**Jordan River Cristina Romero**

**Drainage Basin:** 18, 261 km2

**River Length:** 251 km

**Geographic Coverage:** Middle East: Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Jordan

**Key uses:** Irrigation, making certain land livable, drinking

**Population:** 14 million (note: this is a combination of the populations of the Israel and Jordan, the countries with the most conflict over the river; figures for the total population affected by the Jordan River were unfound)

**Special Features:** Drains into the Dead Sea; has great religious significance (postulated as the place St. John the Baptist baptized Jesus); Israel uses its water to cultivate the Negev desert; only river in Israel that has flow year-round.

**Nature of the Conflict**

The conflict began when Israel established itself as a new country, something many Arab countries protested against. Israel viewed the Jordan River as a source for development, while Jordan considered the river a source of Arab national pride (Grunfeld). When Syria attempted to divert a tributary of the Jordan River, Israel attacked in an act of war, which also brought in Jordan and Egypt against Israel. The war lasted six days and ended with Israel gaining the West Bank of the Jordan River. Israel then increased its water usage, which caused Jordan to have to cancel plans to create a canal system to increase its own usage of the river (Grunfeld). Each country independently sought alternative ways to gain maximum water usage. Jordan built a canal tunnel (with permission from Israel) and a dam. Israel refined the drip irrigation system and considered desalinating Mediterranean water. Both countries found their water alternatives to be expensive; a need for cooperation between the two countries became imminent (Grunfeld).

**Resolution**

In 1994, a peace treaty was signed between Israel and Jordan that included details about using the Jordan River. The two countries share the river and work together on building structures for rain floods and dams for managing river flow; both countries are also responsible for preventing pollution and contamination in the river (Grunfeld). In recent years, some minor conflicts have arisen concerning Israel and the river. However, this time the situations are being handled peacefully as, “mayors from Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian communities along the river are joining together to honor peace agreements calling for protection from pollution and recognition of the disparity in standards of living on each side of the river” (Collins). The controversy concerning Israel and its rights to the Jordan River continue, especially when Syrian and Lebanese rights to the river are also involved.

**Future Prospects**

Recently (this past May), Israel started enacting plans that will help replenish the lower Jordan River, after diverting so much of the water to cultivate land. Jordan approves of the plan, as the plan will help replenish and rehabilitate the river (“Free Flow”). Controversy has come with the plan, as some activists say that Israel needs to release more than 30 million m3 water per year because about 220 m3 is needed to replenish the lower part of the Jordan River (“Free Flow”). More treaties and plans will need to be signed and made between the countries relying on the Jordan River, but so far the countries seem to be working together on using the river.

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