Response To Common Inaccuracy: Jews have no Connection to Israel

Inaccuracy: Jews are interlopers in the Middle East. The Jews that came to Israel had no connection with the land which was populated solely by indigenous Palestinians.

Response

The Land of Israel – the historical birthplace of the Jewish people, the land promised to Abraham, the site of the holy Temple and David's Kingdom – has been the cornerstone of Jewish religious life since the Jewish exile from the land two thousand years ago, and is embedded in Jewish prayer, ritual, literature and culture.

A small number of Jews lived continuously in the Land of Israel after their exile in the year 70, through Byzantine, Muslim and Crusader rule. At the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1517, Jews lived in Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, Safed and in Galilean villages. Over the centuries, Jews made pilgrimages to the holy land. Hundreds of Hasidic Jews immigrated in 1770 from Eastern Europe. Many pious Jews left Eastern Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in order to pray and die in the four sacred cities of the Holy Land: Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron.

There has been a continuous presence of Jewish residents in Jerusalem from King David's time (except for periods when Jews were barred from living in the city), and by 1844, Jews were the largest single religious community in Jerusalem.
By 1856, the Jewish population in Palestine was over 17,000. Organized Jewish immigration began in 1880 with the emergence of the modern Zionist movement. The number of Palestinian Arabs living in the area when Jews began arriving en masse in the late 19th century remains the subject of dispute among historians.

The early Zionist pioneers saw the Arab population as small, apolitical, and without a nationalist element and they therefore believed that there would not be friction between the two communities. They also thought that development of the country would benefit both peoples and they would thus secure Arab support and cooperation. Indeed, many Arabs attracted by new employment opportunities, higher wages and better living conditions migrated to Palestine from other countries in the wake of economic growth stimulated by Jewish immigration.