shouting “*Mazel Tov!*” the guests celebrate the new couple, who leave the *chupah* together and go to the *Yichud* room, their temporary private chamber. Here they are left alone for the first time and may finally break their fast.

Exchange 10: I wish you both happiness.

Soldier:	I wish you both much happiness.	aanee me-aaKhel le-shneyKhem harbey osher
Local:	Thank you.	toadaa

The guests continue celebrating by feasting, playing music, and dancing. After the wedding meal, a prayer (*Birkat Hamazon*) is recited, followed by another recitation of the *Sheva Brachot*. For a week following the wedding, these blessings will be recited numerous times at meals hosted by friends and relatives to honor the new couple.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ “Guide to the Jewish Wedding.” 2001, Shulman, Andy. Aish.com, http://www.aish.com/literacy/lifecycle/Guide_to_the_Jewish_Wedding.asp

Funerals

When a member of an Israeli family dies, seven immediate family members observe the mourning period. They are typically the mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and spouse of the deceased. Those in mourning are said to be “sitting *Shiva*” during this period. The word “*shev’ah*” in Hebrew means seven, and the mourning period of *Shiva* is seven days following the funeral.

Shiva

The mourning family members do not wear leather shoes, put on makeup, use perfume, shave, get haircuts, or bathe during this seven day period. Mirrors in the house are covered, and the seven mourners are expected sit on low stools or on the floor during this time. During *shiva*, friends come to comfort and bring food to the mourners, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Exchange 11: I would like to offer my condolences to you and your family.

Soldier:	I would like to offer my condolences to you and your family.	aanee rotsey lehaatsee'a et taanKhoomaay leKhaa ve-le-meeshpaatKhaa
Local:	Thank you.	todaa

Services

According to Jewish law, embalming, cremation, autopsy (unless a rabbi is consulted and approves), and organ donation are not allowed. Embalming is considered a desecration of the deceased, and cremation destroys the body, which is considered a gift from God.

Israeli Jews do not have viewings or wakes, but rather perform the burial as soon as possible after death. Ideally, the burial should be on the same day of the death, but should not be any longer than two nights after the death. Only wooden coffins are used for burial.

Before the funeral services, the rabbi tears the blouse or shirt (or sometimes a black ribbon) of the mourners. This is called tearing the *Kria*. Services start with the *Kaddish*, a special prayer given by the son or other designated family member. After the funeral, mourners do not attend weddings, bar or bat-mitzvahs, or any other events with music for 30 days (*Shloshim*). The son or daughter of the deceased does not attend any of these events for one year.

Visiting the Gravesite

In Israel, it is customary for people to visit the gravesite on the last day of *Shiva*. Others go at the end of *Shloshim*. One may bring live flowers to place on the grave, but a more common custom is to put stones or pebbles on the grave as a way of paying respects to the deceased.

In Israel, many people unveil the grave's headstone after a month. It is customary to include both the English and Hebrew names of the deceased on the headstone, along with the birth date and death date.

Anniversary of Death

The anniversary date of the passing (*Yarzeit*) is observed according to the Jewish calendar. *Yizkor* (literally "remember") services for the dead are held on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret (the day after the last day of Pesach, or Passover), and Shavu'ot.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ "Jewish Mourning." 2007. Ahavat Israel, <http://www.ahavat-israel.com/torat/death.php>

Hospitality & Gift Giving

Most Israelis are warm and friendly people, especially once they have gotten to know you. A dinner invitation to an Israeli home should always be accepted if possible, as it is an act of sincere friendship. Gifts such as flowers, chocolates, or a good bottle of wine (unless it is a Muslim family) are welcomed and certainly should be taken during a first visit. Other gifts of foods should always be considered in light of possible religious dietary restrictions.^{147, 148}

Eating Habits¹⁴⁹

Unlike the United States, breakfast may be a huge meal of salads, olives, distinctively Israeli breads, juices, cheeses, and coffee. The main meal of the day in Israel occurs at noontime or 1 p.m., when children return home from school, rather than in the evening. Evening meals are usually light affairs and may consist of dairy products, salads, and eggs.

Jewish Orthodox dietary laws (*kashrut*) heavily influence Israeli cuisine and eating habits both in terms of what is cooked and how it is cooked. According to these laws, pork, rabbit, and shellfish are not to be eaten, and only certain types of meat and fish are allowed. Furthermore, dairy dishes should be cooked and eaten separately from meat dishes. Most Israeli homes have two sets of dishes and sometimes pots for use with dairy meals and meat meals.

Sabbath restrictions do not allow cooking to be done that day, so foods that can be prepared in advance and that can simmer for long periods are popular. Examples include a traditional stew (*cholent*) and a vegetable and noodle pudding (*kugel*).

¹⁴⁷ “Doing Business with Israel, Israel Culture.” Leyden Communications (Israel), <http://www.israelmarketing.com/doingbusiness.html>

¹⁴⁸ “Israel: Religious Activities.” 29 December 2003. eDiplomat.com, http://www.ediplomat.com/np/post_reports/pr_il.htm

¹⁴⁹ “Israeli Foods, Introduction.” 2007. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Society_&_Culture/foodintro.html

*Types of Food*¹⁵⁰

It is common for guests to drop by the homes of friends or families unannounced, so many Israelis usually have a supply of appetizers or snacks set aside. These can be *baba ghanouj* (eggplant with tehina), *burekas* (dough with feta cheese filling), chopped chicken livers, *falafel* (chick-pea patties with pita bread), fried goats' cheese, hummus, lentils with spinach and lemon, *mufleta* (dough with melted butter and honey), roasted garlic with goats' cheese, *tehina* (dip with sesame paste), and Turkish-style eggplant (eggplant with tomatoes and cinnamon).

Typical Israeli soups are chicken soup, meat borscht (heavy meat stew with cabbage, originally from Russia), *tarato* (yogurt soup served cold, originally from Bulgaria), and Yemenite soup (chicken soup with *lachuh*, or pancake bread, originally from Yemen).

Vegetables and salads are avocado salad, carrot salad, green pepper salad, *matbucha* salad (tomatoes cooked with red or green peppers), *shakshouka* (eggs cooked with fresh tomatoes), sweet potato *wera* (a potato loaf covered with humus flour), vegetable salad, and zucchini *pritti* (fried zucchini rings).

Two Israeli breads are *frikase* (fried buns with the texture of a doughnut) and *lachuh* (similar to pancakes). The ubiquitous bread is flat pocket bread, or pita, called *pitot*.

Some Israeli main dishes are blintzes, chicken curry, chicken paprika, *kebobs* (stick-shaped hamburgers), lamb stew, *latkes* (potato pancakes), *lokshen kugel* (means noodle pudding in Yiddish), *malawach* (originally from Yemen, similar to pizza dough and served with tomatoes), *cholent* (meat stew served during Sabbath), Moroccan fish (fish with pepper and paprika), meat balls with pine nuts, *moussaka* (eggplant casserole originally from Greece), *shishlik* (skewered meat charbroiled over a barbeque), and St. Peter's Fish with Parsley Sauce.

Some Israeli desserts are *baklava* (a honey and nut pastry), crisp Moroccan cookies, fruit salad, *halvah* parfait, honey cake, *kichlach* (cookies with poppy seeds, originally made for Israeli army recruits), marzipan cookies, Moroccan cookies *spange* (cookies made with beer yeast), Moroccan date cookies, *rugelach* (cookies made with jam and chocolate), sponge cake, and wonder cake (a common cake served with tea).

Common Israeli drinks are mint tea, Turkish coffee, and wine.

¹⁵⁰ "Israeli Foods." 2007. Jewish Virtual Library, American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Society_&_Culture/foodtoc.html

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Do share personal information. Once they get to know you, Israelis are open to sharing details about their lives and one should try to reciprocate in kind.
- Do put up with Israeli security. Israel constantly faces concerns about terrorist attacks, and thus security personnel are seen guarding the entrances of many large public places, such as shopping malls. Usually one will be asked to show any bags and answer questions concerning whether or not weapons are being carried.

Don't

- Do not smoke in public places. Israel has stringent public anti-smoking laws, and most areas within restaurants are reserved for non-smokers. On the Sabbath, in particular, it is considered disrespectful to smoke in many public areas.
- Do dress modestly. In Haredi neighborhoods or at Jewish or Muslim religious sites (mostly in Jerusalem), signs may be posted requesting modest dress (arms and legs covered). Even if you do not see such signs, one should always dress conservatively when entering Orthodox synagogues or Muslim mosques.¹⁵¹

151 "Israel History & Culture." 2007. GTA Travel, <http://guides.gta-travel.com/Destcontent.jsp?dest=OIL&filename=historyculture.htm>

Urban Life

Introduction

In the 20th century, Jewish immigration into Palestine changed what had once been a primarily rural region. The new Jewish settlers first established themselves on the coastal plain during the late 19th Century and then later moved inland into the valleys, hill districts, and desert regions of the interior. Cities such as Haifa and Jerusalem, which had been modestly populated before, became larger. The ancient port city of Jaffa (Yafo) soon was eclipsed by its Jewish suburb, Tel Aviv, which eventually became the central city of Israel's major metropolitan area.¹⁵² The League of Nations population figures from 1920 listed the entire population of Palestine as 700,000 people, of which 235,000 lived in cities.¹⁵³ By 1946, the United Nations estimated the population of Palestine to have nearly tripled (1,846,000).¹⁵⁴ More current estimates of the population of Israel are 6,352,117, with nearly 187,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, about 20,000 in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, and few than 177,000 in East Jerusalem, as of July 2006.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² "Israel: Settlement Patterns." 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23072>, Encyclopædia Britannica

¹⁵³ "Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine." 30 July 1921, Samuel, Herbert. United Nations Information System on the Status of Palestine, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/349b02280a930813052565e90048ed1c!OpenDocument>

¹⁵⁴ "United Nations Special Committee on Palestine: Report to the General Assembly." 3 September 1947. United Nations Information System on the Status of Palestine, <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/eed216406b50bf6485256ce10072f637/07175de9fa2de563852568d3006e10f3!OpenDocument>

¹⁵⁵ Israel, CIA. <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/is.html>

Health Issues/Clinics

Israel today has approximately 32,000 physicians, 9,000 dentists, 6,000 pharmacists, and 51,000 nurses.

Exchange 12: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	yesh kleeneeka krovaa kaan ba-eyzor?
Local:	Yes, over there.	ken, shaam

Due to diseases such as dysentery, malaria, typhus, and trachoma that were common in the 19th Century, European Jewish communities and the British Mandate set up a network of free medical clinics that provided services for those who were unable to pay. Three of these clinics in Jerusalem later expanded to become hospitals, two of which are still operating today: *Bikur Holim* (est. 1843), *Misgav Ladach* (est. 1888, closed as hospital in 2001), and *Shaare Zedek* (est. 1902). Now the National Health Insurance Law, enacted in 1995, ensures insurance coverage for and access to medical services, including hospitalization, for all residents of Israel.¹⁵⁶

Magen David Adom is Israel's emergency medical service, comparable in some ways to Red Cross. It provides first aid stations, runs a nationwide blood donor program and blood banks, and offers first aid courses. It also runs a public ambulance service.¹⁵⁷

Exchange 13: Do you need my help?

Soldier:	Do you need my help?	aataa tsaareeKh at ha-'ezraa shelee?
Local:	Yes.	ken

The country has 47 general hospitals, many offering highly advanced procedures and techniques such as *in vitro* fertilization, CAT scans, brain surgery, and bone marrow and organ transplants.

In 1999, life expectancy for Israelis at birth was 76.6 years for men and 80.4 years for women, and the infant mortality rate was 5.4 per thousand births.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ «Health Services.» 2007. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs . <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Health%20-%20Social%20Services/HEALTH-%20Health%20Services>

¹⁵⁷ «Health Services.» 2007. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs . <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Health%20-%20Social%20Services/HEALTH-%20Health%20Services>

¹⁵⁸ “Health Care Systems in Transition.” 2003, Rosen, Bruce. European Observatory on Health Care Systems, www.euro.who.int/document/E81826.pdf

Work Problems in Urban Areas

Work conditions in Israeli cities are similar to those found in the United States. Weekends are on Friday, Saturday and/or Sunday, depending on religion. Employees are entitled from 14 to 21 days of paid vacation each year.

Approximately 650,000 of Israelis are members of Histadrut, the powerful national labor union that has been a force in Israeli labor since pre-Independence. Histadrut is not only a union, but also owns and operates several businesses, including, until 1983, Bank Hapolim, today the largest bank in Israel. The collective agreements that Histadrut negotiates also cover much of Israel's non-Histadrut work force. Under the current agreements, the maximum number of hours in the work week is 45 hours for private sector workers and 42 hours for the public sector. The minimum wage in Israel is set at 47.5 percent of the average salary.

There are currently over 300,000 non-Palestinian foreign workers in Israel, many of whom are undocumented.¹⁵⁹ Most come from Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, and those that work in the cities are mostly working in construction or caregiving.¹⁶⁰ The Israeli Government has spent millions of dollars to find and deport these illegal migrant workers, despite a continued demand for foreign workers that fuels a continuing stream of such workers through legal channels.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001." 2 March 2002. U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8262.htm>

¹⁶⁰ "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001." 2 March 2002. U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8262.htm>

¹⁶¹ "Middle East: Gulf, Israel." October 2004. Migration News, http://migration.ucdavis.edu/MN/more.php?id=3062_0_5_0

Education and Schools in the Cities

The education system in Israel consists of pre-primary (pre-school and/or kindergarten, ages 0-6), primary (grades 1-6), lower secondary (grades 7-9) upper secondary (grades 10-12), post-secondary (technical colleges), and higher education (colleges and universities).

Exchange 14: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	ha-eem yesh beyt-seyfer ba-eyzor ha-kaarov?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Upper secondary education prepares the students for the Israeli matriculation exams (*bagrut*), equivalent to the high school graduation examination process. These students will take many subjects (e.g., Hebrew literature and language, English, Arabic, mathematics, science, Bible and Judaic studies, history, and civics), some of them mandatory, to prepare them for matriculation into the higher education system.

Approximately 1.6 million children in the 2002 – 2003 school years were enrolled in the pre-primary through secondary educational systems.

Exchange 15: Do your children go to school?

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	ha-yelaadeem shelKhaa holKheem le-veyt-seyfer?
Local:	Yes.	ken

An Israeli with a full matriculation certificate can graduate to higher education, usually after he or she serves in the Israeli military. The higher education institutions generally require a certain grade-point average as well as a passing grade in the Psychometric Entrance Examination, the Hebrew and English Proficiency Exams, and the Mathematics Placement Exam. All universities, and some colleges, are subsidized by the state, and students may pay only a small part of the actual cost as tuition.

Israel's higher education system has eight universities, one of them an Open University, and several dozen colleges. During the 2003 school year, there were approximately 290,000 students enrolled.¹⁶²

162 "Economics and Budgeting Administration, Facts and Figures, 2004." 2006. The State of Israel, Ministry of Education, <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Owl/English/Figures/>

Daily Life of Urban Dwellers

Israel is a society that is both united and divided. Even as they continue searching for and arguing about peace, Israelis mourn their unfulfilled dreams and their failure to unite behind one social vision. The contrasts are quite visible and can be seen both in city streets and the floor of the Knesset, reflecting the differences that have existed from the beginning of the country between secular and religious Zionists.¹⁶³

A quick comparison between Israel's two largest cities, inland Jerusalem and coastal Tel Aviv (Yafo), illuminates some of these differences. Jerusalem, Israel's largest city is a very religious place. For example, in the 1996 elections, when 20 percent of Israel's population voted for religious parties, nearly twice that percentage of voters (37.6) voted religiously in Jerusalem. (And this figure does not consider that roughly 30 percent of Jerusalem is Arab, and thus not nearly as likely to vote for the Orthodox and Haredi religious political parties.)¹⁶⁴ Jerusalem is Israel's second-poorest city, partly because such a high percentage of the population is made up of underemployed Arabs and partly because a significant percentage of the Jewish population is Haredim and thus occupied with religious studies rather than employment.¹⁶⁵

Metropolitan Tel Aviv, on the other hand, the bustling coastal city that is associated with the country's economic resurgence, contains the country's highest concentration of bars and nightclubs, restaurants, business start-ups, and secular singles. As the financial and entrepreneurial capital of the country, the city is easily the most Western within Israel and is the stronghold for left-of-center political parties.¹⁶⁶ There are more cars per person, housing is roomier, and a much smaller percentage of the population is employed in the public sector compared to Jerusalem.¹⁶⁷

Increasing urbanization is a concern to the Israeli government, which has tried to manage the situation by creating new towns in the northern and southern parts of the country that house many of the recent waves of immigrants. Over time, many of these towns develop their own industries and become urban-like centers of regional settlement. An example is Beersheba in the Negev, which is now the sixth largest city in Israel.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ "Life in Modern Israel." 2003. Troy, Gil. World Zionist Organization. <http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1410>

¹⁶⁴ "Religious Zionists in Jerusalem: An Overview." 1998. Elazar, Daniel J. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, <http://www.jcpa.org/jcprg2.htm>

¹⁶⁵ "Religious Zionists in Jerusalem: An Overview." 1998. Elazar, Daniel J. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, <http://www.jcpa.org/jcprg2.htm>

¹⁶⁶ "Is Tel Aviv Really That Apathetic?" 27 March 2006, Arfa, Orit. The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?apage=1&cid=1139395685113&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

¹⁶⁷ "Jerusalem Urban Development – Economic Characteristics." 5 January 1997, State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1998/6/Jerusalem%20Urban%20Development%20-%20Economic%20Characteris

¹⁶⁸ "Israel, Urban Settlement." 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-23074>

Keep in mind that it is customary to tip hotel workers, guides, and drivers as well, but tipping taxi drivers is not mandatory.

Favorite Pastimes of Urban Dwellers

Israel is a country made up of immigrants and their descendants from all around the world. Not surprisingly, that diversity of origins plays out in numerous ways when people pursue activities in their free time. The most consistent pattern is one that is observed in most Western countries: the attraction of shopping malls for youths. A recent study found that 82 percent of Israeli youth cited this as their favorite leisure activity. Neither was it surprising to find that surfing the Internet was a popular youth activity.¹⁶⁹

Israeli urbanites pursue both “high” cultural activities, such as theatre, classical music, and art, and “popular” culture venues (movies, television, and dance clubs). Favorite outdoor activities include sports, such as soccer and basketball, mountain biking and hiking, scuba diving, and windsurfing.¹⁷⁰ For a country of only 6.5 million people, Israel is a world power in chess with four of the top 100 world men chess players being Israelis (the same number as the United States).¹⁷¹ Many of the best Israeli players came to the country in the 1990s in the wave of immigrations from the former Soviet Union.

¹⁶⁹ “Israel 2006: More Kids Under the Poverty Line.” 27 December 2006, Rada, Moran. YNetNews.com, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3345286,00.html>

¹⁷⁰ “Israel: Sports.” ²⁰⁰⁷. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-219416/Israel>

¹⁷¹ “World Chess Federation Top 100 Players.” January 2007, FIDE.com, <http://www.fide.com/ratings/top.phtml?list=men>

Restaurants

Restaurants are plentiful in Israel. There are varied restaurants from different ethnicities throughout the country. Most major restaurants accept credit cards, but open-front eateries on the street usually only accept cash (*shekels*).

Exchange 16: Do you accept US currency?

Soldier:	Do you accept US currency?	aataa mekaabel kesef aamreekaa-ee?
Local:	No we only accept shekls.	lo, anaaKhnoo mekaableem raak shkaaleem

When tipping, ten percent of the bill is sufficient.¹⁷²

As is typical in Mediterranean countries, Israelis dine late; tables are generally available at 7 p.m. but may not be so a few hours later. However, in Jerusalem's Old City, most restaurants close by 6 p.m.

The atmosphere in Israeli restaurants is friendly and informal, in both dress and behavior. Most restaurants have security guards at the entrance, and one should be prepared to open bags if asked.

Some restaurants list themselves as "dairy," which means they will serve meals without meat. Instead, they may offer fish dishes along with pasta, soup, and salads. Restaurants signed as "Oriental" usually are Middle Eastern, as this term once was commonly applied to Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries. "Kosher" restaurants adhere to Orthodox religious restrictions in the foods they cook and the methods by which they prepare and cook the food. Such restaurants are always closed for Friday dinner and Saturday lunch in observation of the Jewish Sabbath.¹⁷³

It is standard to tip anywhere from 10 to 15 percent of the bill. In some restaurants, the tip may be included in the bill, so one should always check first before tipping.

¹⁷² "Travel Facts." 2006. Fodor's Exploring Israel, 4th Edition, p. 269.

¹⁷³ "Restaurants: Overview." 2006. Fodor's Travel http://www.fodors.com/miniguides/mgresults.cfm?destination=jerusalem@80&cur_section=din&showover=yes

Market Place

The larger old towns of Israel, such as Jerusalem, Akko (Acre) and Nazareth, all have outdoor markets, known as *shuks*. In the Old City of Jerusalem, the narrow streets are filled with merchants selling foods and traditional handicrafts. In Nazareth, the Old Market is a lively Middle Eastern bazaar located near the Church of the Annunciation.

Exchange 17: Will you be going to the market today?

Soldier:	Will you be going to the market today?	aataa teleKh la-shook ha-yom?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Even in modern Tel Aviv, there are a number of *shuks*.

Exchange 18: Is the market nearby?

Soldier:	Is the market nearby?	ha-shook kaarov?
Local:	Yes.	ken

The most popular ones are the Bezalel Market, the Carmel Market, and the flea market. The Carmel Market is also known as *Shuk HaCarmel* and is the city's largest market.

Exchange 19: Do you have this in a different color?

Soldier:	Do you have this in a different color?	yesh leKhaa et zeh be-tseva' aaKher?
Local:	Yes.	ken

The city also has the Nachalat Binyamin Pedestrian Mall, which is located in the Yemenite Quarter, one of Tel Aviv's first neighborhoods. In addition to unique handicrafts, the Mall often offers street entertainment in the form of street performers, mimes, and musicians.

In Haifa, the Usfiya and Daliat-el-Carmel Druze villages are located on the Carmel summit. In the center of Daliat-el-Carmel is a colorful outdoor market that is open each day except for Fridays.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ "Markets, Tel Aviv." 2007. In Israel.com, <http://www.inisrael.com/tour/telaviv/markets.htm>

Urban Traffic

Driving in Israel—The Basics

Cars in Israel drive on the right-hand side of the road. According to Israeli law, seat belts must be worn by all car passengers. From November 1 to April 1, all cars traveling on roads between cities must have their headlights turned on at all times. Children under 12 years old must sit in the back seat (unless they are infants in a safety seat).

Exchange 20: Can I rent a car from you?

Soldier:	Can I rent a car from you?	aanee yaaKhol leeskor meemKhaa meKhoneet?
Local:	No.	lo

Distances and speed limits are marked in kilometers. The speed limit is 50 kilometers per hour (km/h) (31 mph) in urban areas and 90 km/h (56 mph) on the roads between cities, unless otherwise stated. Road signs are normally featured in Hebrew, English, and Arabic.

Traffic

Traffic in some urban areas is quite crowded, particularly in areas such as Jerusalem's Old City that were never planned for car traffic. Israeli officials have set plans in motion to create a cable car system in the Old City to ease the traffic crush.¹⁷⁵

In rapidly expanding Metropolitan Tel Aviv, traffic planning has, not surprisingly, been able to keep pace. A light-rail system, parts of which would be underground, is in the early stages of planning.¹⁷⁶

Parking

There are five types of parking zones in Israel. Blue and white zones mean that parking is allowed with parking cards only. These cards may be purchased at kiosks, post offices, or gas stations and are displayed on the passenger side.

Exchange 21: Is there a gas station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a gas station nearby?	yesh taaKhanaat delek bayzo?
Local:	Yes.	ken

¹⁷⁵ "Jerusalem Plans to Build Cable Car to Ease Traffic in Old City." 22 March 2006, Toth, Sara. Associated Press. Jerusalem Federation of Greater Washington, http://www.shalomdc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=179320

¹⁷⁶ "A Subway Would Be Preferable." 3 January 2007, Haaretz Service. Haaretz.com, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/808350.html>

In recent years the paper cards have been giving way in many urban areas to electronic “smart” cards that can be read by meters.

Red-and-white zones mean that there is no parking allowed, while red-and-yellow zones are reserved for buses. A continuous white zone is for street residents, and a blue rectangle on the street indicates handicapped parking.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ “Visiting Scientists: Cars.” 2006. Weizmann Institute of Science, <http://www.weizmann.ac.il/vs/cars.html#parking>

Transportation

Suburban Railway

The government-owned Israel Railways provides transportation for 1,800,000 passengers per month. It runs four commuter train lines in Israel: the Ashdod-Rehovot-Tel Aviv line, the Tel Aviv-Netanya-Binyamina line, the Tel Aviv-Petah Tikva-Rosh Ha'ayin line, and the northern Haifa Hof-HaCarmel -Krayot line.¹⁷⁸

Exchange 22: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	yesh taaKhanaat raakevet krovaa?
Local:	No.	lo

Buses

The Egged Bus Cooperative, the leading public transport operator in Israel, is the world's second largest bus company. It provides 60 percent of public transportation throughout all of Israel, operating over 3,000 buses, of which 114 are armored. It runs more than 1,000 service routes and nearly 4,000 alternative routes all over the state of Israel.¹⁷⁹

Exchange 23: Which direction to the airport?

Soldier:	Which direction to the airport?	maa ha-keevoon le-sdeh ha-te'oofaa?
Local:	That way.	ha-keevoon ha-zeh

Within the larger cities, local bus companies are also found, the largest of which is the Dan Public Transportation Company serving Metropolitan Tel Aviv.¹⁸⁰

Exchange 24: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	ha-otoboos yihiyeh kaan be-kaarov?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Car rentals and taxi cabs are also available throughout Israel.

Exchange 25: Can I get a cab around here?

¹⁷⁸ "General Information, Suburban Railways." 2007. Israil.org. <http://www.israil.org.il/english/index.html>

¹⁷⁹ "About Us." 2007. Egged. <http://www.egged.co.il/Eng/main.asp?lngCategoryID=2785>

¹⁸⁰ "About Dan: Facts and Figures." 2007. Dan Public Transportation Company, Ltd., <http://www.dan.co.il/english/template/default.asp?catId=25>

Soldier:	Can I get a cab around here?	ha-eem aanee yaaKhol lehaaseeg kaan mooneet?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Human Trafficking

Both men and women are illegally trafficked in Israel. Most of the men, many from China, are brought into the country for labor activities, while the women, mostly from the former Soviet Union countries, often end up in the sex trade. Recent reports indicate that some traffickers from the Ukraine have started exploiting the Israeli Law of Return by smuggling in “immigrants” with false Jewish identity documents.

The Israeli government has been increasingly active in pursuing the sex trade trafficking. In 2004, for example, over 600 such cases were investigated, compared to 460 investigations in 2003. From the 2004 investigations, over 100 suspects were arrested and 28 convicted, more than twice as many convictions as in 2003.¹⁸¹ In October 2006, the Israeli Knesset passed a comprehensive anti-trafficking bill that is hoped will give government legal officials “better tools” to go after the traffickers. The law was passed a few months after a U.S. report on human trafficking stated that Israel was in danger of becoming one of the world’s top 100 trafficking countries.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ «Country Narratives -- Countries H through P.» 2005. U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46614.htm>

¹⁸² “Knesset Passes Human Trafficking Bill.” 18 October 2006, Frenkel, Sheera Claire. The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46614.htm>

Rural Life

Introduction

Israeli government statistics show that eight percent of the population of this highly urbanized country lives in rural areas.¹⁸³ (In Israel, “rural” villages are defined to be places with less than 2,000 people or more than 2,000 if at least one third of the population is involved in agriculture.¹⁸⁴) Less than two percent of the Israeli population now lives in *kibbutzim*, the Jewish rural farm collectives, compared with six percent of the population at Israeli independence. Much of the remaining Jewish rural population lives and works on *moshavim* cooperatives.

Roughly 20 percent of Israel's population is non-Jewish. They are primarily Arabic-speaking Muslims, Christians, and Druze, many of whom live in villages in northern Israel. They make up much of the remainder of Israel's rural population. Many of the Arab villages are no longer classified as rural because their populations have grown and fewer of the residents are involved in agriculture.¹⁸⁵

The Druze are perhaps the least well known of the northern Israeli Arab groups. They have formed a separate cultural and religious community whose members usually live in small hilltop villages that are completely populated by Druze. Only those born into Druze families may be Druze—the religion does not allow for converts.¹⁸⁶

The largest non-Jewish rural group in the south is the Bedouin Arab population of the Negev, concentrated around the city of Beersheba. There are about 30 Bedouin tribes. Most tribe members formerly were nomadic shepherds but are transitioning, somewhat unwillingly in some cases, to a more permanently settled society.

183 “Israel at 58.” 1 May 2006. Jewish National Fund, http://www.jnf.org/site/PageServer?JServSessionIdr001=unpz39yrt2.app23a&pagename=PR_Israelat58_2006

184 “Table 6 – Demographic Yearbook 2003—Definition of ‘Urban.’” United Nations Statistics Division, unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/DYB2003/NotesTab06.pdf

185 “Looking at Israel: Urban and Rural Life.” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel-%20Urban%20and%20Rural%20Life>

186 “The Druze in Israel.” 23 December 2002. Aridi, Naim. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2002/12/Focus%20on%20Israel-%20The%20Druze%20in%20Israel

Kibbutzim

The first *kibbutz* was established in 1909 by Zionist settlers on lands purchased in the Sea of Galilee area by the Jewish National Fund. Property and production in *kibbutzim* are communally-owned and operated, with all decisions made by a general assembly of its members. The *kibbutz* is also a communal society that is responsible for its members' needs from infancy to old age.¹⁸⁷

Although the *kibbutzim* now only make up about 1.7 percent of Israel's population, their production has grown to 38 percent of farm produce. *Kibbutzim* are additionally expanding into various types of industries and services and now account for about 8.4 percent of Israel's industrial production. Tourism, catering, and factory outlet stores are just some of the modern economic activities of the *kibbutz*.

Moshavim

Most *moshavim* originated as agricultural villages in which land is privately maintained and farmed, but some economic activities, such as marketing, sharing of water resources, and purchasing, are done cooperatively. They provide an intermediate option between the economic and socially communal *kibbutzim* and independently owned and run farms.¹⁸⁸ *Moshav* farmers make up 3.4 percent of the country's population and supply a large portion of the total farm produce.

Moshavim today hire a significant number of foreign workers to tend the fields and greenhouses. Many of these workers come from Thailand and have taken positions formerly held by Palestinian Arab day workers prior to the recent waves of political unrest.¹⁸⁹

In Arab villages and farms, houses and land are privately owned. Farmers cultivate and market what they grow, such as vegetables, field crops, and olives, on an individual basis.¹⁹⁰ In recent years, as Arab villages have grown and agriculture has become less labor intensive, village residents are increasingly likely to work in a local industry or in nearby urban and rural centers.¹⁹¹

Yishuv Kehilati

A new form of rural settlement is the *yishuv kehilati*, communities made up of hundreds of families. Each family's economic life is completely independent and most members work outside the community.¹⁹² The *yishuv kehilati* itself is run by a General Assembly made up of household heads, and new members must be approved by the community

187 "The Kibbutz." Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/kibbutz.html

188 "Moshav." 2007, Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9053908/moshav>

189 "To Make the Desert Bloom: Seeking Sustainability for the Israeli Agricultural Adventure." 11 August 2005, Tal, Alon. Program in Agrarian Studies, Yale University, www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/papers/01desertbloom.pdf

190 "Israel's Agriculture at a Glance." 2006. Israel Export and International Cooperation Institute, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, www.moag.gov.il/news/Isr_Agriculture/isra_agri_2006_num.pdf

191 "Urban and Rural Life." 23 March 2003. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel-%20Urban%20and%20Rural%20Life>

192 "Urban and Rural Life." 23 March 2003. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts%20About%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel/Looking%20at%20Israel-%20Urban%20and%20Rural%20Life>

before they are allowed to move in. Unlike the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*, the *yishuvim kehilatiim* are not associated with agriculture.¹⁹³

193 "The Land: Rural Life." 1 October 2006, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Land/THE%20LAND-%20Rural%20Life>

Rural Transportation Issues

Israel, a geographically small country, has an extensive network of roads throughout the country. As in many countries, one concern has been that new freeways and expressways will shorten commute routes into major cities such as Tel Aviv, spurring suburban expansion into previously rural areas. One project in particular, Highway 6, has been a magnet for controversy.

Exchange 26: Can you take me there?

Soldier:	Can you take me there?	aataa yaaKhol lakaaKhat otee le-shaam?
Local:	Yes, I can. Follow me.	ken, aanee yaaKhol taa'akov aaKharaay

Highway 6 (Trans-Israel Highway)

Since its opening in 2000, Highway 6 has become a central traffic route in Israel from the north to the south of the country. It currently spans 86 km (53 miles) in central Israel, providing a convenient bypass around the Metropolitan Tel Aviv area. Additional extensions to the north and south will ultimately triple the length and connect Israel's northern Galilee to the Negev area. In addition to environmental arguments, opponents of the project object that the highway is often being built on Arab farm lands.¹⁹⁴

A northern extension of the highway to the Jezreel Valley (Plain of Esdraelon), home to many of Israel's original kibbutzim and moshavim, is scheduled to open in 2008.¹⁹⁵ This will shorten the trip to Tel Aviv from the Valley by as much as 40 minutes, making this area more attractive to city commuters.¹⁹⁶ Two southern extensions are also underway and will be opening over the next two years.

Exchange 27: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	ha-eem yesh meKhonaay tov kaarov le-kaan?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Exchange 28: Do you know how to fix this?

Soldier:	Do you know how to fix this?	aataa yode'a eyKh letaaken et zeh?
Local:	No.	lo

194 "Discrimination Diary: What Highway 6 Would Mean for Arabs in Israel and the West Bank." 21 March 2000, Lochhead, Cynthia. SocialAction.com, www.itdp.org/read/Mex%20White%20Paper_Israel.pdf

195 "Highway 6, Paved with Good Intentions." 21 December 2006, Mirovsky, Arik. Cornerstone International, <http://www.cornerstone-international.co.il/en/ascrolling%20news/27821.php>

196 "Yet to be discovered: The Jezreel Valley." 2007. Mirovsky, Arik. Haaretz.com, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=789914&contrassID=2&subContrassID=20>

Health Issues

Bedouins in Negev

In general, Israel has better-than-average health care facilities for its rural population. However, in recent years, there have been some claims that health care for the Bedouin Arabs in the Negev is well below the national standards. Many of the Negev Bedouins have not moved into the government-created Bedouin towns, but continue to live in villages that the Israeli government does not recognize. Because of their unrecognized status, these villages do not have any government services, including sanitation and health care.¹⁹⁷

Exchange 29: Is there a doctor here?

Soldier:	Is there a doctor here?	yesh shaam rofey?
Local:	No.	lo

The Israeli government website responds by noting that since 1996, all Bedouin citizens are guaranteed health care. In the Negev, there are a total of 12 clinics in the seven government-created Bedouin towns that provide services to the rural population, and another ten clinics are under development. The government also notes that most of the population living outside the towns can reach the clinics easily, and in the more outlying areas, several mobile clinics provide services in the mornings. Hospital facilities are available in Beersheba, the large central city in the Bedouin areas of the Negev.¹⁹⁸

While many of the Bedouin villages still remain unrecognized and thus receive no government delivery of essential services, several Bedouin villages in the past few years have received governmental recognition in the wake of a High Court appeal for village recognition based on environmental and sanitation hazards in the villages.¹⁹⁹

Exchange 30: May I use your phone?

Soldier:	May I use your phone?	aanee yaaKhol leheeshtamesh ba-telefon shelKhaa?
Local:	Sure	betaaKh

Avian Flu

In March 2006, Israel's Agriculture and Rural Development Minister reported that the avian flu had been found in turkey farms in agricultural settlements in southern and central Israel.²⁰⁰ The flu outbreak occurred in three waves between March 16 and March 23, 2006. The total cost to exterminate the diseased birds was 21 million Israeli *shekls*, or

197 "Israel's Bedouins." 16 January 2002, Symon, Fiona. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/issues/1763445.stm

198 "The Bedouin in Israel." 1999. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/1990_1999/1999/7/the%20bedouin%20in%20israel

199 "Interior Ministry to Grant Recognition to Bedouin Village in Negev." 27 April 2005, Rinat, Zafir. Haaretz.com, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=569735>

200 "Cabinet Communique." 26 March 2006. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Cabinet%20Communique%2026-Mar-2006>

USD 4,967,709. Although Israel's poultry industry experienced major losses, no humans were diagnosed with the disease.²⁰¹

Exchange 31: Do you know what is wrong?

Soldier:	Do you know what is wrong?	aataa yodey'a maa lo beseder?
Local:	No.	lo

201 "Health Ministry: Bird Flu Poses No Danger to Public." 21 March 2006. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Health+Ministry+-+Bird+flu+poses+no+danger+to+public+19-Mar-2006.htm>

Education

Kibbutz Schools

While the educational programs in *kibbutzim* vary, in general the schooling that children receive is in tune with the *kibbutz* philosophy. *Kibbutz* children no longer live in communal children's houses apart from their families, but their schooling continues to emphasize cooperation, shared responsibility, and respect for one another. The curriculum in *kibbutz* schools follows that mandated by the Israeli Ministry of Education, but the educational methodology places a strong emphasis on working in groups.²⁰²

Elementary schools for *kibbutz* children generally are on the *kibbutz* grounds. High schools are usually regional, serving the children of several *kibbutzim* and/or *moshavim*, as well as other local children. Some *kibbutz* high schools participate in the government-sponsored *Na'aleh* Program. These schools locally sponsor groups of Jewish students from outside Israel (usually countries of the former Soviet Union) and provide instruction in Hebrew and other subjects. After they graduate from high school, the students may then choose to stay in Israel, in some cases continuing on in the Israeli higher education system.²⁰³

Some *kibbutzim* also offer *ulpanim* for people from all over the world to learn Hebrew and get an understanding of *kibbutz* life. It is a five month period in which guests live on the *kibbutz*, studying half of the week and working in a *kibbutz* the other half.²⁰⁴

Arab Schools

Arab Israelis receive their instruction in Arabic at special state-run schools. They have attracted criticism from Arab groups because of the underperformance and higher attrition rates of students at these schools compared to the state schools enrolling Jews. According to the Arab Follow-Up Committee for Education, the state spends USD 192 on each student in Arab schools compared to USD 1100 per student for the Jewish schools. They also claim that there is a shortage of 5000 classrooms in Arab schools.^{205,206}

The Israeli Ministry of Education notes that improvements are occurring in the Arab schools. For example, between 1997 and 2003 the percentage of Arab children attending kindergarten has gone from 44 percent to 66 percent as a result of implementation of the Free Education Law. Dropout rates in Arabs schools have gone from 11.6 percent in 1998 to 9.1 percent in 2002, and the percentage of 14-17 year old Arab children enrolled in school was 88.8 percent in 2001, compared to 58.9 percent in 1989.²⁰⁷

202 "A Glimpse into Kibbutz Education." Summer 2005, Walley, Carl. Childhood Education. FindArticles.com, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3614/is_200507/ai_n14683806/pg_1

203 "The Elite Academy/Na'aleh Program for High School Students." 6 November 2006. Jewish Agency for Israel, <http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Aliyah/Israel+Programs/For+High+School+Students/Naaleh.htm>

204 "Kibbutz Ulpan." 2007. Kibbutz Program Center, http://www.kibbutzprogramcenter.org/ulpan_faq.aspx

205 "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices." 8 March 2006. U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61690.htm>

206 "NIF Grantee Fight Discrimination in Arab Education." 29 November 2005. New Israel Fund, <http://www.nif.org/content.cfm?id=2343&currbody=1>

207 "Section D. Development of Education: Facts and Figures." Israel Ministry of Education, http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/0D4A1917-8256-42D4-A55A-AFAD4D2A3A3B/6937/Section_D.pdf

Economy

Kibbutz

Most *kibbutz* members work in the *kibbutz* itself. The income of *kibbutz* members who work outside the *kibbutz* is turned over to the *kibbutz* management. Many *kibbutzim* host young volunteers from Israel and abroad for one month or longer in exchange for work

Areas of employment for the *kibbutz* workers include agriculture/fisheries (24 percent), manufacturing (24 percent), public and community services (18 percent), personal services (17 percent), and tourism (11 percent). In the manufacturing sector of the *kibbutz* economy, the three largest areas are metal work, processed food, and plastics. Each economic branch is headed by an elected administrator, who is responsible for an economic coordinator who organizes the different branches, implements production, and develops investment plans for the *kibbutz*.²⁰⁸

Exchange 32: Do you have a job?

Soldier:	Do you have a job?	yesh leKhaa 'aavodaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Moshav

There are two types of *moshavim*. The *moshavei ovdim* are worker-cooperative settlements and are by far the more common of the two types. Each family owns its own house and leases and works its own land, retaining any income it earns. Buying and selling are done collectively.

The *moshavim shitufim* are settlements that combine the economic features of a *kibbutz* with the social features of a *moshav*. In the *moshav shitufi*, property is held communally, and the lands are worked collectively. While profits are shared equally, families control all decision on how to spend their share of the profits. All housing is privately held as well.

Nowadays, many *moshav* members hold non-farming jobs in projects developed on the *moshav* or outside the village.²⁰⁹

Exchange 33: Are you the only person in your family who has two jobs?

Soldier:	Are you the only person in your family who has two jobs?	ha-eem aataa ha-aadaam ha-yaaKheed ba-meeshpaKhaa she-yesh lo shtey 'aavodot?
Local:	No.	lo

208 "The Kibbutz." 2007. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/kibbutz.html

209 "Collective Farm." 2005. Columbia University Press. The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, <http://columbia.thefreedictionary.com/collective+farm>

Daily Life

The collectivist spirit that fueled the rise of the *kibbutzim* still resides in the hearts of many members, but today's *kibbutzim* have vastly changed both economically and socially from the *kibbutzim* of the 1950s and 1960s. As the *kibbutzim* have increasingly developed new economic activities in manufacturing and services, moving away from the original agricultural roots, the make-up of the work force has changed on the *kibbutzim*. Many more non-*kibbutz* members now are employed on the *kibbutzim*. In the *kibbutzim* industries, for example, two thirds of the workers are not living on the *kibbutz*. In addition, *kibbutz* members are increasingly likely to work in nearby towns or cities. Differential pay has become an inevitable but divisive issue on some *kibbutzim* as the economic focus of members has splintered in numerous directions. Virtually all of the well-known *kibbutzim* practices in communal living have either disappeared or changed significantly as the family has become the dominant unit within the *kibbutzim*.²¹⁰

Similar economic and employment changes have taken place in the daily workings of the *moshavim*, although the effects have not been quite as wrenching owing to the more traditional social ideology and less egalitarian nature of most *moshavim*.²¹¹

Exchange 34: Is there lodging nearby?

Soldier:	Is there lodging nearby?	ha-eem yesh maakom leenaa kaarov?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Gender Roles

Kibbutz and Moshav

Women are allowed to work equally in the labor force and have access to any job in the *kibbutz* or *moshav* economy. However, the majority of *kibbutz* and *moshav* women today are less interested in being involved in agriculture and industry as they were in the past, preferring jobs in education, health, and other services.²¹²

Arab Villages

Less than 20 percent of Israeli Arab women are employed and nearly a third of the employed are working part-time. Arab families tend to be bigger than Jewish families, and thus many women by necessity must stay home to take care of children. However, many Arab women who do seek full-time employment (58 percent) report that they cannot find such work.²¹³

Land Distribution

Most of Israel's rural land (except for the land belonging to non-Jewish people) is held by the Israel Land Administration (ILA), a trust that manages the land owned by the

210 "Kibbutz: What, When, Why, Where." Novemer 2002, Fidler, Jon. Focus on Israel. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2002/11/Focus%20on%20Israel-%20Kibbutz

211 "Recent Experience with Agricultural Cooperatives in Israel." April 2000. Kislev, Yoav. Department of Agricultural Economics and Management, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, departments.agri.huji.ac.il/economics/cooperatives.pdf

212 "The Kibbutz." 2007. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/kibbutz.html

213 "The Arab Population in Israel: Selected Educational, Economic, Health, and Social Indicators." 22 November 2006. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, <http://brookdale-en1.pionet.com/files/ArabiIsraelis22-11-06.doc>

government and the Jewish National Fund. The Jewish National Fund was set up in 1901 to buy land in Palestine for Jews to cultivate, and privately it holds over 13 percent of the lands of Israel. (The government owns over 80 percent.) The ILA leases its rural lands to *kibbutzim*, *moshavim*, and other agricultural enterprises.²¹⁴ The remaining 6.5-7 percent of Israeli land is split between Arab and Jewish private owners.²¹⁵

Exchange 35: Do you know this area very well?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	aataa maakeer et ha-eyzor ha-zeh tov?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Bedouin Land in the Negev

The Bedouin tribe's people of Israel present a special situation with regard to land ownership. Presently, roughly two-thirds of the Bedouin population lives in the Negev region. The remaining Bedouins are primarily in northern Israel, where they migrated to from the desert lands of modern-day Syria. Significant land-ownership issues exist in the southern Bedouin regions, and little progress has been made over many years of attempts to resolve claims through negotiations. Today Negev Bedouin groups and their supporters claim that the Israel government has appropriated most of their traditional lands and has tried to force unsatisfactory legal settlements on them.²¹⁶ The Israeli government, on the other hand, argues that good-faith attempts to negotiate an equitable recognition of Bedouin land claims and just compensation for other Bedouin lands have been rebuffed.²¹⁷

Exchange 36: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	ha-eem aataa ha-baa'aleem shel ha-aadamaa ha-zot?
Local:	Yes.	ken

214 "Country Guide, Israel." 2007. Washington Post.com, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/countries/israel.html?nav=e1>

215 "Can Arabs Buy Land in Israel?" December 1997.Safian, Alexander. Middle East Quarterly, <http://www.meforum.org/article/370>

216 "Land Disputes in Israel: The Case of the Bedouin of the Naqab." April 2006, Abu-Ras, Thalbet. Department of Geography and Development, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Adalah.org, www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/apr06/ar2.pdf

217 "The Bedouin in Israel." 2007. Ben-David, Yosef. Jewish Virtual Library. American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/Bedouin.html

Who is in Charge?

Each *kibbutz* and *moshav* is unique in that it organizes and creates its own governing board.

Exchange 37: Does your leader live here?

Soldier:	Does your leader live here?	ha-eem ha-maanheeg shelKhaa gaar kaan?
Local:	Yes.	ken

A typical governing board may have variations of some or all of the committees listed here.

Exchange 38: Can you take me to your leader?

Soldier:	Can you take me to your leader?	aataa yaaKhol lakaaKhat otee la-maanheeg shelKhaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

General Assembly

The General Assembly is the most powerful body on the *kibbutz*. In a *moshav*, this committee may be referred to as the Management Committee. Decisions are final although they can be appealed. All members are invited to the monthly meetings.

Executive Board (*Mazkirut*)

The *Mazkirut* hears committee recommendations and special requests, appeals to General Assembly/Management Committee decisions, and gives initial approval to budgets and special issues. This committee provides advice and acts as the spokesgroup for the members.

Exchange 39: Respected leader, we need your help / advice / opinion.

Soldier:	Respected leader, we need your help / advice / opinion.	maanheeg meKhoobaad, anaaKhnoo tsreeKheem et ha-'ezraa / 'eytsaa / dey'aa shelKhaa
Local:	Yes.	ken

Several committees may report to the General Assembly/Management Committee, including an Absorption Committee (handles all inquiries about membership), a Planning and Building Committee (supervises construction projects and the physical structure of the buildings), an Event Committee (family events and rituals, such as *bar mitzvahs*), a *Health Committee* (handles all health-related issues), an Educational Committee (oversees the educational needs of children and their families), and a Human-Relations Committee (involved in work-related issues for members as well as other hiring issues).²¹⁸

Exchange 40: What is your phone number?

218 "Kibbutz Government." 2007. Kibbutz Ketura.com, <http://ketura.org.il/gov.html>

Soldier:	What is your phone number?	maa mispaar ha-telefon shelKhaa?
Local:	My phone number is 132 5477.	mispaar ha-telefon shelee hoo eKhaad, shaalosh, shtaaym, Khameesh, arba', shavaa, shavaa

Checkpoints

A permanent military checkpoint is usually staffed by about 20 Israeli soldiers and about half a dozen reserve troops.

Exchange 41: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Soldier:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	eyfo ha-maaKhsoom ha-kaarov?
Local:	It's two kilometers.	zeh shney keelometrim mee-kaan

Some of these troops are located in camouflaged watchtowers that often overlook both ends of the checkpoint. Other military personnel perform duties such as patrolling the crossing, conducting traffic, and performing vehicle searches of cars traveling across the border or Green Zone.

Exchange 42: Show us the car registration.

Soldier:	Show us the car registration.	tar-ey laanoo et reeshoom ha-meKhoneet
Local:	OK.	beseder

The Israeli reservists perform identification checks and question those going through the checkpoint. They check each pedestrian's papers at the ID Checkpoint to verify that he or she has the necessary documents.

Exchange 43: Is this all the ID you have?

Soldier:	Is this all the ID you have?	ha-eem eyloo kol te'oodot ha-zeehooee she-yesh leKhaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

A major concern at each checkpoint is preventing militants with firearms or explosive from entering Israel. Some checkpoints have metal detectors that were installed to reduce the need for manual searches. At other checkpoints, soldiers routinely conduct manual searches of those who are thought most likely to fit the suicide bomber profile.

Exchange 44: Please get out of the car.

Soldier:	Please get out of the car.	tsey mey-ha-meKhoneet be-vaakashaa
Local:	OK.	beseder

Waiting times can be quite long at checkpoints, so some have food stalls for people waiting to be checked. There are also medical facilities available if needed. Many of the rural Israeli settlements such as *kibbutzim* or a *moshav* have checkpoints.²¹⁹

219 "A Guide to a West Bank Check Point." 2007. BBC News, UK Version,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/w_bank_checkpoints/html/default.stm

Terrorism

There were 2,990 terrorist attacks against Israeli targets in 2005. Terrorism declined somewhat in 2006. However, the U.S. government has received information indicating that American interests within Israel could be the focus of future terrorist attacks. Americans are cautioned that there may be danger near restaurants and businesses with U.S. interests. There is also concern near U.S. official buildings, such as the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem.

There is a higher risk of terrorist attacks in urban areas than elsewhere in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. There have been more terrorist attacks in Jerusalem. These attacks have taken place in a variety of locations around the city.

Security incidents have occurred in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Be'er sheva, East and West Jerusalem. For example, the Carmel Market in Tel Aviv, the intersection of Jaffa and King George streets, and the Ben Yehuda Pedestrian Mall in Jerusalem have all been targets.

Exchange 45: Did these people threaten you?

Soldier:	Did these people threaten you?	ha-eem ha-aanasheem ha-eyloo eeyemoo 'aaleyKhaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

There are live landmines in many areas, including the border areas with Lebanon and Syria, in the Golan Heights, and in the West Bank. Some minefields have not been clearly marked or fenced.

Exchange 46: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	ha-eem ha-eyzor ha-zeh memookaash?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Near the northern border of Israel, rocket attacks from Lebanese territory can occur without warning.²²⁰

²²⁰ "Israel." 2007. The Hospital for Tropical Diseases, <http://www.thehtd.org/travel/destination.asp?DocID=91>

Security Checks

On December 23, 2006, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, the first direct talks between the two sides in nearly two years. In their discussions, they talked about ongoing security issues, including a shaky truce in an ongoing conflict in Gaza that closed all traffic into and out of the area for a time during 2006. The two leaders agreed to make a “genuine effort” to improve the security crossings between the Gaza Strip and Israel in order that more goods and people could move across the border. In the meeting the two leaders set a target of 400 trucks a day to eventually cross between Israel and Gaza.

Exchange 47: May I hold this and inspect it?

Soldier:	May I hold this and inspect it?	ha-eem aanee yaaKhol lehaaKhzeek et zeh ve-livdok et zeh?
Local:	Sure.	ken

During the meeting Olmert also told Abbas that he had instructed the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) to remove several checkpoints from the West Bank. In addition, he requested that the IDF submit a plan to remove of additional West Bank checkpoints so that peaceful Palestinians would have fewer delays in moving from one area to another.²²¹

Israel is currently constructing a security fence along the “green line,” the de facto borders to Israel created by the 1949 Armistice between Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. A similar security corridor was built around the Gaza Strip border years earlier when that area was under Israeli occupation. The new security fence is very controversial, particularly because in several areas of the West Bank the fence moves eastward from the green line to separate West Bank Israeli settlements from the rest of the West Bank.

Exchange 48: Are you carrying any guns?

Soldier:	Are you carrying any guns?	ha-eem aataa maaKhzeek roveem kolshehem?
Local:	Yes.	ken

²²¹ “PM Olmert Meets with PA President Abbas.” 24 Dec 2006. The State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/PM+Olmert+meets+with+PA+President+Abbas+24-Dec-2006.htm>

Family Life

The Distribution of Roles and Responsibilities in the Family Structure

In Israel, there are three primary family structures: (1) the Jewish secular and traditional family, (2) the Jewish Haredim family, and (3) the Arab family. Within each category there are a multitude of familial variations, but some generalizations can be made.

Jewish

Non-Orthodox Jewish families tend to be more nuclear in structure, similar to the typical family structure in the United States and much of Europe.

Exchange 49: Are these people part of your family?

Soldier:	Are these people part of your family?	ha-eem ha-aanasheem ha-eyloo hem Kheylek mey-ha-meeshpaKhaa shelKhaa?
Local:	No.	lo

The family dynamics are relatively democratic, with the husband and wife discussing and then mutually deciding most family issues. Families are smaller, and couples are more likely to delay having children. For example, in 2003, 40 percent of Israeli Jewish families were couples without children, as opposed to only 19 percent of Israeli Arab families.²²²

Some immigrant groups, most notably the Beta Israel (Ethiopian) Jews, have faced a very difficult assimilation into the mainstream Jewish culture, in part because their family structure was strongly patriarchal and based on an extended family.²²³

The *Haredim* offer a unique situation. Their life is ordered by strict adherence to Jewish law (*halakhah*). *Haredi* men often spend many years in religious schools, and less than half of them are in the labor force. *Haredi* women are more likely to hold jobs, although the large sizes of *Haredi* families and the religious focus of their education limit their employment opportunities.

²²² “The Arab Population of Israel: 2003.” Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, www.cbs.gov.il/statistical/arab_pop03e.pdf

²²³ “Ethiopian Jewish Culture: Family.” Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, http://www.iaej.co.il/pages/our_culture_family.htm#top

Arab

In contrast to the Jewish secular and traditional families, Israeli Arab families tend to be more patriarchal and have a more extended family social support structure.

Exchange 50: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	ha-eem zot kol ha-meeshpaKhaa shelKhaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

This allows the parents to go back to work easier, as grandparents or other potential family child-care givers often either live with the family or are nearby. In many cases, the Israeli Arab women are the first generation in their family to join the work force.²²⁴

Status of Children, Young Adults, and the Elderly

Children

Israel by most standards of children's health is a model nation within the Middle East and one that has shown great improvement in providing needed health care for its youngest citizens. For example, the infant (under one) mortality rate dropped from 32 children per 1,000 births in 1960 to five children per 1,000 births in 2003 according to UNICEF data.²²⁵ The 2003 values were comparable to most Western European countries and actually a bit better than for the United States.

However, there are some areas for concern. In particular, a recent report found that 33 percent of Israeli children are suffering from divorce, poverty, abuse, neglect, trauma and crime.²²⁶ Some 6.6 percent of the children in Israel today are the offspring of foreign guest workers and thus do not have the same rights and access to the same services as children with Israeli citizenship. About one-third of Israeli children fall below the poverty line, and that percentage increases to 60 percent for Israeli Arab children.²²⁷

Exchange 51: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	eyloo haa-yelaadeem shelKhaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

The number of children of divorced parents has dramatically risen to 13,000 in 2005 from 7,300 in 2000. A concern is that there are few if any counseling services for children caught in the crossfire of the often contentious battles between the divorcing parents.²²⁸

²²⁵ "Table 1. Basic Indicators." 2005. UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/english/Table1_E.xls

²²⁶ "33% of Israeli Children Live Under Poverty Line," 27 December 2006, Eglash, Ruth. The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1164881992084&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

²²⁷ "Israel Poverty: One in Three Children are Hungry." 12 October 2005, Sinai, Ruth, and Leyden, Joel. Israel News Agency, <http://www.israelnewsagency.com/israelpovertychildrenyomkippur4831210.html>

²²⁸ "33% of Israeli Children Live Under Poverty Line," 27 December 2006, Eglash, Ruth. The Jerusalem Post, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1164881992084&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

Young Adults

A formative experience unites all Israeli Jewish teenagers and Druze boys: their induction into the Israeli military following high school graduation. Boys serve three years of active duty and then are placed in reserve units, which they are in until their mid-forties. Girls typically serve for a little less than two years. Preparations for service begin at age 17, when Israeli teenagers meet with Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers and discuss what they should expect during their time of service.²²⁹

Most *Haredi* Jewish youth are exempted from military service because of their religious studies. Increasingly these exemptions have become a source of friction within Israeli society. Israeli Arab Muslims and Christians also generally do not serve, although they may volunteer for service. Some argue that the omission of Muslim and Christian young adults from mandatory IDF service further marginalizes a group that in many respects is not fully integrated into Israeli society. They note that the military is a bonding experience for young Israelis. Similar to college, the Israeli soldiers make social connections and receive training within the military that carries over into their professional life after they have finished their active service.²³⁰

Elderly

Only ten percent of Israel's population is older than 65, most of whom are Jewish. (Only 3.8 percent of Israel's Arab population is 65 or over, compared with 11.5 percent of the Jewish population.) However, the number of Arab elderly is expected to increase dramatically over the next several years.

Many of the Jewish elderly are survivors not only of wars, but the Holocaust as well. The Arab elderly tend to be sicker and less functional than the Jewish elderly, presumably related to their lower economic status and less-than-complete integration into the Israeli health care system until recently.

The National Health Insurance Law, which passed in 1995, covers all legal Israeli residents. It provides services for acute, rehabilitative, inpatient, and outpatient services. Only a small co-payment is necessary to get a prescription filled.

Home and institutional care and budgets are not provided by the National Health Law. Non-medical home care by licensed caregivers is provided if the elderly patient is disabled. Approximately 90,000 Israeli senior citizens receive home care 10 to 16 hours a week.²³¹

²²⁹ "Israel's Teenage Recruits." 29 April 2002, Berg, Raffi. BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1947874.stm

²³⁰ "The Israeli Defense Force." Mitnick, Joshua. MyJewishLearning.com, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Israel/Israeli_Society/IsraeliArmy.htm

²³¹ "Challenges of Caring for the Israeli Elderly Population." November/December 2001, Clarfield, A. Mark. Geriatric Times, <http://www.geriatrictimes.com/g011124.html>

Rural Life vs. Urban Life

The largest difference between rural and urban Israeli Jewish families lies in the different settlement patterns between the two areas. The rural areas are dominated by *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*. The *kibbutzim*, in particular, were strongly communal in their early years, and the family structure was downplayed relative to the community structure. Children were often raised mostly outside the parent's homes in children's houses. Modern *kibbutzim* families are much more traditionally organized, although decisions of the *kibbutzim* as a whole continue to have a strong influence on each family.

The *moshavim*, however, were historically more focused on family rather than community as the *kibbutzim*. Today, in both settlement types, fewer members are involved in agriculture. Increasingly, family members are likely to work in service or profession jobs outside the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*. In the *moshavim*, in particular, family patterns are beginning to resemble those of suburban families living outside the major cities.

Exchange 52: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	ha-eem gadaalta kaan?
Local:	Yes.	ken

Despite these changes, however, there continues to be a strong emphasis on community cooperation within the *moshavim* and *kibbutzim*, as contrasted to cities where family and individual considerations often far outweigh community concerns. For this reason, some of the *moshavim* nearer the large cities have become suburban magnets for families looking for a rural, community-focused environment.²³²

Exchange 53: Are you and your family planning to move somewhere else?

Soldier:	Are you and your family planning to move somewhere else?	ha-eem aataa ve-ha-meeshpaKhaa shelKhaa metaaKhneneem laa'avor le-maakom aaKher?
Local:	No.	lo

²³² "Moshavim – Agricultural Settlements." 2007. Neot Shiran, <http://www.luxury-realestate-israel.com/locations.php?location=90>

Gender Differences in the Israeli Family

Within Israeli Jewish families, gender roles are more traditional and patriarchal for Orthodox and *Haredim* families, which constitute a roughly 18 percent minority within Israel. Orthodox Judaism, which is based on centuries-old teachings and traditions, views these roles as natural and not as necessarily limiting or repressive, although some non-Orthodox Jews interpret the message as “mixed.” For example, *shacharit*, the morning prayer recited by Orthodox men, includes a blessing for not being made a woman. On the other hand, the Sabbath blessing *Eschet Chayil* praises the “woman of valor” and extols her virtues, many of which conform to her traditional role of wife, mother, and homemaker.²³³

Employment differences between men and women in Israeli families reflected both ethnic/cultural attitudes and opportunities. In 2005, 50 percent of Israeli women were employed in the civilian work force. Of these women, 55.8 percent of Jewish women were in the work force and 23.8 percent of Arab women.²³⁴

The Arab Muslim family culture traditionally is not as open to women in the workplace as Jewish secular society, which explains some of this difference. Another big factor is the more limited employment opportunities in Arab villages and towns. Nearly 13 percent of Israeli Arab women are listed as “discouraged” in Israeli labor statistics, which means that they are not in the labor force because they were unable to find employment. In contrast, 1.1 percent of Jewish Israeli women are listed as “discouraged.”²³⁵ Over three quarters of the “discouraged” Israeli Arab women cite the lack of nearby work as the reason that they have dropped out of the labor force. This percentage is nearly three times that of Jewish “discouraged” women.²³⁶

²³³ “What is the Eschet Chayil (Woman of Valor) hymn?” Katz, Lisa. About Judaism.com, <http://judaism.about.com/od/shabbatprayersblessings/f/eshetchayil.htm>

²³⁴ “Table 1.2. Labor Force Survey of 2005. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/saka_y/01_02.pdf

²³⁵ “Table 5.7. Labor Force Survey of 2005. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/saka_y/05_07.pdf

²³⁶ “Table 5.6. Labor Force Survey of 2005. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/saka_y/05_06.pdf

Married Life, Divorce, and Birth

In Israel, the legal age of marriage of 17 years old applies only for women. Israelis have traditionally married relatively young, but in recent years they have been marrying later.

Exchange 54: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	aataa naasooee?
Local:	No.	lo

In 1980, the median age for Jewish (Arab) brides was 22.8 (20.4) and for grooms, 25.5 (24.5). Over twenty years later, in 2002, the average age for Jewish (Arab) brides was 25 (21.9) and for grooms, 27.3 (26.6)²³⁷ J

Jewish marital and divorce issues are largely determined by the religious *Halakhic* law under the rabbinical courts.²³⁸ Religious courts within Israel are also responsible for these matters for the Muslim, Christian, and Druze religions.

Exchange 55: Is this your wife?

Soldier:	Is this your wife?	zot eeshteKhaa?
Local:	Yes.	ken

²³⁷ "The Arab Population of Israel: 2003." Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, www.cbs.gov.il/statistical/arab_pop03e.pdf

²³⁸ "Halakhah: Jewish Law." 2007. Judaism 101 <http://www.jewfaq.org/halakhah.htm>

Arranged Marriages

Marriages are arranged both within the *Haredim* (ultra-Orthodox) Judaism and Arab Muslim traditions. In the Muslim society, marriage is viewed as a contract between families, one in which the extended family, or *chamulah*, ideally is economically or politically strengthened. A negotiated amount, or *mohar* (*mahr* in Arabic) is paid to the bride by the groom.

Within the Haredim culture, several factors are weighed in the matchmaking, including the religious scholastic aptitude of the potential groom and the ability of the potential bride's family to support his many years of religious study at the *yashiva*.²³⁹

Divorce

The divorce rate for Israelis is lower than that for the United States and most Western European countries.²⁴⁰ However, the divorce rate has more than doubled, for both Israeli Jews and Arab Muslims, since the early 1970s.²⁴¹

In Israel, there are two separate court systems for matters related to divorce- the civil court, and the religious court. The Jewish religious courts are known as Rabbinical Courts, which apply Jewish religious law (*halakhah*) and have jurisdiction on the issuance of divorce decrees (*gets*). Civil courts, in particular the Family Court, may adjudicate related matters such as child support, division of property, guardianship, and spousal maintenance. However, the rules determining which court has jurisdiction on a particular issue are complicated and often result in multiple filings in both the Family Court and the Rabbinical Court.²⁴²

239 "Israel." 2004. Shtarkshall, R.A., and Zemach, M. Complete Continuum International Encyclopedia of Sexuality (CCIES) at the Kinsey Institute, <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/ccies/il.php#hetero>

240 "Israel." 2004. Shtarkshall, R.A., and Zemach, M. Complete Continuum International Encyclopedia of Sexuality (CCIES) at the Kinsey Institute, <http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/ccies/il.php#hetero>

241 "Vital Statistics: Marriages and Divorces 1999." March 2003, Dobrin, Nurit. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, www.cbs.gov.il/publications/vital99/vi1198-e.pdf

242 "Domestic Relations Laws in Israel." Salzman, Neil. The International Law Office of Jeremy D. Morely, <http://www.international-divorce.com/d-israel.htm>

Birth

Israeli women overwhelmingly choose to give birth at hospitals, as even in rural areas a hospital is generally nearby and access to health care is universal. Nearly all women receive prenatal care.²⁴³ Within the West Bank, however, there has been an increase in home births since the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000, largely due to feared delays at checkpoints on the way to the hospital.²⁴⁴

Fertility rates are closely tracked in Israel, as the religious and ethnic demographics of the country are of major interest to many groups. Presently the highest fertility rates are the Jewish *Haredim* and Orthodox (6-7 births per woman) and Arab Muslims and Druze (4 births per women). The former group's high birth rate is primarily tied to religious reasons (a result of the Torah commandment to "be fruitful and multiply"), whereas cultural and socioeconomic factors combine to keep the latter group's rate high. While immigrations to Israel have a mitigating effect on the birth-rate trends, overall Israel is slowly becoming more Arab, less Jewish and the Jewish population in Israel is becoming more Orthodox, less secular.²⁴⁵

Exchange 56: Do you have any brothers?

Soldier:	Do you have any brothers?	yesh leKhaa aaKheem?
Local:	Yes.	ken

²⁴³ "Perineal Outcomes After Practicing with a Perineal Dilator." Cohane, Judy Sloane. www.pregma.com/experience_judy_slome.pdf

²⁴⁴ "Birth at the Checkpoint, the Home or the Hospital? Adapting to the Changing Reality in Palestine." 15 June 2002, Wick, Laura. Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, http://icph.birzeit.edu/Emergency%20Publications/birth_at_the_checkpoint.htm

²⁴⁵ "Arab Population on the Rise." 28 September 2005, YNetNews.com, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3148583,00.html>

Ceremonies for Newborns

A *brit milah* (circumcision ceremony) is performed for Jewish male babies on the eighth day following their birth. This ceremony is commonly observed by even secular Jews and is also known as a *bris* (“covenant”). Blessings are recited, and the baby boy is given his Hebrew name. The *brit bat* is a more recent ceremony for girls that does not involve circumcision, and has fewer restrictions on when it should happen and what should be said. Like the *brit milah*, however, the baby girl’s Hebrew name is given during the ceremony. After each of these ceremonies, the baby becomes a Jew.

There are several customs for baby naming. Ashkenazic Jews usually name the baby after a deceased family member. Sephardic Jews, on the other hand, will honor living relatives by naming the child after them. Other traditions include using biblical names, popular modern Israeli names, or names associated with religious events or synagogue readings that occur near the child's birth. There are no formal religious requirements for the name, and some parents choose a Yiddish or English name rather than a Hebrew name.^{246, 247}

²⁴⁶ “Overview: About Baby Ceremonies.” My Jewish Learning, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/lifecycle/Ceremonies_For_Newborns/Overview_About_Baby_Cerem.htm

²⁴⁷ “Birth and the First Month of Life.” Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/birth.htm#Name>

Rites of Passage

Bar and Bat Mitzvahs

Jewish boys at age 13 and girls at age 12 become *bar* or *bat mitzvah* (“son/daughter of the commandment”) and obligated to observe the commandments. The child’s new responsibilities are often marked by a ceremony that many traditional Jews observe on the Sabbath immediately following the child’s majority birthday. The ceremony itself is a relatively new feature, and it is not necessary to have it in order to become a *bar/bat mitzvah*.

Most *bar/bat mitzvah* ceremonies occur during the morning services on the Sabbath day. The ceremonies are preceded by a period of intensive religious study. During the ceremony, *bar* or *bat mitzvah* may read from the Torah (but girls do not do this in Orthodox congregations), recite the *haftarah* (the weekly reading from the Prophets), and/or give speeches usually beginning “Today I have become a man/woman...”²⁴⁸ The ceremony is usually followed by a reception, which can sometimes be quite elaborate.

²⁴⁸ “Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation.” Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101, JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/barmitz.htm>

Birthdays

Birthdays for Israeli children are celebrated in ways similar to many other countries. Guests bring gifts, party games are played and special songs are sung, a clown or magician may entertain, and the birthday child often wears a crown made from flowers. Sweets and a cake with candles are essential food items.²⁴⁹ At some parties, the guests may dance around the birthday child's chair and sing while the child's parents lift the chair as many times as the age of the child, plus one extra for good luck.²⁵⁰

The 13th birthday for a boy is a special birthday as it is when he performs the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony on the first Sabbath following his birthday, followed immediately afterwards by a reception. The comparable event for girls is a *Bat Mitzvah*, which is usually celebrated either on or just after her 12th (Orthodox) or 13th (Reform and Conservative) birthday.

The 18th birthday marks another milestone for young Israelis as this is the age when they can legally vote. It is also the age when all Israeli Jewish youth and Druze males reach the age in which they are subject to mandatory conscription in the Israeli Defense Forces.²⁵¹ Some families throw parties for their children prior to their enlistment.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ "When Astronomy, Biology and Culture Converge: Children's Conceptions About Birthday Parties." 2002, Klavir, R., and Leiser, D. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*. Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, <http://www.bgu.ac.il/~dleiser/docs/birthday.htm>

²⁵⁰ "Birthday Celebrations from Israel." 2007. Birthday Celebrations.net, <http://www.birthdaycelebrations.net/israelbirthdays.htm>

²⁵¹ "Birthday Celebrations from Israel." 2007. Birthday Celebrations.net, <http://www.birthdaycelebrations.net/israelbirthdays.htm>

²⁵² "The Israeli Defense Force." Mitnick, Joshua. MyJewishLearning.com, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Israel/Israeli_Society/IsraeliArmy.htm

Naming Conventions

For Ashkenazi Jews, it is customary to name a child after a recently deceased relative, although the name is often similar rather than literally the same. In some cases this convention leads to several cousins born near the same time having the same first name.

For Sephardic Jews, the tradition is to name an infant after living grandparents or other living family members, with the first named after the father's father, the second son after the mother's father, the first daughter after the mother's mother, and the second daughter after the father's mother. In families with more than two sons or two daughters, the names of aunts and uncles would be used.

In the long Jewish history, family surnames are a relatively “new” innovation (within the last 1000 years for the Sephardic Jews, more recently for the Ashkenazim), necessitated mostly by the long Jewish Diaspora in primarily gentile countries. Many of the Ashkenazi surnames are variations of German names. Only three surnames—Cohen (patrilineal descendants of Aaron), Levy (descendants of the Levi tribe), and Israel—are “true” Jewish names, and each of these have many variations as well.²⁵³

²⁵³ “Jewish Names.” 2005. Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101. JewFAQ.org, <http://www.jewfaq.org/jnames.htm>