

I began my research by visiting several important historical sites in Israel. These sites include former Prime Minister Ben Gurion's home, Independence Hall, the Palmach Museum, the Ayalon Institute, Caesarea, Akko, Gamla, Tzafat, Masada, Yad Veshem, the Ramparts Walk, the Temple Mount, and the Israel Museum. First, I visited the home of the first Prime Minister of Israel, Ben Gurion, to learn the significant impact this man had in helping to create the State of Israel. He pushed for Israel to declare independence in 1948 in Independence Hall, which I also visited. Ben Gurion had a vision to create a modern Hebrew city where people only speak Hebrew. When the UN voted to adopt the state of Israel on November 29, 1947, Ben Gurion and other leaders formally declared Israel's independence on May 14, 1948, in Independence Hall. I also visited the very spot in Independence Hall where Ben Gurion announced to all Israelis that Israel declared independence. On this date, Hatikvah was sung as Israel's national anthem for the first time.

I also visited the Palmach Museum in Tel Aviv to learn more about Israel's road to independence and the history of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The IDF play a large role in both Israeli culture and politics today, as there is mandatory service for all 18-year-olds. In this museum, I learned about the background of the Palmach fighting group, such as how this group originally began in 1941, was originally called the Haganah, and changed to the Palmach after they were trained by the British to fight the Nazi's. However, the Nazi's did not invade Palestine, so the British called for the group to disband. Rather than disband, the group changed their name to the Palmach, which means "Strike Force", and went underground. I found it fascinating to learn about the resilience and determination of this group to remain secret, as the Palmach members lived in a kibbutz for half the year and trained for the Palmach the other half of the year. In 1945, after World War II, many Holocaust survivors had nowhere to go, and the British

were not allowing them entry into Israel. So, the Palmach fought against the British military, and smuggled illegal immigrants into Palestine. This was dangerous because if the ships were caught, the immigrants inside were sent to detention facilities in Cyprus. Eventually, groups like the Palmach, joined with other military and defense groups, and this led to what is known today as the IDF. Another incredibly historic site in Israel is the Ramparts Walk in the Old City. This is a walk across the gates guarding Jerusalem, and it has existed since 1539. Along the Walk are sniper lookouts, where Jordanian snipers shot through the Rampart Wall killing Israeli citizens as they walked around the Old City between 1948 and 1967, prior to Israel's peace with Jordan.

In addition to visiting politically historical sites, I also visited religiously historical sites in Israel. I visited Masada, a fortification built by King Herod in 37 BCE on top of a mountain, as a place of safety in case of an attack. Years later, Masada was occupied by Jewish Zealots who were against the Roman occupation of Judea. Eventually, the Roman army surrounded Masada, rammed the walls, and burned them down. Inside Masada, the Jewish rebels killed themselves to preserve their Jewish culture and values, rather than allow the Romans to enslave them. In total, approximately 960 people committed mass suicide on the hilltop in Masada.

I also visited Yad Veshem, the Shoah memorial museum. I learned about many death camps – some of which I had not previously learned about in my studies, such as Ravensbrück, Westerbork, Ba-had, Majdanek, Ponary, Breendonck, Klooga, Chelmsford, Belzec, Drancy, and Lwow- Janowska Jasenovac, Stutthof, Theresienstadt-terezin, Mauthausen, and Transnistria. Of course, there was also Buchenwald, Treblinka, Sobibór, Auschwitz-Oswiecim, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen. I also spent several hours reading through all the stories of both sadness and heroism that occurred during the Shoah. Several of the exhibits stood out to me, including one about the heroism of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943, which was a Jewish resistance

movement led by a youth group counselor when the Warsaw Ghetto members refused to surrender to the police. The uprising lasted approximately three months as the police burned the Ghetto during this time. This uprising is both heroic and tragic. While it is a symbol of resistance against the Nazi's, it also led to the death of approximately 13,000 Jewish citizens.

The second part of my research project focused on learning about Israeli culture. Studying modern Israeli culture helped me to understand and analyze why certain political decisions are made based on the demographics of Israeli citizens. Some of the cultural activities I participated in during my research trip included attending a Graffiti tour of Jerusalem, visiting a kibbutz, hiking the Ein Gedi Nature Reserve, visiting the Dead Sea, exploring the four quarters in the Old City of Jerusalem, and visiting the Machane Yehuda market. To study what is best described as a socialist structure in certain Israeli communities, I visited Kibbutz Or Tal. A kibbutz is a collective community in Israel that follows living patterns resembling a socialist society. Kibbutz Or Tal is comprised of 60 families, all of whom engage in communal living that focuses on agricultural work. Interestingly, their personal possessions from before joining the kibbutz remain their own personal property; however, the kibbutz will take all its members' salaries. While outwardly appearing as a socialist society, children that are born into and raised on the kibbutz do not automatically become members. They have to petition to become a member once they reach the age of eighteen. The kibbutz guarantees its members several basic needs including housing, healthcare, education, pension, and social activities. Private needs may be bought through the monthly allowance given by the kibbutz, with more senior members given a larger allowance. In Israel today, this kibbutz is one of 20 socialist communities left in Israel. Many of the other kibbutz have been privatized. I also focused a significant amount of research into exploring and analyzing the Old City of Jerusalem. First, I entered the Jewish Quarter of the

Old City and learned about the Western Wall. In Judaism, the Second Temple is considered the holiest religious site. However, after the Second Temple was destroyed, the surrounding wall, the closest thing to the Temple, became a holy site for Jews to pray. I learned that twice a year the notes left in the wall are collected and brought to the Temple Mount, the site where the Second Temple stood, where they are then burned. I then visited the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. This quarter is very vibrant with food, shops, people, and activities. As I walked through the market in the northeast section of the Old City, I stopped by many shops filled with foods and spices. I also visited the Christian Quarter of the Old City. Here, I visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Inside this Church are two important items to Christianity. First, this Church houses the stone upon which Jesus was veiled after his death. It also contains a monument over the location of the cave where it is believed that Jesus was buried and then resurrected after 3 days. I watched the procession ceremony of different sects of Christianity as they each walked around the Church with incense to bless the holy area. Interestingly, the leaders of these sects were not entirely tolerant of each other and appeared almost hostile to their presence.

Although I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the impact of Jewish history and culture on the State of Israel, I also devoted a significant portion of my research in Israel to learning about Israeli politics. I visited the Golan Heights to learn more about the Syrian-Israeli border. I studied the relationship between the two countries and the Syrian refugees living at the border. I also studied the relationship between the Druze villages in Israel, of which, many have relatives living across the border in Syria. During my tour of these areas, I was able to get within half a mile of the Syrian border. From this vantage point, I saw an IDF base, a small Syrian refugee community under the protection of the IDF base, and a farther Syrian town called Qunetra. I also heard gunfire from inside the Syrian town. Following this, I traveled down the Israeli mountain

and visited two Druze villages, Buqata and Massade. These communities were an eclectic mix of seemingly prosperous and beautiful homes mixed in with concrete structures that were barely finished, and which housed multiple generations. I found it interesting that the Druze in the Golan Heights area differ tremendously from other Druze villages across the country because they do not enter the army since many of their relatives live across the border in Syria. During my visit in the Golan Heights, I walked around many battle sites from the Yom Kippur War and saw the remains of Israeli and Syrian tanks and bunkers. I also saw the Jordanian border on my way to Jerusalem. During this drive, I saw a Jordanian military base lookout and learned that unlike Israel's relations with Syria and Lebanon, Israel and Jordan's relations are relatively peaceful today due to the 1994 peace negotiations signed between the two countries.

As I was driving to Jerusalem, I saw some Bedouin communities that were supplied water by Israel. I spoke with people in the area about their views on Israel's treatment of the Bedouin communities. One man I met, a former IDF Special Forces soldier and self-proclaimed socialist, provided his views on the topic. As he explained to me, there are about 92 currently unrecognized Bedouin settlements. The Israeli government has several reasons for not acknowledging these settlements as legal. These settlements are built on non-approved government land. Part of the government's argument is that if the government were to approve the settlement in this specific area, rather than other more accessible areas they have designated as appropriate for settlement, then the government would have to provide electricity and education to this inaccessible area. The Bedouin communities argue the Israeli government does not have a right to the land because the Bedouin's are returning to the land of their ancestors who used these areas for part of the year during the period when the Bedouins were semi-nomadic. Today, there are approximately 170,000 Bedouins. Approximately half of this population are

settled in regular communities and are provided amenities by the government. The rest of the Bedouins live in unrecognized settlements and are not provided with such amenities.

Interestingly, the Israeli government does not provide electricity and education to these groups despite the fact that many of the Bedouins in these unrecognized communities serve in the army. Today, there are negotiations between Bedouin tribes and the Israeli government over purchasing the land from the Bedouins, but it will likely take several generations before this matter is settled.

During my time in Israel, I attended a session in the Knesset, and a session in the Israeli Supreme Court. The Knesset is the Israeli Parliament and consists of 120 members who are elected every 4 years. The last Knesset election occurred in 2015 and led to the Likud party gaining the largest number of votes. I studied Israel's proportional representation system, which often leads to many coalitions forming in the Knesset, including a coalition between the Labor Party and the Hatnuah Party in this election. During summer, the Knesset is rarely in session; however, on the day I visited, members were having an important debate over a law Prime Minister Netanyahu wants to implement, which would renew the compulsory civil service law should a person choose not to enter the army at age 18. I entered the gallery and watched an opposition speaker present their views on this piece of legislation. I noted many similarities between this session and a session in the United States Congress. For example, similarities include the layout, the dynamics between the parties, the speeches, filibusters, and the fact that not all members must be present during the speeches.

Lastly, I visited an on-going hearing in the Supreme Court of the State of Israel, and learned about how the Israeli Supreme Court differs from other Supreme Courts around the world. For example, unlike the United States, Israel does not have a constitution; it just has a set of fundamental laws. Therefore, the Supreme Court relies on other constitutions and laws to

answer issues not addressed by Israel's fundamental laws. The three main constitutions that are relied upon by the Israel Court System are the German, Canadian, and British constitutions; however, Israel's system is most like Britain's court system. And, while both the attorneys and justices wear black robes, they do not wear wigs as they do in British courts. In Israel, there are three levels in the court system. The lowest courts are the Magistrate Courts of which there are 18. Then there are 6 District Courts and 1 Supreme Court. The Magistrate Courts hear criminal cases that are up to 7 years of imprisonment and civil cases that are up to 2 million shekels. The District Court hears criminal cases that may result in more than 7 years of imprisonment and civil cases that may result in damages in excess of 2 million shekels. The Supreme Court serves as an Appellate Court and a High Court of Justice. In Israel, everybody has the right to file two appeals on the same case. It is even possible to appeal a Supreme Court case, but the defendant would be sitting with the same Justices that heard the first case, in addition to several new judges added to the panel. The High Court of Justice also hears petitions from many different groups including all Israeli residents, Palestinians living in the West Bank, illegal immigrants, and even tourists can submit petitions. There are many differences between the United States Supreme Court and the Israeli Supreme Court. For example, the Supreme Court Justices are hand selected, and must attend a retreat to undergo a battery of psychological tests while being closely observed. In addition, unlike in the United States, the maximum number of Justices that can be on a panel together is thirteen. Usually the Justices sit in panels of three to make decisions because of the Court's large volume. This provides for more opportunities to secure more decisions and thus reduce the backlog. Ultimately, it is the president of the Supreme Court, who is the senior-most Justice, who decides how many and precisely which Justice sits on the panel. In addition, there are no witnesses or jury because the jury would not be representative of the

minority groups in Israel since the majority of people in Israel are Orthodox Jews. In Supreme Court sessions, journalists are permitted to attend; however, they can only write things down as sessions are not recorded and no pictures are allowed. I also learned that approximately 10,000 cases are petitioned every year, and around 8,000 cases are heard each year. Of the cases heard, around 6,000 of these cases are appeals and around 2,000 of these cases are petitions.

Photographs



