
A Tale of Four Cities



Dr. Shlomo Swirski
Academic Director, Adva Center

There are many ways of introducing one to a country, especially a country as complex as Israel.

The following presentation is an attempt to do so by focusing on 4 Israeli cities (double Charles Dickens's classic book):

Tel Aviv

Jerusalem

Nazareth

Beer Sheba

This will allow us to introduce some of the major national and ethnic groups in the country, as well as provide a glimpse into some of the major political and economic issues.

Tel-Aviv



Tel-Aviv

Zionism hails from Europe, mostly from its Eastern countries. Jews had arrived there in the middle ages from Germanic lands – called Ashkenaz in Hebrew. It was the intellectual child of the secular European enlightenment.

Tel Aviv was the first city built by Zionists – in 1909 – growing out of the neighboring ancient, Arab port of Jaffa. It soon became the main point of entry into Palestine for Zionist immigrants.

Together with neighboring cities, it lies at the center of the largest urban conglomeration in Israel (Gush Dan), with close to 4 million out of 9 million Israelis.

The war of 1948 ended with Jaffa bereft of the large majority of its Palestinian population, and in time it was incorporated into Tel Aviv. The day-to-day Israeli-Palestinian confrontations are now distant (in Israeli terms) from Tel Aviv.

Tel Aviv represents the glitzi face of Israel. Yet Tel Aviv has two faces: the largely well to do Ashkenazi middle and upper-middle class North, and the largely working class Mizrahi South (with a large concentration of migrant workers).

Tel-Aviv

The first Zionist city

The secular, Ashkenazi capital

“Western” city:

Bars, restaurants, theaters

Largest university

Opera, philharmonic orchestra,

EuroVision competition

Site of the Start-Up Nation

LGBT friendly

Away from it all – especially the
Israeli-Palestinian conflict

But – a deep North-South divide



Jerusalem



Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the biblical capital of Judea. It was the site of both the 1st and 2nd Jewish temples. It is the Zion of Jewish prayers.

Jerusalem is the largest Israeli city – counting East Jerusalem, which was annexed by Israel immediately following the 1967 war.

About two thirds of Jerusalem's Jews are religious – evenly split between orthodox and ultra-orthodox. Just one third of the population is secular. This is the obverse of the situation in the general population of Israel – where two-thirds of the Jews are secular, 23% are orthodox and 9% are ultra-Orthodox.

Jerusalem is at the epicenter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – both as a site of numerous violent confrontations and as the main contention block in the negotiations over the siting of the future Palestinian capital.

Jerusalem

The Jewish capital

The religious & orthodox center

Home of 3 monotheistic religions

Secularists exit

Seat of Israel's government

Best-known Israeli university –
an island within a traditionalist space

Heart of Israeli-Palestinian conflict:
border city, re-divided city



Nazareth



Nazareth

Nazareth, the home of Mary and Joseph, now has a Muslim majority – with Christians constituting only about 30% of the population. This reflects two trends: one, Muslim migration from surrounding Palestinian villages and two, Christian emigration out of Israel.

The population of Nazareth is not large – about 77,000 – but it lies at the center of the largest concentration of Palestinian citizens of Israel – more than 1 million.

The Palestinian citizens of Israel are mostly the descendants of the Palestinians who were not expelled or did not flee during the war of 1948. Before that war, Palestinians were the majority of the population of the country lying between the Mediterranean and the Jordan river; after the war they became a minority within the borders of Israel. Presently they are about 1.9 of the 9 million Israeli residents.

Nazareth reflects the low status of the Palestinian citizens of Israel: compared to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beer Sheba, it is not a thriving economic center, it has little room for expansion and it has no university. On top of all that, Israel built Upper Nazareth on adjacent hills, as a countervailing Jewish urban center. (Ironically, some 15% of Upper Nazareth residents are Palestinians, most of them Christian).

Nazareth

Arab “capital” of Israel

Christian center turned Muslim center

City of conflict:
Church of the Annunciation –
Shahab-a-Din Mosque

City of conflict:
Nazareth vs. Upper Nazareth

Political City: seat of major Arab parties

No university



Beer Sheva



Beer Sheba

Beer Sheba is the Mizrahi “Capital”. Mizrahim are Jews who came to Israel, mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, from Arab and Moslem countries. On the eve of the establishment of the state of Israel, they numbered about 850,000, spread from Morocco in the West to India in the East. During the 1950’s and 1960’s some 600,000 migrated to Israel. For about 20 years they constituted a majority among Israeli Jews. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, close to a million ex-Soviet Jews migrated to Israel and joined the veteran Ashkenazim – defined as Jews from Europe or America - now the largest Jewish group in Israel.

Many of the Mizrahi immigrants were settled in the South – in small industrial company towns like Dimona, Yeruham, Sderot, Netivot and Ofakim, as well as in cooperative agricultural communities (moshavim). Having been mostly merchants and craftsmen in the big Arab cities like Baghdad and Casablanca, they underwent a process of peripheralization and proletarianization that established an ethnic division of labor and gave ground to a lingering sense of discrimination.

Following the Six Day War of 1967, as Israel became a regional military power, Mizrahi men found jobs in the growing military-industrial complex, while Mizrahi women entered the public services, becoming civil servants like teachers, nurses, and social workers. Social and economic mobility has not succeeded in erasing the intra-Jewish ethnic divide, as manifested in residence, education, employment and income.

Beer Sheba

The Mizrahi “capital”

A city of immigrants

Services military camps in the area

Services mineral industries:
Phosphates, Bromides, Potash

A most dynamic university





Population 2017

Tel-Aviv

444,000

Jerusalem

883,000

Incl. 332,000 Palestinians

Nazareth

77,000

Out of 770,000 Palestinians in
North District

Beer Sheba

220,000





Economy

Tel-Aviv

**Big Business | “Start-Up Nation” |
Financial Services**

Jerusalem

Government | Tourism

Nazareth

Tourism | Commerce | Services

Beer Sheba

**Minerals | Chemical Industry |
Military**





Average Monthly Salary

2016

Tel-Aviv

11,017 NIS

Jerusalem

7,179 NIS

Incl. East Jerusalem

Nazareth

6,284 NIS

Beer Sheba

8,347 NIS





High School Matriculation Rate

Out of senior year students, 2016/17

Tel-Aviv

73.6%

Jerusalem

35.4%

Nazareth

59.9%

Beer Sheba

73.9%





Starting Academic Studies

High school graduates in 2010 starting academic studies by 2018

Tel-Aviv

51.6%

Jerusalem

24.8%

Nazareth

33.4%

Beer Sheba

38.0%





Election Results

April, 2019

Tel-Aviv

Blue-White	46%
Likud	19%
Left	18%
Right	4%

Nazareth

Arab Lists	83%
Left (Jewish)	8%

Jerusalem

Ultra-Orthodox	37%
Likud	25%
Right	14%
Left	6%

Beer sheba

Likud	43%
Blue-White	18%
Right	12%
Left	4%



*Israeli-occupied with current status subject to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement; permanent status to be determined through further negotiation.