

Lausanne Orthodox/Evangelical Initiative
"Gospel as Foundation for Mission - Praxis"
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Israel: Basic information

Area: 21,000 square Kilometers

Population:

- ❖ Jews: 6.251 million - 74.9% (gospel resistant)
- ❖ Arabs: 1.73 million - 20.7% (majority Muslim)
- ❖ Others: 0.364 million - 4.4% (*non-Arab Christians, Baha'i, etc*)

Features of Arab Palestinians in Israel according to denominational distribution
(*estimates*)

Catholics (Greek & Roman Catholic and Maronite): **61%**

Coptic, Syrians: **2%**

Greek Orthodox: **30%**

Anglican and Evangelical: **7%**.

Context: The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is centered on contested territory by two national movements.

- ❖ Palestinian National Movement
- ❖ Jewish National Movement (Zionism)

Characteristics of an Intractable Conflict

- ❖ Protracted (lasting almost a century with ancient roots)
- ❖ Violent (thousands of casualties in both societies)
- ❖ Central (on the main public agenda of both sides)
- ❖ Total (focused on essential fundamental goals such as *identity* and territory)
- ❖ Demanding (extensive psychological and material investments by the parties in order to cope with – and win – the conflict).
 - ❖ It has been considered to be a zero sum equation and irresolvable peacefully
 - ❖ Both societies live with this harsh, violent reality, therefore both had to adapt psychologically to the ongoing situation.
- ❖ Religion (Competing religious worldviews and identity)

Messianic Jews and Their Communities

Survey Resistant Community

Estimates:

- ❖ 120 Hebrew Speaking congregations (30-300)
- ❖ 45 Russian Speaking congregations (20 – 300)
- ❖ 12 Amheric Speaking congregations (25-400)
- ❖ 5 Spanish speaking congregations (20-50)
- ❖ Growing house church initiatives, mostly younger people

Messianic Jewish Identity

- ❖ The word “Christian” or “Christianity” has been at best a stumbling block preventing them from any real encounter with the substance of the faith.
- ❖ The history of relations between the church and the Jews is written in Jewish blood.
- ❖ “Messianic” describes the faith commitment of the Israeli Messianic Jew with a term that is culturally appropriate and in keeping with being part of the Jewish people.
- ❖ The essential content of a Messianic Jew’s faith is equivalent to evangelical Christian: being a Jew does not contribute to what it requires to come to faith in Jesus.
- ❖ How a Messianic Jew lives out his faith in Jewish social space differs from how a Christian would in a Christian culture. (patriotism, militaristic)
- ❖ “Hebrew Christian” suggests a lack of continuity with Jewish identity.
- ❖ The term “Christian” implies being “not Jewish.”

Messianic Jews: theology and practice

- ❖ Protestant Evangelical
- ❖ Congregational autonomy (little unity)
- ❖ Focus on personal salvation (individualism)
- ❖ Influenced by Dispensationalism
- ❖ Influenced by Christian Zionist interpretation of Scripture
- ❖ Spectrum of Torah Observance

The Gospel in Israel

- ❖ The gospel is first for Israel – to the Jew first, Romans 1:19
- ❖ Focus on evangelism and personal holiness, pietistic
- ❖ Focus on prophetic promises to Israel
- ❖ Little engagement with culture or the conflict.

Challenges

- ❖ To relate to the reality of the conflict as an opportunity for the Gospel rather than a threat to their identity.
- ❖ To see the gospel as a word of reconciliation.
- ❖ To see reconciliation as mission
- ❖ To seriously engage with social justice issues in the context of the conflict.
- ❖ To strive for unity within the diversity of those who have faith in Jesus.