



*Teacher's
Resource
Guide*

Israel:
*Land of Strife,
Land of Promise*

A VIDEO FROM KNOWLEDGE UNLIMITED®, INC.

TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR
Israel:
Land of Strife, Land of Promise

A video
from
Knowledge Unlimited®, Inc.

Project Director
Liza DiPrima

Script Written by
Linda Endsley

Video Produced by
Knowledge Unlimited®, Inc.

Teacher's Resource Guide
Written by
Linda Endsley and Nicholas Glass

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

INTRODUCTION

Many peoples have lived in the country that is now known as Israel. The Jewish religion was founded there and united one of these groups of people in their beliefs and customs. When the land was conquered and the Jews scattered throughout the world, they still thought of Israel as their homeland. When the Jews faced anti-Semitism and brutality, they looked to Israel as a place where they might find freedom and refuge.

ISRAEL: LAND OF STRIFE, LAND OF PROMISE tells the story of how the modern nation of Israel was born. It is a remarkable story of a people who were driven from their native land and who were not able to reclaim it for more than 2,500 years. Israel was carved out of the Arab land of Palestine in 1948. Many times, the Palestinians and the Arab nations of the Middle East have attacked the tiny nation. This video explores why Israeli Jews are determined to hold on to their nation, even if they must make tremendous sacrifices to defend it. It also tells how Arabs and Israelis have recently reached out to each other in peace.

The video presents an overview of Israel's government. A knowledge of Israel's complex party system will help students understand some of the current conflicts there and grasp why it has been difficult for the nation to come to terms with the Palestinian Arabs. The program also looks at some of the other social and economic problems this growing nation faces.

This video is designed to be used in grades four through 12. Of course, no half-hour video could exhaust such a complex topic, especially one that seems to change with every day's headlines. But teachers can use the video as a brief lesson on the history of Israel, why Israel was founded, and why it has had to fight so constantly to survive. The program also provides useful introductory information on the Mideast conflicts.

ISRAEL: LAND OF STRIFE, LAND OF PROMISE is a fact-filled video that will give students a better understanding of this fascinating country and of Israel's unique place in the Middle East and in the world.

Linda Endsley
Associate Editor
Knowledge Unlimited

Israel: ***Land of Strife, Land of Promise***

The Teacher's Resource Guide

The guide consists of the following:

- 1) A brief introduction, describing the video and stating goals and objectives.
- 2) A Readiness Activity to be completed before viewing the video.
- 3) Four follow-up lessons to be completed after viewing the video. A reproducible activity sheet accompanies each lesson.
- 4) The complete script of the video ISRAEL: LAND OF STRIFE, LAND OF PROMISE.
- 5) A brief bibliography.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the video and completing the activities in this guide, students should

- 1) Know more about the history and struggle to establish and maintain a Jewish state.
- 2) Gain an understanding of why Israeli Jews are determined to have and hold on to their nation.
- 3) Have a better understanding of the perspectives and motivations of Palestinians and other groups in the region.
- 4) Recognize that there are divisions among the Jews of Israel that have had and will continue to have an impact on the future of this nation.
- 5) Know more about recent conflicts between Israelis and Arabs in the Middle East.
- 6) Have some historical context to interpret and contemplate future struggles between the Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

A Readiness Activity
(Do this activity before viewing the video.)

Objective: Students will be better able to appreciate the video as a result of having identified key personalities, terms, and events described in it.

Use the **Readiness Activity Sheet** (opposite page).

1. Split your class into four or five small groups.
2. Reproduce copies of the **Readiness Activity Sheet** and hand them out. This sheet contains a list of names and vocabulary terms.
3. Tell the students that they will be viewing a video on Israel. Ask them for their thoughts and opinions about why it is important to learn about this country and its history.
4. Assign each group three of the names, terms, or events on the sheet. Give each group about ten minutes to discuss its three names and agree on definitions for them. Ask one person in each group to record the group's definitions for each term in one or two sentences.
5. Have each group read its definitions to the whole class. Discuss the names and other terms, and try to supply more complete information where necessary.

Israel: ***Land of Strife, Land of Promise***

Readiness Activity Sheet

In a small group, discuss the three names, terms, or events you have been assigned from the list below. Have one member of the group record an agreed-upon definition or description of each name or term.

Palestine

Benjamin Netanyahu

Diaspora

David Ben-Gurion

anti-Semitism

Zionists

PLO

Balfour Declaration

Yassir Arafat

kibbutz

the Holocaust

Jerusalem

Camp David Accords

Gaza Strip

Yitzhak Rabin

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

LESSON 1

Note-Taking Activity

Objective: To give students practice in note taking and to test their overall comprehension of the video.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 1** (opposite page).

1. Review some of the basics of good note-taking skills with the class. Discuss why taking good notes is important.
2. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 1**. You may choose to hand the activity sheet out before viewing the video, so students know what points to look for. Or you may choose to hand out the activity sheet after you have shown the video, to help students determine how detailed their notes are.
3. Show the video and ask students to take good notes. Tell them they will be answering questions on the activity sheet based on their notes.
4. After viewing the video, have students write their responses to the questions on **Activity Sheet for Lesson 1**. They may want to use an extra sheet of paper if they need the room.
5. Use your students' responses to help them evaluate their note-taking skills and as the basis for a class discussion about the important concepts of the video.

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

Activity Sheet for Lesson 1

Note-Taking Activity

As you watch ISRAEL: LAND OF STRIFE, LAND OF PROMISE, take good notes about the events, people, places, and ideas that are mentioned in the video. When the video is over, use these notes to write out answers to the following questions.

1. During the past few thousand years, the land we now call Israel has been controlled by many armed empires. Name at least four of the individuals or groups of people who have ruled this land.
2. Theodor Herzl turned what had been an ancient religious dream into a modern political movement called Zionism. What is Zionism and why is it important?
3. Jews have often been hated, feared, and treated harshly. What is this hatred and mistreatment of Jews called?
4. Many Jews came to Palestine after the 1917 Balfour Declaration. What was the Balfour Declaration and why did it help bring Jews to Palestine?
5. What is a kibbutz?
6. How many Jews are estimated to have been murdered in concentration camps during World War II?
7. In 1947, Great Britain turned the problem of ruling Palestine over to a newly-formed international organization. This organization decided to divide Palestine into two nations, one Arab and one Jewish. Name the organization.
8. Name the two major political parties in Israel. What are the differences between them?
9. In 1967, Israeli forces defeated Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in the Six Day War. Explain the significance of this war, especially as it relates to recent negotiations for peace.
10. The Camp David Accords of 1978 led to peace between two nations. Name the two nations and their leaders.
11. In 1993, the U.S. hosted talks between Yitzhak Rabin and Yassir Arafat in Washington, D.C. Those talks led to a declaration that said that the Palestinians would gradually get autonomy, or self-rule, in which lands?
12. Explain in detail why November 4, 1995, is considered a crushing day for the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

LESSON 2

Learning About the People of Israel

Objective: To give students an opportunity to learn more about the cultures and lifestyles of the peoples of Israel, specifically as they relate to food, clothing, industry, recreation, and women's rights.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 2** (opposite page).

1. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 2** and hand them out. Ask students to read the instructions and questions carefully. Then answer any questions they have.
2. Have students choose one of the five topics to research in depth. Remind them that they may use secondary sources, including encyclopedias, books, magazines, CD-ROMs, and so on.
3. Determine if you want students to work in small groups or individually.
4. When everyone is done, use the information students have collected to have discussions about each topic.



Israel: ***Land of Strife, Land of Promise***

Activity Sheet for Lesson 2

Learning About the People of Israel

The following questions are designed to give you an opportunity to learn more about the lives of people in Israel. Choose one of the five topics below to research in depth. Use encyclopedias, books, library resources, and other research tools to complete your answers. Write out your findings; use extra paper if you need the room.

1. The food and drink that Israelis enjoy reflect Israel's ethnic diversity. Traditional European Jewish dishes are served, as well as Middle Eastern foods. There are also a number of foods and spices native to the region that are often used in cooking. Imagine that you are about to eat two meals, one with a Jewish family on a Jewish holy day and one with an Arab family on an Arab holy day. What would you expect to be served? Are these foods commonly eaten in the Middle East? Are there differences between the foods that Jews and Arabs eat in Israel? Are these foods similar to what you eat at home? Please explain.
2. Most Israelis wear clothing that's similar to what Americans wear. However, there are outfits that are specific to each ethnic and religious group. Choose a religious group in Israel and learn about the traditional clothes of that group. What is the history and purpose of these clothes? Are these clothes unique to these people?
3. The video reported that most Israelis are city dwellers who work in modern factories, offices, and shops. Learn more about how Israeli families make a living. Find out what industries are most common. What are some of the different types of places that people go to work, and what do they do there?
4. Israeli children — Jewish or Muslim — spend most of their days in school. But when kids are not in school, what do they like to do? Find out what kids in Israel like to do for fun. Are there games and activities that are specific to Jewish and Muslim peoples? Are there some activities that we don't do in America? Please explain.
5. Every country, religion, and culture worldwide offers different roles for women. Learn about the rights of women in Israel. Can women vote? Do any hold leadership roles in the government or in Israeli business? What role do Israeli women have in the military? What roles have women played in Israeli history? Are there any differences between the rights of Muslim and Jewish women? Explain.

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

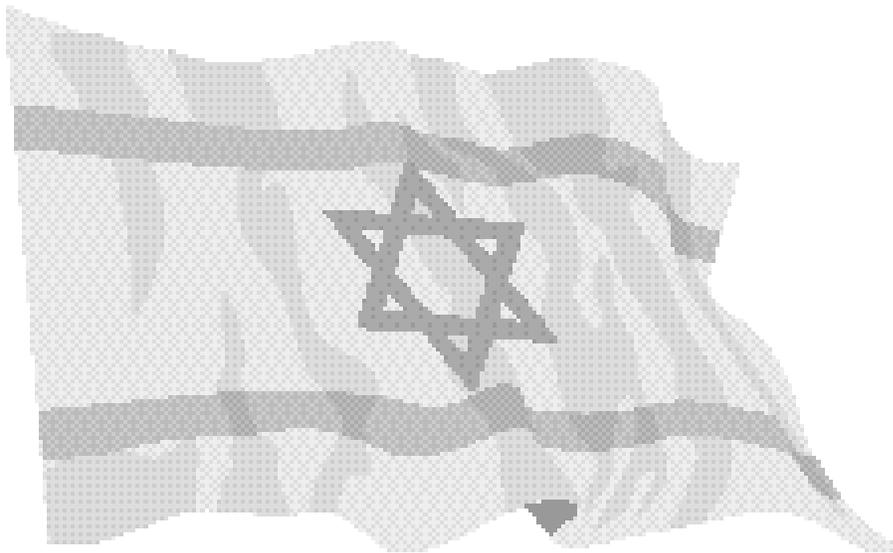
LESSON 3

Role Playing the Jewish-Muslim Conflict

Objective: To further students' understanding of the historical conflict between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 3** (opposite page).

1. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 3** and hand them out.
2. Decide how many different role-playing groups you want in your classroom. The class can be divided in half or, if you desire smaller sections, split into quarters, eighths, and so on. You may choose to focus your groups on any or all of the situations listed on the activity sheet.
3. Remind students that this activity calls for research from secondary sources, including encyclopedias, books, magazines, CD-ROMs, on-line sources, and so on.
4. Initiate and facilitate the discussions.



Israel: Land of Strife, Land of Promise

Activity Sheet for Lesson 3

Role Playing the Jewish-Muslim Conflict

The following questions are designed to give you a personal perspective on the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews in Israel. Pretend you are an Israeli Jew or an Israeli Arab and try to understand the situations raised below from their point of view. Use your own creativity, as well as research tools such as the encyclopedia, library sources, books, and the Internet. Then, divide into groups and argue your position to students who have taken the other side.

- 1. Imagine that you live in the town of Hebron, located in the West Bank south of Jerusalem. This is primarily an Arab city, most recently populated with only a few hundred Jews. Learn more about the history of Hebron and then have a discussion about the life that people live in this city. Perhaps raise the following issues, but don't limit your discussion to these ideas: Why are there Jews living in this city? Why do Arabs believe this city is their territory? What sort of work does each group of people do? Why is this city important for Arabs to control?**
- 2. Imagine that you and your family have lived on the Sinai Peninsula over the past 40 years. Research the history of the Sinai and discuss what your life was like before, during, and after your land was captured by Israel in 1967. How did your life change after the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt in the Camp David Peace Accords? Focus your discussion on why this land is important for both the Arab and Jewish communities.**
- 3. Israeli flags are often burned as a sign of protest. Discuss your feelings about this act and why you support or oppose it.**
- 4. Imagine that you live in the city of Haifa, which is a coastal town near Israel's border with Lebanon. Also imagine that an Arab extremist group, opposed to the peace process, has committed a terrorist act there, killing many people. Discuss how each of the groups might feel. Why did some Arabs do this? Do all the Arabs support this act? How do the Jews feel? Is there any way to accomplish peace after this sort of attack? If so, how? If not, why not?**
- 5. You are delegates at a meeting to negotiate peace. Decide if you want peace and what you are willing to sacrifice to accomplish it if you do. Discuss the possibility of peace and see if you can create a peace plan that is acceptable to both the Arab and Jewish people of Israel.**

Israel: *Land of Strife, Land of Promise*

LESSON 4

Independent Study Project

Objective: To give students the opportunity to learn more about history of the land and people of Israel.

Use **Activity Sheet for Lesson 4** (opposite page).

1. Reproduce copies of **Activity Sheet for Lesson 4** and hand them out.
2. Explain to students that they will be doing an independent study project. Have students choose a project from the five described on **Activity Sheet for Lesson 4**.
3. Encourage students to think up their own projects if they wish. But before allowing them to proceed, have them write up brief outlines of their projects for your approval.

Israel: Land of Strife, Land of Promise

Activity Sheet for Lesson 4

Independent Study Project

Here are five ideas for an independent study project on the history of Israel. Read each one, and then decide which one interests you the most. Then follow the instructions to complete that project. You also have the option of coming up with your own independent study project, but be sure to clear your idea with your teacher before you begin.

- 1. Israel is filled with world-famous and historically important buildings and ruins.**
These sites attract millions of tourists each year. Research a site that interests you. Then, using your research, write a “tourist brochure” for the site. Make sure that your brochure or pamphlet gives a history of the site and explains why it is important. Perhaps consider, but don’t limit your research to, the following questions: When was it built? What is, or was, its purpose? Why is it important? Who uses it? Is there anything controversial about it?
- 2. Pretend you are a reporter assigned to write about the lives of the people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.** Find out what people’s lives are like there. Include in your report, but don’t limit yourself to, an investigation of the following questions: What has it been like to live under Israeli rule and Palestine Authority rule? What struggles occur on a daily basis? What do people like about living in these lands? Feel free to make up interviews with people, but make sure that you are presenting accurate portrayals of people’s lives.
- 3. Many leaders have played important roles in the history of Israel since 1948 — people such as Yassir Arafat, David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, and Anwar Sadat.** Notice that not all of these people are Jewish. Research and write a brief biography of someone whom you feel has been important to Israel. Make sure that you discuss the role this person has had in establishing and advancing the national direction of Israel.
- 4. The various bodies of water in Israel have religious, economic, and political significance.** Choose a body of water in or next to Israel and write about its history and importance. Possible choices might be the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, the Red Sea, the Sea of Galilee, or the Mediterranean Sea.
- 5. Between 600 A.D. and the early 1900s, Muslims ruled Palestine.** Write a paper that reveals what life was like for Muslims and Jews during this period.

Israel: Land of Strife, Land of Promise

Video Script

For Jews all over the world, a dream came true in 1948. For centuries, this dream had given Jews hope and strength. It had enabled them to cling to their faith through times of hardship and suffering. But the dream had also seemed impossible to achieve.

Jews had been forced from their homeland and were scattered throughout the world. In many lands, they were treated like outsiders without rights. They were often forbidden to practice their religion. And they dreamed of returning someday to Israel, the land that had been theirs in Biblical times. They longed to reestablish the nation where Jews were once independent and free.

In 1948, their dream became a reality. And Jews celebrated joyously when the modern nation of Israel was born. But the struggle to survive was only beginning.

Israel: Land of Strife, Land of Promise

Israel is a small country — about the size of New Jersey. It lies along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. About five million people live there. Most are Jews who came from nearly every country in the world.

The story of how Israel became the Jewish homeland began more than 3,000 years ago. It was then that the Jews founded the first nation of Israel in a part of the Middle East later known as Palestine. Their second king, David, established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

But this home was not a peaceful one. Palestine was overrun and controlled by one armed empire after another — the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans. When the Babylonians conquered Palestine around 600 B.C., they forced many Jews to leave the region. This exile was the beginning of a scattering of the Jewish people to other lands. Since then, Jews have been forced from Palestine and from other countries where they settled. The Jews call this scattering the Diaspora.

The Jews still living in Palestine continued to fight against invading armies, at times making incredible sacrifices. In 73 A.D., at the mountaintop desert fortress of Masada, Jewish warriors battled Romans to the bitter end. When the Romans finally broke through their defenses, the fighters and their families committed suicide. About a thousand people chose to give up their lives rather than their freedom.

In the 7th century, Palestine was conquered by Arab Muslims. Muslims are followers of the Islamic religion. Although the Muslims wanted to spread their faith, they allowed Jews and others within their conquered lands to follow their own religions. But some Jews felt that the Muslim influence watered down their faith. And many of these Jews left Palestine to settle in Europe and North Africa. By the Middle Ages, only a few thousand Jews lived in Palestine.

They were the first people who had to learn to preserve their identity and faith away from their home.

Jews in Europe

In Europe, some Christians distrusted Jews because they followed a different faith and had different customs. The Jews were often feared, hated, and treated harshly. This hatred and mistreatment of Jews is called anti-Semitism.

Because they were seen as “different,” the Jews were unfairly blamed for many terrible things. In the 1300s, a disease called the Black Plague caused millions of deaths in just a few years. Frightened survivors blamed the Jews for this outbreak. They attacked the Jews and destroyed their communities.

In some places, the Catholic Church, fearful that Jews might influence or even convert Christians, demanded they be separated from everyone else. They were forced to live in segregated communities, called “ghettos.”

Businesspeople and tradesmen sometimes feared competition from Jewish businesses. At first, only certain occupations were open to the Jews — often jobs that others did not want or were forbidden to do. In the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church forbade Christians to lend money for interest. People who needed to borrow money often turned to Jews. As a result, some Jews became wealthy bankers. At times, they were even important advisors to the kings and queens of Europe.

Still, Jews in Europe never really felt safe. For years, Jews in Spain and Portugal enjoyed a great deal of freedom under Arab rule. Then, in the 15th and 16th centuries, during the Spanish Inquisition, Spain’s Catholic rulers decided that non-Christians would have to convert to Christianity, or sell their possessions and leave the country. As a result, thousands of Jews again became wanderers.

Throughout the centuries, many Jews held on tightly to their customs, their religious services, and their sacred texts. And they continued to believe that someday God would restore Zion — Israel — and bring his people home.

In the 1800s, Jews began to be treated more fairly in much of Western Europe.

But in Eastern Europe and Russia, conditions for Jews remained harsh. And toward the end of the 1800s, anti-Semitism grew much worse. In Russia, for example, the government encouraged mob attacks, called “pogroms,” against Jewish villages. Thousands of Jews were killed in these pogroms.

These terrible times convinced some Jewish leaders that Jews would only be safe if they had their own homeland. The most important of these leaders, Theodor Herzl, turned what had been an ancient religious dream into a modern political movement — Zionism.

Slowly, small numbers of Zionists began to move to Palestine to live and build a Jewish homeland.

A Jewish Homeland

By the 16th century, Palestine had new rulers. Although most of the people in Palestine were still Arab Muslims, much of the Middle East, including Palestine, had been conquered by the Ottoman Turks. For 400 years, the Ottoman Empire controlled the region.

Few Jews had moved to Palestine by the early 1900s. Zionist leaders were worried about the hostility of Palestinian Arabs if a large number of Jews suddenly moved there. But then World War One came along and opened the Middle East to Zionism.

During World War One, the Turks sided with Germany. Great Britain fought the Turks in the Middle East and took control of many of their lands there — including Palestine. The British wanted the support of Jews both in Palestine and all over the world. So in 1917, as part of the Balfour Declaration, the British made a promise to the Jews to help them build a “national homeland” in Palestine.

Many Arabs were angry about the Balfour Declaration. They said the British had no right to help Zionists build a homeland in Palestine. The Arabs had lived in Palestine for centuries, and they were afraid of losing their own homeland. For the next 30 years, the British tried to please both the Zionists and the Arabs in Palestine. But in the end, these efforts failed completely.

In the 1920s and '30s, tens of thousands of Jews, encouraged by the promise of the Balfour Declaration, moved to Palestine.

Most of them became farmers. But the land they farmed was mostly desert. The Zionist pioneers worked hard. Some formed cooperative farm communities called “kibbutzim.” A kibbutz is a large farm owned and worked in common by a group of families. Using modern agricultural methods, the Jews made the deserts bloom.

But Arabs complained about how much land Jews were buying — even though some wealthy Arabs were making money selling Jews this land.

In 1936, the Arabs started a three-year uprising against the Jews. In 1939, as a result of this fighting, the British began to put limits on how many Jews could move to Palestine.

For the Jews, these limits could not have come at a worse time. Because anti-Semitism was again on the rise in Europe.

In the 1930s, millions of people lost their jobs in a worldwide depression. Germany had not fully recovered from losing World War One and was hit especially hard. Support grew for Adolf Hitler, who blamed Europe’s Jews for all of Germany’s troubles.

Hitler became Germany’s leader in 1933. His goal was to make Germany a great empire. Under his leadership, Germany attacked other European countries. In 1939, Germany invaded Poland and started World War Two.

Hitler stripped the Jews of their rights. His political party, the Nazis, attacked and humiliated them. And during the war, the Nazis rounded up millions of Jews throughout Europe, took their possessions, and imprisoned them in concentration camps. Some *six million* Jews were murdered in these camps. This terrible slaughter has come to be known as the Holocaust, which means a great destruction.

The Holocaust led many Jews to renew their feelings that they needed their own homeland, a place where they could be safe.

In 1945, when World War Two ended, Zionists began smuggling thousands of Jewish refugees into Palestine. But the British, who had tried to limit this Jewish immigration since the 1936 Arab uprising, turned away ship after ship. Soon, armed Jewish groups

in Palestine began to fight the British. Some Jews even resorted to terrorism against British soldiers and civilians.

Finally, in 1947, Great Britain decided to turn the problem of Palestine over to the newly formed United Nations.

The U.N. came up with a plan to divide Palestine into two nations, one Arab and one Jewish. But the Palestinian Arabs didn't agree to this plan. They felt that all of Palestine rightfully belonged to the Arab people. Palestine seemed headed for a bloody showdown.

The Birth of Israel

The British troops withdrew from Israel on May 13, 1948, leaving the country in Jewish hands. On May 14, 1948, the Jewish leader David Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence. He said the new nation would be open to all Jews who wished to enter. But he promised equal treatment for all citizens, regardless of their race or religion.

The very next day — May 15, 1948 — several Arab nations attacked Israel. The Israeli Jews had already been fighting off isolated attacks from Arab groups for months. When the Arab armies invaded Israel, even Israelis who were not soldiers defended the new nation. The Arab soldiers were better armed than the Israelis, but not as organized. And the governments of the different Arab countries did not cooperate with each other. Soon, Israel was able to get weapons from France and Czechoslovakia.

By the time the fighting ended, Israel controlled much of the land intended for the new Arab state. Egypt and Jordan divided the remaining parts of Palestine between them. And no Palestinian Arab state was formed.

During the fighting, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled to nearby countries. Most settled in refugee camps or in border areas near Israel. The Arab nations did little to help these refugees settle elsewhere. Instead, the Palestinians became an embittered homeless people — and an ongoing threat to Israel.

President Harry Truman was the first world leader to recognize Israel as an independent nation. And over the years, our country has given Israel billions of dollars in aid. Jews who arrived in Israel were often skilled, well-educated workers. And other Jews who stayed in the United States gave huge amounts of money to help Israel. As a result, Israel became a modern, wealthy, and powerful nation.

Life in Israel

Although there is freedom of religion, and the Arab minority is represented in government, 80 percent of Israel's people are Jewish. And Judaism plays a dominant part in national life. Certain religious rules have been established for all of Israeli society. Jews from all over the world have immigrated to Israel. And they don't always agree on these religious rules or how strictly the rules should be observed. Some Jews, for instance, want businesses and even streets closed on the Jewish Sabbath. Their demands have caused conflicts with less-strict Jews.

Today, most Israelis are city dwellers who work in modern factories, offices, and shops. Diamond cutting and fishing are two important industries. Israelis mine the Dead Sea, the world's saltiest body of water, for many minerals. Most Israelis enjoy a high standard of living.

Israel is a democratic nation. It's ruled by a parliament called the Knesset. The head of the country is the prime minister. All adult citizens can vote to elect the prime minister and lawmakers to the Knesset.

Israel has many political parties, but the largest are the Labor party and the Likud bloc. The Likud is actually made up of several small parties. The Labor party has traditionally supported more government control of the economy, while the Likud believes that businesses should be free of government intervention.

The Labor party is also more willing than the Likud to negotiate with the Arab countries and with Arabs in the occupied lands for the sake of peace.

Peace and how to attain it have been important issues in Israel since the new nation began. This is because the nation's times of peace have been brief and uneasy. Most Israelis are always thinking about the nation's defense.

Partly with U.S. aid, Israel has built a strong army. Both men and women are drafted to serve. Even after regular service, many of them are ready to come to their nation's defense within a matter of hours.

And they have been called upon to defend their nation many times since 1948.

A Disputed Land

At first, the Arab nations all felt the Jews had no right to claim Israel as their own. And the Jews were just as determined to keep and defend their homeland.

In 1956, Israel fought briefly with Egypt. Then in 1967, several Arab nations again attacked Israel. In just six days, Israel repelled them and seized some of their lands. It took the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. It held all of Jordan's land west of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea — the so-called West Bank. And it captured the Golan Heights from Syria.

The Arabs demanded the return of these lands. And in 1973, Egypt and Syria launched another attack on Israel to recover this territory. Israel again drove them off.

In 1977, however, Egypt's President Anwar Sadat stunned the world by offering to make peace with Israel. President Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel and begin talking to its leaders.

U.S. President Jimmy Carter helped these talks along by inviting Mr. Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin to meet with him at Camp David, the president's retreat in Maryland. There, they worked out the famous Camp David Accords of 1978. In this agreement, Egypt promised to establish peaceful relations with Israel, and Israel agreed to give back the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and to solve the problem of the Palestinian Arabs.

Many Israelis hoped that the agreement was the start of a peace process that would soon include other Arab nations.

But at the time, many Arabs called President Sadat a traitor. In 1981, he was murdered by some of his own countrymen while he watched a military parade.

The assassination of Anwar Sadat set back the Arab-Israeli peace process. Israel showed no willingness to give up any other lands it had captured in 1967. These “occupied lands” soon became Israel’s biggest problem.

More than a million Palestinians live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — many in poor refugee camps that became permanent cities. Other Palestinians are scattered throughout the Arab world. Some Palestinians hope to drive all Jews from Israel. Others would be satisfied with any homeland — for example, one in the West Bank.

In 1964, some Palestinians organized the Palestine Liberation Organization — the PLO. For many years, the PLO vowed to destroy Israel. The PLO had its own army, formed with aid from Arab governments and the former Soviet Union.

From 1965 to 1971, the PLO operated from Jordan. From there, it staged attacks against Israel. But Jordan drove the PLO out. The PLO moved to Lebanon. Then, from its Lebanese camps, the PLO continued to launch attacks on Israel. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon to drive the PLO out of the country. The invasion succeeded — temporarily. Soon, the PLO rebuilt its strength.

In 1987, the situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians reached a crisis. Palestinians in the city of Gaza began an uprising against the Israelis occupying the Gaza Strip. The rioting and demonstrations spread to the West Bank and to Arab Jerusalem. Palestinians threw stones and yelled insults at Israeli soldiers. They refused to buy Israeli-made products. A large number of Palestinians took part in the uprising, and it lasted for months. Arab countries had claimed the occupied territories. But they now gave the PLO authority over these areas.

The PLO decided to accept the 40-year-old U.N. resolution to divide Israel into an Arab state and a Jewish state. For the first time, the PLO recognized the state of Israel’s right to exist. This positive step prompted the United States to encourage peace talks between Israel and the PLO.

Although the peace process went slowly, it gained support. And in 1992, the Labor Party won Israel’s election with a promise to strive for peace, even if that peace meant giving up territory.

In 1993, Israel’s Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met with the head of the PLO, Yassir Arafat, in Washington, D.C. Their representatives signed a declaration that said the Palestinians would gradually get autonomy, or self-rule, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The United Nations adopted a resolution endorsing the treaty between Israel and the PLO. And 150 countries approved it. But Syria opposed it because it made no mention of Israel’s occupation of the Golan Heights. Lebanon voted against it because Israel had launched attacks into southern Lebanon. And many in both the Palestinian and the Israeli camps hated this agreement, certain that it gave up too much to the other side.

Nevertheless, other peace agreements between Israel and the PLO followed. Palestinians named Mr. Arafat as president of the Palestine Authority, which would govern Palestinian areas in the West Bank. And Israel began to establish relations with Arab countries. In 1994, Jordan and Israel formally ended 46 years of war.

In recognition of their efforts to achieve peace, Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, and Yassir Arafat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994.

An Uneasy Peace

Even as the PLO and Israel continued peace negotiations, other Arab and Israeli groups still fought. From bases in southern Lebanon, some fundamentalist Islamic groups periodically launched raids and rocket attacks against Israel. And within Israel itself, terrorists attached bombs to themselves and exploded them on buses and busy streets, killing and injuring many people.

Israel reacted with bombing raids on Lebanon. These raids killed Lebanese civilians as well as Palestinians. Israel also restricted the movements of Palestinians, not allowing them to leave their cities in the occupied lands.

Many Israelis were wary of making peace with the Palestinians. They were afraid that the country would appear to be weak if it gave up any land or authority. They also thought only a tough stand would guarantee Israel's security.

In 1995, thousands of Israelis protested against the Palestine Autonomy Plan, which would not only give the Palestinians self-rule, but would uproot Jewish settlements and withdraw Israeli troops from the occupied lands.

On November 4, 1995, Yitzhak Rabin spoke at a peace rally in Tel Aviv. After the speech, a Jewish university student strongly opposed to the peace process shot and killed the prime minister.

Mr. Rabin's assassination shook Israeli society as no other event had since the establishment of Israel. Still, plans for peace were not scrapped. Shimon Peres, who became the country's prime minister, continued to implement Mr. Rabin's policies. At year's end, Israeli troops were withdrawing from the West Bank on schedule.

But the Labor party had lost a strong leader when Mr. Rabin died. And in 1996, Mr. Peres of the Labor party lost the election for prime minister to Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the Likud bloc. The vote, however, did not show any strong support for the Likud. Mr. Netanyahu won the election by less than 1 percent of the vote.

During his campaign, Mr. Netanyahu promised he would not give up any land for the sake of peace. The troop withdrawal from the West Bank was delayed. But after he took office, Prime Minister Netanyahu listened to the Israelis who wanted to continue the negotiations begun by Yitzhak Rabin. And the new prime minister softened his hard-line stand.

In 1997, Israeli soldiers finally left Hebron, the major Palestinian city in the West Bank. Palestinians were jubilant. And other Arab countries viewed the action as an important step in the peace process.

A Changing Nation

Since the nation began, one of Israel's biggest problems has been how to defend itself. The country promised a safe haven to Jews, and has fought many times to keep that promise. Now, with the possibility of a more stable peace at hand, many Israelis want to look at ways to solve the nation's other problems and improve their daily life.

Not all Israelis agree on how to accomplish these things.

One problem Israel faces is how to deal with the recent flood of immigrants and refugees. Since the Soviet Union began breaking up in 1989, more than 500,000 Jews have poured into Israel. This great influx of people has put a tremendous strain on the small nation's economy.

While many of the recent immigrants are skilled and professional workers, there aren't enough jobs for all of them. And they've made Israel's housing shortage even worse.

These Jewish immigrants were granted automatic Israeli citizenship, which entitled them to many free government services and benefits, such as health care. Some Israelis have questioned whether the nation should change its policies, and cut back on free government services. But more than half a million workers have demonstrated against these budget cuts.

One writer has said that Israelis are divided over what being a "Jewish state" means. But he believes that most Israelis agree that the purpose of the state is to provide security and freedom for all Jews and for their children. And it is crucial that Israel continue to fulfill this role.

Yitzhak Rabin was even willing to agree to the creation of a Palestinian state, because he believed the separation of Palestinians and Israelis would enable Jews to live peacefully in their homeland. Mr. Rabin wanted the fighting to stop. And he feared that the opportunity for peace would slip away. In his first speech to the Knesset after becoming prime minister in 1992, he made a dramatic call for peace. He spoke of building a nation not constantly taxed by wars, a place where people could find jobs and houses, and where they could celebrate their heritage. He told the Knesset and all Israelis, "Israel will be not just a state, it will also be a home."

Israelis are still debating whether Mr. Rabin's vision of peace will work. Many think the ongoing peace process will make Israel weak. Others believe it finally will end the Arab-Israeli conflicts. But most Israelis agree they also want Israel to be much more than a refuge for oppressed Jews; they want it again to be the Jewish homeland. But the question remains: Can a Jewish homeland be a peaceful home for all the diverse peoples who live there?

Recommended Readings

For Younger Readers

- DuBois, Jill. *Cultures of the World: Israel*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1993.
- Ferber, Elizabeth. *Yasir Arafat: A Life of War and Peace*. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press, 1995.
- Ganeri, Anita. *I Remember Palestine*. Chatham, N.J.: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1995.
- James, Ian. *Inside Israel*. Danbury, Conn.: Franklin Watts, 1990.
- Jones, Helen Hinckley. *Israel*. Chicago: Childrens Press, 1986.
- Long, Cathryn J. *The Middle East in Search of Peace*. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press, 1991.
- Moon, Bernice and Cliff. *Israel Is My Country*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1986.
- Shamir, Ilana and Shlamo Shavit, eds. *A Young Reader's Encyclopedia of Jewish History*. New York: Viking Kestrel, 1987.
- Sofer, Barbara. *Good-bye Friend*. Rockville, Md.: Kar-Ben Copies, 1996.
- Taylor, Allegra. *A Kibbutz in Israel*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1987.

For Older Readers

- Bauer, Yehuda. *A History of the Holocaust*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1982.
- Ben-Gurion, David. *The Jews in Their Land*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966.
- Eban, Abba. *My Country: The Story of the Modern Israel*. New York: Random House, 1972.
- Herzog, Chaim. *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East*. New York: Random House, 1982.
- Makovsky, David. *Making Peace with the PLO*. New York: Westview Press, 1996.
- Netanyahu, Binyamin. *A Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World*. New York: Bantam, 1993.
- Peres, Shimon. *The New Middle East*. New York: Henry Holt, 1993.
- Perry, Mark. *A Fire in Zion: The Israeli-Palestinian Search for Peace*. New York: William Morrow, 1994.
- Rabin, Yitzhak. *The Rabin Memoirs*. New York: Little Brown, 1979.
- Reische, Diana L. *Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization*. Danbury, Conn.: Franklin Watts, 1991.
- Sachar, Howard Morley. *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.
- Scharfstein, Sol. *Understanding Israel*. Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV Publishing House, 1994.

Knowledge Unlimited®, Inc.
P.O. Box 52, Madison, WI 53701-0052
(800)356-2303

ISBN 1-55933-215-8