

Chapter 6

State of Israel

Chapter Preview

People

David Ben-Gurion, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, Caliph Omar, Muhammad

Places

Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Red Sea, Tel Aviv, Mediterranean Coastal Plain, Central Hills, Jordan Rift Valley, Negev Desert, Golan Heights, Galilee, Jezreel Valley, Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead Sea, West Bank, Levant Basin, Haifa, Ashdod, Eilat, Hadera

Terms

rift valley, Mediterranean climate, diaspora, Crusades, Zionists, Nazi Party, anti-Semitism, Holocaust, Six-Day War, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Knesset, Law of Return, secular, pharmaceuticals, diversified economy, shekel, Joint Economic Development Group

Top: Conflicts in the 20th century have encouraged Israel to build a strong military. **Background:** The Mount of Olives above Jerusalem is the center of major events in Judaism and Christianity.

Bottom Right: The modern high-rises of Netanya overlook the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel is a relatively small country but is often in the news and at the center of world events. It did not become a country until 1948, after World War II. Although the modern State of Israel is young, Israel's history is ancient and is tied closely to the history of the Jewish people. It is viewed by the Jews as their homeland and is seen as a land promised to them by God and given to Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob, also known as Israel. These leaders, known as the Patriarchs, claimed the land of Israel more than 3,500 years ago. Over the centuries, the land of Israel came under the rule of other countries, but many Jewish people still longed to return to their Promised Land.

Modern Israel's history has been marked by conflict since the beginning. Palestinians and neighboring Arab countries wanted the land to be returned to the Palestinian Arabs who were living in the area before it became Israel. Israel maintained that its claim to the land goes back to the time of Abraham thousands of years ago. Israel is unique because it is the only country in which Judaism is the majority religion. However, Christians and Muslims also have sacred and holy sites within Israel, especially in Jerusalem. This has led to conflict between religious and ethnic groups.

Today, Israel has a thriving economy that is based on technology. Over the last sixty years, Israel has transformed itself from a country based in agriculture to a high-tech nation. For example, the map-based Waze navigation app was developed by an Israeli company and sold to Google in 2013 for over \$1 billion. Other technologies that were developed in Israel support the advancement of cell phones, cameras to see inside the human body, and alternative energy sources.

Israel's small size and conflicts with its neighbors have also encouraged it to develop one of the world's most advanced military systems. Although there are some exceptions, military service is required of all Israelis over the age of eighteen, with men serving at least thirty-two months and women serving twenty-four months.

“

In Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles.

- David Ben-Gurion, primary founder and first prime minister of the State of Israel



PASSPORT



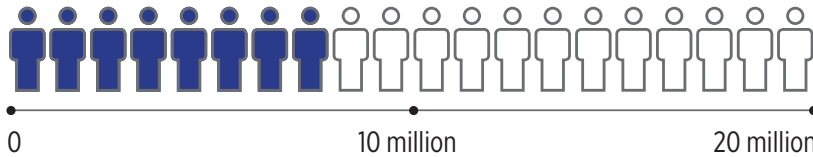
Official Name: The State of Israel (תְּנִידָם לְאִרְשֵׁי or Medinat Yisra'el)
Capital: Jerusalem (for Israel); the rest of the world recognizes its capital as Tel Aviv-Yafo
Form of Government: parliamentary democracy
Head of Government: Prime Minister
Head of State: President
Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal
Currency: Israeli Shekel (ILS)



Top Left: Flag of Israel. **Top Right:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. **Middle:** Jerusalem. **Above:** The Knesset, the Parliament of Israel. **Above Right:** Tel Aviv. **Right:** Shekels, the currency of Israel.

CULTURE CONNECTION

POPULATION

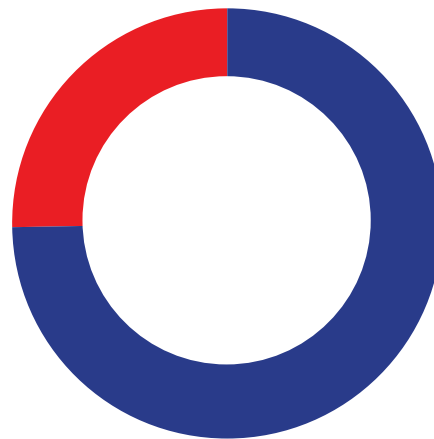


Israel
8,174,527 (July 2016 est.)
Population Rank 99

United States
324,386,000 (est. 2017)
Population Rank 3

ETHNIC GROUPS

- Jewish 75%
- Non-Jewish 25%



FUN FACTS

Israeli banknotes actually have Braille on them.

Official Languages:

Hebrew and Arabic

Phrases in Hebrew

Hello - מולש - Shalom

Goodbye - תוארתהל - L'hit'raot

Good morning - בוט רקוב - Boqer tov

Good afternoon - מיבוט צ"חחא -

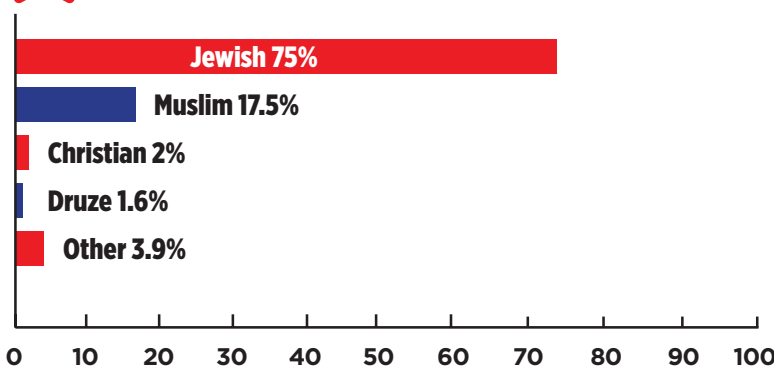
Thank you - הדות - Toda

You're welcome - מא חמשנ - Bevaqasha

Yes - נכ - Hen; ken

No - אל - Lo

RELIGION



LIFE EXPECTANCY

Average 82.4 years

Male 80.6 years

Female 84.4 years



EDUCATION

Literacy total population 97.8%; male 98.7% / female 96.8% (2011 est.)

Education Expenditures 5.9% of GDP
Rank 57

Middle Left: International troops at the Western Wall in Jerusalem during the Six-Day War. **Bottom Right:** US President Jimmy Carter at the White House shaking hands with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. **Background:** Degania, the first kibbutz agricultural colony, near the Sea of Galilee.

TIMELINE

OF ISRAEL HISTORY



Figure 6.1



1900

- 1909** First kibbutz, Degania, formed in Israel
- 1920** British administration of Palestine began

- 1948** Founding of Israel as a Jewish state
Arab-Israeli War
United States recognized the State of Israel

- 1967** Six-Day War

- 1979** Israel and Egypt signed a peace agreement

- 1993** Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization signed a peace agreement

- 1985** United States and Israel established a free trade agreement

- 1997** Four people killed from polluted river water after a bridge collapse

2000

- 2013** Waze navigation app sold to Google

- 2017** US President Donald Trump formally recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel



Area: 8,019 square miles

Area Rank: 154

Natural Resources:

timber, potash, copper ore, natural gas, phosphate rock, magnesium bromide, clays, sand

Environmental Issues:

limited arable land and natural freshwater resources pose serious constraints; desertification; air pollution from industrial and vehicle emissions; groundwater pollution from industrial and domestic waste, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides



Map 6.1

Israel

Map Skill: What countries surround Israel?

Section 1

The Geography of Israel


 Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

- ▶ why water from the Jordan River is a source of conflict;
- ▶ the impact of the Mediterranean Sea on Israel's economy;
- ▶ areas of high population density in Israel;
- ▶ the official language of Israel;
- ▶ terms: **rift valley**, **Mediterranean climate**.

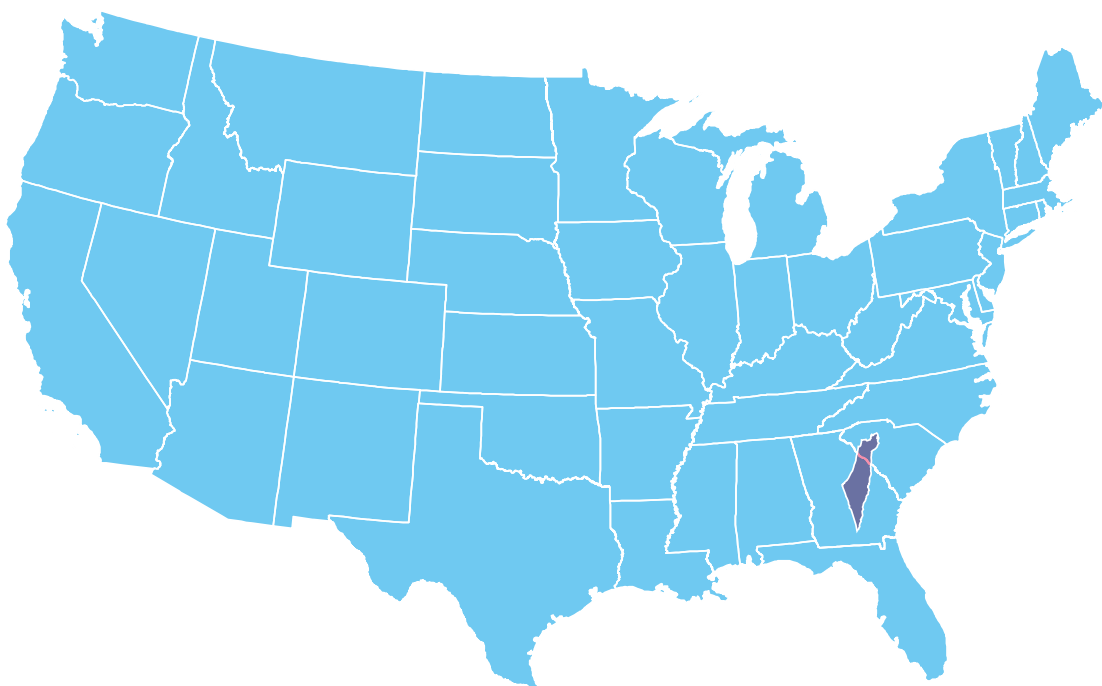
DID YOU KNOW?

It only takes six hours to drive from the northern tip of Israel to the southern tip.

Location and Size of Israel

Israel is located in Southwest Asia. It is located in the northern and eastern hemispheres. Israel is bordered by four countries: Lebanon on the north, Syria on the northeast, Jordan on the east, and Egypt on the southwest. To the west of Israel is the Mediterranean Sea. An important area in the region is the Gaza Strip, which has a small coastline along the Red Sea in the south.

Israel covers an area of approximately 8,000 square miles. That is about the size of Georgia's ten largest counties combined. The country is 263 miles from north to south, and its width varies from 71 miles at its widest point to 9.3 miles at its narrowest.





Physical Features of Israel

As a result of Israel's small size, many different types of physical features—like mountains, deserts, and fertile land—are very close together. Israel can be divided into four geographical regions: the Mediterranean Coastal Plain, the Central Hills, the Jordan Rift Valley, and the Negev Desert.

The Mediterranean Coastal Plain is made of sandy beaches and fertile farmland. In some areas, farmland extends twenty-five miles from the coast. More than half of Israel's population lives in this region. In this area are also major cities like Tel Aviv, harbors for trade, most of Israel's industry, and a large part of its agriculture and tourism.

The Central Hills region of Israel is made of several different small mountain ranges. Thousands of years ago, volcanic eruptions created the Golan Heights, which are located in northeastern Israel. The hills of Galilee are also a part of this region. While the hills can reach heights between 1,600 and 4,000 feet above sea level, there are also fertile valleys between the hills. With so much fertile land, it makes sense that the people who live in the Golan Heights and hills of Galilee focus on agriculture. The Jezreel Valley, for instance, is Israel's richest agricultural area. Tourism and some industry are also part of the economy in this region. The Sea of Galilee, which is technically a lake rather than a sea, is located in this region. It is the lowest freshwater lake in the world.



DID YOU KNOW ?

Israel has 137 beaches but only 170 miles of coastline.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The Sea of Galilee is the largest lake entirely in Israel.

Top: Bahai Gardens in the city of Haifa.
Bottom: The Shomron Mountains and the Cross-Israel Road.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Dead Sea is the lowest point on Earth's surface.



The Negev Desert covers about 60 percent of Israel. Because it is a desert, there is a sparse population in this area. The people who live there focus on agriculture and industrial jobs.

The final major region of Israel is the Jordan Rift Valley. This rift valley is located in eastern Israel and is part of the Syria-African Rift. **Rift valleys** occur when plates on Earth's surface move away from each other. The land in this region is very fertile in the north, so there is a lot of agricultural activity. The southern part of the region is semiarid, which is not as good for agriculture. Other economic activities in this region include fishing, industry, and tourism.

One of the major features in the Jordan Rift Valley is the Jordan River. The river flows through the rift valley, beginning in the north and ending in the south at the Dead Sea.

The Jordan River is about 186 miles long. Throughout the river's course through Israel, fertile land can be found on its banks. The Jordan River is one of the major sources of fresh water in Israel. Syria and Jordan share the Jordan River with Israel. This has led to conflicts in the past, as each country needs the water for irrigation.



Top: The Negev Desert in Israel.
Bottom: The Jordan Rift Valley.

special Feature

The Dead Sea

Did you know there is a body of water that is so salty no fish or aquatic plants can live in it? The Dead Sea, or Salt Sea, is such a place. The Dead Sea is also the lowest place on the surface of Earth and the lowest body of water on Earth. It is landlocked and lies between Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank. Jordan controls the eastern shore, while Israel controls the southern part of the western shore. The northern part of the western shore is in the West Bank, but has been controlled by Israel since the Six-Day War in 1967.

The high level of salt in the water makes people more buoyant than normal. Tourists flock to the shores to float in the salty water and soak in mineral and mud baths for relaxation and health purposes, or sometimes just for fun!

The area around the Dead Sea has been an important place throughout history. While it is true that nothing can live in the Dead Sea, the shores are dotted with oases that are fed with fresh water from underground aquifers. Many events that are important to Jews, Christians, or Muslims happened around the Dead Sea. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were on the shores of the Dead Sea. Some of the oldest copies of Hebrew writings, called the Dead Sea Scrolls, were found in caves above the sea.

The Dead Sea is at risk of an environmental disaster. The main source of water for the sea is the Jordan River. Beginning in the 1960s, farmers in both Israel and Jordan began diverting water from the river for irrigation. As a result, the water level of the Dead Sea is dropping at a rate of three feet a year. It used to be fifty miles long, but is now only thirty miles long. Sinkholes are common along the shore where underground aquifers are drying up. In 2015, Israel and Jordan came up with a plan to build a canal from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea to help provide more water for the Dead Sea. Environmentalists are concerned that this will cause even more problems. How do you think the problem of the shrinking Dead Sea should be solved?



Above: The Dead Sea's salt content makes people more buoyant than normal. **Background:** Salt is evident on the shores of the Dead Sea.

Climate of Israel

Even though Israel is a small nation, its climate varies from temperate to tropical. There are only two main seasons in Israel. In the winter and spring months, there is a cold, rainy period. Summer and fall make up a hot, dry season. The north and central parts of Israel receive the most rainfall each year.

The largest climate zone is Mediterranean, which covers the central and northern parts of Israel. **Mediterranean climate** means that there are hot, dry summers and mild to cool, rainy winters. About forty inches of rain fall each year in the region. This is about six to ten inches less than the average rainfall in Georgia.

The southern and eastern parts of the country, including the Negev Desert, have a desert climate. The region gets the least amount of rainfall and is known for very hot summers. The driest areas can receive less than two inches of rain per year with summer high temperatures around 120 °F.



Natural Resources of Israel

Unlike most countries in Southwest Asia, Israel is not known for its petroleum reserves. In fact, Israel has very

few natural resources. The ones it has include timber, potash, copper ore, natural gas, phosphate rock, magnesium bromide, clays, and sand. Another valuable resource in Israel is arable land. Agriculture makes up about 24 percent of Israel's land use. As a result of the scarcity of natural resources, Israel's economy has had to find other ways to generate revenue.



In 2010, there was a large natural gas discovery in the eastern Mediterranean. The reserves are in the Levant Basin west of Haifa. More recently, shale oil was discovered southwest of Jerusalem and a huge oil deposit was found in the southern Golan Heights northeast of the Sea of Galilee. These discoveries of gas and oil are predicted to produce large amounts of the natural resources. The gas field alone had an estimated market value of over \$5 billion. However, various delays have slowed the extraction of the minerals, primarily because of political disputes in the area. The Levant Basin is shared by Gaza, Lebanon, Cyprus, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This has led to ownership disputes. The claims to oil have been disputed between Israel and Syria. Additionally, environmental groups have shown opposition to the removal of the resources, and development of the resources has been delayed by court action.

Top: The Golan Heights region. **Above:** Windmills generate electricity in the Golan Heights. The snow-covered Mount Hermon cluster seen in the distance borders Syria and Lebanon.

Environmental Issues

The people of Israel are continually working to make Israel an environmentally friendly country. For example, Israel treats 85 percent of its solid waste in an environmentally friendly manner, which makes it one of the environmentally cleanest countries in the world. The country has environmental problems that it must address, however.

Israel's major cities, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa, as well as industrial cities like Ashdod, face pollution from industry as well as automobile emissions. Air pollution created many health issues for the residents in those cities, especially for the elderly and children, who had higher than average respiratory problems. Although Jerusalem is not industrial, air pollution from its vehicle traffic mixes with pollution that drifts in from other cities like Tel Aviv.

The country has suffered from water pollution, too. All of Israel's rivers, except those that flow through sparsely populated areas, are much more polluted than rivers in Europe and the United States. For more than forty years, Haifa Bay's chemical industry discharged its industrial wastes directly into the river. Water treatment plants provide clean water to Israel's citizens for drinking and household use; however, the river pollution is a problem. In one case in 1997, four people were killed when a bridge collapsed and they fell into the Yarkon River. The victims were rescued from the river and taken to hospitals. They later died from infection caused by water pollution.



Israel's climate has created another water issue. Israel is a semiarid country with little rainfall in most areas and declining water sources. Although the country practices water conservation, its increasing population and increasing water usage may result in an insufficient supply of drinking water. Another significant result of the water shortage is the shrinking of the Dead Sea. Large sinkholes, which have resulted from the Dead Sea's disappearing water, make it dangerous to be near the sea in certain areas.

Waste disposal is another environmental issue. Israel faces a solid-waste crisis due to increasing amounts of garbage and small amounts of land. Solid-waste disposal can cause significant and irreversible damage to groundwater, air, and soil. Israel has, however, taken this issue very seriously and has taken many steps to effectively manage its waste.



Top: Haifa Bay industrial area. **Left:** Rescuers search for Australian athletes in the Yarkon River, Tel Aviv, after a pedestrian bridge collapsed during opening ceremonies of the Maccabiah Games on July 14, 1997.



Impact of Location

The geography of Israel has had a significant impact on where people live and how they trade. The areas with high population densities are areas where there is arable land and a milder Mediterranean climate. These areas include the Coastal Plain and the Jordan Rift Valley. Areas with access to fresh water also have higher population densities. The Negev has a low population density because it is a desert, and its climate is not suitable for growing food.

Israel's coastline on the Mediterranean Sea makes trading easier. Its several deepwater ports along the coast increase Israel's ability to trade with countries outside of Southwest Asia. The major ports in Israel are Ashdod, Eilat, Hadera, and Haifa.

People of Israel

Israel's population is a little over eight million people. Over three-fourths of its population is Jewish. The remaining part of the population is mostly Arabic. Israel has two official languages: Hebrew and Arabic. English, however, is commonly used as a result of tourism. After Israel was established in 1948, the government decided to make Hebrew the official language, which was unusual because Hebrew was an unspoken language at that time. Israel was created as a homeland for Jews at the end of World War II, so it makes sense that the largest religion practiced is Judaism. There are also smaller numbers of Christians and Muslims in Israel.

Reviewing the Section

1. Copy the chart below and fill it in with information from the section.

Geographical Region	Description of the Region	What Types of Jobs Are Common?
Mediterranean Coastal Plain		
Central Hills		
Jordan Rift Valley		
Negev Desert		

2. Which countries share water from the Jordan River? Why might this lead to conflict?
3. How does the Mediterranean Sea influence Israel's economy?
4. How does Israel's lack of oil and other natural resources impact its economy?
5. Which areas have the highest population densities in Israel? Why?
6. What are the official languages of Israel? Why?

Top: A dry riverbed snakes through Israel's Negev Desert.

Section 2

A Brief History of Israel

As you read, look for



- ▶ the three religions that have sacred sites in Israel;
- ▶ how British promises about Palestine led to conflict;
- ▶ reasons that led to the creation of Israel;
- ▶ the problems associated with the creation of Israel in 1948;
- ▶ terms: **diaspora, Crusades, Zionists, Nazi Party, anti-Semitism, Holocaust, Six-Day War, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).**

Early History of Israel

The history of Israel goes back for thousands of years. The land itself was at a crossroads of ancient trade routes. Throughout its early history, many people invaded and conquered the land including the Canaanites, Hebrews, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, European Crusaders, and most recently, Ottoman Turks.

According to Jewish belief, around 3,500 years ago, God promised the prophet Abraham the land that is present-day Israel. After a famine forced the Canaanites to leave the area and travel to Egypt, other people settled in the area. Meanwhile in Egypt, the Canaanites—who became the Hebrews—were enslaved by the pharaoh, the monarch of Egypt. The prophet Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, and they returned to the land of their ancestors. The Hebrews were able to win the land back from the other people who were living there. The Hebrews established Israel and the city of Jerusalem.



The city of Jerusalem has over 2,000 archeological sites.



Bottom: Panorama of Jerusalem in the early 20th century.



Top Left: These ruins in Jerusalem are believed to be from the time of King David, about 3,000 years ago. **Top Right:** The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over the traditional birthplace of Jesus. It was named a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Some of the powerful and famous leaders during ancient times include King David and King Solomon. Eventually, outside invaders came and the Israelites, as they were called, were once again forced to leave their land. This was called the **diaspora**, or scattering of Jews across the world.

Eventually, the area came under Roman rule. During this time, Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was born in this area. Christians believe that



Jesus is the Messiah, or Son of God. After his execution by local officials in Jerusalem, it became illegal to practice Christianity. However, Jesus's followers believed that Jesus was raised from the dead by God and stayed in Jerusalem for a short time before ascending to heaven. After these events, the religion grew beyond its Jewish beginnings, and 300 years later, Constantine became the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity and legalize the religion. After Christianity was legalized, the land of Israel became known as the Holy Land. People from all parts of Asia and Europe wanted to travel to this area. A large number of churches and monasteries were built during this time. Ruins of some of these churches can still be seen in Jerusalem and other areas in Israel.

Christian rule in the area ended around the year 640 when the Muslim Caliph Omar conquered the area. According to Muslim belief, the Prophet Muhammad rose to heaven in Jerusalem, making it one of the holiest cities in Islam. During the period of Arab rule, European crusaders were sent to try and reclaim Jerusalem for the Christians. The **Crusades** were not successful. Israel was a part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I.

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire was one of the Central Powers with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a result of losing the war, the Ottoman Empire lands were divided among the European winners. The United Kingdom was given control of the area known as Palestine until a decision could be made about how to establish a permanent government there. The British made promises to both the Arabs and Jews about the future of that land. The Arabs had been promised control of Palestine if they helped the British fight the Ottoman Turks during World War I. The British also promised the Jews that they could create a country in Palestine where their ancestors had lived. Eventually, the British asked the United Nations to solve the problem.

Creation of Israel

Most of the people living in Palestine before World War II were Palestinian Arabs. However, since the late 1800s large numbers of Jewish settlers had been immigrating to the area from both Western and Eastern Europe. Some of these Jewish settlers wanted to create a homeland for the world's Jews in Palestine, because they believed land in this area had been promised to them by God many thousands of years ago. These groups were known as **Zionists** (those who felt the world's Jews deserved to return to a homeland in Zion, or those parts of Palestine where the Jewish people had lived in Biblical times). Conflicts began to break out between the settlers and the Palestinian Arabs, as each group tried to hold onto the land.

During World War II, the Jewish people in Europe suffered terribly at the hands of the **Nazi Party** (the National Socialist Party, led by Adolf Hitler, which came to power in Germany during the 1930s). There was widespread **anti-Semitism** (hatred of the Jews) in Europe. Over six million European Jews were killed in Nazi concentration camps, and many thousands of others had to leave Europe to avoid death. This terrible act came to be known as the **Holocaust**.

At the end of the war, the Jewish people of the world wanted to take steps to be sure nothing like this could ever happen again. Many countries in the world felt tremendous guilt over the Holocaust as they began to learn the details of the Nazi-run concentration camps. Jewish groups living in Europe and the United States, even before the Holocaust, had talked of trying to set up a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. At the end of the war, the newly created United Nations also believed something should be done for the Jewish people because of their suffering.

In 1948, the United Nations voted to create a homeland for the Jews in part of Palestine. The UN plan was to partition, or divide, Palestine between the Arabs and Jews. The Arab Palestinians would retain control of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights. Jerusalem would be set up as an international zone with neither group controlling it. The Jews who were living there accepted the offer and declared the creation of the State of Israel. However, not everyone was happy with the new arrangement. There were Palestinian Arabs living in the area who felt the United Nations had unfairly given their land away, and they along with many other Arab countries refused to accept the new country.



Top: Hungarian Jews in 1944 arrive at the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland.



War broke out in May 1948 between the new State of Israel and the Palestinians. Other Arab countries in Southwest Asia agreed with the Palestinians and helped them during this war. The Israelis were able to win this war and the new State of Israel survived, taking over even more land than had originally been planned. Much of Israel's history since independence has been marked by conflict with its Arab neighbors.

In 1967, there was another major conflict called the **Six-Day War**. Once again, Israel was able to expand its borders. Some of the captured land included parts of Jordan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and the Sinai Peninsula, which was part of Egypt. In 1979, Israel and Egypt signed a peace agreement. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for official recognition as a country by Egypt.

In 1993, the Israeli government and the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, signed an important peace agreement. Part of the agreement allowed for Palestinian rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This appeared to be an important step in the peace process. However, major fighting has continued in the 21st century as Israelis have expanded housing developments into lands claimed by Palestinians.



Top Left: Israeli soldiers hoisted a homemade flag in 1949 to mark the end of the first Arab-Israeli War, known as the War of Independence in Israel.

Right: Israeli settlers in Hebron, West Bank.

Reviewing the Section

1. Which three religions have sacred sites in Israel? Do you think this could cause problems? Why or why not?
2. How did British promises about Palestine lead to conflict?
3. Summarize how and why Israel was created in 1948.
4. When the UN created Israel in 1948, why did it cause problems?
5. **Make a Prediction:** What do you think the future holds for Israel and Palestine? Why?

Section 3

The Government of Israel

As you read, look for

- ▶ the type of government in Israel;
- ▶ how the head of government in Israel gets into power;
- ▶ the Law of Return;
- ▶ who in Israel can vote;
- ▶ powers of the Knesset;
- ▶ terms: **Knesset, Law of Return, secular.**

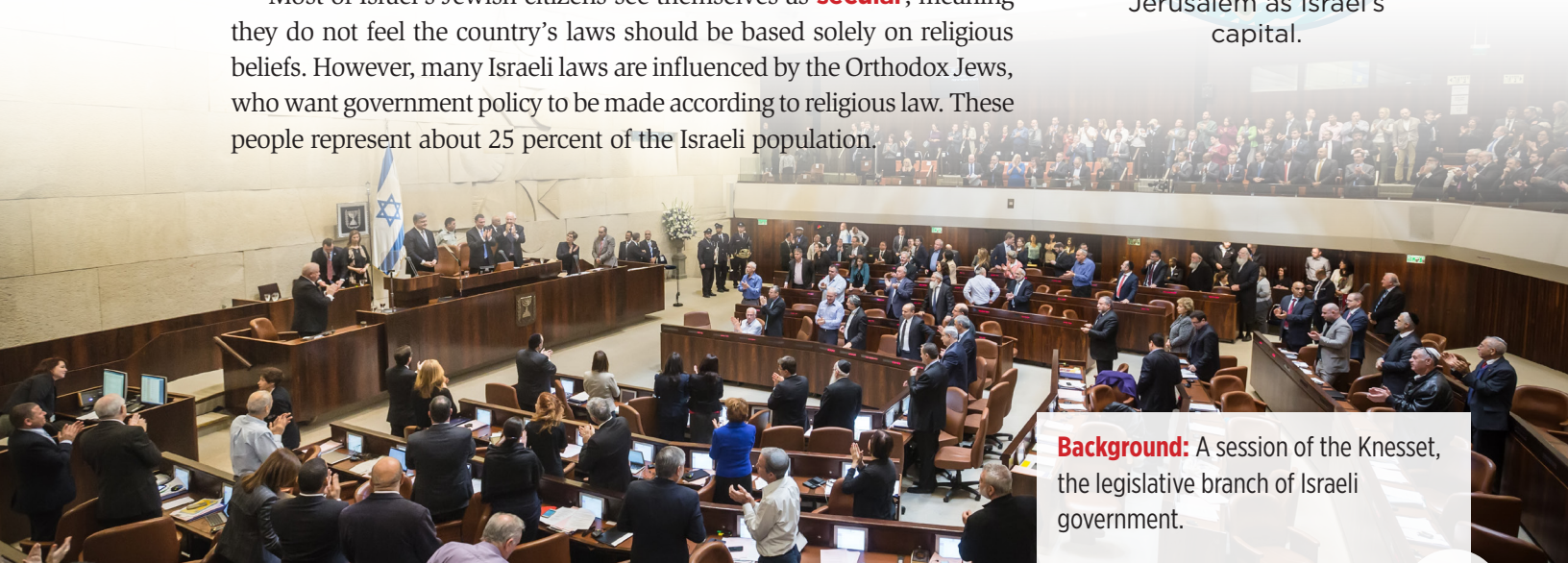


Type of Government

The State of Israel is a parliamentary democracy. Its parliament is called the **Knesset**. The prime minister is head of government. There is a president of the state who has several ceremonial roles and duties but is not considered a part of any branch of the government. The president is elected by members of parliament.

Unlike most other democracies in the world, Israel does not have a written constitution. Instead of a constitution, the government of Israel is based on the Declaration of Establishment (1948), the Basic Laws, and the Law of Return. Both the Basic Laws and Law of Return have been amended several times. The **Law of Return** is unique to Israel and focuses on citizenship. According to the Law of Return, anyone who is considered a Jew—which means that a person has a Jewish mother or has converted to Judaism—and has immigrated to Israel can become a citizen.

Most of Israel's Jewish citizens see themselves as **secular**, meaning they do not feel the country's laws should be based solely on religious beliefs. However, many Israeli laws are influenced by the Orthodox Jews, who want government policy to be made according to religious law. These people represent about 25 percent of the Israeli population.



Background: A session of the Knesset, the legislative branch of Israeli government.



Branches of Government

Israel's government is divided into three branches in addition to the presidency. In the executive branch are the prime minister and cabinet. After elections, the president and party leaders of the Knesset give the task of forming a new government to a member of parliament. This member of the Knesset becomes the prime minister, or head of government. The prime minister appoints people to the cabinet.

The Knesset makes up the legislative branch of Israel. The Knesset is unicameral, which means it is made up of only one house. There are 120 seats in the Knesset. Members are directly elected by citizens. Elections are held every four years but can be called earlier. The Knesset is the most powerful branch of government in Israel. It creates and enforces laws, makes political decisions, chooses the president, and supervises the government.

The third branch of government is the judicial branch, which is made up of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court consists of the chief justice and fourteen judges. The judges serve until age seventy, when they are required to retire. The Judicial Selection Committee chooses the judges. It is composed of two cabinet members, two Knesset members, two representatives from the Israel Bar Association, and three Supreme Court judges. The main responsibility of the judicial branch is to maintain the laws of Israel.

All citizens age eighteen and older can vote in elections for members of parliament. Elections are held in Israel every four years, unless the party in power begins to lose the support of a majority of the Knesset members. In that case, elections for a new Knesset may be held earlier than scheduled.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over thirty political parties in Israel.

Reviewing the Section

1. What type of government does Israel have?
2. Who is the head of government in Israel? How does that person get into power?
3. What is the Law of Return?
4. What does *secular* mean?
5. Who can vote in Israel? Who do they vote for?
6. What is the role of the Knesset?

Top: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli President Shimon Peres at the opening of the Knesset in 2009.

Section 4

The Economy of Israel

As you read, look for

- ▶ the type of economic system in Israel;
- ▶ the core of Israel's economy;
- ▶ challenges facing Israel's economy;
- ▶ how Israel's economy is diversified;
- ▶ Israel's top exports and imports;
- ▶ Israeli tariffs on agriculture products;
- ▶ terms: **pharmaceuticals, diversified economy, shekel.**



Type of Economy

Israel has a market economy, and its citizens enjoy a rather high standard of living. The country has a strong judicial system that protects businesses and enforces contracts effectively. Bribery and other types of corruption in government are illegal and are not expected by citizens. This gives entrepreneurs confidence to invest in businesses in Israel. There are few barriers to trade other than tariffs on food imports that encourage Israelis to purchase locally grown and produced agricultural products.

Because Israel has few natural resources, its economy is based on high-tech equipment, technology-based industries, diamond cutting, and **pharmaceuticals** (medical drugs). The large natural gas deposit that was found recently off the shores of Israel has the potential for adding to the country's economy.

During the Arab Spring in 2011, Israel's economy was not harmed because most of its trade relationships are with countries outside of Southwest Asia. Over the last few years, Israel's economy has grown about 4 percent each year.

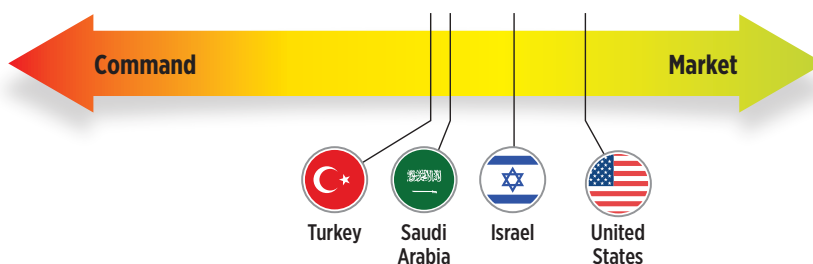


Figure 6.2

Economic Systems in the Middle East

Above: Israel has large pharmaceutical and technology-based companies.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Over 50 million Israeli flowers are sent to European florists for sale on Valentine's Day.

Some of the challenges facing Israel's economy are income inequality and high housing prices. Another problem is that the technology sector of the economy, which is world famous, employs only about 8 percent of the workers. Technology companies may generate a lot of income, but they do not necessarily employ a lot of people. For instance, when the Israeli company Waze was sold to Google, the price was over \$1 billion. However, this valuable company had only about 100 employees. Service and manufacturing jobs are the most important sources of work for Israelis. However, these workers face competition from workers in countries outside of Israel.

Unlike most countries in Southwest Asia, Israel has a **diversified economy**, an economic system that focuses on the production of different goods rather than just one good. It has made up for its lack of natural resources by focusing on industry, technology, and services. About 70 percent of Israel's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from the service sector, which includes jobs like tourism, housekeeping, medical treatments, and education. Israel has also become famous for its technology sector, which has led to increased investment from foreign countries. The industrial sector makes up about 27 percent of Israel's GDP. Some of its main industries include medical electronics, telecommunications, computer hardware and software, solar energy, food processing, and fine chemicals.

Trade in Israel

Trade is very important to the Israeli economy, especially because the country lacks many natural resources. In 2015, Israel exported about \$65 billion worth of products to other countries. The top exports include machinery and equipment, software, cut diamonds, agricultural products, chemicals, and textiles and apparel. Israel's top export countries are the United States, Hong King, the United Kingdom, and China. On the other hand, Israel spent about \$59 billion on imports in 2015. The top imports are raw materials, military equipment, investment goods, rough diamonds, fuels, grains, and consumer goods. Israel's top import partners are the United States, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, and Italy.



Above: This truck is loaded with goods for the Gaza Strip. **Background:** Israeli flowers are exported to Europe.

Free trade agreements with the United States, the European Union, and countries in Latin America have helped Israel's economy and allowed Israel to export more goods and services. Israel uses very low tariffs, with an average tariff rate of about one percent. The government does try to limit the import of agricultural products so that farmers in Israel will not lose business. In order to have a fair trade, countries must use exchange rates to determine the value of goods in terms of their own currency. Israel's currency is the **shekel** (₪), or Israeli new shekel, abbreviated ILS. Countries trading with Israel must exchange their currency, such as US dollars, for Israeli new shekels. Israeli companies must exchange their shekels for US dollars in order to trade with businesses in the United States. In 2017, one shekel was worth about \$.25.

Georgia businesses trade with businesses in Israel. In 2014, Georgia exported about \$250 million in goods to Israel, making the country Georgia's 33rd-largest export market. The exports included aircraft, engines and parts, paper and paperboard, and wood pulp. Georgia imported about \$532 million in goods from Israel, which included aircraft, medical instruments, plastics, and machinery. Governor Nathan Deal visited Israel in 2014 to promote trade and investment in the state of Georgia.



Natural Resources

Israel has very few natural resources. Israel does have a highly developed industrial economy that requires energy from oil, so the world price of oil has a huge impact on the Israeli economy. Minerals are mined commercially in Israel including phosphates. Salts are also taken from the Dead Sea and processed for sale. Israel's economy depends more on technology than on the development of natural resources, but this also means Israel must continue to purchase oil to power its industries or look for alternative fuel sources.



Human Capital in Israel

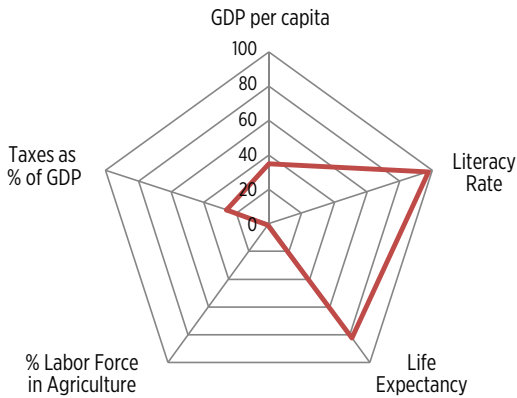
One of the main reasons Israel's economy has remained strong even with threats of economic downturns and armed conflict is Israel's well-educated population. Israelis have wide access to education. School attendance is required beginning at age five, and education is free until age eighteen. The average amount of education a person receives in Israel is sixteen years, which includes a college education. Israel's literacy rate is 98 percent.

Currently, the Israeli government spends almost 6 percent of its GDP on education, which ranks 57th in the world. Many Israelis work in industries related to medical technology, agricultural technology, mining, and electronics. These are highly skilled jobs so the Israelis must be well educated to perform them.



Top: Israel's currency is the shekel.
Above: Israel invests in human capital with schools such as the Sami Shamoon College of Engineering.

Figure 6.3
Israel Spider Graph



Capital Goods in Israel

Israel has invested heavily in capital goods because so much of its economy depends on technology, industrial production, and advanced communication systems. Israel has also invested heavily in technology involved in the defense industry. Israel is usually on the leading edge of capital goods innovation and invention. Some of the important capital goods Israel has created include cell phone technology developed by Motorola, voice mail technology, and development of early antivirus software for computers. New technologies include solar windows that improve energy efficiency, transparency, and power generation. The ability to invent and innovate is promoted in Israel, and the country's investment in capital goods allows businesses to bring these new products to consumers in Israel and around the world.

Entrepreneurship in Israel

Israel's innovation in the area of capital goods is due in part to Israel's high number of entrepreneurs. In fact, Israel has the third-highest rate of entrepreneurship in the world. Israel has the highest rate of female entrepreneurs in the world, as well as the highest number of entrepreneurs who are over the age of 55. Currently in Israel, there are more than 3,000 high-tech companies, which means that Israel has the highest density of high-tech companies in the world after Silicon Valley in California. One example of this technology focus is that four Israelis developed the technology for AOL Instant Messaging. The Waze app is another commonly used technology that had its beginnings with entrepreneurs in Israel. Having so many entrepreneurs helps Israel's economy continue to grow each year. As entrepreneurs open new businesses and create new technology, they are also creating higher-paying jobs for the people of Israel.



Above: Apple Computer has invested in a large research and development center in Herzliya.

Reviewing the Section

1. What type of economy does Israel have?
2. What is Israel's economy based on?
3. What are two challenges facing Israel's economy?
4. What does having a diversified economy mean?
How is Israel's economy diversified?
5. What are Israel's top exports and imports?
6. Why does Israel put tariffs on agriculture products?
7. Copy the chart below and fill it in with information from the section.

Factor of Production	How Does Israel Invest in It?	Examples in Israel
Natural Resources		
Human Capital		
Capital Goods		
Entrepreneurship		

special Feature

A Kibbutz

What is a kibbutz? A kibbutz is a community in Israel where the goal is collective ownership, equality, and democracy. What does that mean? In a kibbutz, all people are equal regardless of their gender, income, or any other factor. There is no private ownership in a kibbutz. The money that is produced from jobs is combined, and each family is granted a part of the money based on the size of the family. All members participate in a direct democracy, which means that every member votes on the issues affecting the kibbutz.

The roots of the kibbutz go back before Israel was created in 1948. In 1909, a group of young people from Eastern Europe arrived in Palestine. They created the first kibbutz, called Degania. The early kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) were responsible for settlement, immigration, defense, and agriculture before the State of Israel was created in 1948. Today, there are 270 kibbutzim across Israel with member sizes that range from 80 to 2,000 people. Around 130,000 people live in kibbutzim, making up about 2.8 percent of Israel's total population.

There are two different types of people in a kibbutz: members and participants. Members are permanent residents of the kibbutz who are able to vote and have other special privileges. Participants are people who work in the kibbutz for a shorter amount of time. They are not able to vote and do not have the same privileges as members. All people in a kibbutz work in one aspect of the community like the orchard, factory, dairy, fishponds, or maintenance. Additional duties, like dining duties, rotate among members. At first, all kibbutzim were based on agriculture, but now many kibbutzim are focused on producing electronics, appliances, machinery, or furniture. What do you think living on a kibbutz would be like?



Top: A large agricultural kibbutz.
Background: A kibbutz field filled with flowering buttercups.

Section 5

US-Israel Relations


 Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

- ▶ how long the United States and Israel have been allies;
- ▶ how long the United States has been involved with the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- ▶ the amount of aid the United States gives Israel each year;
- ▶ the importance of the free trade agreement between Israel and the United States;
- ▶ organizations to which Israel belongs;
- ▶ term: **Joint Economic Development Group.**

DID YOU KNOW?

The United States was the first nation to recognize Israel as a country.

The Friendship of Israel and the United States

The United States-Israeli relationship began the moment Israel became a nation in 1948. Since that time and continuing until today, Israel is the United States' most reliable partner and ally in Southwest Asia. The United States is also Israel's largest trading partner.

The United States and Israel share many of the same goals. Among them is the desire to maintain a secure Jewish homeland in the State of Israel. Also, the countries share similar goals for peace and stability in the Middle East. Finally, the countries share common democratic values that they would like to model and spread to other parts of the Middle East.



Right: The United States and Israel have a long history of friendship.

While the United States is committed to supporting Israel's right to the land, it also is committed to creating a two-nation solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the years, the United States has worked to try and mediate a peace deal between the two groups. The United States wants Israel to remain an independent, Jewish country, but it would like the Palestinians to have their own country as well.

US Assistance to Israel

The relationship between the United States and Israel is very important. One of the ways the United States helps Israel is by providing over \$3 billion in Foreign Military Financing. Israel has one of the world's most technologically advanced militaries. It has invested heavily in military defense because it is under a constant threat of war with many neighboring Arab countries that disagree with its existence. The United States and Israel participate in joint military exercises, military research, and weapons development. Israel and the United States are committed to fighting terrorism together.

Financial assistance to Israel has been important to its success. The United States has led in this financial support. The Congressional Research Service estimated in 2016 that the United States has provided over \$127 billion in aid to Israel since its creation.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Israel is the only country in the world to require both men and women to serve in the military for at least two years.



Top Right: Israeli soldiers during urban warfare exercises. **Above:** Israel's army flies US-made Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. **Left:** Recruits' Oath Ceremony in the Israel Defense Forces.

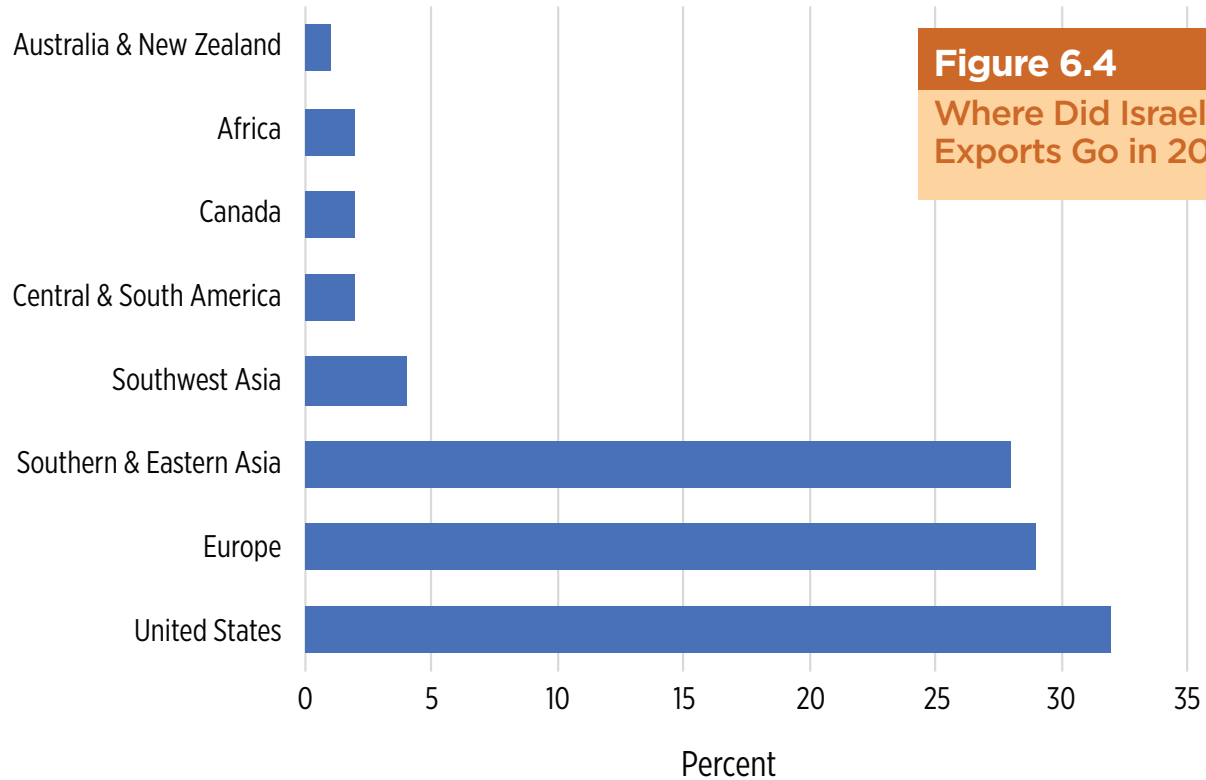
Bilateral Economic Relations

Israel's largest trade partner is the United States. The top five goods that Israel imports from the United States are raw diamonds, machinery, agricultural products, aircraft, and optic and medical equipment. On the other hand, the top five goods the United States imports from Israel are cut diamonds, pharmaceutical products, machinery, optic and medical instruments, and agricultural products. In addition, the United States and Israel invest in each other's manufacturing sectors.

Since 1985, the United States and Israel have had a free trade agreement. This agreement has allowed for trade to expand by reducing trade barriers. It has also increased investment between the countries. The two countries come together at a **Joint Economic Development Group** (an annual bilateral meeting between Israel and the United States to discuss economic conditions and possible economic reforms). Similarly, the United States and Israel have a partnership for scientific and cultural exchanges.



Bottom: Container ships docked at Haifa's port bring goods to Israel and provide a way for Israeli goods to enter world markets.



Israel's Membership in International Organizations

Israel belongs to many of the same international organizations as the United States. These include the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. Additionally, Israel is involved in organizations with European countries. Israel and the United States also belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which allows countries to receive economic investment to help their economy grow.

Reviewing the Section

1. How long have the United States and Israel been allies?
2. How has the United States been involved with the Arab-Israeli conflict?
3. How much does the United States give Israel in aid each year? What is the money used for?
4. Why is the free trade agreement between Israel and the United States important?
5. Name four world organizations that Israel belongs to.

Chapter Review

Chapter Summary

Section 1: The Geography of Israel

- Israel is a small country on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
The country has four geographical regions: the Mediterranean Coastal Plain, the Central Hills, the Jordan Rift Valley, and the Negev Desert.
About three-fourths of Israel's population is Jewish, and the remaining one-fourth is mostly Arab.

Section 2: A Brief History of Israel

- The area has a long history of being governed by many different groups including Jews, Romans, and Muslims.
- Palestine came under direct British administration after World War I. After World War II, the United Nations voted to create a homeland for the Jewish people in part of Palestine. Europeans felt the Jewish people should get their own country because of their suffering during the Holocaust.
- Palestinians and neighboring Muslim countries were unhappy with the new country and many wars have been fought, which actually allowed Israel to gain more land.

Section 3: The Government of Israel

- Israel is a parliamentary democracy, and all citizens over age eighteen can vote for members of parliament.
- The executive branch has a prime minister and a cabinet. The country also has a president who is not considered part of any branch of government.
- The legislative branch is the most powerful branch and is composed of the unicameral Knesset, which has 120 members.

- The judicial branch has a Supreme Court whose justices are selected by a committee.

Section 4: The Economy of Israel

- Israel has a market economy that is diversified, unlike its neighbors, because of its lack of natural resources.
- The largest sector of the economy is service followed by the industrial and technology sectors.
- The economy is steadily growing because of foreign investment in Israel's important technology sector.
- Israelis receive a high quality of education and invest in capital goods because they depend on innovation and service jobs to replace the GDP usually created by natural resources.

Section 5: US-Israel Relations

- The United States has always been an ally of Israel but also encourages a two-state solution.
- The United States invests heavily in Israel's technologies and helps fund their military.
- The two countries are important trading partners and allies in international organizations and they engage in joint military exercises.

Activities for Learning

Reviewing People, Places, and Things



Write each word defined below, and circle each letter on a red line. Write out the word these letters spell and give its definition.

1. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _: a community in Israel where the goal is collective ownership, equality, and democracy
2. _ _ _ _ _ - _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _: hatred and prejudice towards Jews
3. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _: place located in the hills of northeastern Israel

- _____ : a sector of the economy that is world famous but only employs about 8 percent of the population
- _____ : the type of economy that does not rely on one good or service to generate money
- _____ : the legislative branch of the Israeli government
- _____ : the sea where Tel Aviv is located
- _____ : the currency of Israel

Understanding the Facts

- What are the four geographical regions of Israel?
- How do Israelis take care of the environment?
- What is the diaspora?
- What is Zionism?
- What regions did Israel win during the Six-Day War?
- What is the Law of Return?
- What does *secular* mean?
- What sector of the economy provides the most jobs for Israelis?
- Who are Israel's largest trading partners?
- What are the top US imports from Israel?

Developing Critical Thinking

- Throughout history, the area of Israel has been ruled by many different groups. How do you think this affects the area today? Mention at least three of the groups to control this area and possible cultural or physical marks they have left on Israel.
- The United States and Israel have had a strong relationship since 1948. Why do you think they have such a strong political and economic relationship and how have they maintained it over the decades?
- During the Arab Spring, Israel's economy was not affected by the turbulent uprisings in neighboring countries. Why do you think Israel was not trading with its neighbors? What are some advantages and disadvantages of trading with countries farther away?

Writing across the Curriculum

- Write a short report on the beginnings of modern Israel. Include an overview of events prior to its creation in 1948, and explain events that shaped the boundaries of modern-day Israel.
- Although Israel has few natural resources, some are mentioned in this chapter. Write a short report on at least two of them, and describe their importance for the Israeli economy.

Applying Your Skills

- Create a pie chart of the three main job sectors of the Israeli economy. Looking at your completed pie chart, how do you think the size of these sectors influences the income inequality in the country?
- Tourism in Israel comprises a large part of the economy and is mentioned in the chapter. What places do you think are popular tourist destinations? Make a chart with at least six destinations. Show the type of attraction and who would be interested in visiting each place.

Exploring Technology

- Although Jews are a majority in Israel, they are not a cohesive group who share the same beliefs. The Pew Research Center is a great online source for unbiased information. Follow this link (<http://tiny.cc/pewjews>) to read about their research on the different kinds of Jews in Israel. How do you think all these beliefs shape Israeli politics?
- There are many digitized maps online that can show us how people in the past viewed the world. View this 14th-century map that has Jerusalem at the center: <http://tiny.cc/israelmap>. Can you find Jerusalem on the map? Do you recognize any other names or symbols? How does this map provide clues about how people of this time viewed this area?