

60 Years of Israeli Achievements in Immigration

"THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

[Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel, May 14, 1948]

The absorption of immigrants into the social fabric of the country has been one of the central objectives of the State of Israel from the day of its founding. It is one of the government's highest priorities. People come from all over the world in search of democracy, religious freedom and economic opportunity.

Large-scale immigration and a positive process of absorption are not only overall goals of the nation, but also serve as a powerful impetus for Israel's development and progress in all areas.

Since the founding of Israel, approximately 3.5 million people have immigrated to Israel from more than 120 countries. With nearly a million immigrants arriving in Israel during the final decade of the 20th century, the face of Israeli society has been irrevocably altered. This group, as a whole, has flourished, and brought about unprecedented economic growth, cultural innovation and technological development.

The Jewish Agency for Israel: A Global Jewish Partnership

In 1929, when the Jewish Agency was created by visionary leaders from around the Jewish world, "Israel" existed only in the context of liturgy and their dreams. It would take decades of unceasing efforts by the Jewish Agency — a "working government" literally of and by the people, but a people without a state — to realize the centuries-old longing. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, Chair of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, declared the State of Israel... hours later he was inaugurated as Israel's first Prime Minister. The work of the Jewish Agency - supporting aliya to populate and strengthen the Jewish state; bringing Israel into the lives and hearts of Jewish communities around the world; and carrying their passion into Israel to help shape her society and destiny - has continued every day of every year since then.



Waves of Aliya [Immigration to Israel]

1882-1903: First Aliya

25,000 immigrants arrived from Russia and Romania and a further 2,500 immigrants from Yemen.

1904-1914: Second Aliya

35,000 Jews arrived, mainly from Russia and Poland, and another wave also arrived from Yemen.

1919-1923: Third Aliya

35,000 Jews arrived, the majority from Russia and Poland, with a smaller number from Lithuania and Romania.

1924-1928: Fourth Aliya

More than 67,000 immigrants arrived, mainly from Poland, Russia, Romania and Lithuania. Other groups arrived from Yemen and Iraq.

1929-1939: Fifth Aliya

More than a quarter of a million immigrants arrived from all parts of Europe, including Western and Central Europe.

1949: On Eagles' Wings - The Aliya from Yemen

In 1949, 50,000 Jews made aliya from Yemen in an airlift via the city of Aden. The establishment of the State of Israel endangered many Jewish communities in Arab countries, including Yemen. In order to assist them, the State of Israel organized rescue operations to bring the Yemenite Jews to Israel. When the Imam of Yemen agreed to allow Jews to leave his country in 1949, Israel brought thousands of Yemenite Jews to Israel within a very short period of time. It was necessary to airlift them quickly given fears that the Imam would shortly rescind his permission.

1950-1951: Operation Ezra & Nehemiah - The Aliya from Iraq

The Jewish community in Iraq was largely a wealthy one, and enjoyed high social status. During 1948, when Israel was established, thousands of Iraqi Jews were arrested in Iraq.

In 1950 the Iraqi government gave permission to the Jews to immigrate to Israel on condition that they renounce their Iraqi citizenship, relinquish their property, and forfeit the right to ever return in the future. Between 1950 and 1951, 125,000 Iraqi Jews were airlifted to Israel.

1954-1955: Aliya from Morocco

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the Jews of Morocco feared a violent reaction at the hands of the local population and 35,000 of them made aliya. The aliya of Moroccan Jewry continued clandestinely following Moroccan independence in 1956. Between 1956 and 1961, some 30,000 Jews secretly made their way to Israel.

1984 & 1991: Operations Moses & Solomon - Aliya from Ethiopia

During Operation Moses in 1984, approximately 8,000 Jews, 1,500 of them children and young people without their parents, made aliya from Ethiopia. Ethiopian immigrants faced numerous dangers along the way. The conditions in the transit camps were harsh, and many people died along the way. It was necessary that the operation remain clandestine because the Jews were forbidden to depart Ethiopia. Following a regime change in Ethiopia in 1991, the new government agreed, in return for a sum of \$40 million, to permit the remaining Jews of Ethiopia to make aliya. During the 48-hour "Operation Solomon", 14,000 people were brought to Israel.

1990 and into the new millennium: Aliya from the Former Soviet Union

Following a long period of separation between Soviet Jewry and the State of Israel, relations were renewed with the fall of the Soviet regime in 1990. This opened up new possibilities for aliya by Soviet Jews, and brought one million immigrants to Israel who changed the face of Israel and its society forever. Prior to this, there had been a slower trickle of immigration; between 1969 and 1973, some 150,000 Soviet Jews succeeding in making aliya.

1991-Today: Aliya from western countries

To this day, Israel continues to attract immigrants from all over the world. In recent years there has been "aliya of choice" from the United States, Canada and France, countries where Jews live without fear of oppression.

