

## ISRAEL

In Israel there are 53 distinct people groups. Following are two of the groups.

### **Jew, Israeli, Sabra**



Until 1948, Jews formed the largest non-Muslim minority in Iraq and Iran. The Jewish communities fared well over the centuries until Islam was declared the official religion. Since that time, they have been isolated and have experienced much discrimination and persecution. Sometimes they were forced to "convert" to Islam. With the formation of the Israeli nation in 1948 and the Iranian Revolution in 1979, large numbers of Jews have left Iraq and Iran. The few who remain continue to suffer from an anti-Semitic atmosphere.

When considering the Jewish lifestyle, many see Israel as the sparkling jewel on the ring of nations in the Middle East. Having been a minority for almost 2,000 years, the present population of Israel is now mostly Jewish. The stream of immigrants into Israel began in the 1880's with the national and cultural revival known as "Zionism." The trickle of immigrants became a flood when the nation of Israel was established in 1948.

What are their lives like?

Language is one of the distinguishing features among Jews of this region. While Hebrew and Aramaic are the common languages of prayer, sacred and legal matters, the Jews are quite at home with local languages and dialects. Farsi (the Iranian language) and Arabic are the everyday languages of most of the Jews outside Israel. Within Israel, Jews may speak fluent Yiddish (a German dialect with Hebrew elements), Russian, Yudi, Ladino, or any number of other languages learned in their countries of origin or from their immigrant parents.

Most of the Israeli Jews live in cities. Attempts to start new towns and populate rural areas have been difficult. In fact, such attempts have often become scenes of ethnic unrest between Jews and Palestinians. Most of the Jews who live in rural areas are part of the well-known kibbutzim (collective farms or settlements in Israel).

Israeli leaders wanted to see all immigrants integrate into one Jewish people. However, the different immigrant groups of the past have now become the ethnic groups of today. Along with the ethnicity, a class society has developed. "A person's ethnic background may shape his or her occupation and standard of living." The "Oriental Jews," those of African-Asian descent, are concentrated in the lower strata of society.

Unlike many Jewish communities outside Israel, extended families do not play an important part in the lives of the Israeli Jews. Rather, the nuclear family is the most important unit. Because education is highly valued in Israeli society, schools are free and compulsory up to the tenth grade. Most Jews view mandatory service in the Israeli army as a crucial part of the transition into adulthood.

The decline in Judaic studies in school seems to be a result of the crisis in Israel's Jewish identity. Many religious laws written into social law are no longer being enforced, such as businesses observing the Sabbath or the prohibitions against selling pork. Although all of the holidays on the Jewish religious calendar are celebrated, they have a greater social than religious value to most Israelis. On the other hand, there has been a cultural renaissance of Hebrew and Jewish studies and arts, particularly in dance, literature, music, and theater.

What are their beliefs?

Rabbinical Judaism is the dominant religion of Jews in this region, and the officially recognized institutions are Orthodox. Rabbinical Judaism replaced the temple with the synagogue, the priesthood with the rabbi, and the sacrificial ceremony with the prayer service. Emphasis was placed on study of the Torah (Hebrew name for the first five books of the Bible), the growing need for national restoration in the Promised Land, and the function of this world as preparatory for the world to come. However, approximately two-thirds to three-fourths of the Israeli Jews are non-observant. Jews who consider themselves to be religious can be simply divided into the Orthodox (traditionalists) who adhere to the traditional beliefs and practices, and the Moderns, who may hold to traditional beliefs but no longer strictly observe the practices. The holy places are maintained by the state and the religious councils and rabbis are state employees.

What are their needs?

The Jews have a wonderful understanding of their connection with the Abrahamic covenant. However, they also have a history of rejection of Jesus Christ as Messiah, the one who has fulfilled that covenant.

Throughout their history, the Jews have been discriminated against and persecuted. They need to experience emotional healing and forgiveness. Pray that as the Gospel is shared with them, it will not be viewed as anti-Semitic, but rather as the fulfillment of what God promised humanity through Abraham centuries ago. Also pray for a spiritual hunger among the Jews who view their "Jewishness" as an ethnic identity and have no religious affiliation.

Prayer Points

\* Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth loving Christians to work among the Jews of Israel and Iran.

\* Ask the Holy Spirit to grant wisdom and favor to the missions agencies that are focusing on the Middle Eastern Jews.

\* Pray that the Jewish people will understand that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.

\* Ask the Lord to soften the hearts of the Jews towards Christians so that they might hear and receive the message of salvation.

\* Pray that the Lord Jesus will reveal Himself to the Jews through dreams and visions.

\* Pray that God will grant Jewish believers favor as they share their faith in Christ with their own people.

\* Pray that strong local churches will be raised up among the Middle Eastern Jews.



Country: Israel

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

10/40 Window: Yes

People Name in Country: Jew, Israeli, Sabra

People Name General: Jew, Israeli

Alternate People Names: Israeli Jew

Population in this Country: 1,704,000

Population all Countries: 2,206,000

Affinity Bloc: Jews

People Cluster: Jews

People Name General: Jew, Israeli

Primary Language: Hebrew (1,704,000 Speakers)

Primary Religion: Ethnic Religions

Religion Sub-division: Judaism

% Christian Adherents: Data not available

% Evangelical: 0.20 %

**Karaite**



The Karaite form of Judaism is so strange that Russian Tsars categorized them as non-Jews. So did the Nazis. Thus, they escaped Russia's pogroms and the Nazi holocaust. But Karaites know they are true Jews. They follow only the Tanach, the Jewish Bible, rejecting rabbinic interpretations. They allow each believer to make his/her own interpretation. Unlike most Jewish communities, men and women can exercise authority in their groups. They often prostrate themselves in prayer, which is rare for any Jewish community.

Still, the Karaites have important commonalities with mainstream Judaism. They observe the Sabbath. Karaites practice total separation from Gentiles and from ritual washing. Their prayer books come almost exclusively from Tanach passages.

But just when we think we can pigeonhole the Karaites as Orthodox Jews, they surprise us. They do not wear phylacteries attached to forehead or hand in any form. Karaites understand the Scriptures referring to these in metaphorical terms. So they hide the Word of God in their thoughts and let it guide their actions.

In other respects, Karaites tend to adopt the customs of their host country. Since most of them live in Israel, they are starting to assimilate into mainstream society, according to the internet's Wikipedia.

Prayer Points

\* Pray that Messianic Jewish believers will see the Karaite community in Israel as God sees them.

\* Ask God to raise up Messianic Jews to go as His ambassadors to the Karaites.

\* Pray for completion of Bible translation in this people group's primary language.

\* Pray for Gospel messages to become available in audio format for this people group.



Country: Israel

Continent: Asia

Region: Middle East and North Africa

10/40 Window: Yes

Population in this Country: 29,000

Population all Countries: 35,000

Affinity Bloc: Jews

People Cluster: Jews

People Name General: Karaite

Primary Language: Karaim (29,000 Speakers)

Primary Religion: Ethnic Religions

Religion Sub-division: Judaism

% Christian Adherents: Data not available

% Evangelical: 0.00 %