

# ISRAEL ישראל



Israel is a small country in the Middle East (smaller than the size of Wales!). It is the only Jewish country in the world and its capital is Jerusalem which is holy to Muslims and Christians as well as Jews.

The land has had different names over thousands of years starting with Canaan which in the Torah is promised to Abraham and his descendants by G-d. Jewish people have lived in the land of Israel for nearly 4,000 years and have always called it their homeland. The word Israel means "struggle with G-d" and it was a name given to Jacob in the Torah.



The land has been ruled by different people over time, including the Romans and the Ottomans. The British Government was in charge from 1917 to 1948 when it was called British Mandate Palestine.

Israel became an independent state in 1948 shortly after the Second World War. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe and the Middle East went to live there.



Israel's population is about 75% Jewish and about 21% Muslim and Christian Arab.

Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of Israel have equal rights. They can vote in elections, and have the same right to schools and healthcare. Non-Jewish citizens can serve in the Israeli Army. There are Arab parties in the Israeli Parliament, and Muslim and Christian judges in the Supreme Court.



The idea that the State of Israel should be a homeland for the Jewish people, where they can rule themselves is called 'Zionism'. The people who believe in this, and support Israel are called *Zionists*. This idea started in the 19th Century.

Israel today has been transformed into a green and fertile land and a place of innovation and invention. Israel has solved the serious problems arising from lack of water by working out how to take the salt out of seawater, as well as inventing many amazing products and technology (including medical equipment, microchips, and smart phone apps) that are used all over the world. It is also a very popular holiday destination.

