

Unit 13--Section 2: Country Area Studies-- Levant and Jordan

Objectives

At the end of this module you will

Be aware of the following

- Historical origins of the Twelver Shia movement
- Practice of Ismailis (Sevens) Shias
- Syncretistic nature of Alawite belief
- Importance of the Ta'if accord in Lebanon
- Syria's continued presence in Lebanon
- Aims of the Hizballah movement
- Syrian foreign policy aims
- Variety of Jewish practice and adherence
- Ultra-orthodox, Orthodox, and modern Jewish schools of thought in Israel
- Role of traditional Jewish practice in Israeli society
- Women's role in Israeli Defense Force
- Gaza Strip and West Bank issues in Palestine
 - Aims of Hamas

Identify

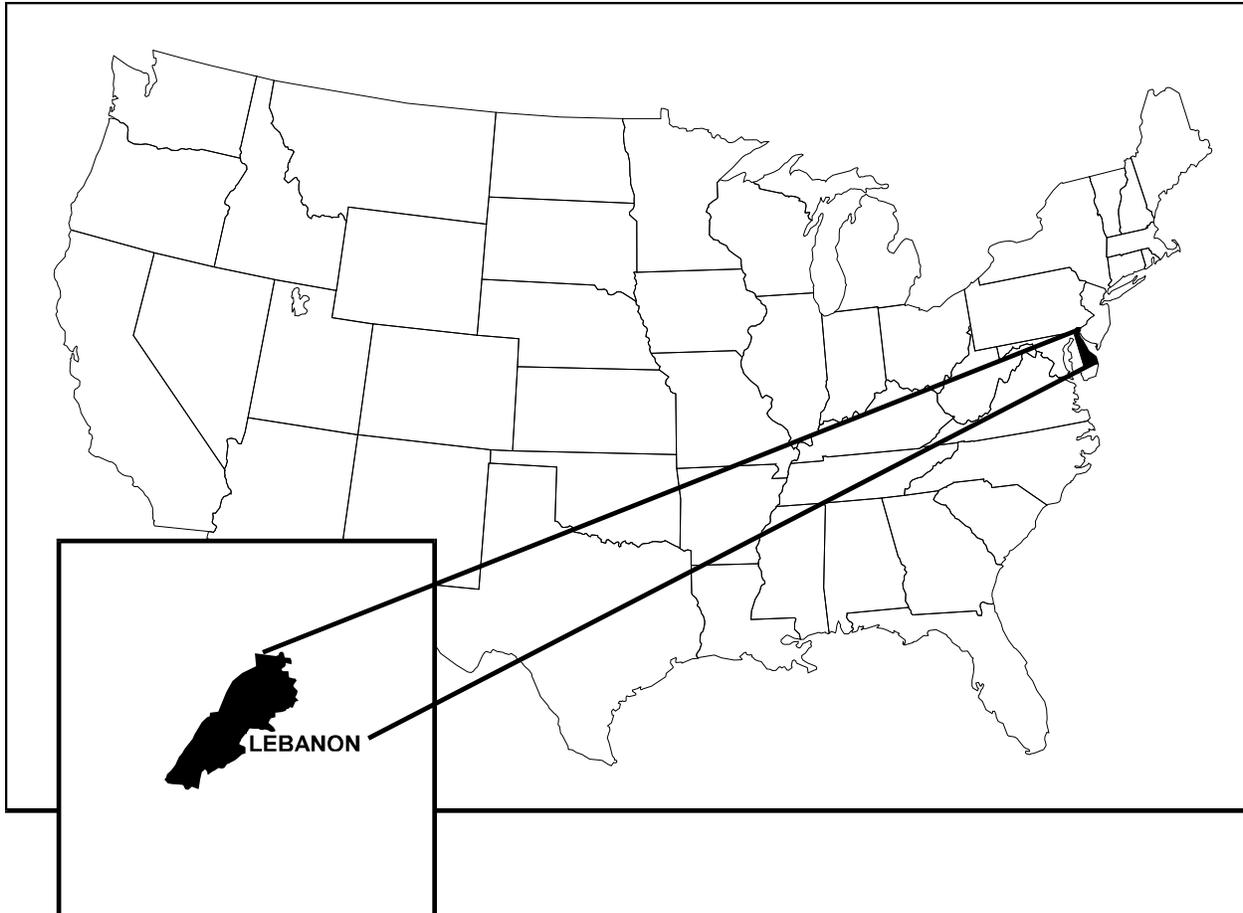
- Twelver and Ismailis (Sevener) Shias
- Alawite distinctives
- Chador
- Ta'if accord
- Hizballah
- Palestinian
- Circassian
- Queen Noor
- Halakah
- Rabbinic law
- Agnostic
- Ultra-Orthodox, Modern or Neo-Orthodox
- Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

- Rabbi
- Druze
- Bahais
- Asheknazi and Sephardim Jewish groups
- Jewish militants
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Hamas
- Levant
 - Holocaust

Realize

- Secrecy practiced by some Islamic sects
- Religious/ethnic group identification of Lebanon's many cultural communities
- Impact of war on women's role in society
- Continuing evolution of Hizballah movement
- Regional dominance of Syria in the Levant
- Opposition party control measures in Jordan
- Training practices for rabbis in Israel
- Marriage rite practices for Israel

Lebanon (LEB-ah-nahn)



<u>Population</u>	3,695,921
% under 15 years	36%
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:3
Radio	1:1
Phone	1:8
Newspaper	?
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	67/72
Hospitals	1:263
Doctors	1:407
IMR	38:1000
<u>Income</u>	\$1,720
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	75%

1. Religious Groups

- Islam 70% (2,587,145)

- Sunnis (702,000)

- *Shias (1,066,000). "Leadership of the Shia community is held by the imam, a lineal descendant of Ali. A son usually inherited the office from his father. In the eighth century, however, succession became confused when the imam, Jafar as Sadiq, first named his elder son, Ismail, his successor, then changed his mind and named a younger son, Musa al Kazim..."*

Those Shia who followed Musa are known to Western scholars as the Twelver Shias or Imami Shias...The appellation 'Twelver' derives from the disappearance of the twelfth imam, Al Mahdi al Muntazar, in about 874. He was a child, and after his disappearance he became known as a messianic figure, Al Mahdi, who never died but remains to this day hidden from view. The Twelver Shias believe his return will usher in a golden era." (Country Study, p. 62.)

- Druze (182,000)

- Ismailis (ahl-is-MHAHL-i-lee-uh, a few hundred)

"The Ismailis are Shias known as Seveners because they believe Ismail was the seventh Imam...[The part of the community that refused to acknowledge Musa's legitimacy and insisted on Ismail's son's right to rule as imam became known as Ismailis-- see 'Shias' above.] Ismaili beliefs are complex and syncretic, combining elements from the philosophies...as well as components of Judaism, Christianity, and Eastern religions...the secrecy with which they veil their religious beliefs and practices make it extremely difficult to establish what their actual religious beliefs are." (Country Study, pp. 63-64.)

- Alawite (several thousand scattered throughout northern Lebanon). Also known as "Nusayris" because of their connection with the Nusayriyah Mountains in northwestern Syria, these peoples seem to be descendants of original peoples living in Alexandrian times.

Originally possessing a distinct pre-Islamic religion, over time they adopted both Islamic and Christian elements to their faith. Alawis celebrate Christmas, Easter and Epiphany, and use sacramental wine. Many of their faith tenets are secret. They "*study the Qur'an and recognize the five pillars of Islam.*" (Country Study, p. 65.)

- Christian 30% (1,108,776) (Greek Orthodox [130,000], Syrian Orthodox [Jacobite--a few thousand], Armenian Catholic, Roman Catholics (less than 20,000), Maronite (416,000), Nestorian (a few thousand), and Protestants (under 20,000).

2. Ethnic/Racial Groups

- Arab 95%
- Armenian 4%

• "The distinctiveness of Lebanon's confessional communities" makes them, in fact, ethnic groups. (Country Study)

3. Gender Issues

- The Islamic revival of the 1980s resulted in an increase of veils and the chador among Muslim women.
- Women took a more independent role in the absence of male householders involved in fighting.
- Lebanese women enjoy equality in most civil rights.

4. Conflicts

• "*Lebanon has made progress toward rebuilding its political institutions and regaining its national sovereignty since the end of the devastating 16-year civil war (1975-1991). Under the Ta'if (TAWH-if) accord--the blueprint for national reconciliation--the Lebanese have established a more equitable political system, particularly by giving Muslims a greater say in the political process...Hizballah, the radical Shi'a party, retains most of its weapons...*" (Country Study)

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- As of December 1993, Syria maintained about 30,000-35,000 troops in Lebanon...Syria's deployment was legitimized by the Arab League early in Lebanon's civil war and in the Ta'if accord.

Citing the continued weakness of the LAF (Lebanese Armed Forces), Beirut's requests, and failure of the Lebanese Government to implement all of the constitutional reforms in the Ta'if accord, Damascus has so far refused to withdraw its troops from Beirut." (CIA 95 Fact Sheet.)

- Israel invaded 6 Jun 82 against the PLO, withdrawing in 1985.
- Hizballah (HEZ-bul-LAH):

This Iranian backed Lebanese Shi'a movement seeks to liberate south Lebanon from Israeli occupation. Its broader mission focuses on the liberation and Islamization of Palestine. (See Farah, "Islamic Fundamentalism" p. 12.)

5. Unique Holidays/Observances

- 22 Nov 1943--Independence Day (from League of Nations under French administration)
- 1 May--Labor Day
 - Christian and Muslim holidays including Assumption Day (15 Aug)

6. Customs

- All citizens carry an identity card on which their religion is listed (Culturgram).

- By custom, the president is a Maronite Christian, prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the legislature a Shi'a Muslim. (CIA 95 Fact Sheet.)
- Religion often determines social/political identification. Each group has its own agenda, political culture and leadership.
- Lebanon is currently emerging from her 17 year old civil war.

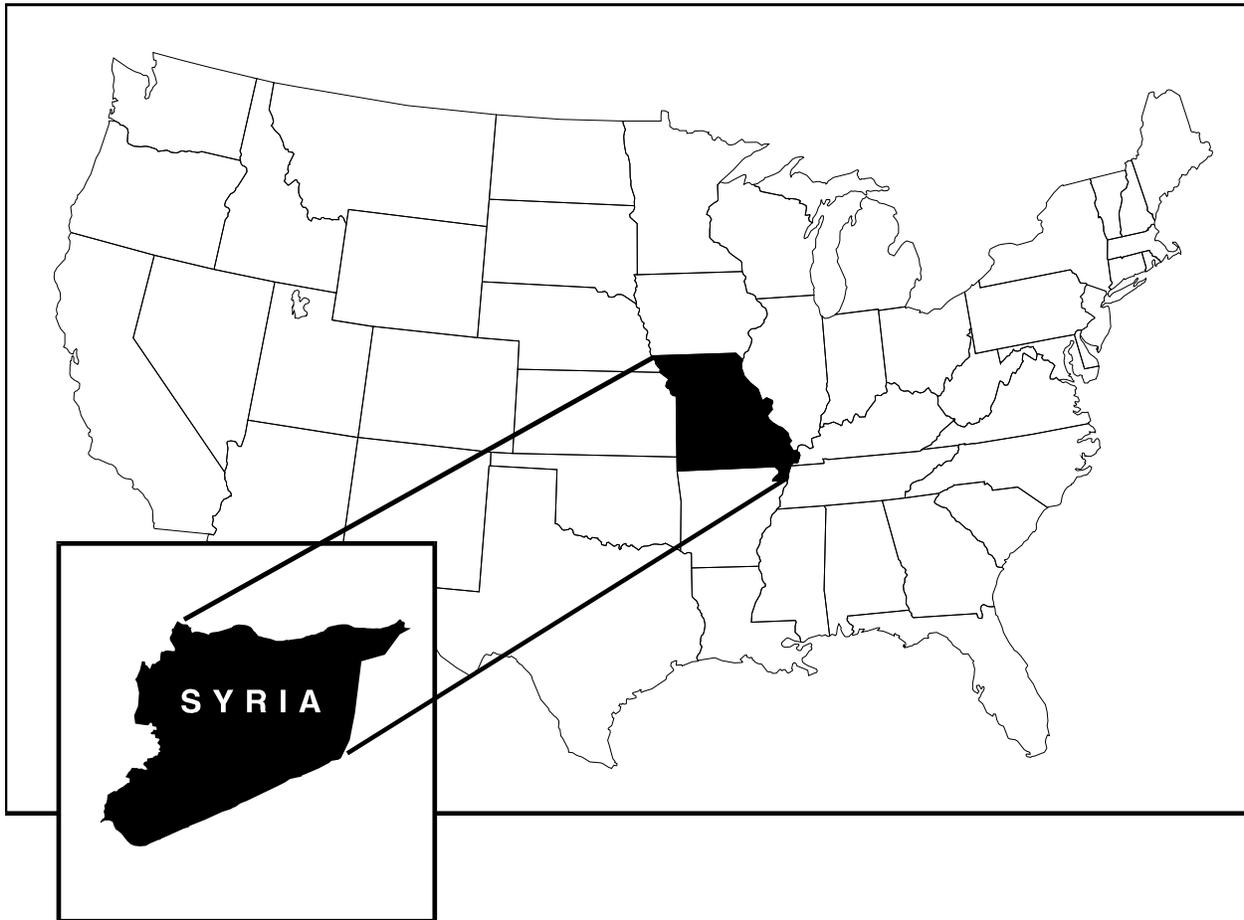
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Syria



<u>Population</u>	15,451,917
% under 15 years	48%
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:9
Radio	1:5
Phone	1:18
Newspaper	22:1000
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	66/68
Hospitals	1:891
Doctors	1:1037
IMR	41:1000
<u>Income</u>	\$5,700
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	64%

1. Religious Groups

- Sunni Muslim--74% (13,906,725)
- Alawite, Druze and other Muslim sects--16%
- Christian--10% (1,545,192)
 - Jewish--tiny communities in Damascus, Al Qamishli and Aleppo

2. Ethnic/Racial

- Arabs 90%
- Kurds, Armenians, others 10%

3. Gender Issues

- Universal suffrage at 18+
- Women in armed forces play more of a public relations than military role.

4. Conflicts

- *"Arab-Israeli conflict remained the paramount foreign policy concern, Syrian objective being to secure withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories, to restore sovereignty over Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, and to ensure full political self-determination for Palestinians.*

In attempting to resolve Arab-Israeli issue, Syria seeks unilateral strategic and military parity with Israel to negotiate from position of strength. Syria attempts to exert regional dominance over its Arab neighbors, focusing on Lebanon, which it has partially occupied since 1976." (Country Study, p. xvi.)

- Listed by U.S. State Department as one of seven state terrorist supporting nations.

5. Unique Holidays/Observances

- 1 Jan--New Year's Day

- 8 Mar--Revolution Day
- 17 Apr 1946 (Independence Day from League of Nations French Mandate)
- 1 May--Labor Day
- 6 May--Martyr's Day
- 23 Jul--Egyptian Revolution Day
 - 1 Sep--Libyan Revolution Day

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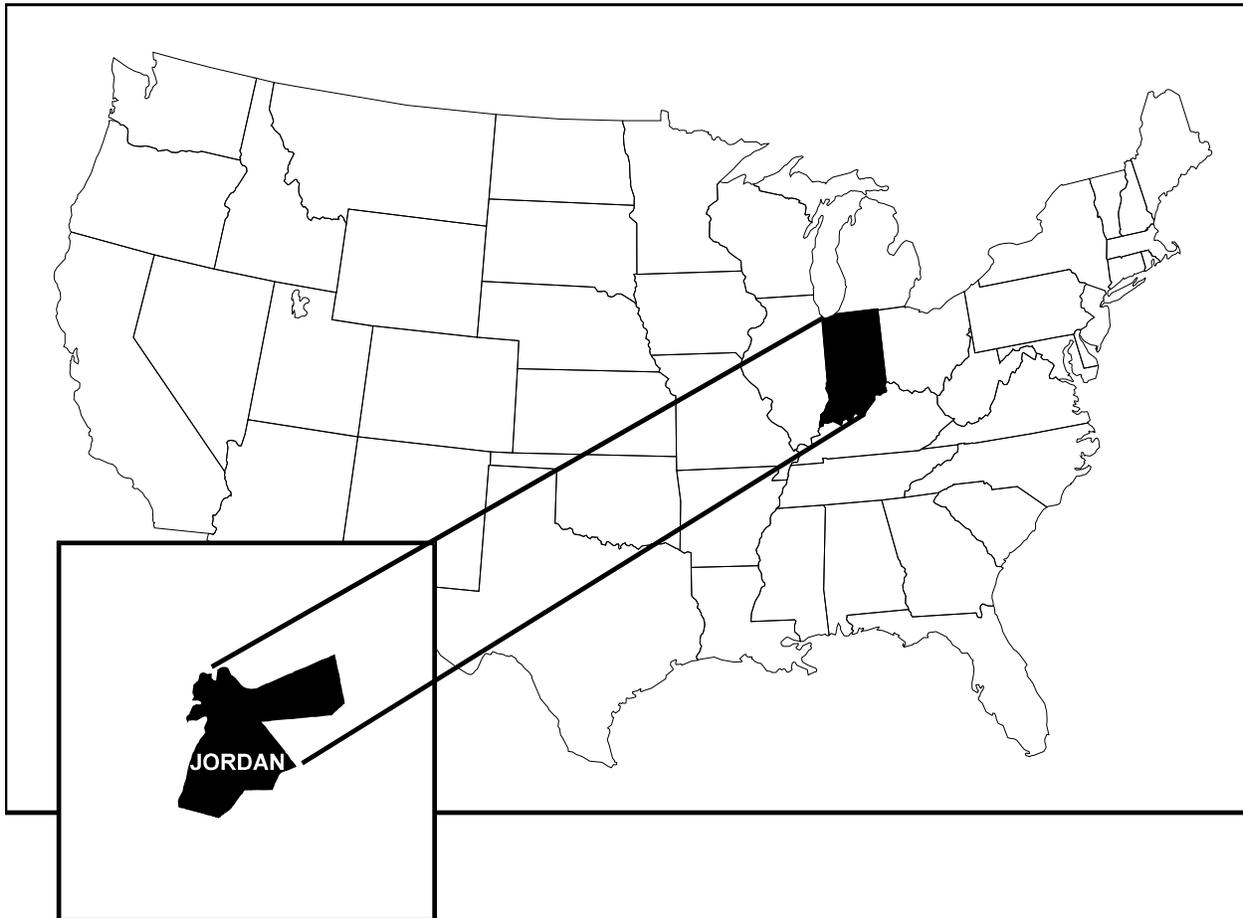
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Jordan



<u>Population</u>	4,100,709
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:16
Radio	1:6
Phone	1:11
Newspaper	70:1000
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	70/74
Hospitals	1:920
Doctors	1:574
Infant M R	32:1000
<u>Income</u>	\$3,000 per cap
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	83%

1. Religious Groups

- Sunni Muslim 92% (3,772,652)
 - Small (2,000) Druze community
- Christian 8% (164,028).
 - Eastern Orthodox (half of Christian population)
 - Catholic
 - Protestant (11,000)

2. Ethnic/Racial Groups

- Arab 98%
 - Nomadic Bedouin 5%
 - Palestinian 50% (either fled Palestine during Arab-Israel war of 1948/June 1967, or individuals born to Palestinians while in Jordan. A number live in East Bank camps, urban squatters, poverty).
 - Refugees: 700,000 entered from Iraq during 1990.
- Circassian 1% (descendants of Caucasus Mountains. Muslims. Important in government, business, military and security. 25,000 people).
- Armenian 1%

3. Gender Issues

- Since 1980s, conservative Islamic dress on rise
- Women comprise 12% of labor force (1985)
- Since 1980s, girl school enrollment nearly equal to boys
 - Queen Noor--American born wife of King Hussein

4. Conflicts

- Jordan/Israel formal peace treaty, 26 Oct 1994

- *"Unlike most neighboring Arab countries, Jordan had no significant minority groups that were perceived as problems for the security forces." (Country Study, p. 231.)*

- Islamic Opposition Parties

Most opposition groups are quickly brought under state control. King Husein's repression of violent Islamists is also well known. (See Miller, p. 472.)

- **Palestinians**
Many Palestinians are scattered and poorly organized. Supported by Syria/Libya, militant rejectionist factions of the PLO pose the most serious threat to Jordan's internal security.

5. Unique Holidays/Observances

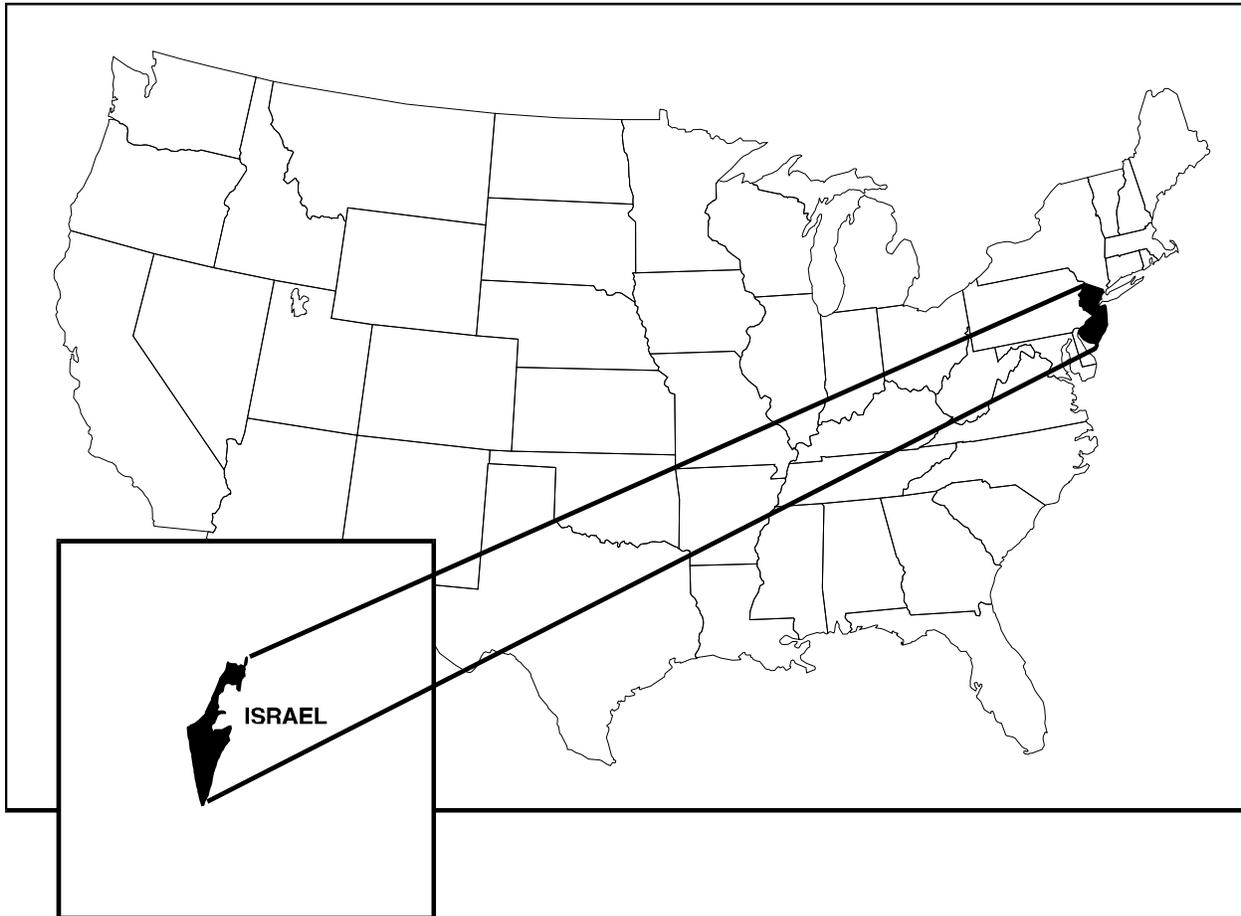
- 1 May--Labor Day
- 25 May--Independence Day
- 10 Jun--Arab Revolution and Army Day
- 11 Aug--King Hussein's accession to the throne
- 14 Nov--King Hussein's birthday
- Christmas and Easter
- Muslim observances

6. Customs

- Many Palestinians, while holding Jordanian citizenship, consider themselves Palestinians first, resenting being called Jordanians (Culturgrams).

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Israel



<u>Population</u>	5,433,134*
% under 15 years	29%
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:4
Radio	1:2
Phone	1:2
Newspaper	261:1000
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	76/80
Hospitals	1:177
Doctors	1:345
IMR	8:1000
<u>Income</u>	\$13,350
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	95%

* (Includes West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights).

1. Religious Groups

- Judaism 82% (4,455,169). *"...Judaism is not a monolithic cultural entity in contemporary Israel...an understanding of religious categories in American Judaism is not sufficient for understanding Israeli Judaism.*

Israelis religiously categorize themselves first as dati. That is, 'religiously' observant Jews or lo date, 'not religiously' observant Jews. One who is religious strictly follows halakah (hah-LOH-khah), that is, adheres to the totality of rabbinic law. One who is not religious is not a strict follower of rabbinic law...the category can be further subdivided into agnostic or atheistic secularists, on the one hand, and individuals who are committed to Judaism in principle, on the other. The latter group calls itself 'traditionalist' (mesoratism)." (Country Study)

- In Orthodox (dati) circles are the ultra-orthodox (haredi) who generally cut themselves off from Israeli society at large. They reject Zionism. These practitioners are exempt from military service.
- The modern or neo-Orthodox (Orthodox Zionists) adhere to the halakah (totality of rabbinic law) yet do not cut themselves off from society. They attempt to reconcile Zionism and religious orthodoxy, seeing Israel as a Zionist state. They participate in major institutions of the state, including the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).
- Neo-Orthodox tend to defer to ultra-Orthodox on religious matters.

"...the ultra-Orthodox have managed to maintain their virtual monopoly on the training and certification of rabbis (including neo-Orthodox ones) in Israel...Thus ultra-Orthodoxy has an aura of ultimate authenticity, a special connection to tradition that has been difficult for others to overcome. Even a staunch secularist such as David Ben-Gurion lamented during a confrontation that the ultra-Orthodox 'look like our grandfathers. How can

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you slap your grandfather into jail, even if he throws stones at you?" (CS, p. 96.)

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- *"In 1988 two-thirds to three-quarters of Jewish Israelis were not religious or Orthodox in observance or practice...Given these facts--the large number of secular Israelis, and the sometimes fierce denunciation of the state by a small number of the most religious extremists--one might expect Judaism to play a modest role in Israeli society and culture. But the opposite is true..."*

Traditional Judaism has been playing a more dominant role since the late 1960s and affecting more of the political and economic dimensions of everyday life..." (Country Study, pages 97-98.)

- *Though a minority, Orthodox Judaism yet has a central role in the state.*
-

This influence is due to the close link between Judaism and Israeli nationalism; the power of religious parties (the National Religious Party [NRP], Agudat and Shas) to form and maintain coalition governments, and the inability of Reform and Conservative religious Jewish movements to integrate with Israel's religious administration. (Country Study, p. 220.)

- Islam 14% (mostly Sunni--760,638)
- Christian 2% (half being Greek Orthodox) 108,662
- Druze and Other 2%. The Druzes have a long-standing reputation for military competence and soldierly abilities. They support the Israeli state and serve in the IDF and Border Police. About 175 Druzes have been killed in action.
- The Bahais governing body, the Universal House of Justice, is located in Haifa.

2. Ethnic/Racial Groups

- Jewish 82% (50% being born in Israel). Ashkenazi Jewish people come from northern and eastern Europe (and their descendants from America). Sephardim (Oriental) include

- Jewish members coming from the Mediterranean, Balkan, Aegean and Middle Eastern lands.
- Non-Jewish (mostly Arab) 18%. 27,000 Bedouin live in the Negev Desert.
- *"The majority of Palestinians are Sunni Muslims, but there are Christian Palestinians as well. There are also small numbers of a bewildering array of ethnic and religious groups. The largest of these are the Druze (1.6 percent), an obscure Arab people who keep their religious beliefs a secret. They are known to venerate the Biblical figure Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, whose tomb is in northern Israel."* (Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands, page 189.)

3. Gender Issues

- Universal suffrage 18+
 - 15% of the Israeli police are women, though not assigned to patrol work.
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- Military service is mandatory, beginning at age 18, for both male and female citizens/resident aliens. Males receive few exemptions. Women experience higher admission standards and more freedom in being granted exemptions. In the late 1980s, only 50% of the eligible females were inducted annually.
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4. Conflicts

- Jewish Militants (Religious Fundamentalists). Author Judith Miller likens Jewish fundamentalists to their "Islamic soul mates." (See God Has Ninety-Nine Names, p. 16)
- Gaza Strip (population 757,422) and the West Bank (1,481,364). Some Palestinian revivalists advocate a Palestinian "state in the West Bank and Gaza alongside Israel...[and] operate within the law to achieve this goal...the Hamas movement is committed to Jihad, believing Palestine is a holy, non-negotiable endowment. Therefore, all negotiations, peaceful settlements, political bargaining and conferences are rejected. Israelis liken revivalist movements within their country to a patchwork quilt--made up of many different groups

- *with differing ideas and no united front."* (Military Review, p. 44.)
- Hamas (hah-MAHS, Movement for Islamic Resistance):

Founded in 1988, this Sunni organization, with historic ties to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, is a major force in Gaza and the West Bank. It advocates a jihad on Israel as the only solution to the Palestinian issue. An Islamic state in Palestine is the goal. Hamas opposes non-Islamic elements of the PLO.

- Arab/Israeli Conflicts: For a discussion of an Arab view of "Israel's aggression," see Khalid bin Sultan, Desert Warrior, p. 173.

5. Unique Holidays/Observances

- 13 days after Passover--Holocaust Day
- 20 days after Passover--Memorial Day
- 21 days after Passover--Independence Day (14 May 1948.)
 - Traditional Jewish religious feasts and observances.

6. Customs

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- *"There are no civil marriages in Israel. All weddings must be performed by a religious authority. Rabbis perform Jewish ceremonies and a Khadi handles Muslim weddings. Christians go to their [clergypersons]. Divorce and other family issues are dealt with by religious courts. Each religion has the right to adjudicate family matters according to its own customs."* (Culturgrams, p. 115.)
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- *"...among the most important forces shaping contemporary Israeli society is religion."* (Country Study, p. 95.)

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- *"Securing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and all Arab parties with which it is not yet at peace."* (U.S. Goals in the Middle East and North Africa, Department of Defense, Apr 1996.)
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Schmemann, Serge, "Rival Claims of Jerusalem Lie at Heart of Arab-Israeli Enmity," New York Times, 27 Oct 96, p. A4.

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Vocabulary List: Levant and Jordan

Agnostic A person who holds that the ultimate cause and essential nature of things are unknown and unknowable.

Alawite Also known as "Nusayris" because of their connection with the Nusayriyah Mountains in northwestern Syria, these peoples seem to be descendants of original peoples living in Alexandrian times. Originally possessing a distinct pre-Islamic religion, over time they adopted both Islamic and Christian elements to their faith. Alawis celebrate Christmas, Easter and Epiphany, and use sacramental wine. Many of their faith tenets are secret. They study the Qur'an and recognize the five pillars of Islam.

Ashkenazi (ahsh-kah-NAH-zee) Jewish people. Jewish immigrants who came to Israel from northern and eastern Europe (and their descendants from America).

Bahais (bah-HAH-ee) Syncretistic religious group, originally established in Iran, whose governing body, the Universal House of Justice, is located in Haifa, Israel.

Circassian (chir-cas-see-AHN) Muslim descendants of Caucasus Mountains people who live presently in Jordan. They are important figures in Jordan's government, business, military, and security.

Druze (DROOZ) Syncretistic, secretive, religious group active in the Levant. The Druzes have a long-standing reputation for military competence and soldierly abilities. They support the Israeli state and serve in the IDF and Border Police.

Halakah (hah-LOH-khah) The totality of the Jewish rabbinic law.

Hamas (hah-MAHS, Movement for Islamic Resistance) Founded in 1988, this Sunni organization, with historic ties to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, is a major force in Gaza and the West Bank. It advocates a jihad on Israel as the only solution to the Palestinian issue. An Islamic state in Palestine is the goal. Hamas opposes non-Islamic elements of the PLO.

Hizballah (HEZ-bul-LAH) Radical Shi'a party. An Iranian creation but a strictly Lebanese Shi'a movement...It is the by-product of Israeli bombardment of Shi'ite villages in south Lebanon and the subsequent harsh policy employed by Israeli troops against the inhabitants, who had once looked to Israel for support before the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The primary aim of the movement is to liberate south Lebanon from Israeli occupation, but, to the extent Islamic Iran is behind it, Hizballah will be committed to the...liberation and Islamization of Palestine.

Holocaust (HOL ah kohst) Devastation, persecution and death experienced by many German Jewish peoples and others during World War II.

Ismailis (ahl-is-MHAHL-i-lee-uh) Shi'as known as Seveners because they believe Ismail was the seventh Imam...Ismaili beliefs are complex and syncretic, combining elements from the philosophies...as well as components of Judaism, Christianity, and Eastern religions...the secrecy with which they veil their religious beliefs and practices make it extremely difficult to establish what their actual religious beliefs are.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Military forces of the nation of Israel.

Jewish Militants Jewish religious nationalists who openly advocate replacing the political system with a theocracy based upon the word of God as they interpret it. Violence, self-righteous hatred and intolerance can be marks of this school of thought.

Levant (li-VANT) East Mediterranean seaboard countries

Neo-orthodox (Orthodox Zionists) Modern Jewish Orthodox adherents who adhere to the halakah (totality of rabbinic law) yet do not cut themselves off from society. They attempt to reconcile Zionism and religious orthodoxy, seeing Israel as a Zionist state. They participate in major institutions of the state, including the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Palestinian Peoples who either fled Palestine during the Arab-Israel war of 1948/June 1967, or individuals born to Palestinians who live in the Holy Land. A number of Palestinians currently live in East Bank camps, the Gaza Strip, or as refugees.

Queen Noor American born wife of Jordan's King Hussein

Rabbi Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation

Rabbinic law Religious law interpreted by Jewish rabbis

Sephardim (seh-FAHR-dim, Oriental) Jewish people. Jewish immigrants who came to Israel from the Mediterranean, Balkan, Aegean, and Middle Eastern lands.

Ta'if Accord (TAWH-if) The blueprint for Lebanon reconciliation. The Lebanese established a more equitable political system, particularly giving Muslims a greater say in the political process.

Twelver Shias "Twelver" derives from the disappearance of the 12th imam, Al Mahdi al Muntazar, in about 874. He was a child, and after his disappearance he became known as a messianic figure, Al Mahdi, who never died but remains to this day hidden from view. The Twelver Shias believe his return will usher in a golden era.

Ultra-orthodox Jewish orthodox adherents who generally cut themselves off from Israeli society at large. They reject Zionism. These practitioners are exempt from military service.

Review Quiz: Country Area Studies-- Levant and Jordan



Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

1. _____ What is a primary U.S. State Department goal in the Middle East region?
 - A. Securing a just, lasting peace between Israel and all Arab parties
 - B. Exploration of the "Empty Quarter"
 - C. Containing Afghan Taliban Islamists

2. _____ In Israel, those who do not follow Rabbinic law (Halakah) can be subdivided into agnostic/atheistic secularists and
 - A. religiously observant rabbis.
 - B. traditionalists who are committed to Judaism in principle.

3. _____ The IDF is the defense force of
 - A. Iran.
 - B. Iraq.
 - C. Israel.

4. _____ In Israel, training and certification of rabbis occurs by the
 - A. state.
 - B. ultra-orthodox school.
 - C. school of choice for those certified.

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5. _____ In what Middle East country is the religious makeup roughly 70% Muslim (Sunnis, Shias, Somalis, Alawites) and 30% Christian (Greek and Syrian Orthodox, Armenian and Roman Catholic, Maronite, Nestorians and Protestants)?
- A. Turkey
 - B. Lebanon
 - C. Egypt
6. _____ Syria maintains 30-35,000 troops in what Middle Eastern country?
- A. Iran
 - B. Lebanon
 - C. Jordan
7. _____ Some Middle East analysts feel the radical party Hizballah, while operative in Lebanon, is supported by what country?
- A. Iraq
 - B. Iran
 - C. Sudan
8. _____ What is Syria's "primary foreign policy concern?"
- A. Arab-Israeli conflict
 - B. Iraqi water rights
 - C. Border disputes with Jordan
9. _____ Druze within Israel
- A. serve with pride in the IDF.
 - B. are banned from the IDF.
 - C. are exempt from the IDF.
10. _____ Service by women in the Israeli Defense Force is mandatory
- A. and nearly 100% serve for a full tour of duty.
 - B. however, exemptions see only 50% inducted annually.
 - C. and 75% serve in all combat and combat support branches.

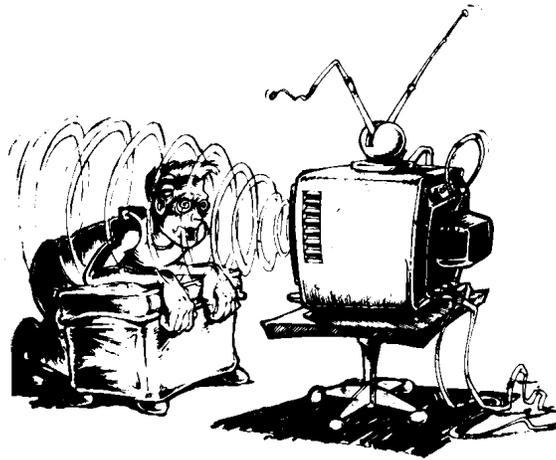
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11. _____ Two areas some Palestinians advocate a Palestinian state are

- A. the Dead Sea and Samaria.
- B. the Golan Heights and Sea of Galilee.
- C. the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

12. _____ Hamas (Movement for Islamic Resistance) is active in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Some analysts feel it advocates

- A. a Palestinian state, achieved within the law, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- B. an Islamic state within Palestine.



"Zone out"