



BOOKLET  
SERIES

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT

# ISRAEL POCKET FACTS

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# Regional Map





\* Iran is not an Arab country, but its regime is deeply involved in the politics and conflicts of the region.





# Israel's Size

Israel's territory is 8,019 square miles.

## New Jersey

8,729 sq. mi.



## California

158,302 sq. mi.



Israel is smaller than New Jersey, which is 8,729 square miles. Israel can fit into the state of California 19 times.

# Number of Countries by Religious Majority

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67	Roman Catholic
49	Islamic
49	Protestant
14	Eastern Orthodox
3	Hindu
1	Jewish

# World Religions

**Christianity:** 2.6 billion people

**Islam:** 2 billion people

**Hinduism:** 1.2 billion people

**Buddhism:** 535 million people

**Judaism:** 16.5 million people

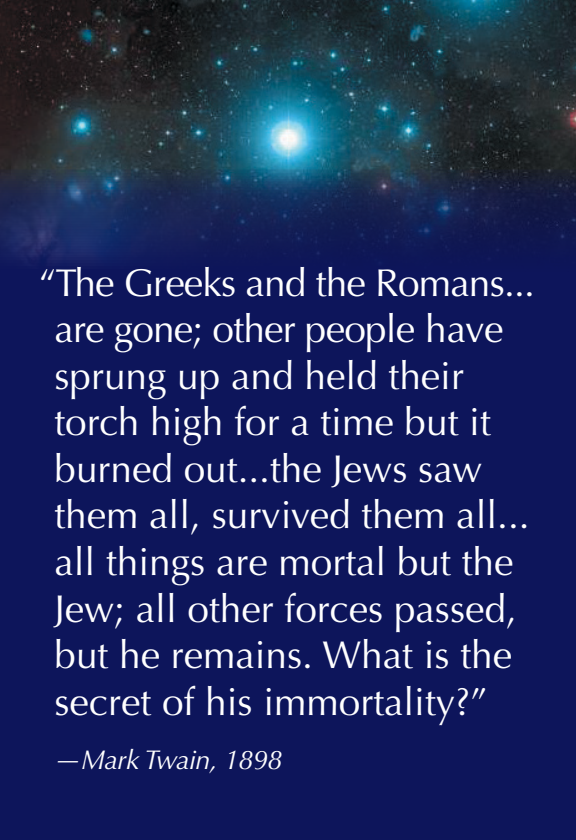


# Israel Represents Justice, Resilience, and Hope.

It is a nation built by  
people who overcame 1,900  
years of oppression to achieve  
freedom in their ancestral home.

Despite facing many challenges  
and conflicts, Israelis find  
countless ways to make the  
world a better place.





“The Greeks and the Romans...  
are gone; other people have  
sprung up and held their  
torch high for a time but it  
burned out...the Jews saw  
them all, survived them all...  
all things are mortal but the  
Jew; all other forces passed,  
but he remains. What is the  
secret of his immortality?”

—*Mark Twain, 1898*

# The Jewish Connection to the Land of Israel

Jews are indigenous to Israel, the birthplace of their ethnic identity, language, culture, religion, and more. Over time they were colonized by foreign empires, and most Jews scattered around the world. However, some always remained and others stayed connected to their ancestral home through traditions and religious practices. Archeological, biblical, and historical records show a constant Jewish presence in Israel for over 3,000 years.



Fragment of the sixth-century  
(Byzantine Period) mosaic  
depicting King David playing  
the lyre  
—*Israel Museum*

“Jews prefer being prisoners in Jerusalem to enjoying the freedom they could acquire elsewhere. ...The love of the Jews for the Holy Land which they lost...is unbelievable.”

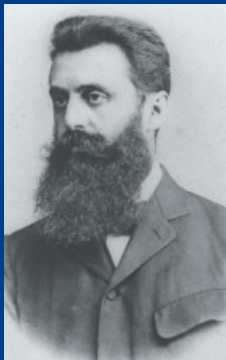
*—Jesuit Father Michael Naud on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, 1674*



# Zionism:

## Liberation and Self-Determination

Zion is an age-old name for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. Zionism is the liberation movement of the Jewish people who sought to regain freedom and independence in their ancestral homeland.



Theodor Herzl founded the modern Zionist movement in 1897, but Israel had always been at the core of Jewish identity. In the centuries after the Romans destroyed ancient Judea, many waves of Jews would return to join communities that were still there. After 1,900 years as an oppressed

minority around the world, Zionism inspired Jews to take back their rights and build a thriving state in their ancestral home.

“Who can challenge the rights of the Jews in Palestine? Good Lord, historically it is really your country.”

*–Yusef Diya al-Khalidi,  
Mayor of Jerusalem, 1899*



Jews on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives, 1893

# Rebuilding the Jewish Homeland

In the 1800s, the Land of Israel was ruled by the Ottoman Empire and called Palestine.\* Arabs were the majority and Jews were an oppressed minority in the region. However, Jews were the largest religious group in Jerusalem by 1854 and were soon joined by waves of Zionist Jewish immigrants. Together, they built farms, schools, businesses, and other institutions.

After the British Empire conquered the area in 1917, the British Mandate for Palestine was created. At the same time, the Arab nationalist movement grew and opposed the creation of a Jewish state. Jewish and Arab leaders claimed the same piece of land as their own, and conflict between the two groups became more intense from the 1920s-1940s. However, despite growing Arab and British opposition, Jews were able to create the foundations for a state.

\*Rome officially renamed the territory from Judea to Palestine in 135 CE, after crushing a Jewish revolt there.

# Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv celebrated its  
100-year anniversary in 2009.



# 1948: Independence and War for Survival

Britain failed to resolve the conflict, so in 1947, the UN voted for a plan to divide the British Mandate into a Jewish state and an Arab state living side by side. Jewish leaders said yes, but Arab leaders said no. Two years after the Holocaust, Arab forces launched a war to destroy the Jewish state. In the middle of this war, on May 14, 1948, Israel declared independence. Despite being invaded by five Arab armies, Israel survived.

The 1948 War led to a tragic refugee crisis. While 160,000 Palestinian Arabs accepted Israel's invitation to stay and become Israeli citizens, up to 750,000 fled. This happened for several reasons:\* (1) Refugees fled to escape the war; (2) Wealthier Arab leaders left first, causing some communities to fall apart; (3) A minority left because Arab leaders told them to get out of the way of Arab armies, promising a quick victory; (4) Exaggerated accounts of Israeli atrocities caused panic; and (5) A minority were forced from their homes by Israeli troops, mostly in vital strategic areas or towns where Arab forces were located.

\*Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947-1949*



# Unique Situation of Palestinian Refugees

Tens of millions of refugees from other war-torn areas in the world during this period resettled in other countries. However, neighboring Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, would not resettle the Palestinian Arabs despite their shared history, language, and religion. Instead, Arab governments confined them in refugee camps and neighborhoods, refused them citizenship, and then used their plight as a political weapon against Israel.

*“The Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it an open sore, as an affront against the UN and as a weapon against Israel.”* —Sir Alexander Galloway, former director of UNRWA in Jordan, April 1952

*“Since 1948 Arab leaders...have used the Palestine people for selfish political purposes. This is...criminal.”* —King Hussein of Jordan, 1960

*“All the Arab countries want to keep this problem looking like an open wound.”*

—Ana Liria-Franch, regional representative in Cairo for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2003

# Jewish Refugees from Arab States and Iran

After Israel's rebirth in 1948, over 850,000 Jews fled rising persecution or were expelled from Arab states and Iran. They became homeless even though some of their communities were over 2,000 years old. Even though it was a tiny, new country of roughly 650,000 people, Israel became a refuge for not only survivors of the Holocaust but also Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa.



# Declining Jewish Population in Arab States and Iran

	1948	2016
Algeria	140,000	50
Egypt	75,000	100
Iran	100,000	9,000
Iraq	150,000	0
Lebanon	20,000	200
Libya	38,000	0
Morocco	265,000	2,300
Syria	30,000	100
Tunisia	105,000	1,100
Yemen	55,000	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>978,000</b>	<b>12,900</b>

Sources: Sergio Dellapergola, *World Jewish Population, 2016*, No. 17, 2016,  
Berman Institute North American Jewish Data Bank and  
"Fact Sheet: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries," *Jewish Virtual Library*,  
September 2012, at [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/jew\\_refugees.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/jew_refugees.html)

# Diversity and Democracy

- Israel was founded in 1948 as a Jewish and democratic state. All Israeli citizens have equal rights under the law.
- Israel has a population of about 9.7 million, with people from over 100 countries. This includes Jewish refugees and immigrants, together with Arab citizens and other groups.

- Seventy-three and a half (73.5) percent of Israelis are Jewish, 18 percent are Arab Muslims, 2 percent are Arab and non-Arab



Photo: Olivier Fitoussi/Flash90

- Christians, and 1.5 percent are Druze.
- Most Israeli Jews come from families that fled or immigrated from Africa and the Middle East.
- There are 15 different officially recognized religious groups in Israel.
- Despite disagreements between different groups, Israelis have built one of the most diverse and vibrant societies and cultures on earth.

# Israeli-Palestinian Peace Efforts

After decades of conflict, Israeli and Palestinian leaders signed the Oslo Accords in 1993. This allowed Palestinians to govern themselves for the first time, through the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The Accords were meant to lead to peace. In 2000, Israel said yes to a U.S. plan which would have created the first-ever Palestinian state. Israel would have given up 97 percent of the West Bank, all of Gaza, and parts of eastern Jerusalem. However, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said no and instead launched the Second Intifada, a brutal campaign of suicide bombings and other attacks against Israeli civilians. In 2008, Israel made an even better offer, but Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas refused to respond.

Today, there is little trust between Israelis and Palestinians, and few believe the conflict will end anytime soon. However, there are many groups that promote cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians on a grassroots level, hoping to build a foundation for peace.

# West Bank Palestinian Communities

Ninety-five to 98 percent of the Palestinian population lives on roughly 40 percent of the West Bank, which is governed by the PA. The other 60 percent is controlled by Israel, and its final status is subject to peace negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Over 50 percent of the territory is mostly unpopulated.



Nablus, the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank, is surrounded by undeveloped land

Most Palestinians in the West Bank live in built-up cities and towns like Ramallah, Nablus, and Tulkarm.



Ramallah – the political and economic center of the Palestinian Authority.

# Israelis in the West Bank

- After Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan in 1967, Jordan refused Israel's offer to exchange much of the land for peace.
- Israelis built West Bank settlements to make the rest of their territory harder to attack, go back to where their families and ancestors had lived before being expelled, and other reasons. The area, also known as Judea and Samaria, is the cradle of Jewish civilization.
- Built-up areas of Israeli settlements cover roughly two percent of West Bank land.<sup>1</sup>
- Eighty percent of Israeli settlers live in communities located close to the line between Israel and the West Bank. The rest live further away.
- Settlements remain a controversial issue inside and outside of Israel.

<sup>1</sup> David Makovsky, "Beyond the Blocs," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, April 26, 2022, at [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/beyond-blocs-jewish-settlement-east-israels-security-barrier-and-how-avert-slide](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/beyond-blocs-jewish-settlement-east-israels-security-barrier-and-how-avert-slide)



# Security Threats

- Iran's leaders call for Israel's destruction, are developing ballistic missiles, and have a suspected nuclear weapons program.
- The PA in the West Bank rewards violence against Israelis through its "pay for slay" program and has let terrorists gain a foothold in cities like Jenin.
- Palestinian leaders promote hate and violence in schools, media, and other institutions.\*
- Iran funded terror groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operating in Gaza, the West Bank, and elsewhere, engaging in genocidal violence against Israeli civilians.
- Hezbollah, another Iran-backed terror group based in Lebanon, has over 100,000 rockets and missiles pointed at Israel. It launched thousands of them during the October 7th War.
- The Houthis, another Iran-backed terror group based in Yemen, launched missiles at Israel after the October 7 massacre, and attacked international shipping in the Red Sea.

\* See examples at [palwatch.org](https://palwatch.org) and [memri.org](https://memri.org)

# Hamas in Gaza

Hamas is an Iran-backed Palestinian terrorist group. According to its leaders and founding charter, one of the group's central goals is to "obliterate" Israel and kill Jews. After Israel removed all of its soldiers and civilians from Gaza in 2005, Hamas took over the territory (see map on page four).

Since then, it has brutally oppressed its people and used Palestinian civilian areas to fire over 30,000 rockets at Israeli homes and families. This has led to multiple wars, which have been horrific for Israelis and even worse for Palestinians.

## The October 7th War

On October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded Israel and brutally massacred, raped, tortured, and kidnapped over 1,400 people, and wounded thousands more. Its leaders have promised to repeat these genocidal atrocities until Israel is destroyed. This caused a long and horrific war, with Israel seeking to remove Hamas from power and free its hostages from Gaza.

# Keeping Israelis Safe

How Israel has responded to security threats:

- Diplomatic pressure and covert operations against Iran's nuclear program, as well as strikes against Iranian weapons shipments to terrorist groups.
- Checkpoints and a security barrier in the West Bank to stop suicide bombings and other attacks which killed huge numbers of Israeli civilians from 2000-2005.
- A blockade against weapons and military equipment entering the Gaza Strip, while ensuring massive deliveries of aid, medicine, and other goods to Palestinian civilians living there.
- Air strikes against terrorist targets and sending the IDF into Palestinian areas where terrorists operate, to eliminate threats, make arrests, and disrupt attacks before they happen.

While Israeli policy is to do everything possible to avoid harming civilians, its military operations and security measures do create hardships. A better future will remain out of reach as long as Hamas and other terrorist groups continue their endless war against Israel.

# Making Peace

- Israel made peace with its neighbors Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and 1994.
- In 2020, Israel signed peace deals with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, known as the Abraham Accords. Economic and cultural ties with the Arab world have grown dramatically since then.
- Israeli leaders express hope that the Abraham Accords will help lead to peace with the Palestinians.



Isaac Herzog Presidential Visit to the United Arab Emirates, January 2022  
by Amos Ben Gershom, courtesy of the Spokesperson unit of the President of Israel, CC BY-SA 3.0

# Human Rights in Israel

- Israel safeguards freedom of religion for all faiths.
- Arab citizens have equal rights and are leaders in many areas, including Israel's Supreme Court, universities, and medical institutions.
- LGBTQ+ Israelis have won many protections against discrimination.
- Sixty percent of Israeli women are in the workforce, similar to the percentage in the U.S.
- Israel guarantees free speech and assembly, as well as fair and open trials.
- Countless Israelis dedicate their lives to fighting discrimination and promoting social and economic justice in their country.

# Saving Lives and Empowering People Worldwide

Israelis have had to come up with creative ways to overcome war, terrorism, a lack of basic resources like water, and many other challenges. Today, they use that knowledge to save and improve people's lives all over the world.

- Israel provided assistance to hurricane victims in Puerto Rico, saved the lives of thousands of Syrian refugees, and set up a field hospital to aid Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russian aggression.
- Israel's Save A Child's Heart is the largest program for children who need heart surgery but can't get it in their home countries.
- Israel offers agricultural training to farmers from Gaza, the West Bank, and Egypt.
- Israel conducts nearly 300 courses annually for emerging nations and has trained over 270,000 participants in over 140 countries, from Albania to Zimbabwe, in desert agriculture, water management, desertification prevention, emergency and disaster medicine, refugee absorption, and employment programs.

# Israeli Innovations

- Israelis have the third-highest number of university degrees per capita worldwide.
- Microsoft, Google, Apple, Facebook, IBM, and many others have opened research facilities in Israel.
- Next to Silicon Valley, Israel has the highest concentration of high-tech companies in the world.
- Israel has the fourth most companies listed on the Nasdaq (after the U.S., Canada, and China).

## Israeli Inventions:

- The first PC anti-virus software.
- Voice mail technology.
- Electro-optic chips and nanotechnology.
- Clean drinking water from air technology (Watergen).
- Drip irrigation.
- The Pentium 4 microprocessor. for desktop computers.
- The Centrino processor for laptop computers.
- Community-driven navigation software (Waze).



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# Regional Map



Arab League countries

Non-Arab countries

\* Iran is not an Arab country, but its regime is deeply involved in the politics and conflicts of the region.

