



EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

ISRAEL 201

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PREFACE

1. In the Preface, the authors talk about the inherent tension and dual mission of Israel – to be, on the one hand, a normal country like any other and, on the other, as the one country in the world set aside for Jews, special. Do you think Israel can fulfill both missions equally? Does one necessarily need to be sacrificed to achieve the other?
 2. In the section entitled “The O-word” the authors explain why they chose not to include content in the book about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Do you agree with this choice? In general, can someone truly know Israel without fully understanding the conflict?
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INTRODUCTION: QUIZ

1. Did any of the behaviors or traits covered in the quiz surprise you?
 2. The authors could have begun the book with Chapter 1, “The Israeli Psyche,” but instead chose to present this mock quiz. Why do you think they did so? How might the Quiz prepare readers for what’s ahead?
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CHAPTER 1: THE ISRAELI PSYCHE

1. Do you believe there’s no such thing as objectively rude behavior?
2. If you had to choose between interacting with people who were either “polite yet fake” or “direct but rude,” which would you prefer and why?
3. Of the five character traits portrayed in this chapter (*freier*, *dugriyut*, *chutzpah*, *shivyon*, and *kehilatiyut*), which, if any, do you emulate most and perhaps wish to take on as a character trait of your own?
4. Does the “*freier*” concept help explain why compromise is so difficult in the Middle East? How does this harm Israeli society and how does it help?
5. What do you think Israelis and people from your country could teach and learn from one another?

6. Israelis often thrive outside of Israel because they are willing to take actions that others wouldn't (i.e., exhibiting chutzpah, thinking outside the box). Have you seen Israelis act differently from locals to get something done and how do you evaluate/judge these behaviors?
 7. Another way of defining "*kehilatiyut*" is that "we're all in it together." How would you compare the feeling of community in Israel to that in your own country?
 8. Have you experienced trauma, or the threat of trauma, that led to magical thinking? If so, how does it affect you today?
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CHAPTER 2: JEWISH LIFE IN A JEWISH STATE

1. What is the value of having Jewish law dictate daily life? What is the downside?
2. Is religious pluralism possible in Israel, or is it an unachievable ideal – or perhaps even a threat to the country's ultimate purpose?
3. Which of the five visions for a Jewish state do you most identify with?
4. How would your daily life, work life, and family life be different if you were living according to the Jewish calendar?
5. In some parts of Israel, signs of other calendars are increasingly seen, for example, Valentine's Day, Black Friday, and Halloween. Do you think there should be a place for these "holidays" in Israel? Why or why not?
6. How does Shabbat in Israel feel different from the weekend/Shabbat abroad? Which elements of a Shabbat experience in Israel can you bring back to your community?
7. What do you think about the custom of bike-riding on Yom Kippur? Is it meaningful, or does it detract from the solemnity of the day?
8. How much can someone who is not a sabra relate to Yom Hazikaron (Israel's Memorial Day)? If you've experienced Yom Hazikaron in Israel, what did you feel as the memorial siren rang? How does this compare with your home country's relationship with veterans and war?
9. In this chapter, we met religious Jews in Israel who complain that Israel isn't Jewish enough. Can you sympathize with their feelings? If so, what would you do to change it, if you could?

CHAPTER 3: THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

1. How critical is proficiency in Hebrew to understanding Israel (politics, culture, the people, etc.)?
2. How much of a role can or should Hebrew play in the life of someone who lives outside of Israel? If you had to design a Hebrew curriculum for Jews living outside of Israel, what would it look like?
3. Should the Academy of the Hebrew language resist or embrace the influence of English on Hebrew?
4. How critical is proficiency in Arabic – for Israelis, or for anyone – to understanding Israeli Arabs and their society?
5. Eliezer Ben-Yehudah felt it was essential for a Jewish state to have a language of its own; others, including Herzl, disagreed. Who do you think was right? How essential is language to any society, and how important do you feel it is that Hebrew be the official language of Israel?

CHAPTER 4: GOVERNMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, AND EDUCATION

1. What elements of Israeli government and elections would you want to incorporate into your country? Which might you avoid? What elements of your country's systems would you want Israel to incorporate?
2. What does it say that more than half of all Israeli prime ministers at some point changed their names?
3. Israeli schools are far less formal than in many countries. Is this a good thing or bad, with respect to child development and growth?
4. Students at the Darka Druze High School in Yarka described the experience of being Druze as “caught in the middle.” What did they mean? Whose job, if anyone's, is it to address and change this?
5. Israel is home to one of the largest Pride parades in the world and is known as a gay-friendly travel destination. How important are LGBTQ issues in a country whose founding purpose was to be a homeland for Jews?
6. Were you surprised to learn what you did about the state of marriage and divorce in Israel? What changes to Israeli marriage and divorce laws would you make, if you could?

CHAPTER 5: THE ECONOMY, WORK, AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

1. It's common for Israelis to live "*b'meenus*" (in overdraft). Would you be comfortable living like this? If you lived in Israel, what sacrifices would you make to save money?
2. In many countries, home ownership is one milestone that many people take for granted. Would you look at yourself or your life differently, or make different choices, if you weren't able to buy your own home?
3. If you moved to Israel, how important would it be to you to purchase and use local products?
4. Israeli ambulances are entirely reliant on foreign donations. In all the ways someone can help Israel, how important is financial support, be it for ambulances or other projects? Should supporting Israel financially be contingent on Israel's current government and political situation?
5. What are the benefits of separating business from personal in the workplace? What are the drawbacks?
6. During humanitarian crises, Israel has sent assistance even to its enemies. Does it have a responsibility to do so?
7. Israeli parenting styles are vastly different from those in other countries. Why is this? What elements of the Israeli parenting style do you like, and which do you not?

CHAPTER 6: THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES

1. How does mandatory military service affect both Israel as a whole and the individuals who serve?
2. Non-Israelis will often comment that Israeli 20-year-olds seem to be more mature than non-Israelis that age. Do you think the army "makes kids mature faster," or does military service simply illustrate that young adults are more capable than we think?
3. On the one hand, the IDF causes young Israelis to confront harsh realities; on the other, Israelis are reliant on their parents for longer, while their contemporaries in other countries hit various checkpoints of independence earlier in life. How would you compare and contrast young adults in Israel and abroad?

4. If your child wanted to go to Israel to be a Lone Soldier, how would you react?
 5. Must an immigrant to Israel serve in the IDF in order to truly “be Israeli”? Why or why not?
 6. Does the high value that the army places on a single life help or hurt Israel? Are there any limits to what a country should do to bring home a prisoner of war?
 7. What are your feelings on the idea of national service? Do you feel Israel’s mandatory draft is an overall positive or negative for the country?
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CHAPTER 7: ARTS, CULTURE, SPORTS AND LEISURE

1. When it comes to humor, should anything be off-limits? Are there topics you feel Israelis should be allowed to joke about but that Diaspora Jews should not, and vice versa?
 2. Can comedy affect change and bridge divides, or does it only “preach to the choir”?
 3. At what point should a tour guide or educator teach and reveal the nuances and negative aspects of Israel? How important is it to first instill pride and a positive connection to the country? Could doing so ultimately prove a detriment?
 4. How important is it to “know the land” of Israel through your feet? How well do you know your own country?
 5. After winning her Olympic medal, Yael Arad commented that Israel had “closed the circle,” a reference to the massacre of Israeli athletes at the ‘72 Olympic Games in Munich. Can an achievement by an Israeli ever be just an achievement, or is it always necessarily infused with a larger meaning?
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CHAPTER 8: MAKING ALIYAH

1. Every year, at the end of the Passover Seder, Jews say, “*L’shana haba’a b’Yerushalayim*” (“Next year in Jerusalem”). For thousands of years a return to Jerusalem was merely a dream. Now that it is possible, do you believe that all Jews have a duty to move to Israel?

2. Have you ever thought about making aliyah? If so, for what reason; and if not, what kept you from doing so?
3. In this chapter, one of the interviewees commented that what ultimately separates those who make aliyah from those who don't is a willingness to "jump" and embrace the unknown. Did this statement surprise you? If you know people who moved to Israel, to what extent do you feel this statement applies to them?
4. Do you have friends or family who made aliyah? Did this chapter cause you to view their experience differently, and if so, how?
5. Does this chapter cause you to view immigrants to your country in a new light?

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At this point in time, is Israel "where it should be" as a nation? What are its biggest challenges going forward?
2. Who is the one person interviewed in this book with whom you'd like to get to know more deeply? What questions would you ask them?
3. Is Israel a Jewish state, or a state for Jews? Neither? Both? What's the difference?
4. In the Conclusion, the futurist David Passig stated that Israel is still searching for its ethos. If you had to come up with a one-sentence mission statement for Israel, what would it be?

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