



Israeli soldiers chase Palestinians after a protest

Chapter 6

It's a Place of Conflict in Search of Peace

Imagine that you live in a neighborhood where no one wants to be your friend; in fact, everyone really wants you to leave. That's how Israelis sometimes feel. Many of their neighbors—Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt—have fought wars against Israel. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have protested against Israel, sometimes peacefully, sometimes violently.

Palestinian and Jewish students from the Music In Common program



What Do You See?

With a partner, discuss the two photos on this page:

1. How do these photos make you feel?
2. What conclusions might you come to about the Israeli-Palestinian relationship based only on the first photo? On the second photo?
3. Using both photos as your information source, how would you describe the relationship between Jews and Palestinians in Israel?

Israel Defense Forces

In Israel, most men and women are required to join the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at age eighteen. Rich or poor, recent immigrant or longtime resident, Jewish and Druze, Israelis from all walks of life serve their country together. Arab Israelis who wish to volunteer also serve. For Arab Israelis and religious Jews, there is also an option of participating in Israel's national service program and assisting at places like schools, hospitals, or nursing homes.



IDF soldiers at their swearing-in ceremony at the Western Wall

After High School

What are some of the things you'd like to do after you graduate high school? On a separate piece of paper, draw a line down the middle to create two sections. In the first section, use pictures, colors, and words to express your feelings about the possibilities.

Now imagine you live in Israel and you will be joining the army after high school. In the second section, create a new image to express how you would feel. What would excite you? What concerns might you have about joining?

The Challenges

The IDF has achieved great victories and maintained the security of Israel and its people. It has responded to every type of attack imaginable: stabbings, stonings, bus bombings, drone attacks, chemical threats, rocket attacks, invading armies, and more. Amidst these conflicts, the IDF strives to balance Israel's security needs with its humanitarian duty to protect civilians on all sides.

Text Study: The Values of the IDF

Read the text below with a friend and discuss the questions:

“The IDF...will act in a judicious and safe manner... out of recognition of the supreme value of human life....IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to [them]...”

—from the IDF's Code of Ethics and Mission

1. The IDF's job is to keep Israel's citizens safe. Do you think the IDF's code of ethics makes that job easier or harder? Why?
2. Judaism teaches that *piku'ach nefesh*, the saving of a life, takes precedence over almost anything else. How do you see this value reflected in the text?



Conflict and Peace: A Visual Timeline

Over the years, many have tried to make peace and solve conflicts in the Middle East. But disagreement and distrust remain. Peace has not yet come to the region.

1948-9 WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Israel prevails. Fighting ends without a formal peace treaty.

1956 SUEZ WAR



IDF soldiers, 1956

1964 PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION FORMS

Palestinians create the Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO, to represent them. Their original goals include the destruction of Israel.

1967 SIX-DAY WAR

In response to serious threats, Israel attacks Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and defeats their armies in just six days. Israel gains new territories, including the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Israel offers to return territory in exchange for peace, but the Arab nations refuse.



Israeli paratroopers after they capture the Western Wall, 1967

1973 YOM KIPPUR WAR

Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack. Israel suffers high casualties but ultimately wins the war and keeps the territory it captured in 1967.



Egyptian soldiers, 1973

1979 ISRAEL-EGYPT PEACE TREATY

Israel agrees to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for peace.



President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, 1979

1987 HAMAS FORMS

A new organization, Hamas, is formed to represent Palestinians. Hamas gains support because they operate schools and hospitals, and provide other services that help with everyday life for Palestinians. However, their attacks on civilians and calls for the destruction of Israel lead the United States and many other countries to consider them a terrorist organization.

1981 EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ANWAR SADAT IS ASSASSINATED

1982 FIRST LEBANON WAR

The PLO attacks Israel from its base in Lebanon. Israel responds by invading Lebanon. It maintains a presence there for eighteen years.

1987 FIRST INTIFADA

Palestinians protest and riot in response to the Israeli presence on the West Bank and in Gaza.



President H.W. Bush addressing the conference, 1991

1991 MADRID PEACE CONFERENCE

The United States and Soviet Union organize a peace conference with Israel and its Arab neighbors. For the first time, negotiators from Israel and the Palestinians meet with one another. The idea

of a two-state solution—one Israeli and one Palestinian—is discussed.



1993 OSLO ACCORDS

The PLO rejects terrorism and, for the first time, recognizes Israel's right to exist. Israel agrees to allow the PLO's newly formed Palestinian Authority to rule the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, with US President Bill Clinton, 1993

1994 ISRAEL-JORDAN PEACE TREATY SIGNED



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein of Jordan, with US President Bill Clinton, 1994

1995 YITZHAK RABIN, PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL, IS ASSASSINATED

1996 PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

Palestinians conduct fair and free elections. Israel withdraws from parts of the West Bank.

2000 ISRAEL WITHDRAWS FROM LEBANON

2000 SECOND INTIFADA

In response to the failure of the peace talks, Palestinians begin the Second Intifada, which includes suicide bombings against Israeli civilians.



The aftermath of a suicide bombing attack on an Israeli bus, 2000



Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel, US President Bill Clinton, and Chairman Yasser Arafat at Camp David, 2000

2000 CAMP DAVID SUMMIT

Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO, meets with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David, in Maryland. Their peace talks break down over the issues of control of Jerusalem and whether Palestinians should be given land inside Israel.

2002 ISRAEL BUILDS A SECURITY FENCE

Israel begins building a fence to prevent terrorists from entering the country. The barrier does its job but provokes controversy because it is built, in part, on land claimed by Palestinians and makes daily life more difficult for Palestinians.

2005 ISRAEL WITHDRAWS FROM GAZA

Israel dismantles settlements in Gaza and withdraws its soldiers, leaving the Palestinian Authority in charge.



Israeli residents of Gaza protesting the IDF's withdrawal, 2005

2006 SECOND LEBANON WAR

“One of the biggest problems that ALL Palestinians complain about is the lack of a clear future.... [We have lived through periods of hope, violence, anticipation, concern....We do not know what the future holds for us....”

—Nedal Zahran, a Palestinian from the West Bank

The security fence

“The hundreds of Israeli military closures across the West Bank such as checkpoints, roadblocks, and settler-only roads...make simple daily tasks for Palestinians who are trying to get to work, school or hospital a constant struggle.”

—Amnesty International

2007 HAMAS TAKE-OVER OF GAZA

Hamis violently overthrows the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. Palestinian rule is divided, with the Palestinian Authority in charge of the West Bank and Hamas in charge of Gaza. Hamas fires rockets into Israel from Gaza, hitting nearby towns.



2008 OPERATION CAST LEAD

Israeli soldiers enter Gaza and destroy Hamas rockets.



Remains of some of the thousands of rockets fired on the Israeli city of Sderot from the Gaza Strip

“I remember growing up, feeling safe and secure in Sderot. I was happy. Why can’t my kids have that kind of childhood?”

—Carmit Malka, an Israeli from Sderot

2014 OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE

Following the murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas, Israel enters Gaza and destroys dozens of tunnels leading from Gaza into Israeli neighborhoods.



Eyal Yifrah (19), Gilad Shaer (16), and Naftali Frenkel (16)

2018 GAZA BORDER PROTESTS

Palestinians organize what they call the “Great March of Return,” protests demanding that Palestinian refugees and their descendants be allowed to claim land in Israel.

The Timeline

Continue the timeline into the future.

What do you think will happen between Israel and its neighbors in the future? In the white boxes, write the year and the title of an important event that you think will occur in five years, ten years, and twenty-five years. Add a drawing or paste an image that illustrates it.



IN FIVE YEARS, THE YEAR WILL BE: _____

THE EVENT: _____

IN TEN YEARS, THE YEAR WILL BE: _____

THE EVENT: _____

IN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, THE YEAR WILL BE: _____

THE EVENT: _____



Do Settlements Promote Security or Conflict?

What are the settlements? When Israel first captured the West Bank, many Israeli leaders hoped that they would be able to return it in exchange for peace. Others believed that the West Bank was a part of ancient Israel and argued that the country should keep and settle it.

As time passed, the Israeli government encouraged citizens to move to the West Bank and build communities there, called settlements. Some Israeli Jews moved for religious reasons, while others moved because it was an affordable place to live or because it was close to their workplaces.

Today, there are more than 130 settlements. They range in size from tiny outposts to large cities. Many settlements are very close to major Israeli centers, while others are more remote.

“I think the settlements are part of Israel...and I think the settlers view themselves as Israelis, and Israel views the settlers as Israelis.”

—David Friedman,
US ambassador to Israel

Are the Settlements an Obstacle to Peace? Over the past decades, one of the most common suggestions for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been what is sometimes called the “two-state solution,” or “two states for two peoples.” This solution calls for the West Bank and Gaza to separate from Israel and become an independent country, called Palestine.

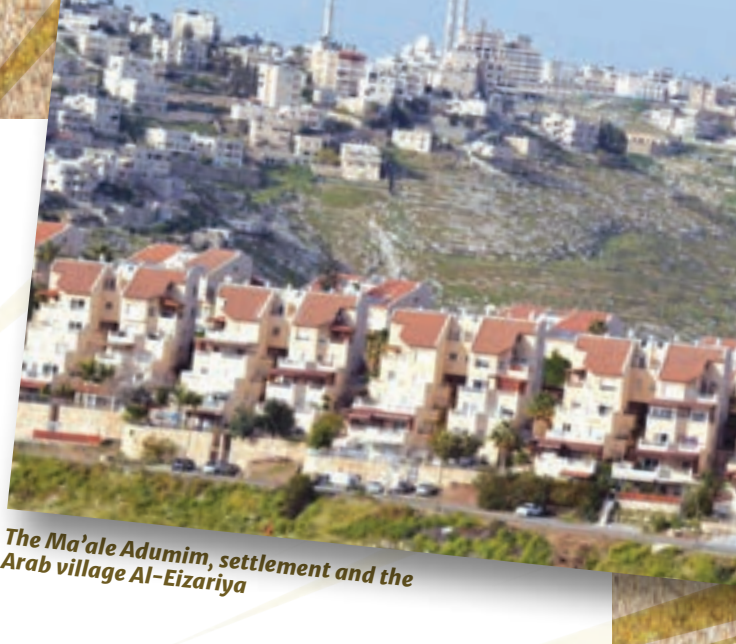
The settlements cause many to question whether Israel is really open to the two-state solution. After all, they argue, if the West Bank someday becomes a part of a Palestinian state, then the Jewish homes and communities in those settlements would need to be dismantled.

Are the Settlements Necessary for Israel's Security? Many Israelis fear what would happen if the settlements were dismantled. When Israel dismantled its settlements in Gaza in 2005, many hoped that would be a first step toward peace. But instead, the opposite occurred. Gaza became a base for Hamas, which uses the territory to launch missile attacks against Israel.

Israel argues that keeping the settlements in the West Bank is necessary to provide security for Israel's citizens. Much of Israel's population can be reached by a missile launched from the West Bank, and Israel can't risk letting this land fall under the control of Hamas or another group that seeks to destroy Israel.

“Nearly 90,000 settlers are living... in the middle of what, by any reasonable definition, would be the future Palestinian state.”

—John Kerry,
former US secretary of state



The Ma'ale Adumim, settlement and the Arab village Al-Eizariya

Debate It!



Your friend Adi's family is planning to move to Israel. Her father wants to live in the West Bank because it's more affordable. Her mother thinks Jewish people shouldn't live in the West Bank because it makes the peace process more challenging. Adi doesn't know what to think.

Should Adi's family move to the settlements?

With a partner, debate the issue. List the main points in the spaces below.

YES: Adi's family should move to the West Bank:

NO: Adi's family should move elsewhere in Israel:



Talk about It!

There's a famous story in the Talmud about Rabbi Hillel. A man who wanted to convert to Judaism asked Rabbi Hillel to explain the whole Torah while the man stood on one foot. Hillel responded: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. The rest is commentary. Now, go study."

Use this story to answer the following questions:

1. Imagine someone asked you to explain the conflicts described in this chapter while standing on one foot—in other words, to sum them up very briefly. What would you say?
2. How do you think the people who live in the Middle East might benefit from Rabbi Hillel's advice?

