

"SHALOM" Welcome to Israel



Israel is one of the smallest countries in all of Asia. Yet, it is home to more Jewish people than anywhere else in the world.

The young country is both fascinating and complicated. It is, for example, the birthplace of several Western religions, all of which call the Israeli city of Jerusalem their holiest site.

Sadly, the history of this young country is filled with conflict and wars. Yet, despite the conflict, everyday life in Israel is similar to the United States, Canada, or Western Europe.

You can read more about this fascinating country in this book. Shalom!

Where in the World Is Israel?

Israel is a small country in the Middle East. It borders four different countries. To the east are Jordan and Syria. Lebanon serves as the northern border and Egypt borders in the south. Palestine is also to the east.

Many people agree that Palestine is made up of two regions: the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Gaza Strip borders Egypt, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea.

The West Bank is located between Israel and Jordan. It covers an area of approximately 2,270 square miles (5,900 square kilometers). That's about the size of Delaware. Most of the people who live in the territory are Palestinian Arabs.

Many countries recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, but many others, including the U.S., do not.



The map shows the State of Israel and two distinct regions that make up Palestine, as well as the countries and bodies of water that are nearby and/or surrounding.

A Very Brief History of Israel

The story of modern Israel begins more than 3,500 years ago. Read how these curious kids tell about the history of Israel.



In the 1700s BCE, a group of tribes, known as Israelites, moved from their home in Mesopotamia (now the country of Iraq) to a land called Canaan, where the Philistines lived.

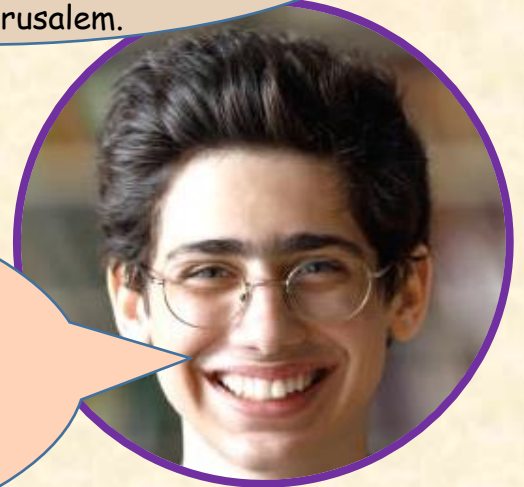
Hundreds of years later, in about 1000 BCE, the Israelites conquered the Philistines for control of Canaan, roughly the area of modern-day Israel.



Then in 922 BCE, the Israelites split in two small kingdoms. One was called Israel and was located in the north; the other was called Judah and was located in the city of Jerusalem.



For hundreds of years afterward, various peoples occupied and controlled the area that is now Israel, including the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Egyptians, and others. Then, in 1527, the Ottoman Empire conquered the land. They ruled for the next four hundred years.



Chapter 2

People, Customs, and Traditions

What do you love about Israel?



Amazing forests and beautiful beaches.

The Dead Sea. It's awesome!

Jerusalem. I love the history!

We get to vote when we're 18.

Jerusalem

*A city considered holy
by three of the world's largest religions.*



Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. It is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is also considered by many to be one of the holiest places in the world.

Three of the world's largest religions consider Jerusalem holy. Jews believe the Messiah will one day appear here; Muslims believe that Muhammad ascended to heaven from here; and Christians believe this is where Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

This holy city is also the site of cherished shrines for these three world religions. Here are three of those shrines.

The Hebrew Calendar

The Hebrew (or Jewish) calendar is different from the calendar used in the United States and other western countries. That calendar is based on the earth going around the sun.

The Jewish calendar, however, is based on the moon going around the earth. As a result, the holidays begin on a slightly different date each year.

The diagram below shows the months of the Hebrew calendar and approximately when they fall in relation to the months of the Western calendar.



An Imaginary Interview with A Jewish Family



What is a kibbutz?

A kibbutz is a commune or type of community that is unique in Israel. In a kibbutz, the members all work and contribute to the running of the community. In return, their basic living necessities such as food and housing are provided free.

Is Palestine a country?

That's a good question. Not everyone agrees. As of 2022, 138 members of the United Nations (out of 193) recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, including Costa Rica, Iceland, and South Africa. But many other U.N. members do not recognize Palestine as a state. That includes the United States, Great Britain, France, and others.

Are only Jews allowed to live in Israel?

Jews make up more than three-fourths (75 per cent) of the population of Israel. And about 20 percent of the people are Arabic, mostly Muslim, but also Christian. But anyone of any faith or even no faith can live in Israel.

Landmarks and Attractions

Every country has its famous and popular landmarks and attractions.

Some landmarks are made by humans, like the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Statue of Liberty in the United States. Other landmarks are natural wonders, created over thousands or millions of years. The Grand Canyon in the United States is an example.

Israel also has many famous landmarks and attractions, including many sacred attractions, such as the Western Wall.

People from all over the world come to see the Western Wall and other sacred and unique landmarks and attractions in Israel. Here are some of them.




The Western Wall is about 160 feet (50 meters) long and 60 feet (20 meters) high.

Why Is the Dead Sea So Salty?

The land surrounding the Dead Sea is a desert. The hot summer temperatures cause the lake's water to evaporate at a high rate. When the water evaporates it leaves behind salt. Over many years, a high concentration of salt has built up in the Dead Sea.



The Wildlife of Israel

A black and white striped polecat is the central focus of the page. It is standing upright on its hind legs, looking towards the right. The background is a blurred green forest. The polecat has dark fur with prominent white stripes on its face and neck.

Israel is a small country. Yet, it has many different landscapes, from snow-covered mountains to dry, hot deserts to lush woodlands.

All of these landscapes provide a home to a wide variety of wildlife. In fact, there are 116 species of mammals native to Israel, 511 kinds of birds, 97 types of reptiles, and seven types of amphibians.

Today, the largest land animals are mountain gazelles, wild boar, foxes, jungle cats, and Nubian ibex. There are also leopards, hyenas, jackals and wolves. But people rarely see them.

Here are just a few of the many different animals that make Israel their home.

Fun Fact

The continent of Europe is about 300 times larger in size than Israel. Yet, Israel has 116 different species of land animals, while all of Europe has only slightly more — 140 different species.