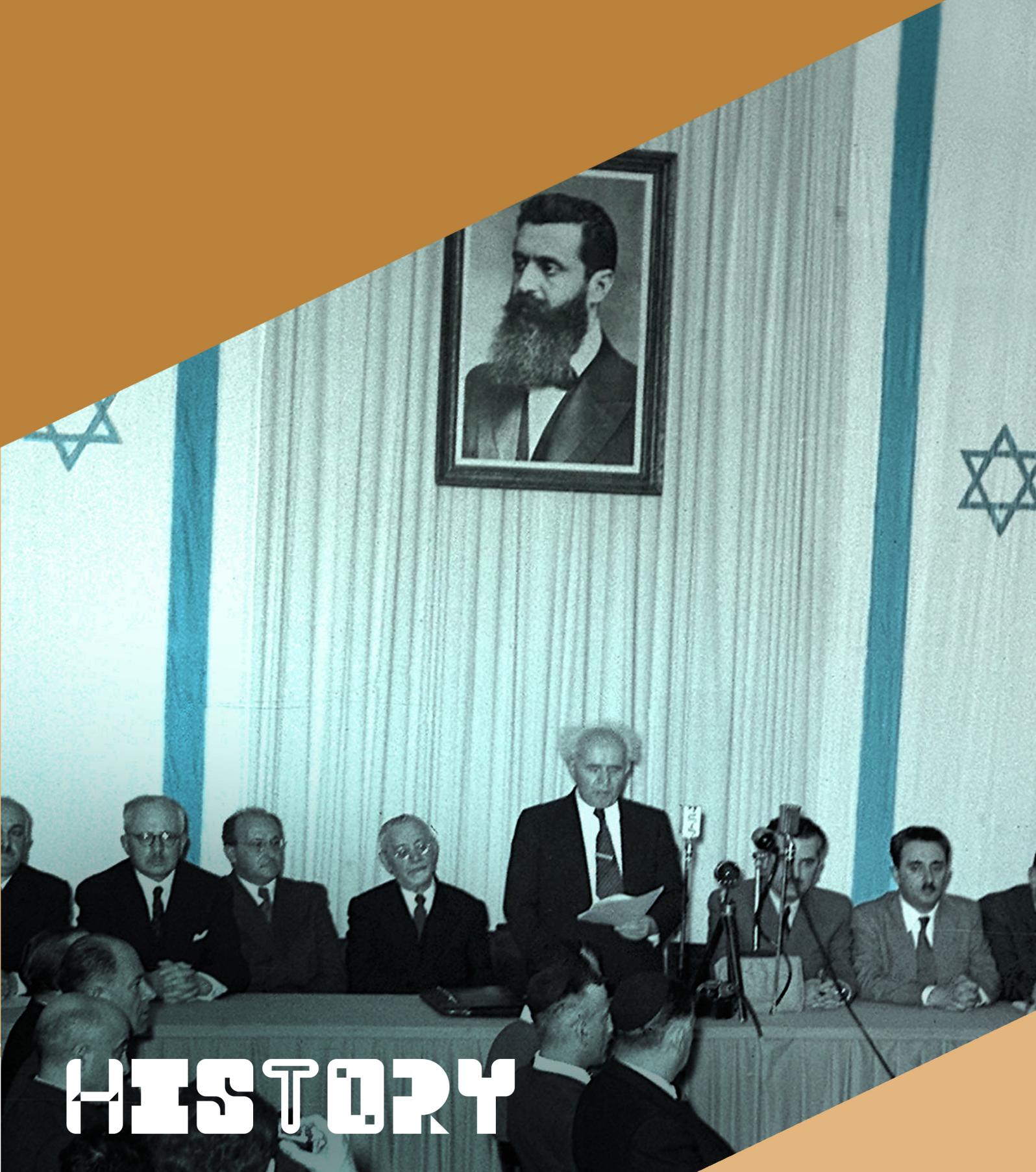


FACTS ABOUT  
ISRAEL



**HISTORY**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Media and Public Affairs Division  
Information and Visual Media Department  
Director: Mordehay Rodgold  
Project Managers: Ariella Charny, Michal Gur-Aryeh, and Dana Segall  
Editing: Michal Horneman

Executive Manager: MGS Language Services  
Creative and Project Manager: Visual-Trigger  
Design: Hashchuna  
Content Research: Maof Creative  
Writing: Hilary Faverman Communications  
Cover Image: Pinn Hans GPO

Note: The maps contained in this booklet are for illustrative purposes only and should not be considered authoritative

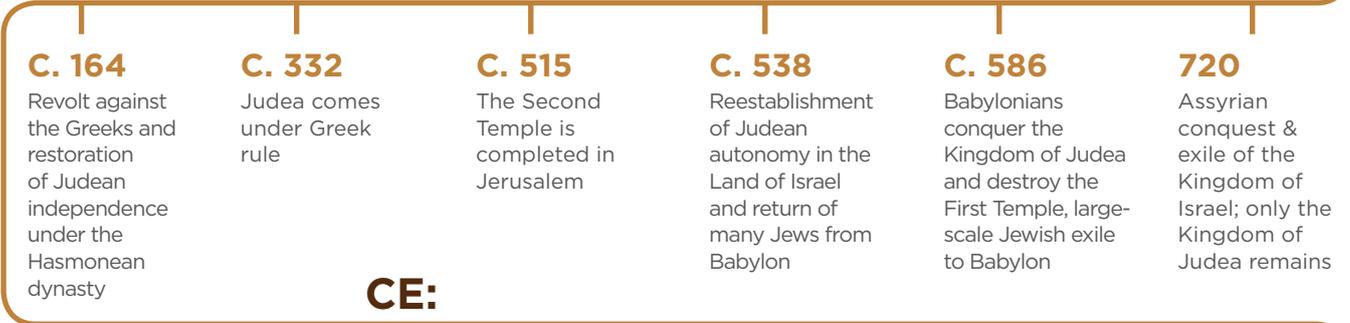
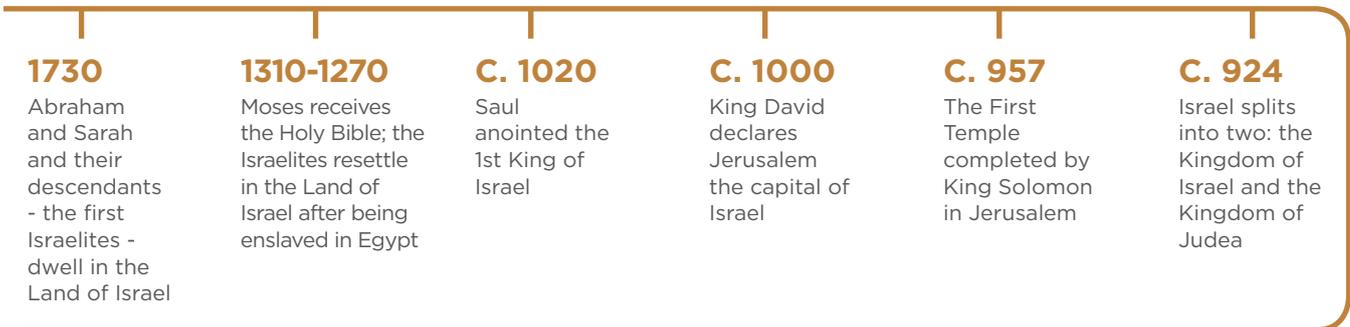
# FACTS ABOUT ISRAEL

TIMELINE	2
ISRAEL IN BIBLICAL TIMES	4
THE SECOND JUDEAN KINGDOM	6
FROM THE ROMANS TO THE OTTOMANS	8
RETURNING TO ZION	10
1917 - 1948: THE BRITISH MANDATE	12
1940s: THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE	14
1950s: BUILDING THE STATE OF ISRAEL	16
1960s: YEARS OF CONSOLIDATION	18
1970s: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL TRANSITION	20
1980s: LIBERALIZING THE ECONOMY	22
1990s: A CHANGING WORLD	24
21st CENTURY: START-UP NATION	26

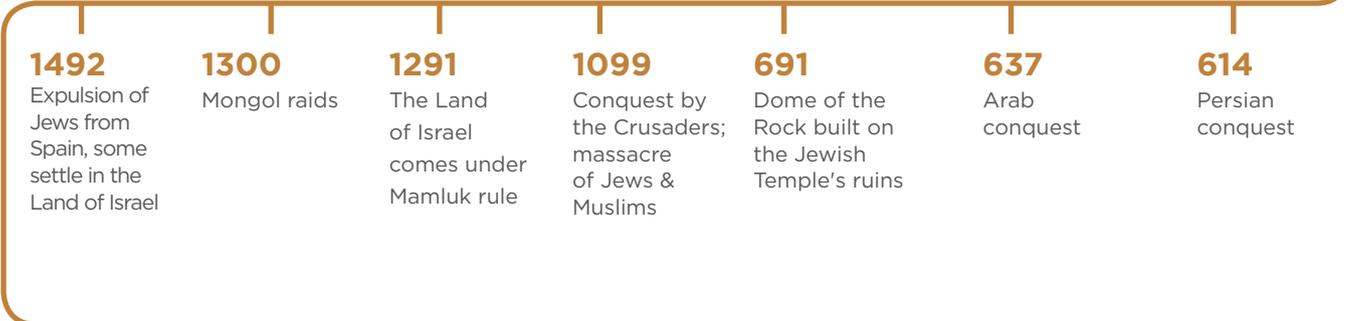
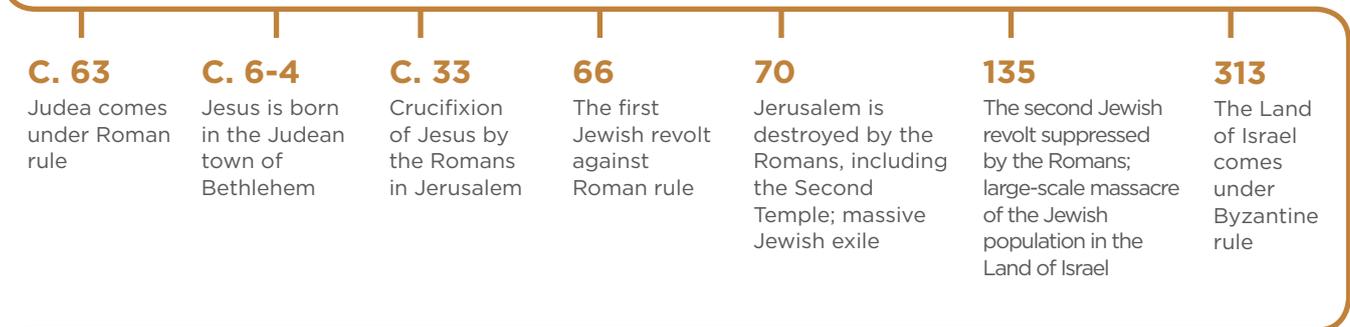
# HISTORY

# THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL: FROM BIBLICAL TIMES TO TODAY

## BCE:



## CE:



**2018**

United States Embassy moves to Jerusalem

**2010**

Israel joins the OECD

**2007**

Hamas violently takes over Gaza

**2006**

Second Lebanon War

**2005**

Israel disengages from the Gaza Strip

**2002**

Second Intifada (violent Palestinian riots)

**1995**

Broadened Palestinian self-government implemented in West Bank and Gaza Strip; assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

**1977**

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visits Israel

**1979**

Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty signed

**1982**

First Lebanon War

**1987-1989**

First Intifada (violent Palestinian riots)

**1990**

Collapse of Soviet Union and mass immigration of Soviet Jews

**1991**

Madrid Conference; second airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel

**1993**

Signing of the Oslo Accords

**1994**

Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty; establishment of the Palestinian Authority

**1973**

Yom Kippur War

**1967**

Six-Day War; Jerusalem reunited; Judea & Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip come under Israeli administration

**1964**

National Water Carrier completed, distributing water from north to south

**1956**

Sinai Campaign

**1949-1956**

Mass immigration of Jews from Middle East and Europe to Israel; Jews expelled from most Arab lands.

**1949**

Armistice agreements signed with Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon following the War of Independence; Jerusalem divided; Israel admitted into the UN as the 59th member

**1922**

Council of the League of Nations entrusts Britain with the Mandate for Palestine, for the purpose of establishing a Jewish national home in the Land of Israel

**1933**

Nazis come to power in Germany and begin enacting antisemitic policies

**1939**

British government in Mandatory Palestine issues White Paper, severely limiting Jewish immigration to the area.

**1939-1945**

Six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Europe

**1947**

UN vote to partition the Land of Israel into Jewish and Arab states

**1948**

Independence of the State of Israel; six Arab armies attack the new state

**1917**

November - Lord Balfour declares Great Britain's support of a Jewish national home in Palestine

**1883-1902**

Aliyah (Jewish return) to Land of Israel and development of agricultural communities

**1897**

Theodor Herzl convenes the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland

**1799**

Napoleon campaigns in Egypt and the Land of Israel

**1700-1800s**

Jews from Diaspora communities including Europe, Morocco and Yemen return to the Land of Israel

**1517**

Ottoman conquest of the Land of Israel

# ISRAEL IN BIBLICAL TIMES

## The Invention of the Weekend

The very concept of a weekly rest period originates in Judaism's Ten Commandments, which reserved the seventh day of the week [the Sabbath or Shabbat] as a rest day. Eventually, this revolutionary concept was adopted by both Christianity and Islam and integrated into many world cultures.

## The Land of Israel is where Jewish cultural, spiritual, and national identity was formed.

Jewish history began about 4,000 years ago (17th century BCE). The Bible records the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs - Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel and Leah - who forged a monotheistic community in Canaan, the ancient Land of Israel. Famine drove Jacob (also called Israel) and his twelve sons (who later formed the 12 tribes) to Egypt, where their descendants were forced into slavery. After centuries of bondage, the Israelites were led to freedom in the Land of Israel by Moses (13-12th centuries BCE). It was on that journey that they received the Holy Scriptures known as the Bible, or Torah, which includes the Ten Commandments.

Once back in the Land of Israel, loose tribal organization gave way to a monarchy under the first Israelite king, Saul (1020 BCE). King Saul's successor, King David, reigned for 40 years and established Jerusalem as his realm's capital. His heir, Solomon, built the First Temple in Jerusalem, which became the Jewish people's national and spiritual center until this very day.

Upon King Solomon's death, tribal divisions resurfaced and the country was divided into a northern kingdom, Israel, and a southern kingdom, Judah. The northern kingdom was conquered and the people exiled by the Assyrians in the 8th century BCE. 125 years later, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and exiled many of the Jewish elite to Babylon. In 586 BCE, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple.

Even after the majority of the nation was exiled, the Jewish people never broke their bond with the Land of Israel and maintained a constant physical presence there.

### Archaeology and the Bible

Many historical events, people and places mentioned in the Bible are corroborated by archaeological findings. Inscriptions have been found on coins, seals, lintels, and more, in excavations in biblical cities such as Jerusalem, Jericho, Megiddo, Beersheba and others. For example, an inscription discovered in Tel Dan in northern Israel refers to both the name "Israel" and the phrase "King of the House of David."

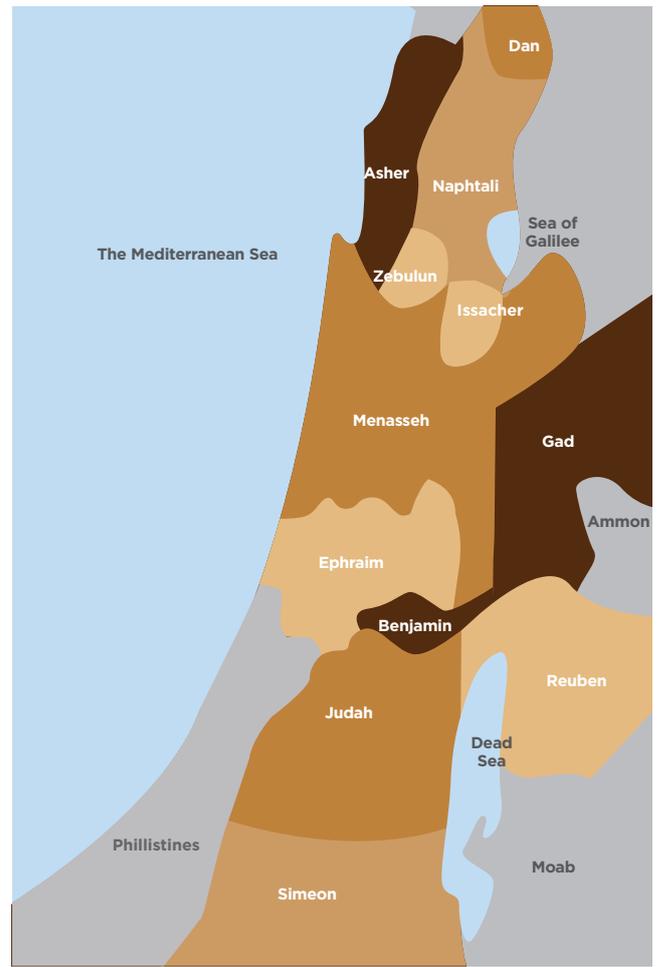


Bar Kokhba Revolt coinage issued in 132-135 CE

### Water Innovation in Ancient Times

In 701 BCE, King Hezekiah designed and deployed a solution to protect Jerusalem's water source, which was outside the city walls, from invading Assyrians. He had a tunnel dug deep under the ground to divert the water from the Gihon Spring to a pool - the Shiloah or Siloam Pool - inside the city walls. This engineering marvel, stretching 457m (1,500 ft.) is still intact today and open to visitors.

### Map of the 12 Tribes of Israel



Tel Megiddo | Itamar Grinberg

# THE SECOND JUDEAN KINGDOM

In 538 CE, the Persian King Cyrus conquered the Babylonian empire. King Cyrus permitted the Jews living in exile to return to the Land of Israel. For the next four centuries, the Jewish people enjoyed varying degrees of self-rule under the Persian and later Hellenistic governors. It was during this time of relative freedom that the Jews constructed the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

When the Greeks prohibited the practice of Judaism and desecrated the Holy Temple, the Jews, led by the Hasmonean priestly family, rose in revolt and regained independence in the Second Judean Kingdom. With the Roman conquest by Pompeus in 68 BCE, the Judean Kingdom became a vassal of the Roman Empire. From then on, Jewish kings in Israel, including Herod, were appointed by the Romans. It was during this period that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the Judean Kingdom.

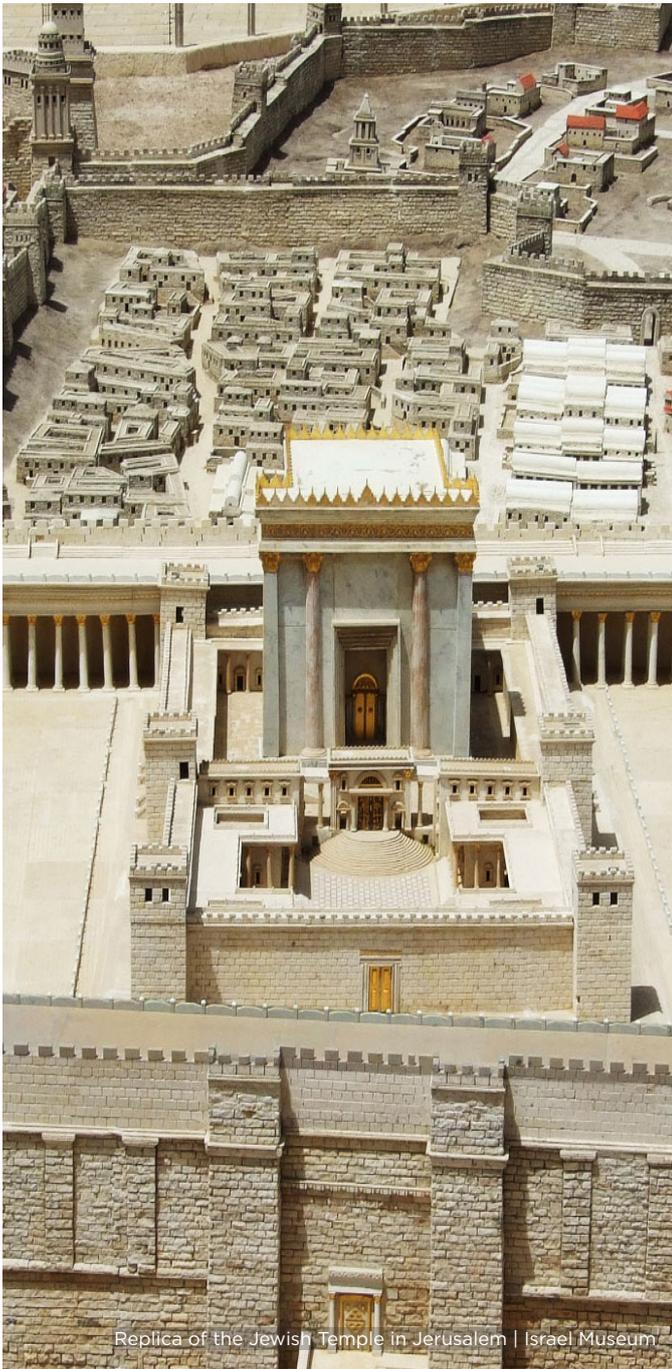
In 66 CE, Roman oppression and restrictions on Jewish life again sparked revolt. After several years of war, in the year 70 CE, Titus besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the Holy Temple and razed the city; scores of Jews perished, and the siege of Masada marked one of the final events in the war. The Bar Kokhba revolt (132-136 CE), the last war fought against the Romans, marked the end of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel for many centuries.

**Although the Temple was destroyed and Jerusalem razed, Judaism survived the encounter with Rome.**

The Jewish communities recovered; eventually, prayer services replaced sacrifices, synagogues and educational institutions became the centers of Jewish life, and rabbis began to play a leading role as spiritual leaders in the communities of the Diaspora.

## The Origin of the Name Palestine

After the Judean Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-136 CE), the Romans, weary of repeated insurrections, sought to undermine the Jews' connection to the Land of Israel and Jerusalem, renaming the geographical area "Palestine".



Replica of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem | Israel Museum



The romanticized engraving of Flavius Josephus

### A Dedicated Documentary

Joseph Flavius - originally Yosef Ben Matityahu Hachohen - was a Jewish priest, scholar, historian, and head of the Jewish forces in the Galilee during the First Jewish-Roman War in 66 CE. He eventually surrendered to Rome and became a Roman citizen. His eyewitness accounts provide a rare description of daily life in the Land of Israel during that period. He recorded the destruction of Jerusalem and is the only primary source of the Romans' dramatic siege of Masada - a hilltop fortress built by King Herod in the Judean desert - at the end of the war, 73 CE.

### Map of the Hasmonean Kingdom at its Height c. 37 BCE



### Did You Know?

The pilgrimage festivals brought Jews to Jerusalem three times a year, making the Holy Temple the cultural and social center for the Jewish people. From the high priest and the high court, to the shops along its outer promenade, the Temple was the national center and held the pulse of Jewish life.

# FROM THE ROMANS TO THE OTTOMANS



Even after the Roman destruction of the Judean Kingdom, and throughout the many years of rule by various foreign powers, Jewish presence in the Land of Israel never ceased. Some of the most important Jewish laws and texts were debated and crystallized during this time, taking form in the scriptures of the Mishnah and Talmud. Jewish life flourished, and developed around four main spiritual centers: Jerusalem and Hebron in the Judean Hills, and Tiberias and Safed in the Galilee region.

For centuries in the Diaspora - from Morocco to Yemen, from Spain and Poland to India - Jews yearned to return to Israel, reciting "next year in Jerusalem" in countless prayers, songs and texts.

Following the rise of the Byzantine Empire (330 CE), the Land of Israel became predominantly Christian. Jews were forbidden to enter Jerusalem except for one day each year, when they were permitted to mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple.

In 636, the Muslims under the Rashidun Caliphate conquered Jerusalem and the region from the Byzantines, ruling for more than four hundred years. Jews were given second class "dhimmi" status, which nevertheless safeguarded their lives, property, and freedom to worship. Later, the status of non-Muslims deteriorated, and the Jews were subjected to severe discrimination.

In 1099, Pope Urban II called for a Crusade to rid the Holy Land of the "infidels." For more than a century until about 1240, the Christians dominated the Land once again. In 1187, Sultan Saladin overthrew the Crusaders, reclaiming Jerusalem. Under Saladin, Jews in the Land of Israel were granted greater freedom and access to Jerusalem.

Following the Ottoman conquest in 1517, the Land of Israel was divided into four districts and ruled from Istanbul for 400 years. Under Sultan Suleiman, the land saw order, but after his death in 1566, the land underwent widespread neglect until the 19th century.

## Medieval Travel from Spain to Jerusalem and Back

Benjamin of Tudela lived in the 12th century and traveled extensively throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. He wrote detailed descriptions of the Jewish communities he encountered. His diary, the Book of Travels, is a treasure trove for historians. His accounts reflect the continuous link between the Jewish communities of the Diaspora and those in the Land of Israel.

### Spanish Inquisition and Return to Israel

For many centuries, the Jewish community in Spain flourished, despite periodic incidences of antisemitism. From the 1390s however, Jews began to suffer ever more frequent pogroms, and were forced to choose between converting to Christianity or death. However, suspicion of the Jews who had chosen to convert, known as 'conversos', led to the Spanish Inquisition. Ultimately, all Jews who remained loyal to their faith were expelled from Spain in 1492. Following the expulsion, many Jews found their way back to their ancestral homeland, where they developed a vibrant Sephardic culture.

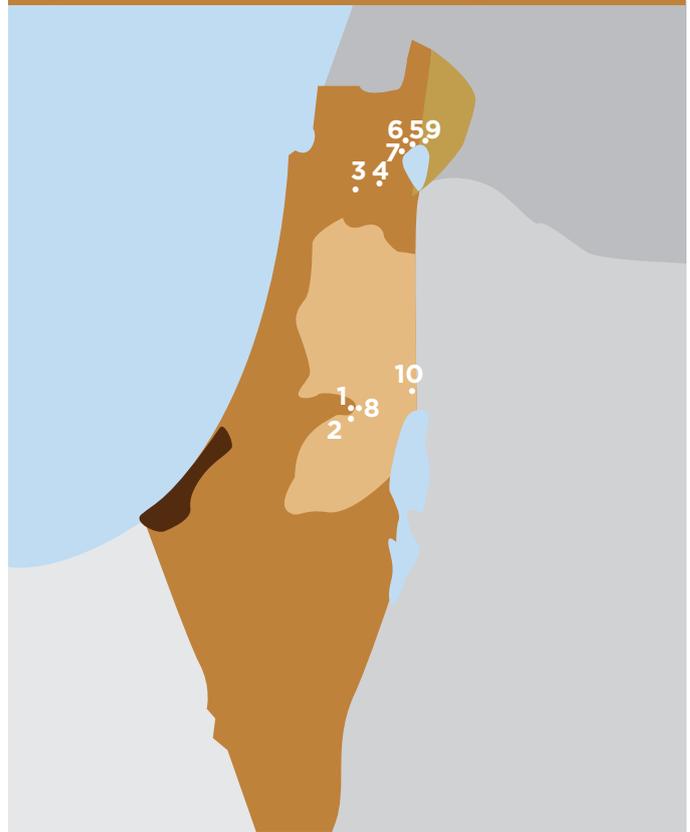


The Church of the Holy Sepulchre | Jorge Lascar

## The Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque

According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad embarked on a Night Journey from Mecca on a steed named al-Buraq to "the farthest mosque". Muhammad then ascended into heaven from the location of the Dome of the Rock shrine, where he received the command to pray five times daily. The farthest mosque was later identified as the Al-Aqsa Mosque, near the Dome of the Rock. Both were constructed in the 7th and 8th centuries, respectively, by the Umayyad Caliph.

### Significant Christian Sites in the Holy Land



- 1. Jerusalem**, location of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Via Dolorosa, the Garden of the Tomb, and many other sites.
- 2. Bethlehem**, (in Judea and Samaria - West Bank) the birthplace of Jesus Christ and location of the Church of the Nativity.
- 3. Nazareth**, the childhood home of Jesus, and today home to the largest Christian church in the Middle East.
- 4. The Jesus Trail**, the recently created walking trail that follows in Jesus' footsteps in the Galilee, running from Nazareth to Capernaum.
- 5. Capernaum**, "the town of Jesus", where several churches and a museum celebrate the life and teachings of Jesus.
- 6. Mount of Beatitudes**, the home to The Sermon on the Mount, and a tranquil oasis overlooking the Sea of Galilee.
- 7. Tabgha**, the legendary site of the feeding of the five thousand (with five loaves and two fish), celebrated today by the Church of the Multiplication.
- 8. St. George's Monastery**, (in Judea and Samaria - West Bank) the stunning cliff-hugging monastery (one of the world's oldest) in the heart of the Judean desert.
- 9. Bethsaida**, home to the three Apostles, Peter, Andrew and Philip.
- 10. Qasr al-Yahud**, (in Judea and Samaria - West Bank) the baptismal site on the Jordan River.

# RETURNING TO ZION

Beginning in the late 18th century, and gaining strength throughout the 19th century, many groups of people, including the Jews, were struggling to achieve national self-determination. With the onset of the industrial revolution and modern transportation systems, the idea of returning to Zion, the Land of Israel, became a realistic possibility for many Jews.

From 1882, thousands of Eastern European Jews immigrated to Israel in what is known as the First Aliyah. Around the same time, Jews arrived in the Land from Yemen and Morocco. It was a major turning point in history: after centuries of dreaming, the Jewish people began to return to Zion, joining the Jewish community that had remained in the land for centuries. By the 1860s, local Jews had established agriculture as a central feature of their national revival. In 1897, Theodor Herzl gave form to the concept of Zionism, the movement for self-determination of the Jewish people, by convening the First Zionist Congress.

Despite hardships such as the lack of infrastructure and the devastating prevalence of malaria, the returning Jews built farming communities, tilled the soil and developed a thriving agriculture sector.

**The revival of the Jewish people in its native homeland was the true actualization of the Zionist dream.**

In December 1917, during World War I, British General Allenby conquered Jerusalem from the Ottomans, paving the way for the British Mandate in Palestine. In the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917), Britain pledged to support the establishment of a Jewish national home in the Land of Israel. This declaration was backed by the international community, including France, the United States, Italy, Japan, China and Siam, and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the State of Israel. The League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations, adopted the Declaration in 1922.

## **Jewish Demographic Growth in Jerusalem**

Ever since King David made Jerusalem the People of Israel's capital in c. 1000 BCE, Jews in the Diaspora have expressed their yearning for Jerusalem by praying in the direction of the city, and twice a year repeating the ancestral prayer, 'next year in Jerusalem'. Jews maintained an almost constant physical presence in Jerusalem for over 3,000 years, and in the 1800s, the Jewish community in the city began growing rapidly once more. As early as 1842, over 7,000 of the city's 15,000 residents were Jewish. By the beginning of WWI in 1914, Jews accounted for 45,000 of Jerusalem's 65,000-strong population.



Theodor Herzl

### Reviving the Hebrew Language

In the 19th century, the Jews revived their ancestral language, Hebrew, which for centuries had been used only for literature and liturgy. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922) was the key figure in reviving the language, and had the vision to transform an ancient language into a modern tongue.

### The Bezalel Academy of Art and Design

The Bezalel Academy was established in 1906 by renowned Jewish artist Boris Schatz, who aspired to develop Jewish art, blend European artistic heritage with the Jewish design traditions of the East and West, and to "find visual expression for the much yearned-for national and spiritual independence" of the Jewish people. The school opened its first class with 30 students and grew steadily despite the difficulties of the time. Today, Bezalel is one of the world's most prestigious art schools and has over 2,000 enrolled students.

### The Kibbutz

The kibbutz was a new kind of voluntary agricultural collective pioneered by Zionist Jews in the early 20th century, based on egalitarian principles. Residents of kibbutzim worked as members of the agricultural collective, taking up different jobs in the community, and pooling their income to run the kibbutz. The first kibbutz, Degania, was established in 1910 next to the Sea of Galilee. Today, there are over 270 kibbutzim in Israel, which together account for over 10% of Israel's agricultural output.



Women on a Kibbutz | Yaakov Ben Dov, Ein-Harod Meuhad Archive

# 1917 - 1948: THE BRITISH MANDATE

In 1922, the League of Nations gave recognition to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine, and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.

The League established the British Mandate over Palestine, as well as British and French mandates over Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Transjordan, which later became independent states. The Mandate over Palestine originally encompassed the land on both sides of the Jordan River; however, in 1923, the Mandate was officially divided between Transjordan on the eastern side of the River Jordan and the area west of it until the Mediterranean Sea.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the Jewish people developed social and economic institutions and built the foundations of a state. In and around the growing cities, industry and new business were bustling. New companies were founded to harness the electricity-producing potential of the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers, trade unions were formed, and new agricultural initiatives were turning the desert into a flourishing landscape. The social and cultural fabrics of the state were truly taking form.

In Germany, where the Nazi party had come to power in 1933, antisemitic policies were increasingly enforced. In 1939, World War II broke out. The British government's White Paper of 1939 severely restricted Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine, leaving European Jews with few options to escape Nazi persecution. Some joined the partisans, while others were hidden by local non-Jews. Ultimately, however, two-thirds of European Jewry were murdered in what became known as the Holocaust, or 'Shoah' in Hebrew.

## Joining WWII's Allied Powers

Following the example of the Jewish Palestinian volunteers in WWI, more than 26,000 members of the Palestinian Jewish community volunteered to fight Nazi Germany. In September 1944, the Jewish Infantry Brigade became an independent military unit of the British army. The 5,000 men of the brigade fought in Egypt, northern Italy, and central Europe.



## Building Institutions

Israel's democratic and economic institutions were established by the Jewish leadership in the Land of Israel well before the state became independent in 1948. At the turn of the century, labor organizations were created, as well as a range of health services, cultural centers, power infrastructures, academic institutions, and a Hebrew press. These institutions continue to flourish in Israel to this day. Moreover, the National Assembly, which held its first elections in 1920, laid out the foundations for Israel's parliamentary democracy.



(From left) Ben-Zion Mossinson, Albert Einstein, Ghaim Weitzman, and Menachem Ussishkin, 1921

### Establishing Higher Education

In 1913, the Eleventh World Zionist Congress voted to establish the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where instruction was to take place in Hebrew. Over the course of 1908-1914, Haifa's Technion was founded as an institute for science and technology and, after some debate, Hebrew was chosen as the language of instruction there, too. The first lecture at Hebrew University was given by 1923 Nobel laureate Albert Einstein; he spoke about his theory of relativity. In fact, Einstein was one of the early board members of the university and the first chairman of its academic council.

### Major Academic Institutions Established Before Israel's Independence

	Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design	1906	Jerusalem
	Technion - Israel Institute of Technology (IIT)	1912	Haifa
	Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI)	1918	Jerusalem
	Weizmann Institute of Science (WIS)	1934	Rehovot

# 1940s:

# THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

By the middle of the 20th century, the Jewish population in Mandatory Palestine numbered some 650,000. Between the two World Wars, the Jewish population there had become a highly organized community with well-developed political, social and economic institutions – a state in everything but name. However, the British government's White Paper of 1939 placed strict limits on Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine, constituting a major obstacle for the growing Jewish community.

As World War Two came to an end, many of the survivors of the Holocaust began new lives in Israel. Jews from Arab countries who had suffered persecution, such as in the "farhud" (pogrom) in Iraq in 1941, were also yearning to come to the Holy Land.

On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181 calling for the establishment of two states – a Jewish one and an Arab one – in Mandatory Palestine. The Jews accepted the plan; the Arabs rejected it. When the British Mandate in Palestine expired,

**David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, declared the independence of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.**

On the same night, six Arab countries – Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iraq – together with local Arab militia forces, attacked the Jewish state from all directions. The fighting lasted some 15 months, until the newly formed and poorly equipped Israel Defense Forces overcame the massive attack. The armistice agreements negotiated under UN auspices reflected the situation on the ground when the fighting stopped: Israel held the Coastal Plain, the Galilee and the Negev, while Jordan occupied Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. Jerusalem was divided, with Jordan controlling the eastern side – including the Old City with its holy sites – and Israel controlling the western part of the city. Despite the fact that Jordan and Egypt held most of the territory designated by UNGA Resolution 181 as an Arab State, no Arab state was established in any part of former Mandatory Palestine.

## Building the IDF

Just weeks after the declaration of independence, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was established, incorporating pre-state Jewish paramilitary organizations. A code of ethics was established which is strictly enforced to this day, guiding all soldiers in the exercise of their duties.



David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, declares Israel's independence on May 14, 1948

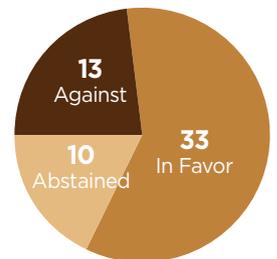


### UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (Partition Plan) November 29, 1947

**In favor:** Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelorussian S.S.R., Canada, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, Liberia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Ukrainian S.S.R., Union of South Africa, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Uruguay, Venezuela

**Against:** Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen

**Abstained:** Argentina, Chile, China, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Mexico, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia.



#### International Recognition

The United States was the first country to recognize Israel - 10 minutes after the state was declared! The USSR recognized Israel three days later. On May 11, 1949, the new democratic state took its place as the 59th member of the United Nations.

#### Creating a Democracy

The first national elections took place on January 26, 1949, with a turnout of over 85% of eligible voters; the 120-seat Knesset (Parliament) held its first session soon after. Two prominent leaders who had led the Jewish people in their struggle for statehood were elected to high offices: David Ben-Gurion as Israel's first Prime Minister and Chaim Weizmann as the nation's first President.

# 1950s: BUILDING THE STATE

After gaining independence, Israel set about enhancing the development of the country its people had struggled so hard and so long to restore.

In the 1950s, Israel experienced a dramatic influx of new immigrants, echoing the prophecy of the ‘ingathering of the exiles.’

Israel’s legislature reaffirmed the right of every Jew to immigrate to Israel and obtain citizenship. In the first four months of independence, some 50,000 newcomers, mainly Holocaust survivors, immigrated to the new state. After the War of Independence and throughout the 1950s, some 850,000 Jews from Arab lands immigrated to Israel, most after being expelled from their former homes.

With the influx of immigrants, building initiatives sprang up all across the country; infrastructures were built, industries were developed, and the national airline El Al was established, among other major projects.

In 1951, Israel began draining the Hula Valley marshlands and converting them into agricultural land. This launched the development of innovative agricultural systems in the country, establishing agriculture and agrotechnology as major players in the state’s economy.

As Jews arrived in Israel from all parts of the world, they brought their traditions with them. The blending of Middle Eastern, North African, and European elements throughout the decade saw Israel’s cultural and artistic creativity blossom.

In 1956, the Sinai War, or Suez Crisis, broke out with Egypt. Israel gained control over the entire Sinai Peninsula following the war, but ultimately returned the territory to Egypt as part of a ceasefire negotiation. By the end of the decade, Israel had established diplomatic relations with dozens of countries across the world.

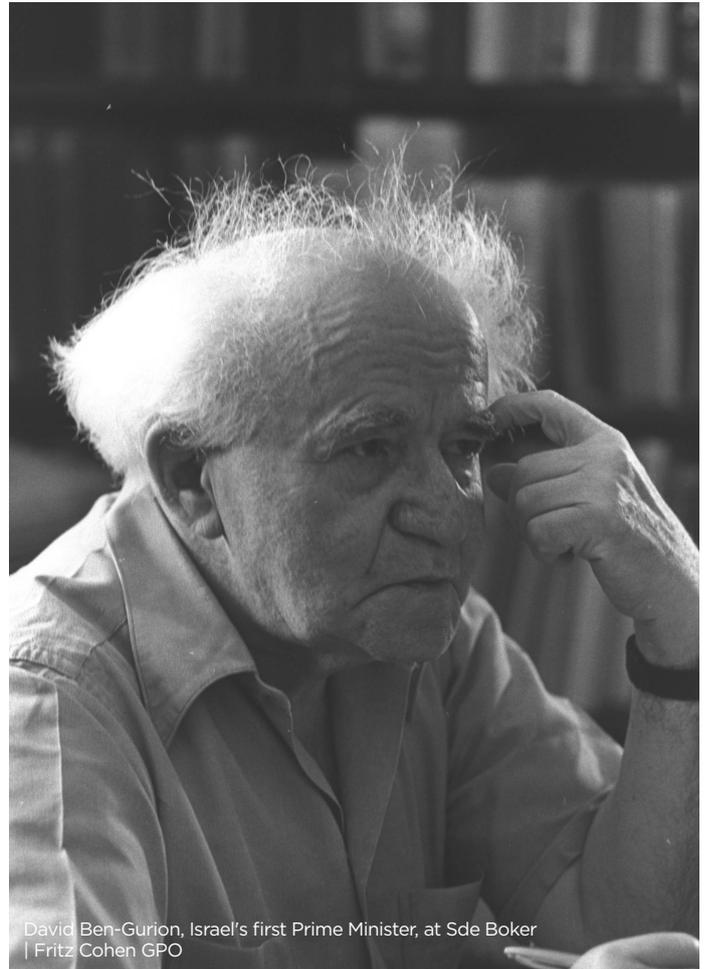
## Water to the Desert

In 1953, Israel began building the National Water Carrier, designed to distribute water from the Sea of Galilee in the north – Israel’s only fresh-water lake – to the highly populated center and the arid south. The 130-kilometer system, consisting of giant pipes, open canals, tunnels, reservoirs, and large-scale pumping stations, was completed in 1964. Eighty percent of the water was allocated for agricultural use.



## Art and Music

Art, culture and music in the 1950s were seen as being an integral part of the revival of the Jewish people. The leaders of the fledgling state harnessed art and culture in the process of nation-building and in the consolidation of a common identity. With the huge influx of Jews immigrating to Israel from Middle Eastern and European lands, culture became a particularly important mechanism for creating a national identity. A distinctly 'Israeli' culture took form in this decade as the local society blended with the diversity of cultures that Jewish immigrants brought with them from across the world.



David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, at Sde Boker  
| Fritz Cohen GPO



Throughout the 1950's, some 850,000 Jews of Arab lands came to Israel, most as refugees  
| Fritz Cohen GPO

**"Without moral and intellectual independence, there is no anchor for national independence."**

David Ben-Gurion was Israel's first prime minister (1948-54 and 1955-63). Before the establishment of the state, he held key positions in the Jewish leadership, including serving as the secretary general of the Labor Union, chairman of the World Zionist Organization, and chairman of the Jewish Agency.



# 1960s: YEARS OF CONSOLIDATION

The 1960s was a period of consolidation in Israel. The local agricultural sectors provided for domestic needs as well as export markets. This was accompanied by rapid growth of industry, including machinery, chemicals, and electronics. The Port of Ashdod was established in 1963, becoming one of Israel's major ports along with Haifa and Eilat.

Israel's foreign relations expanded steadily as the Jewish state developed close ties with the United States, France, British Commonwealth countries, European states, and countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. After vehement opposition and public debate, Israel normalized relations with Germany in 1965. In June 1967, following months of Egyptian military buildup along the southern border, Syrian bombardments of Israeli settlements in the Galilee, and terrorist raids from Jordan, Israel fought and won a defensive war on three fronts.

**The Six-Day War, as it came to be known, resulted in Israel reuniting Jerusalem along with its holy sites.**

Israel also gained control over the Golan Heights, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), and the Gaza Strip, as well as the Sinai Peninsula. Israel's victory in the Six-Day War was followed by the bloody War of Attrition with Egypt, which lasted over three years and ended with a ceasefire in 1970.

In December 1966, Shai Agnon became the first Israeli to be awarded a Nobel Prize, for literature, in recognition of "his profoundly characteristic narrative art with motifs from the life of the Jewish people."

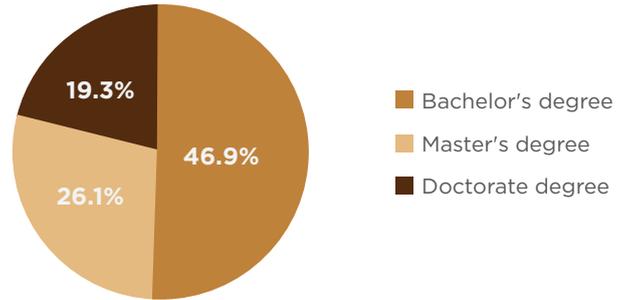


Ben-Gurion tirelessly promoted his dream of building communities and developing agriculture and industry in the south, turning the Negev desert into a mainstay of Israel's economy. In 1969, the University of the Negev, later renamed the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 1974, was established in Beersheva as part of his vision for Israel's south.

### Hebrew Radio, TV and Film

Israeli entertainment took a leap forward in the 1960s. The independent Israel Broadcasting Authority was established in 1965, transforming Israel's official broadcast station, Radio Kol Israel. Furthermore, television began broadcasting in 1969, and the release of the comedy Sallah Shabati launched Israeli film into the international spotlight. The film was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Film category, won a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film, and closed the Berlin Film Festival.

### Percentage of Women in the Student Population at Universities, by Degree 1969-1970



## The Eichmann Trial

Israel became the center of global attention when it brought to trial Adolf Eichmann, the chief of operations of the Nazi genocide program during World War II. The emotionally explosive trial was broadcast live on television. With viewers in 37 countries, it was the first time Holocaust survivors publicly testified to the horrors they had experienced. The televised trial was especially important in the education of a generation that had come of age after World War II. Eichmann was found guilty of crimes against humanity and the Jewish people, and was sentenced to death; his appeal to the Supreme Court was rejected and he was hanged on May 30, 1962. This is the one and only time that the death penalty has been carried out in Israel.



# 1970s: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL TRANSITION

The 1970s was a time of sharp contrasts. In its third decade, Israeli society was characterized by cultural openness and far-reaching social and political change.

The oil crises of 1973-74 and 1979-80 contributed to a decline in Israel's economic growth, with the annual GDP per capita growth rate falling from 5.6 percent to 2.8 percent. After the Yom Kippur War of 1973, caving to pressure from Arab states, most sub-Saharan African countries severed diplomatic ties with Israel. After briefly opening its borders early on in the decade, the Soviet Union shut its borders tight. With the Cold War in full force, many Soviet Jews became known as *Refusniks* for their struggle to gain the freedom to emigrate to Israel. Israel and the European Community (EC) established a free trade zone in 1975, leading to a significant increase in trade with Europe.

**In 1977, Knesset elections brought the Likud party, with a coalition of right-wing and centrist parties, to power, ending almost 30 years of Labor-led governments.**

The new Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, reiterated Israel's commitment to peace and invited all Arab leaders to come to the negotiating table. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat responded positively and initiated a historic visit to Israel in 1977. On 26 March 1979, Begin and Sadat signed the groundbreaking Israel-Egypt peace treaty, inspiring future peace treaties between Israel and its neighbors. As part of the landmark agreement, Israel agreed to a complete withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had controlled since the 1967 war.

## Israel's Iron Lady

Golda Meir was the fourth Prime Minister of Israel and the first woman to hold the title. Meir was elected to the Knesset in 1948 and served in a variety of senior government roles, including as Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs and as Israel's first Ambassador to the USSR. Meir was also a signatory to Israel's Declaration of Independence in 1948.



## A Decade of Firsts for Culture and Sports

In 1978, Moshe Mizrahi was the first Israeli director to win an Academy Award, for his film *'Madame Rosa'*. The same year, Israel won first place in the Eurovision Song Contest with the song 'A-Ba-Nee-Bee' and did so again in 1979 with the song 'Hallelujah'. For the first and only time in its history, Israel's national football team qualified for the FIFA World Cup playoffs in 1970. In 1977, Maccabi Tel Aviv put Israel on the map when Tal Brody led the team to its first victory in the European Basketball Championship.



Menachem Begin, founder of the Likud party and sixth Prime Minister of Israel, voting with his wife Aliza in the national elections on May 17, 1977 | Ya'acov Sa'ar GPO

## Social Change

Movements for social justice were sweeping the world, and Israel was no exception. In 1971, a group of second-generation Israelis from North African and Middle Eastern descent founded a protest movement to fight discrimination. Inspired by the eponymous African-American group in the US, the Israeli protestors called themselves the "Black Panthers." They demonstrated against the lack of educational and employment opportunities, as well as the poor, crowded housing conditions. The protests raised public awareness and resulted in increased budgets for social issues.

### Jewish State Under Attack from Terrorists

Terror attacks against Israel began even before the creation of the state, and continued in the 1950s and 60s.

#### May 1970

School bus in Avivim attacked; 12 killed, including 9 children

#### Sept. 1972

Munich Massacre: 11 members of the Israeli Olympic Team murdered by PLO terrorists at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games

#### April 1974

Kiryat Shmona attacked by PFLP terrorists; 18 killed, nearly half of them children

#### May 1974

School in Ma'alot attacked by DFLP terrorists; 26 killed, including 22 children

#### April 1975

Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv attacked by PLO terrorists; 11 killed

#### July 1975

Bomb detonated at Zion Square, Jerusalem; 14 killed

#### March 1978

Coastal Road Massacre: Fedayeen terrorists hijack bus on Israel's Coastal Highway; 38 killed, including 13 children

#### July 1976

Operation Entebbe: Air France plane on route to Paris hijacked by Palestinian and German terrorists and diverted to Entebbe, Uganda. 94 Israelis and Jews, as well as 12 flight crew members, are held hostage. Israel carries out a covert and daring rescue operation to free the hostages.

#### Nov. 1975

Explosive detonated on Jaffa Road, Jerusalem; 7 killed

# 1980s: LIBERALIZING THE ECONOMY

The beginning of the 1980s was marked by economic challenges for Israel, including the bank stock crisis of 1983, and hyperinflation that reached over 400% by 1984. The National Unity government, formed in 1984, and headed in rotation by Yitzhak Shamir from the Likud party and Shimon Peres from the Labor party, implemented a radical emergency program known as the 1985 Economic Stabilization Plan, designed to stimulate the economy.

**A series of far-reaching reforms reduced government involvement and encouraged an open and competitive economy.**

As part of the reform program, a number of state-owned companies were privatized. Israel also adopted a fixed exchange rate in order to stabilize the currency and lower inflation and, in 1986, introduced the new Israeli shekel (NIS).

Israel's first venture capital fund, Athena Venture Partners, was established in 1985. In the same year, Israel signed a second Free Trade Agreement (FTA), this time with the United States. It was the United States' first bilateral free trade agreement and Israel's second, following the one signed with the European Community in 1975.

Operation Peace for the Galilee (known as the First Lebanon War) began in 1982 after repeated terror attacks by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) operating in southern Lebanon against Israeli towns by the border. In 1987, the First Intifada broke out across Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip, lasting into the early 1990s.



## Up in Space

In 1983, the Israel Space Agency was established to supervise and coordinate all activities of the civilian space program. Israel's investment in space technology promotes international cooperation, contributes to Israel's economy, and brings benefits in diverse areas such as agriculture, communications, health, climate change and environmental pollution.

## Statesman and Peacemaker

In a political career that spanned decades, Shimon Peres served two terms as Prime Minister, three terms as Foreign Minister, two terms as Defense Minister, and one term as President. In his capacities at the Ministry of Defense, Peres made major strides in advancing Israel's security. As Finance Minister from 1988 to 1990, he focused his energies on Israel's economy. Peres further distinguished himself by leading the negotiations that led to the signing of the Oslo Accords with the PLO in 1993. In 1997, he established the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation, with the goal of advancing joint Israeli-Arab initiatives. Today, Shimon Peres is remembered for his indispensable role in building up Israel's military capabilities, and for his efforts to establish lasting peace with Israel's Arab neighbors.

## The Eternal Capital

In July 1980, reflecting the beliefs of the vast majority of Israeli citizens, the Knesset passed the Basic Law: Jerusalem the Capital of Israel. The law states that Israel's capital is the united city of Jerusalem; it also ensures protection of the holy sites of the three monotheistic religions in Israel's capital.



Yitzhak Shamir & Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, 1986 | Nati Harnik GPO

### Operation Moses

In 1984, thousands of Ethiopian Jews from the Beta Israel community fled from Ethiopia to Sudan, the first stage in fulfilling their age-old dream of returning to the Land of Israel. Suffering malnutrition, disease and sometimes violent attacks during the arduous weeks-long journey across the desert, they then had to endure a long wait in Sudanese refugee camps. A covert Israeli operation, known as Operation Moses, airlifted 8,000 Ethiopian Jewish refugees from Sudan to Israel, marking the long-awaited return of the Beta Israel community to its homeland. The operation extended over seven weeks and involved some 30 flights.



# 1990s: A CHANGING WORLD

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, nearly a million Jews from Russia immigrated to Israel.

In 1991, the Israeli Government and the Jewish Agency airlifted some 14,000 Jews from Ethiopia in a 36-hour operation dubbed Operation Solomon.

The 1990s was a decade of dramatic change for Israel. After negotiations in Madrid, Washington D.C., and Oslo, Israel and the PLO committed to a peaceful resolution of the decades-long conflict. As part of the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority was established for Palestinian self-government in the main population centers of the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).

In 1994, Israel signed a historic peace treaty with its main neighbor, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Israel also established or enhanced diplomatic and economic relations with a variety of countries including India, China, Russia, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Oman, and Qatar.

In 1995, Israel signed a new trade agreement with the European Union, which strengthened ties between the two parties and provided a robust framework for partnership and cooperation in research and development.

## Olympic Triumphs

Although Israel has competed in the Olympics since 1952, its first taste of Olympic success was in 1992 when Yael Arad earned a silver medal in the judo half-middleweight event at the Barcelona Olympic Games. She was joined by Oren Smadja, an Israeli judoka who won the bronze medal in judo in the under 71-kg category.



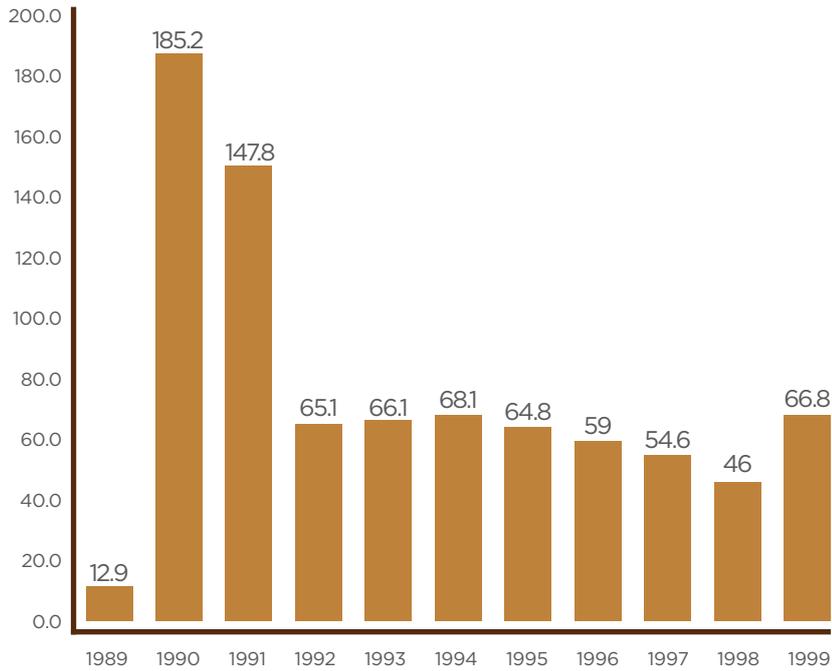
Yael Arad wins Israel's first Olympic medal, 1992  
| Yossi Rot

## Hi-Tech

The hi-tech boom of the 1990s belied Israel's size and position on the world economic stage. Keen to foster early-stage technology development through entrepreneurship, the Israeli government created the Yozma program in 1993 to stimulate venture capital and promote foreign investment. Israeli start-ups, like the cybersecurity firm Check Point and instant messaging company Mirabillis, became global hi-tech market leaders. By 1998, sales from the technology sector totaled \$8.05 billion, \$6.6 billion of which came from exports. The government also created an incubator program to integrate newcomers with local talent and leverage the strength of thousands of scientists, engineers, and physicians that had recently arrived from the USSR.

## Russian-speaking immigrants from the former USSR (thousands)

Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics



### War Hero and Peace Maker

As IDF Chief of Staff, Yitzhak Rabin contributed to Israel's dramatic victory in the 1967 Six-Day War. After leaving the military, he turned to diplomacy and then to politics. In the course of a political career that spanned over 20 years, he served two terms as Prime Minister, from 1974-1977 and again from 1992-1995. In 1994, Rabin signed the peace treaty with Jordan. That same year, Rabin and Shimon Peres were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize following the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles with PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat. Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated on 4 November 1995 as he left a peace rally. His death was condemned and mourned by Israelis across the political spectrum.



Yitzhak Rabin, 1994 | Ya'acov Sa'ar GPO

# 21st CENTURY: START-UP NATION



Dubbed the 'Start-up Nation,' Israel has become a world leader in the fields of science, technology, and research and development.

Although Israel is 60 percent desert and its population has increased tenfold since 1948, its incredible technologies enable it to produce a surplus of water, which it also shares with its neighbors.

Israel's rapid transition from a developing to a developed nation was recognized in 2010 when it was invited to join the OECD as a full member. In 2012, Israel ranked second

among OECD countries for the percentage of 25-to-64-year-olds with a tertiary education – 46%, compared to an OECD average of 32%. Additionally, 47% of Israelis aged 55-64 hold a higher education degree, nearly twice the OECD average of 25%.

Unfortunately, threats against Israel have not abated. In 2000, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat rejected Israel's peace proposal and started the Second Intifada, in which thousands of Israelis were killed in Palestinian terror attacks. After Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it was brutally taken over by the terror organization Hamas in 2007. Hamas has since launched numerous rocket attacks against Israel, and provoked three military confrontations in 2008, 2012 and 2014. In 2000, Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon, after which the Iranian-funded terrorist group Hezbollah overtook the region and brought about the Second Lebanon War.

Iran continues to pose a grave threat to the security of Israel, the Middle East, and the entire world. The Iranian regime provides the essential funding that both Hamas and Hezbollah need in order to continue to terrorize Israel on its southern and northern borders. Moreover, Iran continues to pursue its nuclear weapons program, all the while threatening the destruction of the State of Israel.

Nevertheless, Israel is thriving in the international community. By 2014, Israel had established diplomatic relations with 159 of the 193 member states of the UN. In 2019, Israel reached space with spacecraft Beresheet, becoming the 7th country in the world to achieve a lunar orbit.

## Culture

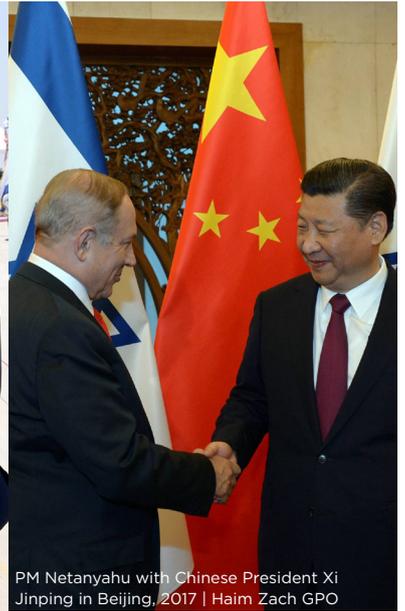
Israeli culture is popular around the world. Israeli musicians are making a name for themselves in classical music and the world's jazz scene. Artists, agents, and journalists come from all over the world to International Exposure, the Suzanne Dellal Center's annual showcase of Israeli contemporary dance. Thanks to its innovative programming, Israel is also the third-largest provider of content for American television, after Britain and the Netherlands – hit shows such as *Homeland* and *Phenomenon* are based on Israeli TV series'. In the past decade, more than 10 Israeli films have been nominated for an Oscar or won prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, among them *Beaufort* (2008), *Waltz with Bashir* (2009) and *Ajami* (2010).



PM Netanyahu with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, 2016 | Amos Ben Gershon GPO



PM Netanyahu with US President Donald Trump in Tel Aviv, 2017 | Avi Ohayon GPO



PM Netanyahu with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, 2017 | Haim Zach GPO

Israel is rapidly evolving into a global technology powerhouse, and in the World Economic Forum's 2018 measure of R&D investment per capita, Israel ranked second in the world. Moreover, Israel has the world's highest rate of investment in venture capital per capita. Israel has also become a world leader in health and agricultural technologies, which it shares with the world. Israel's unique culture of innovation and commitment to research have allowed the country to achieve an outstanding level of economic and technological excellence.

### Israeli Nobel Prize Winners

Despite its small population, Israel ranks 15th among the countries with the most Nobel Prize winners, winning 12 of the esteemed awards since 1966.



**Shmuel Yosef Agnon**  
Literature, 1966



**Menachem Begin**  
Peace, 1978



**Shimon Peres**  
Peace, 1994



**Yitzhak Rabin**  
Peace, 1994



**Daniel Kahneman**  
Economics, 2002



**Avram Hershko**  
Chemistry, 2004



**Aaron Ciechanover**  
Chemistry, 2004



**Robert Aumann**  
Economics, 2005



**Ada E. Yonath**  
Chemistry, 2009



**Dan Shechtman**  
Chemistry, 2011



**Michael Levitt**  
Chemistry, 2013



**Arieh Warshel**  
Chemistry, 2013

**Bar Kokhba Revolt Coinage photo credit (page 5)**

1. Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.

**Israeli Nobel Prize Winners photo credits (page 27)**

1. Aumann, Robert Aumann
2. Ciechanover, Amos Ben Gershom GPO
3. Hershko, Amos Ben Gershom GPO
4. Levitt, Bengt Nyman
5. Rabin, Ya'acov Sa'ar GPO
6. Shechtman, Holder Motzkau
7. Warshel, Tomasz A. Wesolowski
8. Yonath, Hareesh Nampoothiri NewNMedia



FACTS ABOUT  
**ISRAEL**

The People

The Land

**History**

The Quest for Peace

Democracy

Education

Economy

Innovation

Caring for the Environment

Israel in the International Community

Sharing for a Better World

Israel and the Jewish World

Culture

Lifestyle

Visiting Israel