



Israel Today

MAIN IDEA

Israel's current problems are rooted in a long and complicated history.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Peace in the region depends on peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

TERMS & NAMES

Zionism
kibbutz
Law of Return
Orthodox Jews
Rosh Hashanah
Yom Kippur
secular

DATELINE

TEL AVIV, PALESTINE, JULY 14, 1921— Newcomers from America arrived here today after a long and difficult trip. All have been active in the movement to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Golda Mabovitz and her husband, Morris Myerson, born in Russia, hope to join a kibbutz. Riots in the port city of Jaffa delayed their arrival. Palestinian Arabs are protesting the immigration of Jews from America, Russia, and other countries who plan to settle in the land the Arabs consider their own.



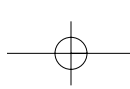
Movement • Jewish immigrants from Europe arrive in Palestine. ▲



Movement • Golda Mabovitz, who later adopted the Hebrew name Meir (to burn brightly) became prime minister of Israel in 1969. ▲

From Zionism to a Modern State

After A.D. 70, when the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, Jews no longer had a country of their own. They lived scattered around the world, but still considered Palestine their homeland. **Zionism** was a Jewish movement that encouraged Jews to return to that homeland, which many called Zion. In the late 1800s, Jews began immigrating there and establishing colonies.



Reading Social Studies

A. Analyzing Motives What were the Jewish immigrants' main reasons for forming kibbutzim?

Life on a Kibbutz Many new arrivals came from Eastern Europe, where Jews were often denied the right to be landowners. Seizing the chance to own land, even in the desert, the newcomers formed communities called kibbutzim. A **kibbutz** (kih•BUTS; *kibbutzim* is the plural) is a farming village whose members own everything in common. Members share labor, income, and expenses. The people of the kibbutzim saw themselves as brave, hard-working pioneers.

A VOICE FROM ISRAEL

The kibbutz would break new ground, literally; it would make the parched earth bloom and beat back the attacks of marauders who sought to destroy our pioneering lives.

David Ben-Gurion

Kibbutzim Today About 270 kibbutzim still exist in Israel today. Some manufacture and sell products or welcome tourists. Others are still farming communities. Israel produces nearly all of its food. To improve the dry soil, Israelis practice drip irrigation. Tubes in the ground deliver the exact amount of water each plant needs.

The People of Israel

Israel was established in 1948 as a Jewish state. Judaism is the state religion. Hebrew is the official language. Of its six million inhabitants, over 80 percent are Jews. The Declaration of the Establishment promised that Israel would treat all its inhabitants equally. Some Israelis feel their country has not always lived up to that promise.

Palestinian Arabs About 20 percent of the people in Israel are Palestinian Arabs. These Arab Israelis carry Israeli passports and vote. Arab politicians serve in Israel's government. However, Arab Israelis do not live as well as Jewish Israelis. Most do not have equal rights and opportunities in jobs, job training, higher education, and housing. In 1996, Arabs were elected to 11 of the 120 seats in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, the most they had ever won. In October 2000, the Israeli government announced that it planned to spend a billion dollars on schools, housing, and new jobs for Arab Israelis.



Place •
A modern kibbutz sprawls over a desert landscape. ▲



Culture • Israeli women must serve in the military for two years; men must serve for three. ▲

Some Palestinians are refugees from Israel who fled to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. (See the map on page 245.) Israel occupies these territories. Constant tension between Arabs and Israelis often leads to violence.

Women in Israel Even before Israel was a state, its women were encouraged to work outside the home. To free mothers from child-care duties, children on kibbutzim lived and slept in separate children's houses and visited their parents during evenings and weekends. An American-educated woman, Golda Meir (may•EER), was the prime minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974.

Reading Social Studies

B. Making Inferences Why might Jews in other countries want to emigrate to Israel?

The Law of Return

Since 1948, Israel has taken in nearly 3 million Jewish immigrants. The 1950 **Law of Return** states that Jews anywhere in the world can immigrate to Israel and become citizens.

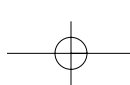
Recent Immigrants In 1987, the USSR finally allowed Jews within its borders to emigrate. Within three years, 300,000 arrived in Israel. Many were skilled engineers and technicians. Because of their numbers, however, they had a hard time finding jobs and good housing.

In the 1980s, Israel began a policy of airlifting groups of Jews from countries such as Yemen, Albania, and Ethiopia and bringing them into Israel. Ethiopia's 38,000 Jews were airlifted between 1984 and 1999. These people had been so isolated they had thought they were the only Jews left in the world.

Citizenship IN ACTION

B'Tselem Many Israelis are concerned about abuses of power by their own government. That was why the Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, or B'Tselem, was founded in 1989. B'Tselem documents and reports human rights violations against the mostly Palestinian residents of Gaza and the West Bank. Such violations include housing discrimination, torture, killing, and the taking of land by Israeli security forces. B'Tselem believes that educating the public about these abuses is the best way to bring about change in Israeli policy in the Occupied Territories.





Many had never used electricity or running water. Although poorly educated, they had useful skills such as blacksmithing, weaving, and pottery making that helped them fit into Israeli society.

Religion in Israel Today

Only about one in four of Israel's Jews strictly follows Jewish law.

They are called **Orthodox Jews**. These Jews believe that Jewish law should help form government policy. Orthodox rabbis have official control over marriage, divorce, and burial. They also limit what Israeli Jews can do on the Sabbath and holidays. **Rosh Hashanah** (RAWSH huh•SHAW•nuh) is the Jewish New Year. **Yom Kippur** (YAWM KIHP•uhr) is the Day of Atonement, a day for fasting and reflecting on one's sins. It is the holiest day in the Jewish year. No government employee can work on these Jewish High Holy Days. No newspapers appear on either holiday. Most of Israel's Jews are **secular**, meaning that religious practices play a less important role in their lives. They are more interested in living a modern way of life. Many resent Orthodox control of daily life.



Movement • Jewish children from Ethiopia make a new home in Israel. ▲

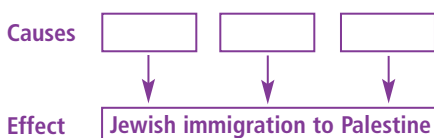
SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names

1. Identify: (a) Zionism (b) kibbutz (c) Law of Return (d) Orthodox Jews
(e) Rosh Hashanah (f) Yom Kippur (g) secular

Taking Notes

2. Use a cause-and-effect chart like this one to write the reasons for Jewish immigration to Palestine.



Main Ideas

3. (a) Why did early Jewish settlers in Israel establish kibbutzim?
(b) Why have Russian Jews faced problems fitting in to Israeli society?
(c) What are the major differences between Orthodox and secular Jews?

Critical Thinking

4. Forming and Supporting Opinions

How well do you think Israel has lived up to its promise to treat all its inhabitants equally?

Think About

- the treatment of Palestinian Arabs
- the treatment of women
- the treatment of immigrants

ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Write an **interview** you might have with a new immigrant to Israel. Include information on where the immigrant comes from, the date and method of arrival, reasons for coming, and reactions to a new land.