



BOOKLET
SERIES

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ISRAEL

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1

The Jewish people are indigenous to Israel—the birthplace of their language, culture, religion, and identity. Jews have been living in their ancestral homeland for over 3,000 years.



2

While they thrived at times, for 1,900 years Jews were an oppressed minority across Europe and the Middle East. Those living outside of Israel overcame many obstacles to keep their unique identity. They stayed connected to their ancestral homeland and the Jews who remained there.



**“If you will it,
it is no dream**

—Theodor Herzl
Founder of Modern Zionism

3

In the late 19th century, Jews started a movement called Zionism to liberate themselves from oppression and rebuild a thriving nation in the land of Israel.



4

In 1920, after the Balfour Declaration and the San Remo conference, the League of Nations recognized the Jewish people's historic connection to Israel as well as their right to a homeland there under international law.



Founding of Tel Aviv, 1909



Tel Aviv, 1946

5

For decades, beginning in the late 1800s, waves of Jews returned to the land of Israel to rejoin those who were already there and rebuild their nation. They drained swamps, built cities and farms, revived Hebrew as a spoken language, and created the foundations for a Jewish and democratic state.



6

In 1948, Israel declared statehood during a brutal war launched by Arab forces to seize all of the land. Its Declaration of Independence enshrined the values of justice, democracy, equal rights, and peace. At first, most of its population consisted of Jewish refugees who survived the Holocaust or fled rising violence and persecution in Arab countries.



7

Israel is about the same size as New Jersey and can fit into California 22 times. It has very limited natural resources, and most of its land is desert.



8

Israelis are resilient and create unique solutions to many challenges. Their innovations and humanitarian aid help people all over the world overcome hunger, disease, water scarcity, war, terrorism, natural disasters, damage to the environment, cyber threats, and much more.



9

Israel has made peace with Egypt (1979), Jordan (1994), the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco (all in 2020). Israelis have agreed to or offered at least four major proposals to end the conflict with the Palestinians and help create a Palestinian state. Palestinian leaders have said no each time, to the detriment of both peoples.



10

Israel is the only free country in the Middle East according to Freedom House. Israelis have successfully fought for progress on human rights issues like equality for minorities (especially for the roughly 2 million Arab citizens of Israel), women's rights, LGBTQ rights, peace with Israel's neighbors, and much more.

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