

**Brandeis University**

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

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## **The Israel Literacy Measurement Project: 2015 Report**



*What languages  
are spoken in Israel?*

*What is the role of  
religion in Israel?*

*Who serves in Israel's army?*

*What do you know about  
this conflict or conflicts?*

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October 2015

## Acknowledgments

Support for this research was provided by the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life and anonymous other donors. We also deeply appreciate the support and partnership with the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University. In particular, we are grateful for the advice and encouragement of Professor Ilan Troen, the Stoll Family Chair in Israel Studies at Brandeis University and founding director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, and Dr. Rachel Fish, associate director of the Schusterman Center. We are also grateful to our colleagues at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies: to members of the research team, Fern Chertok, Eric Fleisch, and Ariel Stein; as well as the Center's managing editor, Deborah Grant, for her assistance in preparing the document for publication; and Masha Lokshin, the Center's assistant director, for administrative coordination of the project.

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## Introduction

Rhetoric about Israel on college campus has become increasingly strident, leading one *New York Times* article to characterize the situation as “a kind of ideological arms race.”<sup>1</sup> A 2012 study of students in courses about Israel (Koren et al.) found widespread rejection of the hostile discourse “on the quad”—outside the classroom. Rather, students preferred the reasoned discourse of the classroom, informed by facts and moderated by academic rigor. Since then, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has further degraded the tenor of conversation (Nelson & Brahm, 2014), and a recent study of applicants to Birthright Israel summer trips found that “more than one-quarter of respondents describe hostility toward Israel on campus by their peers as a “fairly” or “very big” problem and nearly 15% perceive this same level of hostility toward Jews” (Saxe et al., 2015).

Anti-Israel campaigns, and the student response to them, often have been assumed to stem from a lack of knowledge about Israel and the Middle East. Attempts to counter the BDS movement frequently aim at education (Campus Trends Report, 2014-15). The tag line of CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America is “get the facts” ([www.cameraoncampus.org](http://www.cameraoncampus.org)). Other organizations, such as Campus Watch, the Middle East Forum, and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), provide materials to educate the public about issues in the Middle East. These organizations believe that Jewish students on campus lack the knowledge necessary to effectively counter the BDS movement and other anti-Israel groups. But ignorance about Israel is a problem not limited to Jewish students. Data from national polls suggest that lack of familiarity with Israel is widespread. In 2015, ahead of a scheduled talk by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 23% of Americans said they had never heard of him (Pew Research Center, 2015).

In the Jewish community, concern focuses on the way Israel is taught in elementary religious schools where discussions of Israel focus on the affective connection of students to Israel, fostering a love of the country, rather than developing a more sophisticated understanding of the land, its people, and its political situation (Pomson, Wertheimer, & Wolf, 2014). Jewish community professionals and educators began to address a concern with Israel education in the early 2000s. A commissioned study for the Gilo Family Foundation (Gerber & Mazor, 2003) called for “Israel education to become a field in its own right—with the requisite development of a curricular approach, systemized training, professionalization and the creation of a ‘central address’ to coordinate and streamline this process.” This led to the creation of a number of centers and organizations, for example, academic institutions such as the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis (2006) and Israel education programs such as the iCenter for Israel Education (2008) and Makom Israel (2006). In addition, numerous experiential education programs such as Birthright Israel (1999), Masa Israel (2004), and Onward Israel were created to help generate support for and education about Israel (for a review of these initiatives, see Horowitz, 2012). In the past decade, Israel studies programs at leading universities in North America have also flourished and expanded their breadth and reach (Koren & Einhorn, 2013; Koren et al., 2013). At the core of these efforts are the twin goals of expansion of opportunities for learning about Israel and provision of better tools for understanding its culture, history, and contemporary affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/02/28/us/ap-us-israel-on-campus.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/02/28/us/ap-us-israel-on-campus.html?_r=0). Accessed 9/1/2015

Despite the flourishing educational and experiential programming, there is little, if any, empirical research that documents what Americans know about Israel, the Middle East, or Israeli/Palestinian issues or assesses how prepared Jewish students are to encounter anti-Zionism and anti-Israel sentiment on campus. Israel educators continue to be concerned about not having enough competent teachers (iCenter, 2011) or teachers with significant content knowledge about Israel (Kopelowitz & Wolf, 2013). Given that schools continue to focus primarily on teaching a love of Israel, the few existing measures of Israel education have examined the affective impact on attachment and support for Israel (e.g., Grant, 2008; Kadushin, Saxe, Phillips, & Sasson, 2009; Pomson, Wertheimer, & Wolf, 2014; Saxe & Boxer, 2012; Saxe & Chazan, 2008). Measures of content knowledge, particularly for use in secular settings, are missing. Documenting what people know (and do not know) about Israel, the conflict, and the history of the region, is necessary for establishing the state of the field and building strong educational programs. In addition, for programs that aim to teach about Israel, having a means to assess educational success is paramount.

The current project is an attempt to create a valid and reliable measure of knowledge of Israel. Beginning with the question, “what does it mean to be literate about Israel?” the team worked to establish assessment standards. Drawing on definitions of literacy in other social science disciplines and in consultation with substantive experts, the research team developed a test bank of validated Israel-related questions. The question bank can be used with college-aged young adults to assess the content of Israel-related knowledge as well as the presence or absence of particular related subject areas.

## Educational Assessment

*“You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of service to them”  
– Charles Dickens, Hard Times*

Much has been written in the educational arena about the best methods to assess student knowledge. Multiple choice tests continue to dominate across most subjects as they are easy to grade, inexpensive to produce, and create a (perhaps false) sense of precision and fairness (Breakstone, Smith, & Wineburg, 2013). Multiple choice and standardized tests have been criticized for their emphasis on testing declarative or procedural knowledge at the expense of testing for the content and quality of student knowledge (Fleming & Chambers, 1983; Morgenstern & Renner, 1984; Nickerson, 1989). Particularly in the field of history, students perform poorly on state or national exams that test historical facts. Scholars have argued that this is a product of test construction rather than an indication of how little students know (Wineburg, 2004; 2006). Tests are designed to produce overall scores that conform to a bell curve; questions which everyone gets right (or wrong) are eliminated because they do not discriminate, thus reducing the overall scores on the exam and making it appear that students lack the most basic facts (Wineburg, 2004). There is increased desire to focus on alternative methods of assessment across subject areas (Baker, 2010; Baker, O’Neil, & Linn, 1993; Breakstone, Smith, & Wineburg, 2013), but uncertainty about the ability to construct and validate such assessments (Baker, 2010; Frederiksen & Collins, 1989; Linn, Baker, & Dunbar, 1991).

Despite concern about the validity of standardized tests, the most basic form of learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills, represented by facts, concepts, principles, or procedures. This knowledge can be recalled, understood, or applied, and different assessments can be used to

determine the level of comprehension (Haladyna, 2006). Recall of specific facts and information can be accurately and quickly tested using multiple-choice questions, and this testing provides a valid and reliable measure (Downing & Haladyna, 2006; Haladyna, 2004). However, educators often want to know about a students' depth of understanding and ability to apply knowledge and skills to new situations. Thus, higher-order cognitive functioning or cognitive ability is often the goal, not simple recall (Haladyna, 2006). Perhaps the biggest criticism of multiple choice tests is the emphasis on declarative knowledge over depth of understanding and quality of thinking (Haladyna, 2006; Nickerson, 1989).

Others have argued that understanding a set of facts can indeed better prepare one for higher-order thinking. E. D. Hirsch is perhaps the most well-known proponent of what he terms cultural literacy—the view that the ability to comprehend requires concrete and specific background knowledge. Hirsch's insight came from an experiment that he conducted with college students. He gave two sets of students a reading comprehension exam. The first group of students had large background knowledge in several relevant areas such as history, geography, civics, etc. The second group, often coming from disadvantaged homes, lacked this background knowledge. Hirsch found that students with background knowledge could comprehend and analyze difficult college-level texts much more effectively than the students who lacked this knowledge (Hirsch, 1988; Stern, 2009). Hirsch's work formed the basis of many state-sponsored core curriculum initiatives as well as the basis for standardized testing across our country. Other skills, such as critical thinking and creativity, are certainly important to teach, but students who lack the fundamentals cannot engage in higher-order thinking, according to Hirsch (Hirsch, 1988; Schweizer, 2009).

Research in political science supports the idea that specific and concrete knowledge is necessary for a complex and sophisticated cognitive understanding of information. Knowledge of concrete political facts is related to deeper knowledge of the political process. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1993) showed that a simple five-item scale of political knowledge was correlated with 1) larger indexes of political knowledge, 2) political sophistication (as measured by open-ended questions and an interviewer's rating), and 3) the ability to use facts well in a political discussion. Knowledge of these facts was also correlated with increased political participation, faith and trust in government (political efficacy), and holding stable political opinions (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993).

Measuring recall of facts is not the same as measuring depth of knowledge and ability to analyze new information. More work is certainly necessary in order to develop measures that test higher-order cognitions. However, these studies suggest that both knowledge of facts and critical thinking skills are necessary for understanding information. Thus, in a first attempt to measure Israel literacy, the research team focused on validating questions that measure recall or recognition of facts related to Israel on a wide range of topics. These questions measure the extent to which individuals possess the information necessary for critical thinking and processing of topic-relevant information.

## **The Project - Overview**

The goal of the project at inception was to design an instrument that could be used with all populations, Jewish and non-Jewish, youth, college students, and adults. The process was designed to be iterative—consulting with an advisory group, assessing what subjects knew across multiple domains of knowledge, developing questions, testing the questions, eliminating questions that were too easy, too hard, or unrelated to overall literacy, developing new questions, retesting—and

continuing the process until a valid and reliable measure of Israel literacy was created. The questions would then be used to assess needs (in diagnostic testing) and evaluate the efficacy of programs designed to enhance understanding of Israel.

Two changes were made in the scope of the project early on. The population was redefined and limited to Jewish college students, and the project was shifted to focus on creation of a bank of questions rather than a single instrument. The knowledge relevant to specific target audiences was vastly different, thus making a single instrument impractical. Thus, the focus shifted from a “diagnostic tool” (single instrument) to a bank of reliable and validated questions related to the larger construct of Israel literacy. Creating a bank of questions would allow practitioners to pick and choose questions and constructs suited to their own purposes.

### ***Advisory group***

In March 2013, CMJS assembled a team of experts in the fields of Jewish education, Israel studies, and communication to help identify the subject matter and content areas necessary for individuals to be considered literate about Israel. The advisory group included:

- Irit Aharony, Senior Preceptor in Modern Hebrew, Harvard University
- Cheryl Aronson, Associate VP of Israel and Education, Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston
- Marci Borenstein, Director of High School Programs, Brandeis University
- Rachel Fish, Associate Director, Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University
- Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Professor of Jewish Education, Brandeis University
- Charles Radin, Director of Public Information, National Bureau of Economic Research
- Leonard Saxe, Director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and Steinhardt Social Research Institute, Klutznick Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies, Brandeis University
- David Starr, Rabbi and Founder of Tzion, an adult education course about the State of Israel
- Eran Tamir, Affiliated Scholar, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, Brandeis University
- Ilan Troen, Former Director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies and the Stoll Family Chair in Israel Studies, Brandeis University

The research team and the advisory group discussed the idea of literacy and the best method for testing it. Advisory group members from the field of Jewish education questioned whether literacy as a concept could be captured and tested using a multiple choice exam. While their opinions did not change, the majority of the advisory group and CMJS team members were convinced that there were key facts in the fields of history, geography, and politics that individuals need to possess in order to understand those subjects.

After debating the merits of multiple choice questions and whether or not a single instrument could be used for the various populations the research hoped to target, a decision was made to begin with a qualitative series of interviews with college students and determine what they might reasonably be expected to know about Israel.

## Qualitative Data Collection

The research team conducted two initial rounds of interviews: the first with a small group of students in order to find out what kinds of information they brought to the interpretation of newspaper articles or videos on the web. The interviews were meant to assess whether one needed factual content in order to discuss such sources and to identify the kind of information subjects said they used for comprehension of the texts. The second much larger group of interviews was designed to test broader areas of knowledge within a defined set of domains—to determine what might be reasonable to expect individuals to know.

For the first round of interviews, CMJS recruited a convenience sample of six students and young adults in April 2013. Students were given articles and videos and questioned about the information they knew beforehand that helped them understand the materials. A number of articles were chosen in which some prior knowledge about Israel would be helpful and perhaps necessary for understanding. The following media items were used (see Appendix A):

- Lee, M. (2013, March 22). Obama in Israel: President Ends 3 Day Visit with Symbolic Stops. *The World Post*.
- Kershner, I. (2013, April 11) Court Rules for Women in the Western Wall Dispute. *The New York Times*.
- Harman, D. (2013, April 14) The Technion: Israel's hard drive. *The New York Times*.
- Video Clip – Soldiers entering the Old City of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War, 1967.

Students were asked to describe what was taking place in the article or video and any background information they knew about the subject (see Appendix for full protocol).

The interviews revealed more about the intellect and ability of students to gather information from an article rather than their existing knowledge of Israel. For example, one student, who could not pronounce the name of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who was mentioned in the article, could still speak intelligently about Obama's trip to Israel after reading and gleaning information from the article. “[Obama met with] important political figures who are currently in a conflict... [It is] definitely crucial for Obama to visit them and maintain peace as well as give reassurances... Obama is, I think, attempting to take a stance and not to be overly political and still be respecting the religious aspects at play.”

The article mentioned that Obama had placed a stone on the grave of “Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995.” The student could not say who Yitzhak Rabin was, why, or how he died, but she did say that he was the victim of a “political assassination” which “escalated tensions.” It is hard to know what this says about the student's knowledge about Israel. Was she able to infer that the assassination escalated tension, or did she possess background information that helped her understand the article?

A student who attended a Jewish high school watched the video clip and easily knew that it was about the Six Day War and correctly identified that it was 1967. He had heard one of the men who fought in the war speak, and he remembered a good deal of detailed information about the man and the photograph that was taken of him, which became emblematic of the war. Then, when asked how this incident connects with Israel today, the student said, “I have no idea. I am not up on what is happening in Israel right now.” When asked about how the borders from that war might still be



significant today, the student responded, “I know that there are some issues about borders that people are fighting about.”

Another student who was well informed about Israel used the Women of the Wall article to discuss pluralism and the Israeli government as well as the issue of secular versus religious in Israel and at the Kotel (Western Wall) in particular. In this case, the use of the article was almost irrelevant. Her knowledge of the subject was broad and beyond the scope of the article; this was clear even without discussing the article.

Overall, CMJS found that the interpretation of the articles and video clips yielded more about the students and their critical thinking abilities than their knowledge of Israel. Smart and well-read students could sound intelligent and make accurate comments about the articles, even in the absence of extensive knowledge about Israel. Distinguishing pre-existing knowledge about Israel from information gleaned from the articles was occasionally challenging. The information students had was often incomplete. They knew some facts but not others. Finally, CMJS found that knowledge about Israel came from many different sources, such as friends, family, or even speakers and not only from academic classes.

CMJS shared the findings of these interviews with the advisory group in a second meeting in May 2013. At that time, the advisory group helped the research team identify domains of knowledge: history, geography, culture, religion, society, the conflict, and government. Within each domain, the group produced a list of concepts critical to understanding that domain; for example: the Oslo Accords was considered an important concept in the domain of history; boundaries, topographical features, and climate in geography; literature, pop music, and film within culture; and demography and diversity as part of society.

In July and August 2013, the second group of interviews were conducted with 42 students from various colleges and universities, also recruited through a convenience sample. Of these, 25 were Jewish and 17 were not Jewish, some were from elite schools and others from less prestigious schools. All students were asked the same broad questions designed to elicit their knowledge within each domain. See Appendix B for the full protocol used in the interviews.

Students were asked to rate their sense of their literacy about Israel and how they learned what they knew. Then they were asked open-ended questions such as: “What are some of the key geographical places, features, and characteristics of Israel?” This question was followed-up with key terms (i.e., probes). Students’ knowledge of Israel differed widely necessitating different probes for different groups. Each question had two sets of probes depending on whether responses to initial questions demonstrated any knowledge of the subject. Probes given to students who began with more knowledge were more open-ended, testing recall as well as recognition. A more defined set of probes was given to those who appeared totally ignorant of the field.

When students failed to answer on their own, the researcher was instructed to say “Does the word [insert probe here] mean anything to you?”

These interviews with students focused on a global construct of literacy—could students have informed conversations about Israel? Students showed large gaps in overall knowledge and a lack of consistency in knowledge level across domains. For example, students who had almost no knowledge of Israeli culture might have facts at hand about the conflict. Students who knew the

geography of the region might have no knowledge of the culture or the political system. A student, who described himself as an atheist, said in his interview that the major natural resources of Israel were salt, farming, and fish. When asked about the languages spoken in Israel he said:

English would be in there because the British had control for a long time. Yiddish is probably spoken, because of the historic populations. I know people in Israel have an accent and I can't think of [whether] it is a different language or if it is accented British. That's is all I can think of.

He said that he was unsure whether the United States gave aid money to Israel. Yet he was able to talk about the conflict, at least in general terms:

Tensions will always be there as long as one side views that it has been slighted by the other, but it is more of a calm, passive-aggressive, hatred. Occasionally one side will cross the other...maybe Hamas will throw a rocket or two into Israel and, but Israel doesn't really massively attack—retaliate with air strikes or ground troops as they did a couple of years ago...

Some students had limited vocabulary. A non-Jewish student who said he follows the news, knew there were Muslim Palestinians and that there is an issue of settlements (or squatting, as he termed it), but his explanation is rather murky and confused:

I guess what I know is mostly from disputed territories like the West Bank and Gaza Strip and sort of forcing or, I don't know, I guess depending on who you're talking to, they're, I guess, Muslim, Palestinian settlers in those regions, and I know that a lot of conflict or at least recently has been sort of demolishing these stuff like squatting homes and putting up all these track points of how to get in between the territories. And I guess that's mostly all I know is the sort of internal conflict of people trying to move around or live in these disputed territories and who is allowed to live there and how the government has responded to these people. If the people who are squatting in those territories, or people who are saying that they have been living there or their ancestors have been living there for centuries, I guess that's all I know.

When asked what a kibbutz is, the student answered that it sounds like a term he should know.

No that sounds familiar. I'm trying to figure out why I would know that. Actually I know what that is...it's like music or maybe that's a different term, but I think it's some sort of traditional music or cultural thing in Israel.

Another student who grew up Jewish and visited Israel with her family was able to identify some of the more famous leaders but when talking about religion in Israel said that she thought most people were Orthodox (very religious) and that most businesses were shut down on Friday night and Saturday morning.

Often students were not aware of their own knowledge. For example, one claimed she did not know anything about geography, saying: "I feel really, really rough with my geography." However, when

asked about cities, she responded that she lived in both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. She went on to give detailed information about these cities:

Tel Aviv is more of a secular city, with large immigrant populations... It's a big city, with lots of money and commerce going through it. Jerusalem is...all low-lying buildings, much more of a religious-oriented city, but still really vibrant, and kind of thriving, just much smaller than Tel Aviv.

Despite her claim that she did not know much about geography, she had an understanding of the cultural difference between the two cities.

Geography was a particular challenge for many of the students. Students were correct most of the time in their ability to identify Israel as part of the Middle East but Europe, Eastern Europe, and Africa were also given as answers to a question on Israel's location. Many students were able to identify a number of bordering countries (Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt most frequently) but countries such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia were also mentioned as abutting neighbors.

A non-Jewish student said she had taken a course on terrorism. She said that Israel came up in class a lot, but she could not remember which terrorist groups were associated with attacks on Israel. When asked which terrorist groups the class had discussed in the context of Israel, she said,

I can't think of any particular name, but we talked a lot about bombings...I just can't remember particular names of the groups. And the only one coming to mind right now is Hamas, and I don't even know if that's related.

The interviewer asked if the name Hezbollah meant anything to her. She said they had definitely discussed it in class but she had no idea why the group might come up in the context of Israel.

Some of the students, as shown here, seemed to be unable to place facts into a context. This student had the sense that Hamas is related to Israel but could not articulate why or how. Other students had more of a sense of context, but lacked the specific details to back up their narratives about the area. For example, a student was clear that the conflict in Israel is over land, "it's still being argued over who the land belongs to...everybody thinks, oh, Israel belongs to me." When asked about Palestine, this student responded,

Well, back in Biblical ages...Israel...was a very holy land that, according to the Jews, belonged to them; Palestinians think it belongs to them, but the Palestinians currently live in Palestine, which is near Israel.

Long-term study, rather than family or short-term teen trips to Israel appears to be associated with particularly high levels of knowledge about Israel. A Jewish student who had spent three months in Israel doing *ulpan* (immersive Hebrew classes) and an internship at a Jewish learning/community program described the green line as an armistice line from 1948 and continued, "Then there's the 1967 armistice line which includes what people refer to as the West Bank, or Judea and Samaria, which borders Jordan." When asked who refers to it as Judea and Samaria, she revealed an understanding of the use of language by people talking about the region:

It reflects where you are in the political spectrum ... People on the left would say, 'Occupied Territories,' or the 'Territories,' or the 'West Bank.' [Those in the] center would say 'West Bank,' maybe 'Judea and Samaria.' The right wing would say 'Judea and Samaria.' Those are the Biblical names for it. 'West Bank' refers to the West Bank of the Jordan River.

Another Jewish student, a day school graduate who had spent a semester in Israel in high school, when asked about the major differences of opinion concerning the history of modern Israel said, "the biggest one would be responsibility for the refugees after '48." He went on to discuss the debate over whether the [Palestinian] refugees

had been kicked out or just saying they were kicked out, whether it was the right thing to do—and whose responsibility it is to—where they should go now, and who should take them in....The more right-wing tends to think that the Palestinians left sort of voluntarily, because they thought that Israel was going to be destroyed, and that, as a consequence, it's not Israel's responsibility to deal with it. More left-wing [people] think that Israel had a hand in kicking them out, and to an extent is responsible for fixing the issue after the fact.

Overall, the research team found that individuals who had more knowledge of basic facts were able to speak articulately about the larger issues, and the reverse was not found. In the 50 interviews conducted before the questions were prepared, the research team did not find individuals with content knowledge who were unable to articulate understanding of larger concepts. Based on this learning, the research team designed multiple choice questions to evaluate knowledge about Israel. Team members chose terms, place names, and concepts to test based on the analysis of the qualitative data and discussions with the advisory group.

At the outset of the program, it was assumed that a single set of questions could be designed for use with a variety of potential audiences: educators (e.g., Jewish day school and secular high school teachers, informal Jewish educators); adult learners (e.g., members of Jewish congregations, interfaith social action groups, Jewish leadership); young adults in high school or college, and specifically Jewish youth going on Israel experience programs such as Birthright Israel. After the initial round of interviews, it was clear that the knowledge these different populations possessed differed greatly, and one instrument or set of questions would be inadequate to assess the literacy of all populations. For the question bank, college students (and eventually Jewish college students) were chosen as the target audience. CMJS has relatively easy access to this population and the need for such a measure was felt to be most pressing among this group.

## ***Developing the Question Bank***

In fall 2013, the research team developed a question bank to test with a sample of students in Birthright Israel orientation programs prior to their trip to Israel. This sample provided adequate numbers for quantitative testing while also providing the research team with a diverse group of students whose knowledge of Israel varied greatly.

A total of 140 questions were prepared by the members of the research team. Questions were created within each domain identified by the advisory group. Although some of the questions overlapped two domains (for example, history and conflict), each question was assigned to a primary domain by the end of the testing period.

In designing questions, the research team attempted to follow good practices for multiple choice test creations (see Haladyna, 2002). Based on published guidelines and the goals and objectives of the research, the team:

- Designed each question to reflect the type of information likely to be known by college students based on the preceding interviews. For example, “which Israeli leader was assassinated” gave the following answer choices: Yitzhak Rabin, Theodore Herzl, Anwar Sadat, or Ariel Sharon.
- Designed wrong answer choices to be wrong, not tricky. This was an attempt to be fair with the questions and answers and avoid “distractor” answers. For example, wrong answers to when the State of Israel was declared were wrong in both year and month.
- Designed questions to focus on facts rather than opinions or subjective information. The team stayed away from any questions that could be misinterpreted and seen as biased toward one political point of view. For example, a question on the Oslo Accords centered on factual information such as the names of the individuals who accepted the final negotiations and the countries who signed on rather than on assessments of the efficacy of the agreement
- Avoided all-of-the-above or none-of-the-above in the answer choices

## ***Testing the Question Bank***

In November-December 2013, CMJS administered three questionnaires of about 50 questions each to 311 students from nine universities in the Boston area and one in Philadelphia. Students were randomly assigned one of the three versions of the questionnaire. Students completed the questionnaire in hard copy at their Birthright Israel orientation sessions and received 20 New Israeli Shekels ([NIS], a sum equal to about \$5) to be used on their trip. If students did not attend their Birthright Israel orientation, they received the questionnaire electronically through an email invitation. All students from the Pennsylvania institution completed the questionnaires electronically. Most of the universities involved are considered “highly selective” in their admissions process and are ranked highly in *US News and World Report* school rankings.

The results were analyzed to assess how well the items performed as a measure of knowledge about Israel. Item-analysis was conducted using two statistical tests, the point biserial and the discrimination index. The point biserial correlation shows the correlation between respondents’ answers to a target item and his/her overall test score (Henrysson, 1963; Richardson & Stalnaker,

1933). A student who scores well overall should do better on any given individual item and items with low item-total correlations are considered problematic.

The item discrimination index is a measure of item quality helpful when the test's purpose is to produce a spread of scores (a norm-referenced test), such as the literacy exam. A good test should be able to distinguish between high and low achieving students. In the conventional approach, an equal-sized group of high scorers and low scorers are selected, and the proportion of correct answers of the low scorers are subtracted from the proportion of high scorers (Kelley, 1939). An item would have the highest possible discrimination if all the high scorers answered correctly and all the low scorers answered incorrectly. Questions with high discrimination are kept and other items are removed from the test bank.

These item analyses provide a way of eliminating questions that do not discriminate between those who know something about Israel and those who do not have this knowledge. For example, since all respondents knew that falafel was something to eat, that question was not useful in distinguishing knowledgeable students from those who had no knowledge. A question on the religion of the majority of Israeli-Arabs was also eliminated because scores on this question were not correlated with overall scores on the exam.

After analysis, some questions were discarded, others were changed, and new questions were designed to better capture certain concepts. Questions were submitted to the advisory group for comments and suggestions.

In January 2014, a new instrument was tested with an introduction to psychology class at Brandeis University. The students filled out the questionnaire in class and were given one research credit for their participation (students are required to complete a number of research credits in psychology). The majority of respondents were not Jewish and some were not native English speakers. Jewish students had varied scores, but most of the non-Jewish students scored very low, averaging 25% correct. This was further evidence that the question bank would not be appropriate for most non-Jewish students.

In March 2014, a number of the students from the introductory psychology class who scored high on their multiple choice test were selected for further research to help correlate the findings of the test with their ability to discuss Israel. The research team wanted to see whether those who scored higher on the multiple choice test would also show more fluency and understanding when speaking about Israel.

One such student showed a complex and broad knowledge of Israel and its society. For example, he had rough knowledge of the map of Israel, where the Gaza and West Bank are located, how the parliamentary government works, Israel's wars and with whom they were fought, and the influx of immigrants to Israel who make up its current society. Although some of his facts were inaccurate (for example, that the Palestinian Liberation *Organization* rather than the *Authority* is governing the Palestinians), his narrative overall showed accurate and in-depth knowledge of many aspects of Israel. Another student in her interview gave detailed information about the current borders of Israel.

After the '67 war, Israel annexed the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza strip and did they get the Sinai Peninsula after that war? Yes, they did. So they pretty much almost doubled their size...[Since '67] they gave Sinai back to Egypt and

since then the West Bank and Gaza Strip are more autonomous...more self-governing.

The interviews demonstrated that students with high scores on the multiple choice exam were able to speak with knowledge and understanding about Israel, even if not all of their information was correct.

The revised question bank was tested with a larger group of Birthright Israel students (n=642) from a more diverse group of 20 universities in April-June 2014, during their orientation sessions. An attempt was made to balance schools that were “highly selective” with “less selective” schools and large state universities with small private colleges. Hillel staff from the participating schools administered the survey (in hard copy) and returned the anonymous answer sheets to CMJS. Students were again given 20 NIS for their participation and all of the students were new to the testing. A total of 91 questions were selected for testing. Questions were divided between two different questionnaires that were randomly assigned to schools. Four questions appeared on both questionnaires because they were the most highly correlated with overall performance on the test. For administrative ease, the students recorded their answers on a scantron (bubble) form that was scored by computer and analyzed using Stata statistical analysis software.

## Results

### *Demographics and Scores*

A total of 642 students completed the final round of testing. Of these students, 14 were excluded from the analysis because of errors in their use of the scantron forms (an extra question was filled in, suggesting that, at some point during the test, they had not paired the answer form with the question sheet). A total of 628 student responses were used in the analysis.

Students came from the following 20 universities (the number of student participants appears in parentheses after the school name):

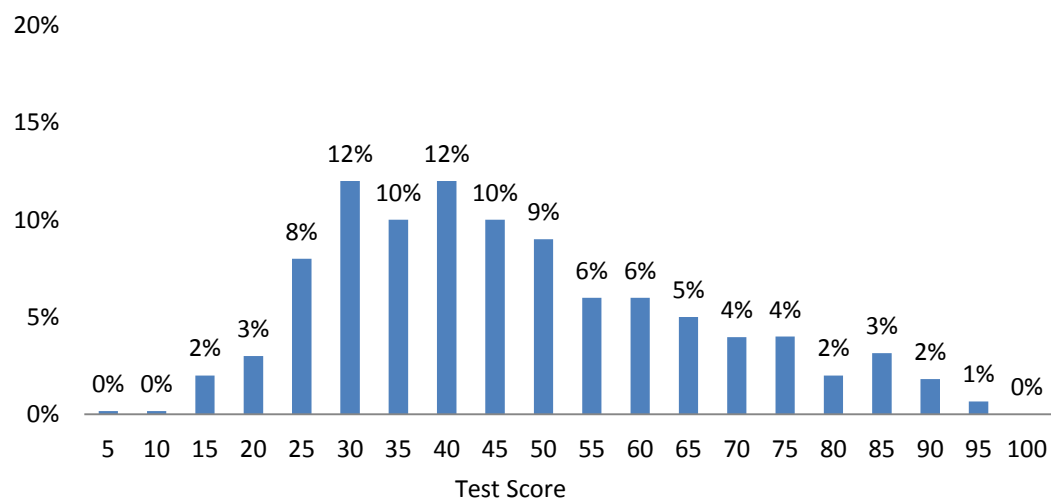
- Arizona State University (10)
- CUNY, Queens College (20)
- Emory University (24)
- Florida Atlantic University (21)
- Florida State University (45)
- George Washington University (59)
- Indiana University (64)
- Michigan State University (51)
- SUNY University of Binghamton (30)
- California State University, Northridge (10)
- University of Central Florida (29)
- University of Delaware (23)
- University of Georgia (12)
- University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (23)

- University of Maryland, College Park (58)
- University of Massachusetts, Amherst (36)
- University of Pennsylvania (32)
- University of Southern California (50)
- University of Texas, Austin (10)
- Washington University in St. Louis (21)

Most of the respondents (61%) were in their first or second year of college. A smaller number (29%) were in their third or fourth year, with 5% of respondents in graduate school and 5% unknown. The vast majority (83%) of respondents had some formal Jewish education growing up. Of the total respondents, more than a third (38%) attended a day school or yeshiva for at least one year, and three-quarters (74%) attended a part-time religious school (some respondents attended both). Of the total respondents, a little more than half (56%) had never been to Israel previously, 25% had taken one or more college courses about Israel, and 26% read and/or listen to news about Israel a few times a month or more.

Overall, students had an average score of 46% correct; the median score was 44%; and 92% of all students scored 75% or lower (Figure 1). In prior analysis, questions that all students knew the answers to and those that none of the students answered correctly were eliminated from the test.

Figure 1: Distribution of Test Scores All Institutions (n=628)



## Question Examples

All questions were based on a multiple choice format except map questions, which relied on matching names of places with positions on a map. Some questions relied on identification of pictures. All questions in the test bank were categorized in one of six domain areas: conflict, geography, government, history, religion, and society (which includes culture and economy). Student scores by domain were close to the total overall scores for the test (Table 1).



Table 1: Scores by Domain

Domain	Number of Questions	% Correct
Conflict	14	42%
Geography	19	43%
Government	8	44%
History	28	46%
Religion	9	45%
Society	13	50%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>46%</b>

Consistency of scores across domains gives confidence that questions are of consistent difficulty.

In the final test bank, individual questions ranged in difficulty between the easiest (71% answered it correctly) to most difficult (19% answered it correctly). Examples of easy, moderate, and difficult questions follow. The correct answer to each question is in bold. The percent of students who chose each answer is given in parentheses next to the answer. Domain names are listed above the question. All questions and answers are listed in the Appendix.

Society – easy question

Which of the following statements about the Israeli economy is TRUE?

- Israel has a socialist society in which wealth is relatively evenly distributed among all citizens (14%)
- The kibbutz movement is the main driver of the Israeli economy (13%)
- **Israel has a national health care system (71%)**
- Israel is a very poor country due to its lack of natural resources (3%)

Culture – difficult question

Who are Amos Oz, David Grossman, A.B. Yehoshua, and Etgar Keret?

- Members of the Israeli Parliament (52%)
- **Israeli novelists (19%)**
- Israeli soccer stars (12%)
- Founders of the Kibbutz movement (17%)

Government—easy question

The current prime minister of Israel is:

- **Benjamin Netanyahu (69%)**
- Mahmoud Abbas (7%)
- Angela Merkel (5%)
- David Ben-Gurion (19%)

History—moderate question

Which of the following Israeli leaders was assassinated?

- **Yitzhak Rabin (49%)**
- Theodore Herzl (22%)
- Anwar Sadat (14%)
- Ariel Sharon (14%)

Geography—difficult question

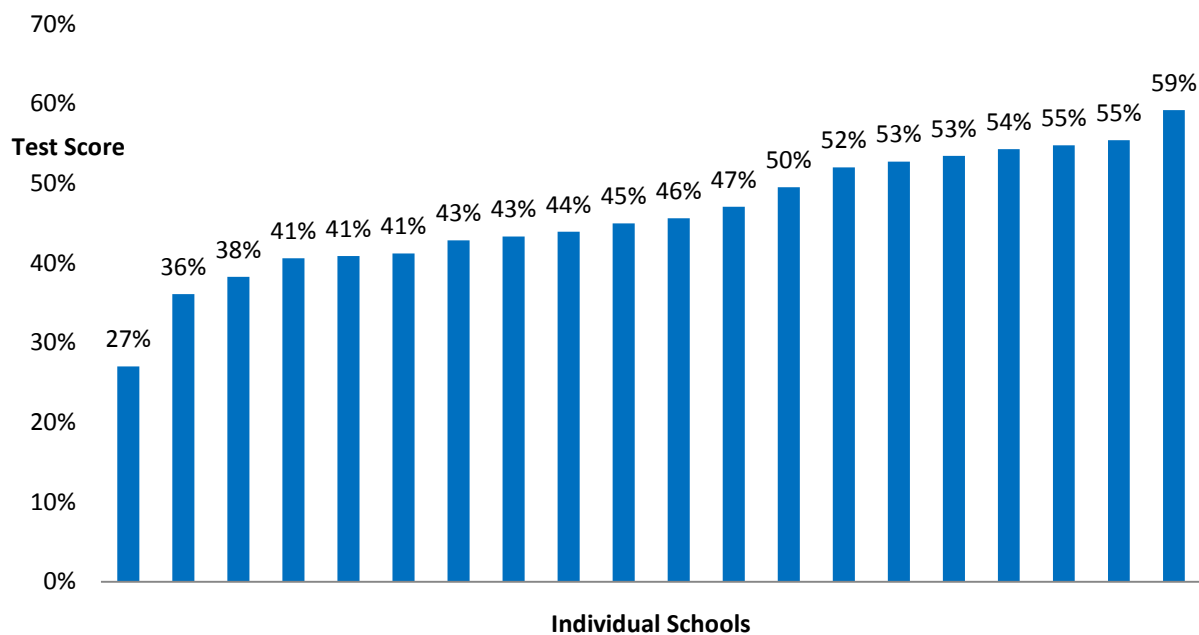
The headquarters of the Palestinian Authority are in:

- **Ramallah (30%)**
- Gaza City (43%)
- Bethlehem (18%)
- Nablus (10%)

### Scores by Campus

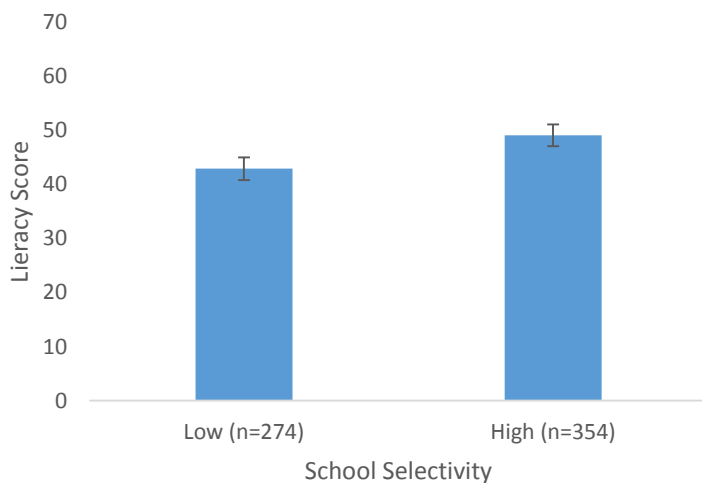
Scores were computed for each school. Average scores differed by school: The school with the lowest average score was 27% and the school with the highest average score was a 59% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Average Score by School



We would expect more selective schools to score higher overall, and, in aggregate, the data support this finding. The average score for students from the 10 schools with the highest average SAT scores, was 49%. The average score for students from the 10 schools with lowest average SAT scores was 43%. This difference is significant,  $t(626)=-4.12, p<.001$ . See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Average Scores by School Selectivity

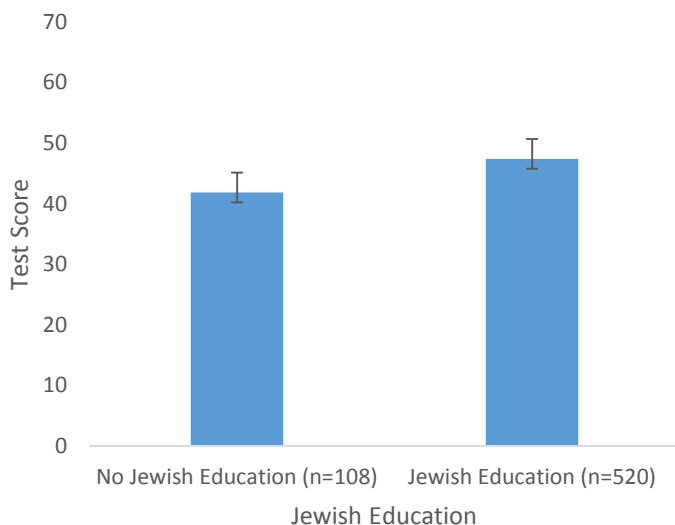


Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

### Background and Opinion Questions

The tests also asked about the students' level of formal Jewish education, college classes about Israel, and visits to Israel. On average, students who had Jewish education (part-time, day school, or both) scored better on the exam (average score of 47%) compared to those who had no Jewish education (average score of 42%), a significant difference  $t(626) = -2.78, p < .01$ . See Figure 4.

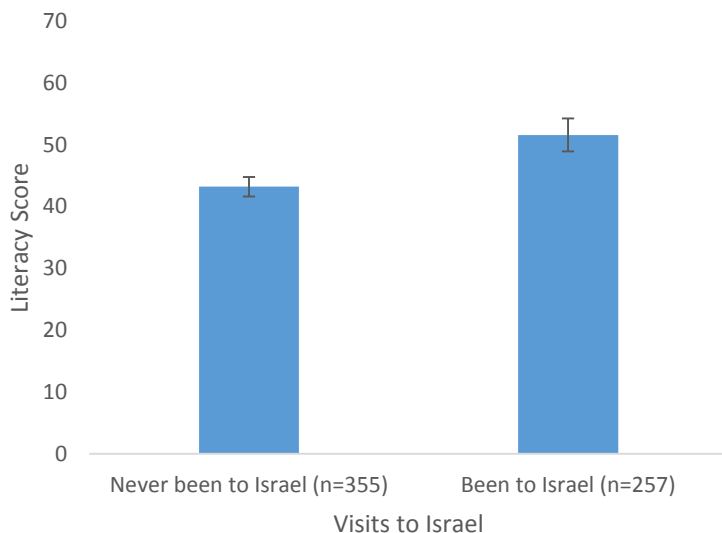
Figure 4. Average Score by Jewish Education



Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Students who had been to Israel scored significantly higher (52%) than those who had never been to Israel (43%),  $t(610) = -5.60, p < .001$ . See Figure 5.

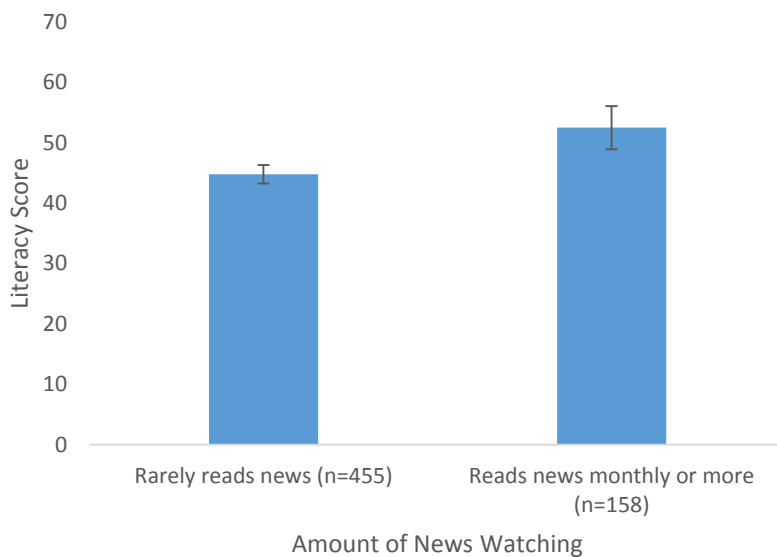
Figure 5. Average Score by Visits to Israel



Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Similarly, students who watched or read news about Israel monthly or more often scored significantly higher (52%), compared to those who never watched or read news (45%),  $t(611) = -4.55, p < .001$ .

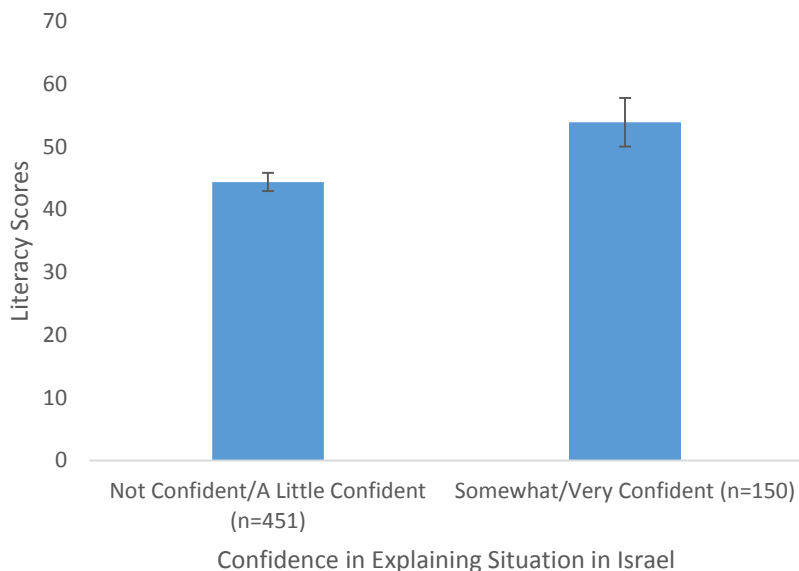
Figure 6. Average Score by Frequency of News Watching



Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

The students were asked how confident they felt in explaining the current situation in Israel to others. Unsurprisingly, those who scored higher on the literacy questions also felt more confident that they could explain the situation,  $F(1, 599) = 51.92, p < .001$ . Students who were even somewhat confident in their ability to explain the situation scored higher (53%) than those who did not feel confident explaining the situation (44%). See Figure 7.

Figure 7. Average Score by Confidence in Explaining Situation in Israel



Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

There seems a clear and obvious link between education, time spent in Israel, and reading the news with increased scores on the literacy questions. This helps validate the literacy question bank as a tool that measures knowledge of Israel, by showing that those who have greater exposure to Israel answer more questions correctly. In addition, students who scored higher on the questions also felt more confident in their ability to explain the current situation in Israel.

A number of opinion questions were asked about the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. A little less than half (41%) thought Israel should be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction, with only 17% saying that Israel should not be willing to compromise. The number of students who said they did not know was very high (42%) but, for those who did answer, there was a correlation between this opinion question and scores on the test. Students who scored higher on the test were more likely to say that Israel should not compromise on Jerusalem,  $t(322) = -3.24, p < .001$ .

The students also were asked about whether Israel should dismantle Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Only 10% of students said that Israel should dismantle all settlements, 28% said Israel should dismantle some settlements, 23% said Israel should not dismantle any settlements, and 39% of students said they do not know. There was no relationship between the views on settlements and the scores on the test.

Overall, close to half of the respondents, 47%, thought that the Israeli leadership was making a sincere effort to bring about peace. In contrast, only 15% of respondents thought that the Palestinian leadership was making a sincere effort. The number of respondents who wrote that they did not know about the sincerity of either leadership group was high on both questions (35% for Israeli leadership and 38% for Palestinian leadership question). There was no relationship between scores on the literacy measure and whether Israel was making a sincere effort at peace. However, there was a relationship between scores and Palestinian efforts at bringing about peace. Students

who scored higher on the exam said that Palestinians were less likely to be sincere in their efforts at peace,  $t(356) = -5.64, p < .001$ .

The relationship between opinion questions and test scores is somewhat murky. The relationship between more knowledge and a more right wing position is clear in two instances but not in others. Higher test scores were correlated with an uncompromising position on Jerusalem and less confidence in the Palestinians' sincerity in the peace talks. However, there was no relationship between test scores and views on West Bank settlements or on Israelis' sincerity in the peace talks. The most salient observation seems to be the large percentage of young Jews who have no opinion on pressing issues in the Israeli/Palestinian debate. In the interviews, students often stated outright that they lacked knowledge in a specific area. Perhaps the plurality of students are unwilling to present opinions on subjects about which they actually know very little. Students know they lack knowledge about this complex issue, and the literacy bank is one step to uncovering this gap in education.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to create a bank of questions that could assess student knowledge about Israel. Although many programs have been created to help foster greater understanding and knowledge of Israel, no tool has been available for measuring their effectiveness. For the current project, a bank of 91 questions about Israel was created and validated using a sample of college students from around the country. The test bank is available to individuals or organizations interested in assessing student knowledge of Israel, and tests can be customized through item selection to assess knowledge gained over the course of a particular program, trip, or classroom experience.

Using the question bank has a number of benefits for assessing knowledge of Israel. The creation of the question bank was thoughtful, intentional, and based in concrete data. By soliciting suggestions of domains and concepts that experts in the field thought were crucial for student understanding, the creation of the test bank utilized a top-down approach. At the same time, a bottom-up approach was used, based on analyses of qualitative data—to assess what students could be expected to know about Israel. This top-down/bottom-up approach yields questions that have been informed by experts and reflects realistic assessments of student literacy of Israel. Questions are neutral, unbiased, relevant, and based in student understanding of Israel. In addition, questions have been individually validated through statistical item analysis. Further, higher test scores have been shown to be associated with greater ability to think critically about Israel, as demonstrated in post-test interviews.

Continued work on the literacy project has a number of important objectives: on-going updates to maintain relevance and validity, promotion of the question bank for diagnostic and achievement testing, dissemination of results of further testing, and practical application of these results to the development of content and delivery of Israel education. Future testing can be used to assess not only what students know, but how they have learned what they know, and why they retain certain types of information and not others.

The question bank is the start of an educational process. In the next stage of research, essay questions may be added to assess how students use, interpret, and analyze the information they

learn. In that form, the Israel literacy question bank will be able to measure the development of higher-order understanding of Israel as well as basic Israel literacy.

The testing to date has demonstrated a less than acceptable level of knowledge about Israel among students about to embark on Birthright Israel. More than half of all students answered less than half of the questions correctly, and over 90% scored less than 75%. This information deficit prevents students from contributing to discourse about Israel on campus in a meaningful way. The scores also raise concerns about potential disillusionment with Israel education prior to college. To help students engage in serious and educated dialogue on campuses around the country, educational programs must give them tools to better converse about Israel; read news articles with greater understanding; and arrive at a deeper, perhaps more nuanced, view of the country and its people. The ability to assess knowledge is key to the success of Israel educational programming and Israel studies courses, and the current question bank is one important step toward measuring Israel literacy.

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## Appendix A: Articles

1. Lee, M. (2013, March 22). Obama in Israel: President Edns 3 Day Visit with Symbolic Stops. The World Post. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/22/obama-in-israel\\_n\\_2931366.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/22/obama-in-israel_n_2931366.html)

JERUSALEM -- Wrapping up a three day visit to Israel, President Barack Obama paid respects to the nation's heroes and to victims of the Holocaust, solemnly reaffirming the Jewish state's right to exist.

Accompanied by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres, Obama laid wreaths at the graves of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism who died in 1904 before realizing his dream of a Jewish homeland, and former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995.

He also toured the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, declaring after that the memorial illustrates the depravity to which man can sink but also serves as a reminder of the "righteous among the nations who refused to be bystanders."

Friday's stop at Herzl's grave, together with Thursday's visit to see the Dead Sea Scrolls, the ancient Hebrew texts, were symbolic stops for Obama that acknowledged that the rationale for Israel's existence rests with its historical ties to the region and with a vision that predated the Holocaust. Obama was criticized in Israel for his 2009 Cairo speech in which he gave only the example of the Holocaust as reason for justifying Israel's existence.

"Here on your ancient land, let it be said for all the world to hear," Obama said at Yad Vashem Friday, in a clear response to that criticism. "The state of Israel does not exist because of the Holocaust, but with the survival of a strong Jewish state of Israel, such a holocaust will never happen again."

Later in the day, Obama was traveling to Jordan where he planned to meet with King Abdullah II. Among the topics is Jordan's struggle with the influx of a half-million refugees from the Syrian civil war. Abdullah has voiced fears that extremists and terrorists could create a regional base in Jordan.

Before leaving for Jordan, Obama had lunch with Netanyahu and then took his motorcade to Bethlehem in the West Bank to visit the Church of the Nativity.

Obama had been scheduled to take a helicopter to Bethlehem but had to change plans due to unusually high winds. The route gave Obama a clear look at Israel's separation barrier with the West Bank, which runs south of Jerusalem and is the subject of weekly protests by Palestinians.

About 300 Palestinians and international pilgrims gathered near the Nativity Church, awaiting Obama's arrival. But a knot of protestors along the route held up signs stating: "Gringo, return to your colony" and "US supports Israeli injustice."

At a nearby mosque, Mohammed Ayesh, a Muslim religious official in Bethlehem, issued a plea to Obama in a speech to worshippers: "America, where are your values? Where are the human rights? Isn't it time that you interfere to make it stop?"

Amid high security, Obama toured the church with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. They stopped at the Grotto of the Nativity, which is said to stand where Jesus Christ was born. About 20 children waving U.S. and Palestinian flags greeted Obama in a courtyard outside the sanctuary. He posed for photographs with Abbas and Bethlehem's mayor, Vera Baboun.

Earlier in Jerusalem, Obama and his Israeli hosts arrived at the somber Herzl grave site under cloudless skies. Obama approached Herzl's resting place alone and bowed his head in silence. He turned briefly to ask Netanyahu where to place a small stone in the Jewish custom, then laid the stone atop the grave.

"It is humbling and inspiring to visit and remember the visionary who began the remarkable establishment of the State of Israel," Obama wrote in the Mt. Herzl guestbook. "May our two countries possess the same vision and will to secure peace and prosperity for future generations."

At Rabin's grave a short walk away, Obama was greeted by members of Rabin's family. He initially placed a stone on Rabin's wife's side of the grave, then returned to place one atop Rabin's side. In a gesture linking the U.S. and Israel, the stone placed on Rabin's grave was from the grounds of the Martin Luther King memorial in Washington, the White House said.

Rabin, Obama told family members, was "a great man."

Chatting with the family, Obama joked that "Bibi arranged for perfect weather," using Netanyahu's familiar name. He then added that "Shimon plied me with wine" at the official state dinner Thursday evening. At one point the talk turned to the singer who performed at the dinner, and Obama pointed out that he was known to sing, too. "They had me on YouTube," he said with a laugh. "Check it out -- Obama singing Al Green."

At Yad Vashem, Obama donned a skull cap and was accompanied by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, a survivor of the Buchenwald Concentration camp who lost both parents in the Holocaust. Among his stops was Yad Vashem's Hall of Names, a circular chamber that contains original testimony documenting every Holocaust victim ever identified.

"Nothing could be more powerful," Obama said.

2. Kershner, I. (2013, April 11) Court Rules for Women in the Western Wall Dispute. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/12/world/middleeast/israeli-court-rules-for-women-at-western-wall.html>

JERUSALEM — In the latest twist in the struggle for the character of the Western Wall, a magistrates' court here ruled on Thursday that five women who had been detained at the Jewish holy site that morning for wearing prayer shawls and singing aloud were not disturbing public order, as the police had asserted.

The women, activists with [Women of the Wall](#), a feminist and pluralist religious group, were released without conditions; the police had requested that they be barred from attending their group's monthly prayer at the wall for the next three months.

The courtroom turnaround came days after [Natan Sharansky](#), the chairman of the quasi-governmental Jewish Agency, [outlined a proposal](#) for easing tensions at the site between Orthodox and more progressive worshippers. The compromise involves expanding the existing area of prayer to create a section with unfettered access for Jews wishing to pray in a less Orthodox, more egalitarian style. Contention over rituals has peaked in recent months and caused discord between the Israeli authorities and Jewish leaders abroad.

The focus on freedoms at the site also comes amid a broader rift in Israeli society between the ultra-Orthodox minority and other religious and secular communities. Many Israelis object to what they see as the undue influence of the ultra-Orthodox in politics and public life. The new government formed last month excluded the ultra-Orthodox parties that have been part of most governing coalitions since the late 1970s.

The Jewish Agency, which links [Israel](#) with Jewish communities abroad, said in a statement that Thursday's arrests had shown "the urgent need to reach a permanent solution and make the Western Wall once again a symbol of unity among the Jewish people, and not one of discord and strife."

Mr. Sharansky added that he hoped that the good will generated by his proposal "will be translated into practical steps in the coming weeks."

Women of the Wall called Thursday's decision by Judge Sharon Lari-Bavli "a groundbreaking precedent."

Lesley Sachs, the director of the group and one of the five women detained on Thursday, said, "We hope that the police will think twice before arresting women mid-prayer at the Western Wall again."

The judge said the people disturbing public order on Thursday were a group of ultra-Orthodox protesters who were demonstrating against the women. The police said an ultra-Orthodox man was also arrested after he grabbed a book from one of the women and burned it.

For years, members of Women of the Wall have been challenging the constraints imposed on them by the strictly Orthodox authority that administers the Western Wall plaza as well as a 2003 ruling of the Israeli Supreme Court. That ruling, which came after a lengthy legal battle, prohibited women

from wearing the type of prayer shawls traditionally limited to men or from reading aloud from the Torah in the interest of public order.

The Orthodox rabbi of the Western Wall, Shmuel Rabinowitz, who has said that he will not oppose Mr. Sharansky's proposal, said he regretted what he described as a "provocation" by the women on Thursday. He said in a statement that their goal was to sow "contention," to offend the sensibilities of other worshipers and to turn the plaza into "a battlefield of extremisms."

The first such arrest of a woman took place there in 2009, when an Israeli medical student publicly wrapped herself in a prayer shawl.

A more recent [spate of arrests](#) stirred growing outrage in Israel and among Jews abroad, prompting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to assign Mr. Sharansky to find ways of making the Western Wall more accommodating to different branches of Judaism.

Mr. Sharansky's proposal has yet to be approved by the Israeli government. The plan, which involves construction in what is now an archaeological park and an important area for Muslims, in the vicinity of Al Aksa Mosque compound, could take years to be realized.

In the meantime, the friction looks set to continue. The police said they would appeal Thursday's magistrates' court ruling, saying it contradicted the higher court ruling of a decade ago.

Micky Rosenfeld, a police spokesman, said the police found the ruling "unacceptable."

3. Excerpts from Harman, D. (2013, April 14) The Technion: Israel's hard drive. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/education/edlife/inside-the-technion-israels-premier-technological-institute-and-cornells-global-partner.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/education/edlife/inside-the-technion-israels-premier-technological-institute-and-cornells-global-partner.html?_r=0)

WHEN the Technion class of 1957 graduated, its members got together and wrote a letter of complaint to their prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, who was otherwise busy building a nation. "There were no jobs for us in our fields," recalls Gideon F. Inbar, an electrical engineer who is now 79. "My wife kept saying, 'Oy, things are grim, grim, grim.'"

In 2013, the student body has pretty much the opposite problem. "Officially, the rule is that first- and second-year students should not take outside jobs," says Peretz Lavie, president of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Cornell's partner in creating an ambitious graduate school for applied science and engineering in New York City. Mr. Lavie, a psychophysicist who periodically ducks out of his roomy hilltop office to check in on his sleep-disorder laboratories and two start-up companies, acknowledges that exceptions are made. Often. Because getting out and ahead in the work force is, in many ways, the very idea.

"They turn a blind eye," says Asaad Malshy, 24, who is studying physics and electrical engineering while working two afternoons a week at Intel, one of Israel's largest employers. "I used to dream that I would finish university and get a job in high tech," he says, "until I realized the dream was already in reach."

“Israelis will not hesitate to tell me how wrong I am, even though I have gray hair and 40 years of experience,” says Mr. Maital of the Neaman Institute, who was born in Canada and has taught at universities around the world, including M.I.T. “They are not afraid of risk, and will start companies even though the odds are against them. And they will not hesitate to leave a well-paying job if their innovative ideas are shelved.”

Mr. Malshy doesn't buy into the chutzpah culture. He does not have a Jewish mother, did not serve in the army and is not an immigrant. Like 20 percent of the Technion student body, he is Arab. To the question of what creates the bubbling innovation on campus, he responds that it is just something taught. No DNA involved. “They take students who are already talented and at the top of the class,” he says, “and then hammer excellence into them, and not just excellence, but the expectation of innovative thinking. That's what happens to us.”

4. Video Clip – Soldiers entering the Old City of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War, 1967. For a copy of the video, please contact the authors.

## Appendix B: Interview protocol for Israel literacy project

*Process (for the interviewer)*

- Use two articles, three if you have time. We suggest you start with the Obama in Israel story. Use the video second.
- If enough time available, use the Women of the Wall article and the Technion article.
- If your interviewee appears knowledgeable about Israel and/or you are a little pressed for time, use only the WOW article.
- Use Technion article with less informed people or if very pressed for time.

### Introduction

- Not a test. No right or wrong answers
- Purpose is to help us develop a process and a tool for our research about Israel
- Not a speed-reading test
- Make notes if you like

*Show excerpt from article or full article and ask them to read it.*

1. What does this article tell you about Israel? What's it about?
2. How would you explain this article (or introduce this article) to someone who knows nothing about Israel?
3. What information about Israel's [history, religion, society, politics, economy—these categories will depend on the article] did you use in order to understand the article?
4. What does this article tell you about Israel's [history, religion, society, politics, economy]?
5. What questions do you have after reading this article?
  - a. Where would you go to get that information?
  - b. What sources would you use?
6. What did you learn from this article that you didn't know before?
7. Do you think this article had a particular point of view? Is so, what evidence do you see of it?

*Background information to correlate with level of Israel literacy*

1. Have you ever been to Israel? How many times, how long, what program?
2. What is your religion? What is your parents' religion?
3. What was your Jewish educational background? (formal and informal)
4. What is your major?
5. Have you taken any classes about Israel in college?
6. What do you consider the primary source of what you know about Israel?
7. How often do you read/listen to the news? What sources?.
8. How often do you read news about Israel? What sources?
9. On a scale of one to five with five being ignorant about Israel and 5 being very knowledgeable, how do you rate yourself?



## Appendix C: Literacy Interview Protocol

### *Introduction*

*This interview is not a test and we will not be evaluating whether your answers are right or wrong. The purpose of this research is to help us with our research about college students' understand of Israel. I will be recording our conversation today. Your participation and the information obtained from your interview will be kept confidential and all information from this research will be reported only in ways that do not identify individuals.*

*If after the first few questions you get the sense that the interviewee really has very little or no content knowledge about Israel, switch to the alternate protocol. Feel free to switch back and forth if necessary. General probes try to elicit recall. Easier probes require only recognition and should be easier for that reason.*

### *Intro questions*

1. This research is about what people know about Israel and we're looking for all kinds of people—some knowledgeable about Israel, some less so. How would you characterize yourself in that regard?
2. *If they know anything about Israel*, How have you learned what you know?  
*Probes:* news sources, books, movies, friends, families, travel, courses, religious education?
3. When you think about Israel, what (five) images, ideas, or thoughts first come to mind?

### *Geography*

1. Let's discuss the country. Where is it? And what are some of its key geographical places, features, and characteristics?  
*Probes:* Borders, Green line, Relative size, Climate /terrain (water issues), Major cities, Religious and historic landmarks  
*Easier probes:* Jerusalem, Western/Wailing Wall, Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Sinai, Bethlehem, Tel Aviv, West Bank, Gaza, Dead Sea

### *History*

1. What are the major points of debate or differences of opinion about Israel's history?
2. What would you say are important events, ideas, and/or people in Israel's history?  
*Probes:* Wars, peace treaties or accords (Camp David, Oslo), political and military leaders, Zionism, Immigration  
*Easier probes:* Holocaust, David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Theodore Herzl, Yasser Arafat, War for Independence, 1967 War, Yom Kippur War, Lebanon Wars, Kibbutz, UN Partition Plan

### *Israeli-Arab/Israeli-Palestinian conflict*

The state of Israel is and has been involved in a regional conflict.

1. What do you know about this conflict or conflicts (key issues and events?) What are some particular events? Groups or players? (internal, external) How do you think the different groups or players would explain the conflict?  
*Probes:* Naqba, Intifada(s), Sderot, East Jerusalem, two state solution, the centrality of

Jerusalem to the conflict, IDF, Hamas, Hezbollah, Iron Dome, refugees, Right of Return, Mahmoud Abbas, settlements, occupation

*Easier Probes:* Gaza, West Bank, Palestinians, terrorism, the Wall (separation Fence, check points)

2. What is the current status of the conflict? What is going on right now?
3. Why is the conflict complex? Why do you think it has not yet been resolved?

### ***Society (including diversity, immigration, and culture)***

1. What are the different ethnic and religious groups that make up contemporary Israel? Are there others groups or sub groups? How did these groups come to be in Israel?

*Probes:* Arab Israelis, Druze, Mizrahi Jews, Ashkenzi Jews, Muslims, Christians, Russians, Ethiopians, Ultra-orthodox, secular, progressive Jews

2. What do you know about how these groups interact in Israeli society and politics?
3. What are the official languages of Israel? What other languages are spoken there? What languages appear on road signs?
4. What do you know about the economy of Israel?  
*Probes:* Natural resources, agriculture, industries, hi-tech, level of education and wealth
5. What do you know about Israel's art, music, literature, and food? How are they similar to and different from the culture of the U.S.?
6. Who serves in Israel's army and what do they do?

### ***Politics and Democracy***

1. Tell me about Israel's government. How is the Israeli system of government similar to or different from our own?

*Probes:* Who is allowed to vote? What are some of the political parties in Israel? What are their ideological positions? What is a coalition government? What is parliamentary democracy?

*Easier probes:* Benjamin Netanyahu, Knesset/Parliament

2. What internal conflicts exist in Israel between groups or members of society?

*Probes:* IDF and who serves, Gender issues, Economic growth and inequality, Water, Environment, Role of religion in society, conflicts between ultra-orthodox and secular

3. What is the relationship between Israel and the US? Other countries? The UN?

### ***Role of Religion in State***

1. What is the role of religion in Israel? How does it compare to the role of religion in the United States?

*Probes:*

- Separation of Church and State, Law of marriage, conversion, Law of return
- Ultra-orthodox, secular, progressive Jews, women's rights
- Relationship of Israel to American Jews

2. What does it mean to call Israel: "Jewish and democratic"?

*Probes*

- Service in the army, Tal law, Right to vote and be citizens, Serve in the Knesset

**Alternate Protocol (FOR LESS KNOWLEDGEABLE INTERVIEWEES)**

1. Do you know anyone who's ever visited Israel? If yes, what did they tell you about it? What did they do there?
2. *If they have been to Israel (see background sheet)* Tell me about your experience in Israel. What did you do? Where did you go?
3. *If they mentioned anything about Israel in response to the intro question (what first comes to mind when you think about Israel...)* Probe for more details about anything they mentioned: "Can you tell me more about x? How did you form that impression/image?"
4. *If they know or mention anything at all about the conflict, ask:* Why is the conflict complex? Why do you think it has not yet been resolved?

**Closing**

I know there's so much more we can talk about...but I want to be mindful of your time. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Israel that we haven't touched on?

Do you know any possible interviewees for this project?

As our way of saying thank you, you will receive a \$15 Amazon gift card by email. Please allow a few days for this to get processed, but let us know if you do not receive it.

Many thanks!

## Appendix D: Full Test Bank Questions and Answers (in bold)

### Conflict

- To what does the term “two-state solution” refer?
  - A State of Palestine separate from the State of Israel**
  - A federation of the West Bank and Gaza
  - A federation of Israel and Gaza
  - The formation of a single federated country of Israel-Palestine
- What is meant by the two–state solution?
  - Separating the West Bank and Gaza into two separate states
  - Establishment of an independent Palestinian state separate from the State of Israel**
  - An agreement for joint governance of the region by an Israeli and a Palestinian Authority
  - Allowing residents to vote on whether they prefer an Israeli or Palestinian state
- The following headline appeared in the *New York Times* in September 2000: **Ariel Sharon Touches a Nerve, and Jerusalem Explodes**. To what does this explosion refer?
  - The Six-Day War
  - The War of Independence
  - The Second Intifada**
  - Riots at Hebrew University
- Which of the following organizations is currently **NOT** designated by the U.S. as a terrorist organization?
  - Hamas
  - Hezbollah
  - The Palestinian Authority**
  - Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades
- What is **NOT** one of the major issues in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians?
  - Jewish settlements in the West Bank
  - Defensible borders for Israel
  - The right of Palestinian refugees to return to their former homes
  - Shared rights to oil fields in the Negev**
- Yasser Arafat was:
  - Founder of Fatah and Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)**
  - Founder of Hezbollah
  - President of Egypt before Hosni Mubarak
  - The Mufti of Jerusalem

7. What is the current status of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
  - A. A final settlement has been agreed on but has NOT yet been implemented
  - B. A final settlement has been agreed on and is currently being implemented
  - C. An interim settlement has been agreed on, and only the status of Jerusalem remains in dispute
  - D. There is no interim or final settlement**
  
8. What is the Right of Return?
  - A. Israeli claims to archeological artifacts excavated in and removed from Israel
  - B. Palestinian claims to property owned by their families before the establishment of the State of Israel**
  - C. British claims to properties owned by British subjects before the establishment of the State of Israel
  - D. Jewish claims to a free visit to Israel for all Jews prior to their 26th birthday
  
9. The Camp David Accords refers to:
  - A. A peace treaty between Israel and Jordan
  - B. A peace treaty between Israel and Egypt**
  - C. A peace treaty between Israel and Syria
  - D. A peace treaty between Israelis and Palestinians that paved the road to the Oslo Accords
  
10. Which of the following statements is **NOT** true about the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)?
  - A. It was led by Yasser Arafat
  - B. It was founded in the 1960s
  - C. It is the organization that is recognized by Israel to represent the Palestinian people
  - D. It is another name for Hezbollah**
  
11. With which Arab countries does Israel have signed peace treaties?
  - A. Lebanon and Syria
  - B. Jordan and Egypt**
  - C. Saudi Arabia and Iraq
  - D. It does not have any signed peace treaties with Arab countries
  
12. Hamas and Hezbollah are:
  - A. Nonviolent Islamic organizations in the Middle East
  - B. Groups that are classified as terrorist organizations by the United States**
  - C. Recognized representatives of the Palestinians in the United Nations
  - D. Political leaders of the West Bank
  
13. The Palestinian Authority exercises civil administrative authority in areas of:
  - A. The Gaza Strip
  - B. East Jerusalem
  - C. Lebanon
  - D. The West Bank**

14. Choose the best caption for the photo below:



Photo:public domain.

- A. Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein with Bill Clinton at the signing of the Oslo Accords  
**B. Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat with Bill Clinton at the signing of the Oslo Accords**  
 C. Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat with Bill Clinton agreeing to the release of Gilad Shalit  
 D. Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein with Bill Clinton agreeing to the release of Gilad Shalit
15. The future of “the settlements” is an issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today.  
 These are:  
**A. Jewish settlements in the West Bank**  
 B. Palestinian settlements in the Golan Heights  
 C. Permanent settlements for the Bedouin people in the desert  
 D. None of the above
16. What term do Palestinians use to refer to the 1948 war and its results?  
 A. Intifada  
**B. Naqba**  
 C. Hamsin  
 D. Hudna

## Geography

Choose the correct place name for each number on the map below.

17. Number **13** on the map is:

- A. Syria
- B. Egypt
- C. Lebanon
- D. Jordan

18. Number **14** on the map is:

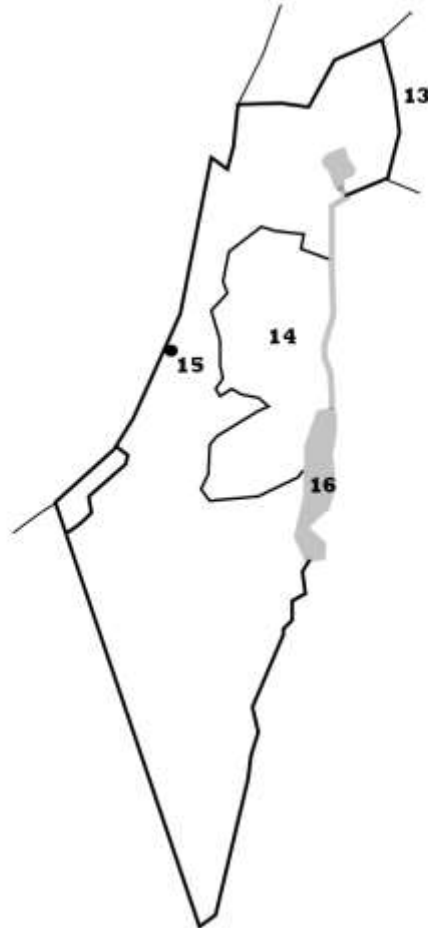
- A. Golan Heights
- B. Gaza Strip
- C. **West Bank**
- D. Negev

19. Number **15** on the map is:

- A. Jerusalem
- B. **Tel Aviv**
- C. Haifa
- D. Sderot

20. Number **16** on the map is:

- A. The Galilee
- B. The Red Sea
- C. The Mediterranean
- D. **The Dead Sea**



21. Which of the following statements is **NOT** true?

- A. The Dead Sea is southeast of Jerusalem
- B. The Golan Heights is on the border with Syria
- C. Eilat is a popular resort city in Israel
- D. **The Gaza Strip is located in the West Bank**

22. Religious Jewish settlers live in Hebron, a city in the West Bank, largely because it is:

- A. An easy commute to Jerusalem with inexpensive housing
- B. Known to be a place where Jews and Arabs live together in harmony
- C. **According to the Hebrew Bible, the burial site of the Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs**
- D. Home to Israel's supreme Rabbinical Court

23. The picture below is:



Photo credit: the Israeli Ministry of Tourism [www.goisrael.com](http://www.goisrael.com)

- A. Jericho
  - B. Caesarea
  - C. Masada**
  - D. Mt. Ararat
24. What is meant by the Kotel or Western Wall?
- A. The barrier that separates Israel from the West Bank
  - B. The site where many Jews pray and insert notes**
  - C. The wall built on the west side of farms to provide shade at sunset
  - D. The outer wall of a Crusader fortress that is still standing
25. Which of the following is **NOT** located in Jerusalem?
- A. Hebrew University
  - B. Yad Vashem
  - C. The Mount of Olives
  - D. Masada**
26. Which of the following statements is **NOT** true?
- A. Jerusalem is known for being the seat of hi-tech industry in Israel**
  - B. Haifa is famous for its Baha'i Gardens
  - C. Tel Aviv was founded in the early 20th century
  - D. Israel has one of the densest concentrations of archaeological sites in the world



27. What is the Gaza Strip?
- Land captured from Syria in the Six-Day War
  - Land captured from Egypt in the Six-Day War from which Israel withdrew in 2005**
  - Demilitarized zone between Jerusalem and Bethlehem
  - Land that Israel captured from Lebanon in the First Lebanon War
28. What is the Green Line?
- The armistice line following the Israeli War of Independence**
  - The border between Israel and Lebanon created by the British mandate
  - The line that divides the forested area of Israel from the desert
  - The new train line between Tel Aviv and Haifa
29. The population of Israel is approximately:
- 100-110 million
  - 50-60 million
  - 20-25 million
  - 5-10 million**

Choose the correct place name for each number on the map below.

30. Number **35** on the map is:

- Syria
- Egypt**
- Lebanon
- Jordan

31. Number **36** on the map is:

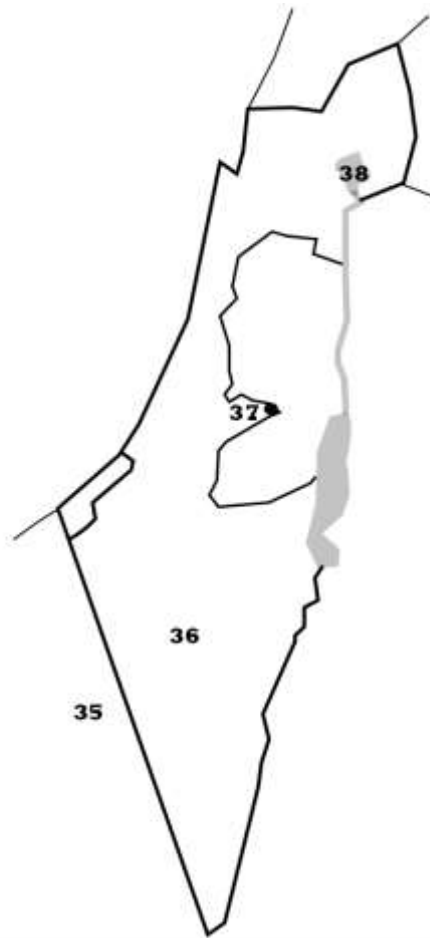
- Golan Heights
- Gaza Strip
- West Bank
- Negev**

32. Number **37** on the map is:

- Jerusalem**
- Tel Aviv
- Haifa
- Sderot

33. Number **38** on the map is:

- The Sea of Galilee**
- The Red Sea
- The Mediterranean
- The Dead Sea



OR (to use a more detailed map question, use question below in place of questions above)

34. This is a map of Israel. Insert the number from the map next to its name below.

- \_\_Egypt
- \_\_Jerusalem
- \_\_Jordan
- \_\_Jordan River
- \_\_Lebanon
- \_\_The Negev
- \_\_Syria
- \_\_Tel Aviv
- \_\_West Bank
- \_\_The Dead Sea
- \_\_The Sea of Galilee



**Answer key:**

1. **Jerusalem**
2. **West Bank**
3. **Syria**
4. **Egypt**
5. **Tel Aviv**
6. **Jordan River**
7. **The Dead Sea**
8. **Lebanon**
9. **The Sea of Galilee**
10. **Jordan**
11. **The Negev**

**Government**

35. The Prime Minister of Israel is:
- A. Appointed by the Chief Rabbi
  - B. Leader of a coalition representing the majority of seats in the Knesset**
  - C. Elected directly by popular vote
  - D. Elected by a three-fifths majority of members of the Knesset
36. Which of the following is **TRUE** about Jewish life in Israel?
- A. Men and women pray together in all areas of the Western Wall
  - B. Jews cannot legally marry non-Jews in Israel**
  - C. The majority of Israeli Jews are ultra-Orthodox
  - D. Every Jewish Israeli male is required to have a bar mitzvah
37. The Israeli Parliament is called:
- A. The Bet Din
  - B. The Kotel
  - C. The Knesset**
  - D. The Shawarma
38. Who gets to vote in Israel?
- A. All citizens**
  - B. Jewish citizens
  - C. Jewish and Arab citizens but not Druze citizens
  - D. Citizens who have served in the Israeli army
39. Which statement is **NOT** true?
- A. Israel has a parliamentary system of government
  - B. Like the United States, Israel has a written constitution**
  - C. People vote for a political party and seats in Israel's Parliament are allocated proportionally
  - D. Unlike the United States, Israel has many political parties represented in government
40. The seat of government in Israel is in:
- A. Haifa
  - B. Jerusalem**
  - C. Tel Aviv
  - D. Eilat
41. The current Prime Minister of Israel is:
- A. Benjamin Netanyahu**
  - B. Mahmoud Abbas
  - C. Angela Merkel
  - D. David Ben-Gurion

42. Which of the following statements about the Israel Defense Force is **NOT** true?
- A. Most Israelis serve in the IDF shortly after they graduate from high school
  - B. Israel has an all-volunteer army**
  - C. Ultra-Orthodox Jews have been exempt from Israeli military service
  - D. Women as well as men serve in the IDF
43. The “Law of Return,” passed by Israel as one of its Basic Laws, refers to:
- A. A law requiring all Israelis to return from overseas in times of war
  - B. A law guaranteeing every Jew citizenship in Israel**
  - C. A law entitling every Palestinian refugee to return to their ancestral homes in Israel
  - D. A law mandating that land purchased in Israel be returned to government ownership after 50 years
44. The headquarters of the Palestinian Authority are in:
- A. Ramallah**
  - B. Gaza City
  - C. Bethlehem
  - D. Nablus
45. Israel was NOT involved in which of the following?
- A. Capture of Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina
  - B. Rescue of hostages from Entebbe, Uganda
  - C. Rescue of American hostages in Iran**
  - D. Provision of health care in Haiti following the earthquake

### History

46. Which of the following Israeli leaders was assassinated?
- A. Yitzhak Rabin**
  - B. Theodore Herzl
  - C. Anwar Sadat
  - D. Ariel Sharon
47. The largest wave of immigration to Israel in the last two decades of the 20th century came from:
- A. The United States
  - B. Poland
  - C. Morocco
  - D. The Former Soviet Union**
48. Israel’s Prime Minister during the Yom Kippur War was:
- A. Golda Meir**
  - B. Menachem Begin
  - C. Yonatan Netanyahu
  - D. Tzipi Livni

49. Choose the best caption for the photo below:



Photo credit: Ilan Bruner, Israel Government Press Office

- A. Israeli leaders out for a stroll in Tiberias
  - B. British soldiers entering Jerusalem after the Battle of Jerusalem in 1917
  - C. Israeli leaders imposing martial law on Tel Aviv during the Second Intifada
  - D. Israeli military leaders in the Old City of Jerusalem after its capture in 1967**
50. The Oslo Accords led to:
- A. A signed peace treaty between Israel and Egypt
  - B. Syrian formal acceptance of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights
  - C. Mutual recognition and face-to-face meetings between Israel and the PLO**
  - D. Israeli withdrawal of most settlements from the West Bank
51. Which of these sets of events is in the correct chronological order?
- A. World War II/Holocaust > Israel's War of Independence > Six-Day War > Intifada**
  - B. Israel's War of Independence > World War II/Holocaust > Six-Day War > Intifada
  - C. Intifada > Six-Day War > World War II/Holocaust > Israel's War of Independence
  - D. Intifada > World War II/Holocaust > Israel's War of Independence > Six-Day War

52. The Holocaust is significant to the State of Israel because:
- A. Holocaust survivors founded the Zionist movement
  - B. Many Holocaust survivors immigrated to Israel after World War II**
  - C. The United States encouraged Jews to settle in Israel to escape the Holocaust
  - D. Israel's first three Prime Ministers were Holocaust survivors
53. What was the last country to govern the territory that is now Israel before it became an independent state?
- A. Palestine
  - B. Turkey
  - C. Great Britain**
  - D. France
54. Who was the first Prime Minister of Israel?
- A. Benjamin Netanyahu
  - B. David Ben-Gurion**
  - C. Yasser Arafat
  - D. Mahmoud Abbas
55. The word "Zion" was **FIRST** used:
- A. By Theodore Herzl at the first Zionist Congress
  - B. In medieval poetry about Israel
  - C. In the Hebrew Bible as a reference to Jerusalem**
  - D. As an alternative name for Israel when the State was founded
56. In which war did Israel capture East Jerusalem?
- A. The Six-Day War**
  - B. The Yom Kippur War
  - C. The War of Independence
  - D. The First Lebanon War
57. Germany made reparation payments to the State of Israel for:
- A. Artifacts stolen from Jerusalem during World War II
  - B. Failing to protect Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics in Munich
  - C. Atrocities committed against Jews during the Holocaust**
  - D. Mistakenly sharing secret nuclear technology with the PLO
58. The State of Israel was declared on:
- A. November 11, 1918
  - B. December 7, 1941
  - C. May 14, 1948**
  - D. June 20, 1950
59. Who was a prime minister of Israel?
- A. S. Y. Agnon
  - B. Ariel Sharon**
  - C. Theodore Herzl
  - D. Natan Sharansky

60. Which of the following statements is **NOT** true?
- A. Tiberias was the home of the Sanhedrin, the High Court of ancient Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple
  - B. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Tel Aviv**
  - C. Jerusalem was the site of the Second Temple
  - D. Safed is known for Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism)
61. In the Six-Day War, Israel captured which of the following territories?
- A. The Negev
  - B. The Northern Galilee
  - C. The Sinai Peninsula**
  - D. The Jezreel Valley
62. Which statement is **NOT** true?
- A. The United States recognized Israel immediately after it declared its independence
  - B. All United States presidents since 1948 have expressed support for Israel
  - C. The United States and Israel run joint military training exercises
  - D. Israeli law requires approval from the American president prior to launching a military strike**
63. Between the end of World War I and World War II, the land now known as Israel was under the rule of:
- A. Great Britain**
  - B. Jordan
  - C. Egypt
  - D. Turkey
64. What was one of the immediate causes of the Second Lebanon War?
- A. Capture of a Lebanese freighter trying to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip
  - B. Iraq's invasion of Lebanon
  - C. The assassination of former Lebanese Prime minister, Rafic Hariri
  - D. Hezbollah's cross-border attack and kidnapping of Israel soldiers**
65. Zionism is a movement that **DOES NOT** include the promotion of:
- A. A Jewish nation state
  - B. A distinctive Jewish culture
  - C. A return to an ancient homeland
  - D. A revival of the Yiddish language**
66. Theodore Herzl was:
- A. The first president of Israel
  - B. The organizer of a mass immigration to Israel from Hungary
  - C. The father of the Zionist movement**
  - D. A general in Israel's War of Independence

67. Prior to World War I, the territory that is now called Israel was governed by:

- A. **The Ottoman Empire**
- B. The League of Nations
- C. Egypt
- D. The British Empire

68. Choose the best caption for the photo below:



Photo credit: Zoltan Kluger, Israel Government Press Office

- A. David Ben-Gurion speaking at the First Zionist Congress
- B. Theodore Herzl speaking at the First Zionist Congress
- C. **David Ben-Gurion declaring Israel's independence**
- D. Theodore Herzl declaring Israel's independence

69. In the 2005 "Disengagement," Israel:

- A. Removed its troops from Southern Lebanon
- B. **Evacuated Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip**
- C. Attempted to reduce terrorist attacks by constructing a barrier separating it from the West Bank
- D. Declared that it no longer supported a two-state solution

70. Which of the following names has NEVER been used to refer to the area that is now known as Israel?

- A. Canaan
- B. Palestine
- C. The Holy Land
- D. **Carthage**



## Religion

71. The West Bank city called Nablus by Palestinians is called Shechem by religious Israeli Jews because:
- A. It was given that name by the British
  - B. Shechem is its biblical name**
  - C. It is Hebrew for “new city” which is what Nablus means in Arabic
  - D. It is the name of a flower that grows in the region
72. Which of the following statements about Israel is **TRUE**?
- A. Religion and state are separate as they are in the United States
  - B. Religious courts in Israel have jurisdiction over marriage and divorce**
  - C. All religious matters are decided by an interfaith council
  - D. The official religion is determined by the majority party in government
73. Arab Israelis make up approximately what percentage of Israel’s citizens?
- A. 1-5%
  - B. 15-25%**
  - C. 40-45%
  - D. 60-65%
74. The building in the center of the picture below is:



Photo credit: The Israeli Ministry of Tourism [www.goisrael.com](http://www.goisrael.com)

- A. The Baha’i Temple in Haifa
  - B. The Great Synagogue of Jerusalem
  - C. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem
  - D. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem**
75. Which of the following cities does **NOT** contain Christian pilgrimage sites?
- A. Bethlehem
  - B. Nazareth
  - C. Jerusalem
  - D. Tel Aviv**

76. The Dome of the Rock is a shrine built over the Foundation Stone. Muslims believe it is the place where:
- A. The Patriarch Abraham was born
  - B. The Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven**
  - C. Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad, is buried
  - D. Saladin defeated the Crusaders in 1187
77. Jews make up approximately what percentage of Israel's citizens?
- A. 60-69%
  - B. 70-79%**
  - C. 80-89%
  - D. 90-100%
78. Haredi is a word that describes:
- A. Ultra-Orthodox Jews**
  - B. A Palestinian political party
  - C. Jews from Ethiopia
  - D. The Socialist party in Israel

### **Society/Economy/Culture**

79. The kibbutz movement created:
- A. A water distribution system
  - B. Collective farming operations**
  - C. A platoon in the Israeli army
  - D. An airline industry
80. Which one of the following countries has **NOT** been the source of a major wave of Jewish immigration to Israel?
- A. Poland
  - B. Russia
  - C. Chile**
  - D. Ethiopia
81. "Mizrahi" refers to Jews originating from what region of the world?
- A. The Middle East and North Africa**
  - B. Germany and Poland
  - C. The former Soviet Union
  - D. The United States and Canada

### **(Economy)**

82. Which of these natural resources is scarce in Israel?
- A. Sunlight
  - B. Water**
  - C. Natural Gas
  - D. Salt

83. Israel is known for some of its industries. Which one of the following is Israel NOT known for?
- A. High-technology
  - B. Weaponry
  - C. Steel production**
  - D. Diamond cutting
84. Which of the following characterizes Israel's oil production?
- A. Israel is among the world's leading oil exporters
  - B. Israel is an oil exporter, but not one of the world's largest
  - C. Israel produces enough oil to meet its own needs, but not enough to export
  - D. Israel currently imports oil to meet its own needs**
85. Which of the following statements about the Israeli economy is **TRUE**?
- A. Israel has a socialist society in which wealth is relatively evenly distributed among all citizens
  - B. The kibbutz movement is the main driver of the Israeli economy
  - C. Israel has a national health care system**
  - D. Israel is a very poor country due to its lack of natural resources

**(Culture)**

86. Which of the following is an Israeli-based news source?
- A. The Forward
  - B. Haaretz**
  - C. The Jewish Week
  - D. Binyan Shalem
87. Yom Hazikaron is Israel's Memorial Day, a remembrance of fallen soldiers and victims of terror. Which of the following activities is **NOT** associated with the day?
- A. Fasting from sunrise to sunset**
  - B. A siren at its beginning when all activity stops for one minute
  - C. Visits to Har Herzl, the national military cemetery
  - D. Lowering the Israeli flag to half staff
88. Which of the following is **NOT** true?
- A. Many Israelis speak Russian or English as well as Hebrew
  - B. Hebrew and Arabic are both official languages of Israel
  - C. Street signs in Israel appear in Hebrew, Arabic, and English
  - D. Modern Hebrew is virtually unchanged from Biblical times**
89. Yad Vashem is:
- A. A Holocaust memorial and museum**
  - B. The largest Israeli art museum
  - C. A memorial to soldiers killed in the War of Independence
  - D. Israel's national archives

90. Yom Ha-Atzmaut, Israel Independence Day, is the day after which Israeli holiday?
- A. Yom Kippur
  - B. Passover
  - C. Hanukkah
  - D. Yom Hazikaron**
91. Who are Amos Oz, David Grossman, A.B. Yehoshua, and Etgar Keret?
- A. Members of the Israeli parliament
  - B. Israeli novelists**
  - C. Israeli soccer stars
  - D. Founders of the Kibbutz movement
92. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda is credited with:
- A. Discovering gas reserves in Israel
  - B. Founding Tel Aviv University
  - C. Reviving the Hebrew language**
  - D. Inventing the Israeli drip irrigation system

The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is a multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and issues related to contemporary Jewish life.

The Steinhardt Social Research Institute (SSRI), hosted at CMJS, uses innovative research methods to collect and analyze socio-demographic data on the Jewish community.

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