



Cultural Diversity in Israel

Presented by Shay Shmoul

Israeli Emissary of the Jewish Federation of Northwest Indiana

Who are you, Israelis?

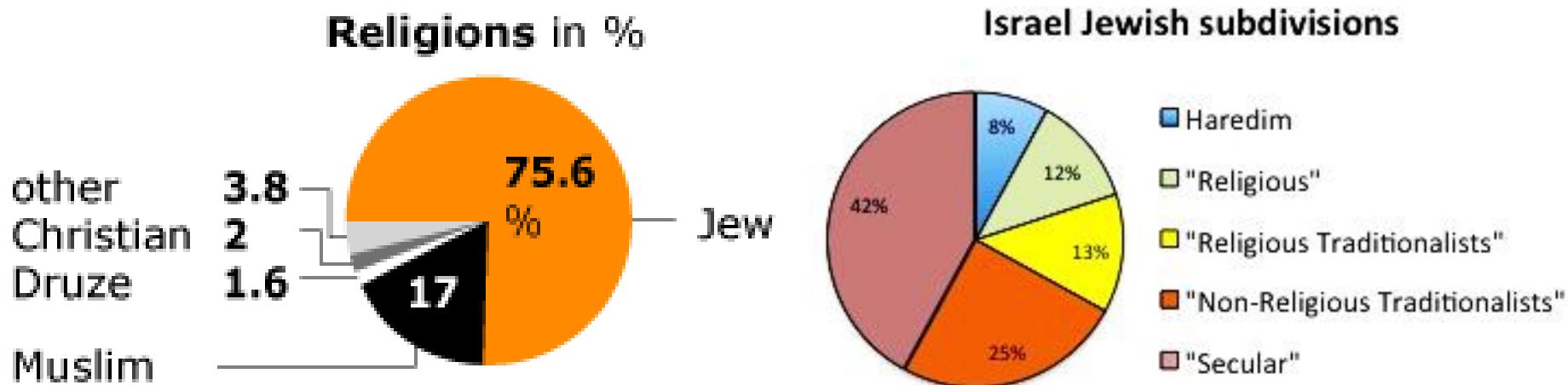


Now Seriously...

- ▶ The State of Israel has a population of approximately 8,556,000 inhabitants.
- ▶ Official Languages: Hebrew, Arabic and English.
- ▶ 74.8% are Jews, 20.8% are Arab, while the remaining 4.4% are defined as “others”.
- ▶ Jewish population distribution:
 - European or American origin: 35.11%
 - African origin: 15.53%
 - Asian origin: 12.3%
- ▶ 70.3% born in Israel.
- ▶ The majority of marriages are of mixed-ethnic origins.
- ▶ Arabic population distribution:
 - 82.6% Sunni Muslim (small minority of Shia)
 - 9% Christian (mostly Orthodox and Catholic)
 - 9% Druze

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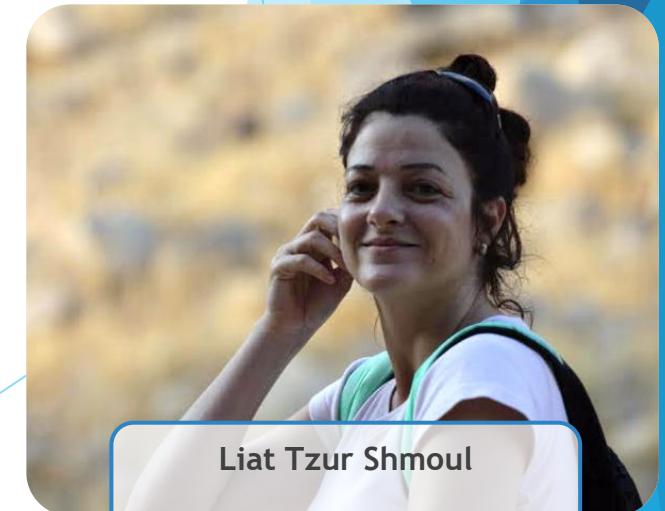


- ▶ Through the years, Israel absorbed mass numbers of immigrants from different countries and cultures. This led to social, economical and cultural changes.
- ▶ Statistical data provided by Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics

Ashkenazi



- ▶ Jews of European ancestry.
- ▶ The largest group of Jews in Israel.
- ▶ Mainly from Romania, Poland, Germany, and other European countries.
- ▶ Close to 6 million Jewish people were murdered during the Holocaust of World War 2 (67% of the Jewish European population). About 400,000 Holocaust Survivors immigrated to Israel.
- ▶ They speak mainly Hebrew. In addition to Hebrew, the elders speak the language of the country of their origin.



Liat Tzur Shmoul

My mother, psychotherapist

Mizrahi



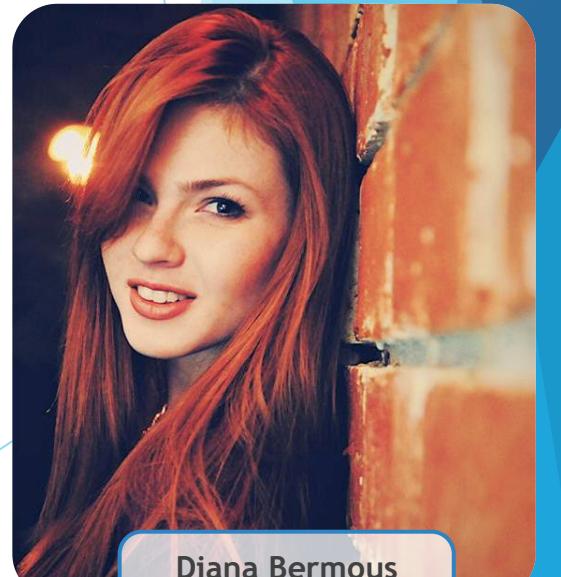
- ▶ Also called Sephardim (Hebrew for Spanish). They are descendants of Jews who were exiled from Spain in late 15th century and moved to Arabic countries.
- ▶ Jews of African and Asian ancestry.
- ▶ Second largest group of Jews in Israel.
- ▶ Mainly from Morocco, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and other Arabic countries.
- ▶ The majority of them are Jews who were exiled from Arabic countries after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.
- ▶ They speak mainly Hebrew. In addition to Hebrew, the elders speak Arabic.



Russian



- ▶ Russian Jews in Israel are the descendants and immigrants from the Former Soviet Union Jewish communities.
- ▶ They number up to 1,200,000 people.
- ▶ The immigration in the 1990s accounts for 85-90% of this population. The mass immigration happened after the Russian government opened the borders of the USSR and allowed Jews to leave the country for Israel.
- ▶ They speak mainly Russian, but also Hebrew.



Diana Bermous

A friend, lawyer

Ethiopian



- ▶ Nearly all of the Ethiopian Beta Israel community today lives in Israel, comprising more than 121,000 people.
- ▶ They are the descendants and the immigrants who immigrated to Israel during two massive waves of immigration (1984, 1991) mounted by the Israeli government—covert Israeli military operations to airlift the refugees in more than 60 top secret non-stop flights.
- ▶ Many of the immigrants came with nothing except their clothes and cooking instruments.
- ▶ Operation Solomon in 1991 cost Israel \$26 million to pay off the dictator-led government.
- ▶ Most of them speak Amharic and some Hebrew.



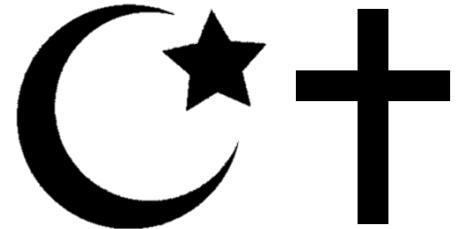
Haredi



- ▶ Ultra-Orthodox Jews.
- ▶ About 10% of the Israeli population.
- ▶ Haredi are deeply religious, and live their lives in Haredi communities. They observe the rules of Jewish law strictly.
- ▶ The ritually observant Haredi wear distinctive clothing, and about half of Haredi men do not work, instead studying religious texts throughout the week.
- ▶ Haredi families are usually much larger than non-Orthodox Jewish families with many children.
- ▶ They are exempt from mandatory army service, which raises major controversial issues.
- ▶ They speak mainly Yiddish.



Arab



- ▶ Roughly 21% of Israel's citizens are Arabs.
- ▶ The vast majority 81% - are Muslims. 9% are Christians.
- ▶ The majority of these identify themselves as Arab or Palestinian by nationality and Israeli by citizenship.
- ▶ Arabs in Israel have equal voting rights; in fact, it is one of the few places in the Middle East where Arab women may vote.
- ▶ Most speak Arabic and Hebrew.
- ▶ Arabs currently hold ten seats in the Knesset - The Israeli government. There have been Arabic members since the establishment of the state. There are Arabic representatives in the Supreme Court, Cabinet, Foreign Service and other Israeli government offices.
- ▶ They are exempt from mandatory army service.
- ▶ They speak Arabic, and some speak Hebrew.



Nour Shahen

A friend, navy officer

Druze



- ▶ There are about 130,600 Druze living in Israel.
- ▶ Druze are a unique ethnoreligious minority located in Israel, Syria and Lebanon.
- ▶ The Druze faith is a secret monotheistic and Abrahamic religion, and it incorporates elements of other religions. It might be considered as a Muslim sect.
- ▶ Some Israeli Druze identify as Arabs, but most don't.
- ▶ The Druze men serve in the Israel Defense Forces. Members of the community have attained top positions in the army, Israeli politics and public service.
- ▶ They speak mainly Arabic, and most speak Hebrew.



Ram Asaad

My best friend, university student

Israel Defence Forces



- ▶ Since the establishment of the state, and due to constant security threats, conscription exists for all Israeli citizens over the age of 18 who are Jewish or Druze.
- ▶ The length of compulsory service is three years for men and two years for women.
- ▶ For many people, their army service may be the only time in their lives where they mix for an extended time and on an equal footing with others from very different backgrounds.
- ▶ Many of the soldiers who complete their mandatory military service are later obligated to serve in a reserve unit.
- ▶ There are many women who choose to become fighters!



Israel is a Hub for Diversity

