



## Educator's Guide

# 1948 War part 2

1947 was a tense year for Israel and the region. In November, the UN voted in favor of the Partition Plan, and Israeli-Arab clashes immediately ensued. When Israel officially declared independence in May 1948, the surrounding Arab armies invaded and war broke out. Would Israel, a tiny, fledgling country, defeat these armies? Would the newly founded IDF pull this off? What would become of the Palestinians in Israel, and the Jews in Arab lands? Watch this video and use these prompts to delve into Israel's nail-biting beginning.

Link to video:

### Further Reading

1. Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*, chapter 7
2. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, chapter 8
3. [https://knesset.gov.il/holidays/eng/independence\\_day\\_war.htm](https://knesset.gov.il/holidays/eng/independence_day_war.htm)
4. [United Nations Resolution 194 on Palestinian Refugees](#)
5. Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, chapter 6
6. [Ha'aretz Article on Arab Leaders during the 1948 War](#)

### Review – Did the students understand the material?

1. Which Arab countries invaded Israel in 1948?
2. Why was Ben-Gurion mournful when the rest of the country was celebrating Israel's newfound independence?



- 3.** In 1948, the IDF was formed as a united Israeli army. Which of these groups was not one of the three para-militias that comprised the new IDF?
  - a.** Haganah
  - b.** Lechi
  - c.** Irgun
  - d.** Tzahal (correct)
- 4.** On what date did Israel declare independence?
  - a.** May 14, 1947
  - b.** May 15, 1947
  - c.** May 14, 1948 (correct)
  - d.** May 15, 1948
- 5.** How many Israelis were killed in the 1948 war?
  - a.** 2,000
  - b.** 4,000
  - c.** 6,000 (correct)
  - d.** 8,000

## Discussion Questions

- 1.** Israel had the opportunity to capture the West Bank, but Ben-Gurion opposed this, stating: "We would have a Knesset with an Arab majority. Faced with either a greater Israel or a Jewish Israel, we choose a Jewish Israel." Do you agree with Ben-Gurion's decision? Explain.
- 2.** How *did* Israel manage to win this war, when they were up against so many enemies? Some suggest it was Israel's military strategy; others suggest it was the disorganization of the Arab countries, while the religiously minded might point to divine intervention. In your opinion, which factor(s) contributed most profoundly to Israel's success?
- 3.** As a result of the war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were forced out of their homes. Simultaneously, hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from their homes in Arab lands. Israel absorbed the Jewish refugees, while many Palestinians remain refugees to this day. How do you explain this



imbalance? Why is the Palestinian refugee problem still raging today? (Watch this additional [video](#) and use the resources there to learn more about this issue.)

## Reflection Questions

- 1.** Imagine you are living in Israel in 1948. Surrounding enemies vow to wipe Israel off the map; you are severely outnumbered; your fighters are new immigrants who don't know the land and speak different languages. What emotions are you experiencing? How do you maintain hope?
- 2.** Today, some view Israel as the Goliath in the battle against the Palestinians, in which the Palestinians represent David. Yet if one zooms out, Israel is still the David in a region of many hostile Arab countries. Read this [article](#) from the *New York Times*, and think about whether or not you view Israelis as the David or Goliath in the 21st century. Better yet, if Israel is the "Goliath" in your view, does your attachment to the state and its people waiver or is it important for you to have Israel retain the "David" status?
- 3.** In a story like this, what captures your interest: The military strategy and battles? The political tactics? The ramifications for civilians? Take this opportunity to pinpoint the aspects of history that you connect with and reflect on what captures your interest and why.
- 4.** Two thousand of Israel's fallen were Holocaust survivors. Many of them are buried with no name on their grave, as they were completely alone in this new country. What do you think it meant to them to fight for the sake of a Jewish state, after the atrocities they experienced in the Holocaust?