



## Acquisition of Israeli Nationality

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## Acquisition of Israeli Nationality

Israel's Nationality Law relates to persons born in Israel or resident therein, as well as to those wishing to settle in the country, regardless of race, religion, creed, sex or political belief. Citizenship may be acquired by:

- Birth
- The Law of Return
- Residence
- Naturalization

### Acquisition of nationality by birth is granted to:

1. Persons who were born in Israel to a mother or a father who are Israeli citizens.
2. Persons born outside Israel, if their father or mother holds Israeli citizenship, acquired either by birth in Israel, according to the Law of Return, by residence, or by naturalization.
3. Persons born after the death of one of their parents, if the late parent was an Israeli citizen by virtue of the conditions enumerated in 1. and 2. above at the time of death.
4. Persons born in Israel, who have never had any nationality and subject to limitations specified in the law, if they:
  1. apply for it in the period between their 18th and 25th birthday and
  2. have been residents of Israel for five consecutive years, immediately preceding the day of the filing of their application.

### Acquisition of Nationality according to the Law of Return

On the establishment of the State, its founders proclaimed "...the renewal of the Jewish State in the Land of Israel, which would open wide the gates of the homeland to every Jew..." In pursuance of this tenet, the State of Israel has absorbed survivors of the Holocaust, refugees from the countries in which they had resided, as well as many thousands of Jews who came to settle in Israel of

their own volition.

The [Law of Return](#) (1950) grants every Jew, wherever he may be, the right to come to Israel as an *oleh* (a Jew immigrating to Israel) and become an Israeli citizen.

For the purposes of this Law, "Jew" means a person who was born of a Jewish mother, or has converted to Judaism and is not a member of another religion.

Israeli citizenship becomes effective on the day of arrival in the country or of receipt of an *oleh's certificate*, whichever is later. A person may declare, within three months, that he/she does not wish to become a citizen.

An *oleh's* certificate may be denied to persons who:

1. engage in activity directed against the Jewish people;
2. may endanger public health or the security of the state;
3. have a criminal past, likely to endanger public welfare.

Since 1970, the right to immigrate under this law has been extended to include the child and the grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of the grandchild of a Jew. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure the unity of families, where intermarriage had occurred; it does not apply to persons who had been Jews and had voluntarily changed their religion.

#### **Acquisition of Nationality by Residence**

Special provision is made in the Nationality Law for former citizens of British Mandatory Palestine. Those who remained in Israel from the establishment of the State in 1948 until the enactment of the Nationality Law of 1952, became Israeli citizens *by residence* or *by return*.

According to an amendment (1980), further possibilities to acquire citizenship by residence, were included in the law.

#### **Acquisition of Nationality by Naturalization**

Adults may acquire Israeli citizenship by naturalization at the discretion of the Minister of the Interior and subject to a number of requirements, such as:

1. they must have resided in Israel for three years out of the five years preceding the day of submission of the application.
2. they are entitled to reside in Israel permanently and have settled or intend to settle in Israel;
3. they have renounced their prior nationality, or have proved that they will cease to be foreign nationals upon becoming Israeli citizens.

The Minister of the Interior may exempt an applicant from some of these requirements.