

History of Israel

The Land of Israel (also known as the Holy Land or Palestine) is the birthplace of the Jewish people, the place where the Hebrew Bible was composed and the birthplace of Judaism and Christianity. It contains sites sacred to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Samaritanism, Druze and the Bahá'í Faith.

The site of modern Israel has come under the sway of various empires and been home to a variety of ethnicities, but was predominantly Jewish from roughly 1,000 years before the Common Era (BCE) until the 3rd century of the Common Era (CE).^[1] The adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire in the 4th century led to a Greco-Roman Christian majority which lasted until the 7th century when the area was conquered by the Arab Muslim Empires. It gradually became predominantly Muslim until the Crusades between 1096 and 1291, when it was the focal point of conflict between Christianity and Islam. From the 13th century it was mainly Muslim with Arabic as the dominant language and was first part of the Syrian province of the Mamluk Sultanate and then part of the Ottoman Empire until the British conquest in 1917.

A Jewish national movement, Zionism, emerged in the late-19th century (partially in response to growing anti-Semitism), as part of which Aliyah (Jewish immigration) increased. During World War I, the British government publicly committed to create a Jewish National Home and was granted a Mandate to rule Palestine by the League of Nations for this purpose. A rival Arab nationalism also claimed rights over the former Ottoman territories and sought to prevent Jewish migration into Palestine, leading to growing Arab–Jewish tensions. Israeli independence in 1948 was accompanied by an exodus of Arabs from Israel, the Arab–Israeli conflict^[2] and a subsequent Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries and Europe to Israel. About 43% of the world's Jews live in Israel today, the largest Jewish community in the world.^[3]

Since about 1970, the United States has become the principal ally of Israel. In 1979, an uneasy Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty was signed, based on the Camp David Accords. In 1993, Israel signed Oslo I Accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization, followed by establishment of the Palestinian National Authority and in 1994 Israel–Jordan peace treaty was signed. Despite efforts to finalize the peace agreement, the conflict continues to play a major role in Israeli and international political, social and economic life.

The economy of Israel was initially primarily socialist and the country dominated by social democratic parties until the 1970s. Since then the Israeli economy has gradually moved to capitalism and a free market economy, partially retaining the social welfare system.

Contents

Prehistory

Bronze and Iron Ages

- Canaanites (Bronze Age)

- Early Israelites (Iron Age I)

 - First Hebrew texts and religion

- Israel and Judah (Iron Age II)

 - Assyrian invasions

Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods (586–37 BCE)

- Hasmonean dynasty (140–37 BCE)

Roman period (64 BCE–4th century CE)

- Herodian dynasty and Roman province
- Jewish–Roman wars
- After the 136 CE Jewish defeat
- Rome adopts Christianity

Byzantine period (390–634)

Early Arab period (634–1099)

Crusades and Mongols (1099–1291)

Mamluk period (1291–1517)

Ottoman period (1516–1917)

- Old Yishuv
- Birth of Zionism
- World War I

British Mandate of Palestine (1920–1948)

- First years
- Increase of Jewish immigration
- Arab revolt and the White Paper
- World War II and the Holocaust
- Illegal Jewish immigration and insurgency
- United Nations Partition Plan
- Civil War

State of Israel (1948–present)

- War of Independence
- Armistice Agreements
- 1948–1955: Ben-Gurion I; Sharett
- 1955–1963: Ben-Gurion II
- 1963–1969: Eshkol
- 1969–1974: Meir
- 1974–1977: Rabin I
- 1977–1983: Begin
- 1983–1992: Shamir I; Peres I; Shamir II
- 1992–1996: Rabin II; Peres II
- 1996–2001: Netanyahu I; Barak
- 2001–2006: Sharon
- 2006–2009: Olmert
- 2009–present: Netanyahu II

Demographics

See also

References

Further reading

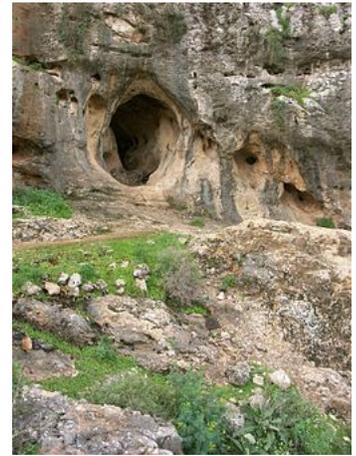
External links

Prehistory

Between 2.6 and 0.9 million years ago, at least four episodes of hominine dispersal from Africa to the Levant are known, each culturally distinct. The oldest evidence of early humans in the territory of modern Israel, dating to 1.5 million years ago, was found in Ubeidiya near the Sea of Galilee.^[4] The flint tool artefacts have been discovered at Yiron, the oldest

stone tools found anywhere outside Africa. Other groups include 1.4 million years old Acheulean industry, the Bizat Ruhama group and Gesher Bnot Yaakov.^[5]

In the Carmel mountain range at el-Tabun, and Es Skhul,^[6] Neanderthal and early modern human remains were found, including the skeleton of a Neanderthal female, named Tabun I, which is regarded as one of the most important human fossils ever found.^[7] The excavation at el-Tabun produced the longest stratigraphic record in the region, spanning 600,000 or more years of human activity,^[8] from the Lower Paleolithic to the present day, representing roughly a million years of human evolution.^[9] Other notable Paleolithic sites include caves Qesem and Manot. The oldest fossils of anatomically modern humans found outside Africa are the Skhul and Qafzeh hominids, who lived in northern Israel 120,000 years ago.^[10] Around 10th millennium BCE, the Natufian culture existed in the area.^[11]



Es Skhul cave

Bronze and Iron Ages

Canaanites (Bronze Age)

During the 2nd millennium BCE, Canaan, part of which later became known as Israel, was dominated by the New Kingdom of Egypt from c.1550 to c. 1180.

Early Israelites (Iron Age I)

The first record of the name Israel (as *ysri'ir*) occurs in the Merneptah stele, erected for Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah (son of Ramses II) c. 1209 BCE, "Israel is laid waste and his seed is not."^[12] William G. Dever sees this "Israel"

in the central highlands as a cultural and probably political entity, more an ethnic group rather than an organized state.^[13]

Ancestors of the Israelites may have included Semites native to Canaan and the Sea Peoples.^[14] McNutt says, "It is probably safe to assume that sometime during Iron Age I a population began to identify itself as 'Israelite'", differentiating itself from the Canaanites through such markers as the prohibition of intermarriage, an emphasis on family history and genealogy, and religion.^[15]

The archaeological evidence indicates a society of village-like centres, but with more limited resources and a small population.^[16] Villages had populations of up to 300 or 400,^{[17][18]} which lived by farming and herding, and were largely self-sufficient;^[19] economic interchange was prevalent.^[20] Writing was known and available for recording, even in small sites.^[21]

First Hebrew texts and religion

The first use of grapheme-based writing originated in the area, probably among Canaanite peoples resident in Egypt. This evolved into the Phoenician alphabet from which all modern alphabetical writing systems are descended. The Paleo-Hebrew alphabet was one of the first to develop and evidence^[22] of its use exists from about 1000 BCE (see the Gezer calendar), the language spoken was probably Biblical Hebrew.

Monotheism, the belief in a single all-powerful law-giving God is thought to have evolved among the Hebrew speakers gradually, over the next few centuries, from a number of separate cults,^[23] leading to the first versions of the religion now known as Judaism.



Map of the ancient Near East

Israel and Judah (Iron Age II)



City of David in Jerusalem

The Hebrew Bible describes constant warfare between the Israelites and the Philistines whose capital was Gaza. The Philistines were Greek refugee-settlers who inhabited the southern Levantine coast.^[24] The Bible states that King David founded a dynasty of kings and that his son Solomon built a temple. Both David and Solomon are widely referenced in Jewish, Christian and Islamic texts. Standard Biblical chronology suggests that around 930 BCE, following the death of Solomon, the kingdom split into a southern Kingdom of Judah and a northern Kingdom of Israel. The Bible's Books of Kings state that soon after the split Pharaoh "Shishaq" invaded the country plundering

Jerusalem.^[25] An inscription over a gate at Karnak in Egypt recounts such an invasion by Pharaoh Sheshonq I.^[26]

The archaeological evidence for this period is extremely sparse, leading some scholars to suggest that this section of the Hebrew Bible, which includes texts written two centuries later, exaggerates the importance of David and Solomon.^[27] The earliest references to the "House of David" have been found in two inscriptions, on the Tel Dan Stele and the Mesha Stele; the latter is a Moabite stele, now in the Louvre, which describes an 840 BCE invasion of Moab by Omri, king of Israel. Jehu, son of Omri, is referenced by Assyrian records (now in the British Museum). Modern archaeological findings show that Omri's capital city, Samaria, was large and Finkelstein has suggested that the Biblical account of David and Solomon are an attempt by later Judean rulers to ascribe Israel's successes to their dynasty.

Assyrian invasions

In 854 BCE, according to Assyrian records (the Kurkh Monoliths)^[28] an alliance between Ahab of Israel and Ben Hadad II of Aram Damascus managed to repulse the incursions of the Assyrians, with a victory at the Battle of Qarqar. This is not included in the Bible which describes conflict between Ahab and Ben Hadad.^[29] Around 750 BCE, the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III.^[30] The Philistine kingdom was also destroyed. The Assyrians sent most of the population of the northern Israelite kingdom into exile, thus creating the "Lost Tribes of Israel". The Samaritans claim to be descended from survivors of the Assyrian conquest. An Israelite revolt (724–722 BCE) was crushed after the siege and capture of Samaria by the Assyrian king Sargon II.

Modern scholars believe that refugees from the destruction of Israel moved to Judah, massively expanding Jerusalem and leading to construction of the Siloam Tunnel during the rule of King Hezekiah (ruled 715–686 BCE).^[31] The tunnel could provide water during a siege and its construction is described in the Bible.^[32] A Hebrew plaque left by the construction team still exists.



The Merneptah Stele. While alternative translations exist, the majority of biblical archaeologists translate a set of hieroglyphs as "Israel," representing the first instance of the name in the historical record.



Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

Sargon's son, Sennacherib, tried and failed to conquer Judah, during Hezekiah's reign. Assyrian records say that Sennacherib levelled 46 walled cities and besieged Jerusalem, leaving after receiving extensive tribute. The Bible also refers to tribute,^[33] and suggests that Hezekiah was also aided by Taharqa, king of Kush (Nubia), in repulsing the Assyrians.^[34]

Under King Josiah (ruler from 641 - 619), the book of Deuteronomy was either rediscovered or written. The Book of Joshua and the accounts of the kingship of David and Solomon in the book of Kings are believed to have the same author. The books are known as Deuteronomist and considered to be a key step in the emergence of Monotheism in Judah. They emerged at a time that Assyria was weakened by the emergence of Babylon and may be a committing to text of pre-writing verbal traditions.^[35]

Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods (586–37 BCE)

In 586 BCE King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon conquered Judah. According to the Hebrew Bible, he destroyed Solomon's Temple and exiled the Jews to Babylon. The Phillistines were also driven into exile. The defeat of Judah was recorded by the Babylonians^{[36][37]} (see the Babylonian Chronicles). Babylonian and Biblical sources suggest that the Judean king, Jehoiachin, switched allegiances between the Egyptians and the Babylonians and that invasion was a punishment for allying with Babylon's principal rival, Egypt. The exiled Jews may have been restricted to the elite. Jehoiachin was eventually released by the Babylonians. Tablets which seem to describe his rations were found in the ruins of Babylon (see Jehoiachin's Rations Tablets). According to both the Bible and the Talmud, the Judean royal family (the Davidic line) continued as head of Babylonian Jewry, called the "Rosh Galut" (head of exile). Arab and Jewish sources show that the Rosh Galut continued to exist (in what is now Iraq) for another 1,500 years, ending in the eleventh century.^[38]



The route of the exiles to Babylon



Obverse of Yehud silver coin

In 538 BCE, Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon and took over its empire. Cyrus issued a proclamation granting subjugated nations (including the people of Judah) religious freedom (for the original text see the Cyrus Cylinder). According to the Hebrew Bible 50,000 Judeans, led by Zerubabel, returned to Judah and rebuilt the temple. A second group of 5,000, led by Ezra and Nehemiah, returned to Judah in 456 BCE although non-Jews wrote to Cyrus to try to prevent their return. Modern scholars believe that the final Hebrew versions of the Torah and Books of Kings date from this period, that the returning Israelites adopted an Aramaic script (also known as the Ashuri alphabet), which they brought back from Babylon; this is the current Hebrew script. The Hebrew Calendar closely resembles the Babylonian calendar and probably dates from this period.^[39]

In 333 BCE, the Macedonian ruler Alexander the Great defeated Persia and conquered the region. Sometime thereafter, the first translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, was begun in Alexandria. After Alexander's death, his generals fought over the territory he had conquered. Judah became the frontier between the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic Egypt, eventually becoming part of the Seleucid Empire in 200 BCE at the battle of Panium.

Hasmonean dynasty (140–37 BCE)

In the 2nd century BCE, Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to eradicate Judaism in favour of Hellenistic religion. This provoked the 174–135 BCE Maccabean Revolt led by Judas Maccabeus (whose victory is celebrated in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah). The Books of the Maccabees describe the uprising and the end of Greek rule.

A Jewish party called the Hasideans opposed both Hellenism *and* the revolt, but eventually gave their support to the Maccabees. Modern interpretations see the initial stages of the uprising as a civil war between Hellenised and orthodox forms of Judaism.^{[40][41]}

The Hasmonean dynasty of Jewish priest-kings ruled Judea with the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes as the principal Jewish social movements. As part of the struggle against Hellenistic civilisation, the Pharisee leader Simeon ben Shetach established the first schools based around meeting houses.^[42] This led to Rabbinical Judaism. Justice was administered by the Sanhedrin, which was a Rabbinical assembly and law court whose leader was known as the Nasi. The Nasi's religious authority gradually superseded that of the Temple's high priest, who under the Hasmoneans was the king himself.^[43]

The Hasmoneans continually extended their control over much of the region.^[44] In 125 BCE the Hasmonean ethnarch John Hyrcanus subjugated Edom and forcibly converted its population to Judaism.^[45]

Hyrcanus' son Alexander Jannaeus established good relations with the Roman Republic, however there was growing tension between Pharisees and Sadducees and a conflict over the succession to Jannaeus, in which the warring parties invited foreign intervention on their behalf.

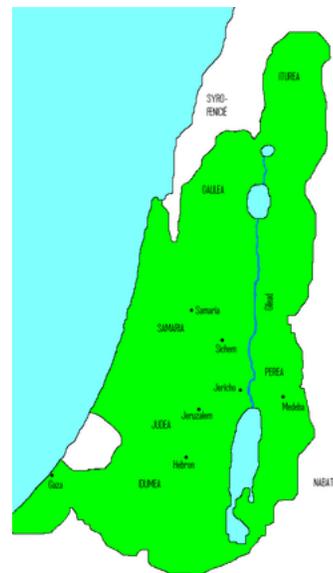
Roman period (64 BCE–4th century CE)

In 64 BCE the Roman general Pompey conquered Syria and intervened in the Hasmonean civil war in Jerusalem. During the siege of Alexandria in 47 BCE, the lives of Julius Caesar and his protege Cleopatra were saved by 3,000 Jewish troops sent by King Hyrcanus II and commanded by Antipater, whose descendants Caesar made kings of Judea.^[46]

Herodian dynasty and Roman province

From 37 BCE to 6 CE, the Herodian dynasty, Jewish-Roman client kings, descended from Antipater, ruled Judea. Herod the Great considerably enlarged the temple (see Herod's Temple), making it one of the largest religious structures in the world. Despite its fame, it was in this period that Rabbinical Judaism, led by Hillel the Elder, began to assume popular prominence over the Temple priesthood. The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was granted special permission not to display an effigy of the emperor, becoming the only religious structure in the Roman Empire that did not do so. Special dispensation was granted for Jewish citizens of the Roman Empire to pay a tax to the temple.

Augustus made Judea a Roman province in 6 CE, deposing the last Jewish king, Herod Archelaus, and appointing a Roman governor. There was a small revolt against Roman taxation led by Judas of Galilee and over the next decades tensions grew between the Greco-Roman and Judean population centered on attempts to place effigies of the Emperor Caligula in Synagogues and in the Jewish temple.^{[47][48]}



Hasmonean kingdom

Jesus was born in the last years of Herod's rule, probably in the Judean city of Bethlehem. Jesus is thought to have been a Galilean Jewish reformer (from Nazareth), and was executed in Jerusalem by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate between 25 and 35 CE. All his key followers, the Twelve Apostles, were Jews including Paul the Apostle (5–67 CE) who took critical steps towards creating a new religion, defining Jesus as the "Son of God". In the year 50 CE, the Council of Jerusalem led by Paul, decided to abandon the Jewish requirement of circumcision and the Torah, creating a form of Judaism highly accessible to non-Jews and with a more universal notion of God. Another Jewish follower, Peter is believed to have become the first Pope.



Portion of the Temple Scroll, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls written by the Essenes

In 64 CE, the Temple High Priest Joshua ben Gamla introduced a religious requirement for Jewish boys to learn to read from the age of six. Over the next few hundred years this requirement became steadily more ingrained in Jewish tradition.^[49]

Jewish–Roman wars

In 66 CE, the Jews of Judea rose in revolt against Rome, naming their new state as "Israel".^[50] The events were described by the Jewish leader and historian Josephus, including the defence of Jotapata, the siege of Jerusalem (69–70 CE) and the desperate last stand at Masada under Eleazar ben Yair (72–73 CE).



Siege of Jerusalem (70 CE)

Josephus estimated that over a million people died in the siege of Jerusalem. The Temple and most of Jerusalem was destroyed. During the Jewish revolt, most Christians, at this time a sub-sect of Judaism, removed themselves from Judea. The rabbinical/Pharisee movement led by Yochanan ben Zakai, who opposed the Sadducee temple priesthood, made peace with Rome and survived. After the war Jews continued to be taxed in the Fiscus Judaicus, which was used to fund a temple to Jupiter. A victory arch erected in Rome can still be seen today.

Tensions and attacks on Jews around the Roman Empire led to a massive Jewish uprising against Rome from 115 to 117. Jews in Libya, Egypt, Cyprus and Mesopotamia fought against Rome. This conflict was accompanied by large-scale massacres of both sides. Cyprus was so severely depopulated that new settlers were imported and Jews banned from living there.^[51]

In 131, the Emperor Hadrian renamed Jerusalem "Aelia Capitolina" and constructed a Temple of Jupiter on the site of the former Jewish temple. Jews were banned from living in Jerusalem itself (a ban that persisted until the Arab conquest), and the Roman province, until then known as Iudaea Province, was renamed Palaestina, no other revolt led to a province being renamed.^[52] The names "Palestine" (in English) and "Filistin" (in Arabic) are derived from this.

From 132 to 136, the Jewish leader Simon Bar Kokhba led another major revolt against the Romans, again renaming the country "Israel"^[53] (see Bar Kochba Revolt coinage). The Bar-Kochba revolt probably caused more trouble for the Romans than the better documented revolt of 70.^[54] Christians refused to participate in the revolt and from this point the Jews regarded Christianity as a separate religion.^[55] The revolt was eventually crushed by Emperor Hadrian himself. During the Bar Kokhba revolt a rabbinical assembly decided which books could be regarded as part of the Hebrew Bible: the Jewish apocrypha and Christian books were excluded.^[56] As a result, the original text of some Hebrew texts, including the Books of Maccabees were lost (Greek translations survived).

A rabbi of this period, Simeon bar Yochai, is regarded as the author of the Zohar, the foundational text for Kabbalistic thought. However, modern scholars believe it was written in Medieval Spain.^[57]

After the 136 CE Jewish defeat

After suppressing the Bar Kochba revolt, the Romans exiled the Jews of Judea, but not of Galilee and permitted a hereditary Rabbinical Patriarch (from the House of Hillel, based in Galilee) to represent the Jews in dealings with the Romans. The most famous of these was Judah haNasi who is credited with compiling the final version of the Mishnah (a massive body of Jewish religious texts interpreting the Bible) and with strengthening the educational demands of Judaism by requiring that illiterate Jews be treated as outcasts. As a result, many illiterate Jews may have converted to Christianity.^[58] Jewish seminaries, such as those at Shefaram and Bet Shearim continued to produce scholars and the best of these became members of the Sanhedrin,^[59] which was located first at Tzippori and later at Tiberias.^[60] Before the Bar-Kochba uprising, an estimated 2/3 of the population of Gallilee and 1/3 of the coastal region were Jewish.^[61] In the Galilee, many synagogues have been found dating from this period. However, economic mismanagement of the Roman economy in the third century led to a collapse of Roman trade and empire, as well as increased taxation and persecution,^[62] which caused most Jews to migrate to the more tolerant Persian Sassanid Empire, where a prosperous Jewish community with extensive seminaries existed in the area of Babylon.

Rome adopts Christianity

Early in the 4th century, the Emperor Constantine made Constantinople the capital of the East Roman Empire and made Christianity the official religion. His mother, Helena made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (326–328) and led the construction of the Church of the Nativity (Bethlehem), the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem) and other key churches that still exist. The name Jerusalem was restored to Aelia Capitolina and it became a Christian city. Jews were still banned from living in Jerusalem, but were allowed to visit, and it is in this period that the surviving Western Wall of the Temple became sacred to Judaism.

In 351–2, another Jewish revolt in the Galilee erupted against a corrupt Roman governor.^[63] In 362, the last pagan Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate, announced plans to rebuild the Jewish Temple. He died while fighting the Persians in 363 and the project was discontinued.

Byzantine period (390–634)

The Roman Empire split in 390 CE and the region became part of the (Christian) East Roman Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire. Byzantine Christianity was dominated by the (Greek) Eastern Orthodox Church whose massive land ownership has extended into the present. In the 5th century, the Western Roman Empire collapsed leading to Christian migration into the Roman province of Palaestina Prima and development of a Christian majority. Jews numbered 10–15% of the population, concentrated largely in the Galilee. Judaism was the only non-Christian religion tolerated, but restrictions on Jews slowly increased to include a ban on building new places of worship, holding public office or owning slaves. In 425, following the death of the last Nasi, Gamliel VI, the Sanhedrin was officially abolished and the title of Nasi banned. Several Samaritan Revolts erupted in this period,^[64] resulting in the decrease of Samaritan community from about a million to a near extinction. Sacred Jewish texts written in Palestine at this time are the Gemara (400), the Jerusalem Talmud (500) and the Passover Haggadah.

In 495 Mar-Zutra II (the Exilarch), set up an independent Jewish city-state in what is now Iraq. It lasted seven years and after its fall, his son Mar-Zutra III moved to Tiberias where he became head of the local religious academy in 520.

The Jewish Menorah, which the Romans took when the temple was destroyed, was reportedly taken to Carthage by the Vandals after the sacking of Rome in 455. According to the Byzantine historian, Procopius, the Byzantine army recovered it in 533 and brought it to Constantinople.^[65]

In 611, Sassanid Persia invaded the Byzantine Empire and, after a long siege, Khosrau II captured Jerusalem in 614, with Jewish help, including possibly the Jewish Himyarite Kingdom in Yemen. Jews briefly governed Jerusalem when the Persians took over. The Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius, promised to restore Jewish rights and received Jewish help in defeating the Persians, but reneged on the agreement after reconquering Palaestina Prima, massacring the Jews in Palestine,^[66] and issuing an edict banning Judaism from the Byzantine Empire. (Egyptian) Coptic Christians took responsibility for this broken pledge and fasted in penance.^[67]

Early Arab period (634–1099)

According to Muslim tradition, in 620 Muhammed was taken on spiritual journey from Mecca to the "farthest mosque", whose location many consider to be the Temple Mount, returning the same night. In 634–636 the Arabs conquered Palaestina Prima and renamed it Jund Filastin, ending the Byzantine ban on Jews living in Jerusalem. Over the next few centuries, Islam replaced Christianity as the dominant religion of the region.

From 636 until the beginning of the Crusades, Jund Filastin was ruled first by Medinah-based Rashidun Caliphs, then by the Damascus-based Umayyad Caliphate and after that the Baghdad-based Abbasid Caliphs. In 691, Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik (685–705) constructed the Dome of the Rock shrine on the Temple Mount. Jews consider it to contain the Foundation Stone (see also Holy of Holies), which is the holiest site in Judaism. A second building, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, was also erected on the Temple Mount in 705.

Between the 7th and 11th centuries, Jewish scribes, called the Masoretes and located in Galilee and Jerusalem, established the Masoretic Text, the final text of the Hebrew Bible.

Crusades and Mongols (1099–1291)

In 1099, the First Crusade took Jerusalem and established a Catholic kingdom, known as the Kingdom of Jerusalem. During the conquest, both Muslims and Jews were indiscriminately massacred or sold into slavery.^[68] The murder of Jews began as the Crusaders travelled across Europe and continued when they reached the Holy Land.^[69] Ashkenazi orthodox Jews still recite a prayer in memory of the death and destruction caused by the Crusades.

Around 1180, Raynald of Châtillon, ruler of Transjordan, caused increasing conflict with the Ayyubid Sultan Saladin (Salah-al-Din), leading to the defeat of the Crusaders in the 1187 Battle of Hattin (above Tiberias). Saladin was able to peacefully take Jerusalem and conquered most of the former Kingdom of Jerusalem. Saladin's court physician was Maimonides, a refugee from persecution in Córdoba, Spain. This was the end of the Golden age of Jewish culture in Spain and Maimonides possessed extensive knowledge of Greek and Arab medicine. His religious writings (in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic) are still studied by Orthodox Jews. Maimonides was buried in Tiberias. A Crusader state centred round Acre survived in weakened form for another century.



The Siege of Jerusalem, 1099, during the First Crusade

From 1260 to 1291 the area became the frontier between Mongol invaders (occasional Crusader allies) and the Mamluks of Egypt. The conflict impoverished the country and severely reduced the population. Sultan Qutuz of Egypt eventually defeated the Mongols in the Battle of Ain Jalut ("Goliath's spring" near Ein Harod), ending the Mongol advances, and his successors eliminated the Crusader states. The last Crusader state, the Kingdom of Acre, fell in 1291, ending the Crusades.

Mamluk period (1291–1517)

Egyptian Mamluk sultan, Baibars (1260–1277), conquered much of the Holy Land, ultimately leading to the end of Crusader rule in 1291. The Mamluks ruled Palestine until 1516, regarding it as part of Syria. In Hebron, Baibars banned Jews from worshipping at the Cave of the Patriarchs (the second-holiest site in Judaism); the ban remained in place until its conquest by Israel 700 years later.^[70]

The Mamluks, continuing the policy of the Ayyubids, made the strategic decision to destroy the coastal area and to bring desolation to many of its cities, from Tyre in the north to Gaza in the south. Ports were destroyed and various materials were dumped to make them inoperable. The goal was to prevent attacks from the sea, given the fear of the return of the crusaders. This had a long-term effect on those areas, which remained sparsely populated for centuries. The activity in that time concentrated more inland.^[71]

The collapse of the Crusades was followed by increased persecution and expulsions of Jews in Europe. Expulsions began in England (1290) and were followed by France (1306).^{[72][73]} In Spain, persecution of the highly integrated and successful Jewish community began, including massacres and forced conversions. During the Black Death, many Jews were murdered after being accused of poisoning wells. The completion of the Christian reconquest of Spain led to expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497. These were the wealthiest and most integrated Jewish communities in Europe. Many Jews converted to Christianity, however many secretly practised Judaism and prejudice against converts (regardless of their sincerity) persisted, leading many former Jews to move to the New World (see History of the Jews in Latin America). Most of the expelled Spanish Jews moved to North Africa, Poland, to the Ottoman Empire and to the region of Bilad a-Sham, which roughly corresponds to the ancient Kingdom of Israel (united monarchy). In Italy, Jews living in the Papal States were required to live in ghettos (see Cum nimis absurdum). The last compulsory Ghetto, in Rome, was abolished in the 1880s.

Ottoman period (1516–1917)

Under the Mamluks, the area was a province of Bilad a-Sham (Syria). It was conquered by Turkish Sultan Selim I in 1516–17, becoming a part of the province of Ottoman Syria for the next four centuries, first as the Damascus Eyalet and later as the Syria Vilayet (following the Tanzimat reorganization of 1864).

Between 1535 and 1538 Suleiman the Magnificent built the current city walls of Jerusalem; Jerusalem had been without walls since the early 13th century. The construction followed the historical outline of the city, but left out some sections which had been within the walls during certain previous time periods, such as the City of David (today part of Silwan) and what is now known as Mount Zion.

Old Yishuv

From the Middle Ages on, there was small scale individual Jewish migration to the Land of Israel, which increased when persecution grew elsewhere. Jewish population was concentrated in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias, known in Jewish tradition as the Four Holy Cities.



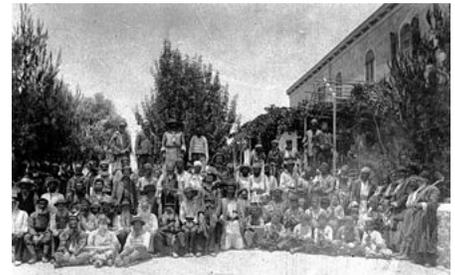
16th-century Safed rabbi Joseph Karo, author of the Jewish law book

In 1558 Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi, a survivor of the inquisition and one of the richest women in Europe, was granted control over Tiberias by Suleiman the Magnificent. She encouraged Jewish refugees to settle in the area which led to Safed becoming a centre for study of the Kabbalah. Her daughter's husband, Joseph Nasi, was made governor of Tiberias and he encouraged Jewish settlement from Italy.^[74]

In 1660, a Druze revolt led to the destruction of Safed and Tiberias.^{[75][75][76]} In 1663 Sabbatai Zevi settled in Jerusalem, and was proclaimed as the Jewish Messiah by Nathan of Gaza. He acquired a large number of followers before going to Istanbul in 1666, where the Sultan forced him to convert to Islam. Many of his followers converted, forming a sect that still exists in Turkey, known as the Dönme. In the late 18th century a local Arab sheikh Zahir al-Umar created a *de facto* independent Emirate in the Galilee. Ottoman attempts to subdue the Sheikh failed, but after Zahir's death the Ottomans restored their rule in the area.

In 1799 Napoleon briefly occupied the country and planned a proclamation inviting Jews to create a state. The proclamation was shelved following his defeat at Acre.^[77] In 1831, Muhammad Ali of Egypt, an Ottoman ruler who left the Empire and tried to modernize Egypt, conquered Ottoman Syria and tried to revive and resettle much of its regions. His conscription policies led to a popular Arab revolt in 1834, resulting in major casualties for the local Arab peasants, and massacres of Christian and Jewish communities by the rebels. Following the revolt, Muhammad Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali, expelled nearly 10,000 of the local peasants to Egypt, while bringing loyal Egyptian peasants and discharged soldiers to settle the coastline of Ottoman Syria. Northern Jordan Valley was settled by his Sudanese troops.

In 1838 there was another revolt by the Druze. In 1839 Moses Montefiore met with Muhammed Pasha in Egypt and signed an agreement to establish 100–200 Jewish villages in the Damascus Eyalet of Ottoman Syria,^[78] but in 1840 the Egyptians withdrew before the deal was implemented, returning the area to Ottoman governorship. In 1844, Jews constituted the largest population group in Jerusalem and by 1890 an absolute majority in the city, but as a whole the Jewish population made up far less than 10% of the country.^{[79][80]} In 1868, the Ottomans banished the Bahá'u'lláh, one of the founders of the Bahá'í Faith, to Acre where he is buried, and the movement subsequently established its global administrative centre in nearby Haifa. In 1874, Ottoman reforms led to the area of Jerusalem gaining special status as the Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem.^[81]



Jewish workers in Kerem Avraham neighbourhood of Jerusalem (c. 1850s)

Birth of Zionism

During the 19th century, Jews in Western Europe were increasingly granted citizenship and equality before the law; however, in Eastern Europe, they faced growing persecution and legal restrictions, including widespread pogroms in which thousands were murdered, raped or lost their property. Half the world's Jews lived in the Russian Empire, where they were severely persecuted and restricted to living in the Pale of Settlement. National groups in the Empire, such as the Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians were agitating for independence and often regarded the Jews as undesirable aliens. The Jews were usually the only non-Christian minority and spoke a distinct language (Yiddish). An independent Jewish national movement first began to emerge in the Russian Empire and the millions of Jews who were fleeing the country (mostly to the USA) carried the seeds of this nationalism wherever they went.

In 1870, an agricultural school, the Mikveh Israel, was founded near Jaffa by the Alliance Israelite Universelle, a French Jewish association. In 1878, "Russian" Jewish emigrants established the village of Petah Tikva, followed by Rishon LeZion in 1882. "Russian" Jews established the Bilu and Hovevei Zion ("Lovers of Zion") movements to assist settlers and these created communities that, unlike the traditional Ashkenazi-Jewish communities, sought to be self-reliant rather than dependent on donations from abroad. Existing Ashkenazi-Jewish communities were concentrated in the Four Holy Cities, extremely poor and lived on donations from Europe. The new migrants created small agricultural settlements. In Jaffa a vibrant commercial community developed in which Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews inter-mingled. Many early migrants left due to difficulty finding work and the early settlements often remained dependent on foreign donations. Despite the difficulties, more settlements arose and the community grew.

The new migration was accompanied by a revival of the Hebrew language and attracted Jews of all kinds; religious, secular, nationalists and left-wing socialists. Socialists aimed to reclaim the land by becoming peasants or workers and forming collectives. In Zionist history, the different waves of Jewish settlement are known as "aliyah". During the First Aliyah, between 1882 and 1903, approximately 35,000 Jews moved to what is now Israel. The first wave coincided with a wave of Jewish migration and Messianism among Yemenite Jews and Bukharan Jews. By 1890, Jews were a majority in Jerusalem, although the country as a whole was populated mainly by Muslim (settled and nomad Bedouins) and Christian Arabs.

In 1896 Theodor Herzl published Der Judenstaat (*The Jewish State*), in which he asserted that the solution to growing antisemitism in Europe (the so-called "Jewish Question") was to establish a Jewish state. In 1897, the Zionist Organisation was founded and the First Zionist Congress proclaimed its aim "to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law."^[82] However, Zionism was regarded with suspicion by the Ottoman rulers and was unable to make major progress.

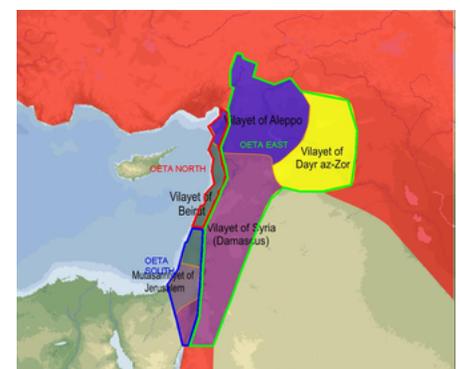
Between 1904 and 1914, around 40,000 Jews settled in the area now known as Israel (the Second Aliyah). In 1908 the Zionist Organisation set up the Palestine Bureau (also known as the "Eretz Israel Office") in Jaffa and began to adopt a systematic Jewish settlement policy. Migrants were mainly from Russia (which then included part of Poland), escaping persecution. The first Kibbutz, Degania, was founded by nine Russian socialists in 1909. In 1909 residents of Jaffa established the first entirely Hebrew-speaking city, Ahuzat Bayit (later renamed Tel Aviv). Hebrew newspapers and books were published, Hebrew schools, Jewish political parties and workers organizations were established.

World War I

During World War I, most Jews supported the Germans because they were fighting the Russians who were regarded as the Jews' main enemy.^[83] In Britain, the government sought Jewish support for the war effort for a variety of reasons including an erroneous antisemitic perception of "Jewish power" over the Ottoman Empire's Young Turks movement,^[84] and a desire to secure American Jewish support for US intervention on Britain's behalf.

There was already sympathy for the aims of Zionism in the British government, including the Prime Minister Lloyd George.^[85] In late 1917, the British Army drove the Turks out of Southern Syria,^[86] and the British foreign minister, Lord Balfour, sent a public letter to Lord Rothschild, a leading member of his party and leader of the Jewish community. The letter subsequently became known as the Balfour Declaration of 1917. It stated that the British Government

"view[ed] with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people". The declaration provided



Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, 1918

the British government with a pretext for claiming and governing the country.^[87] New Middle Eastern boundaries were decided by an agreement between British and French bureaucrats. The agreement gave Britain control over what parties would begin to call "Palestine".

A Jewish Legion composed largely of Zionist volunteers organized by Jabotinsky and Trumpeldor participated in the British invasion. It also participated in the failed Gallipoli Campaign. A Zionist spy network provided the British with details of Ottoman troops.

British Mandate of Palestine (1920–1948)

First years

The British Mandate (in effect, British rule) of Palestine, including the Balfour Declaration, was confirmed by the League of Nations in 1922 and came into effect in 1923. The boundaries of Palestine initially included modern Jordan, which was removed from the territory by Churchill a few years later. Britain signed a treaty with the United States (which did not join the League of Nations) in which the United States endorsed the terms of the Mandate.

Between 1919 and 1923, another 40,000 Jews arrived in Palestine, mainly escaping the post-revolutionary chaos of Russia (Third Aliyah), as over 100,000 Jews were massacred in this period in Ukraine and Russia.^[88] Many of these immigrants became known as "pioneers" (halutzim), experienced or trained in agriculture and capable of establishing self-sustaining economies. The Jezreel Valley and the Hefer Plain marshes were drained and converted to agricultural use. Land was bought by the Jewish National Fund, a Zionist charity that collected money abroad for that purpose. A mainly socialist underground Jewish militia, Haganah ("Defense"), was established to defend outlying Jewish settlements.



The opening ceremony of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem visited by Arthur Balfour, 1 April 1925

The French victory over the Arab Kingdom of Syria and the Balfour Declaration led to the emergence of Palestinian Nationalism and Arab rioting in 1920 and 1921. In response, the British authorities imposed immigration quotas for Jews. Exceptions were made for Jews with over 1,000 pounds in cash (roughly 100,000 pounds at year 2000 rates) or Jewish professionals with over 500 pounds. The Jewish Agency issued the British entry permits and distributed funds donated by Jews abroad.^[89] Between 1924 and 1929, 82,000 more Jews arrived (Fourth Aliyah), fleeing antisemitism in Poland and Hungary, and because the United States Immigration Act of 1924 now kept Jews out. The new arrivals were mainly middle-class families who moved into towns and established small businesses and workshops—although lack of economic opportunities meant that approximately a quarter later left. The first electricity generator was built in Tel Aviv in 1923 under the guidance of Pinhas Rutenberg, a former Commissar of St Petersburg in Russia's pre-Bolshevik Kerensky Government. In 1925 the Jewish Agency established the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Technion (technological university) in Haifa. British authorities introduced the Palestine pound (worth 1000 "Mills") in 1927, replacing the Egyptian pound as the unit

of currency in the Mandate.^[90]

From 1928, the democratically elected Va'ad Leumi (Jewish National Council or JNC) became the main institution of the Palestine Jewish community ("Yishuv") and included non-Zionist Jews. As the Yishuv grew, the JNC adopted more government-type functions, such as education, health care and security. With British permission, the Va'ad raised its own taxes^[91] and ran independent services for the Jewish population.^[92] From 1929 its leadership was elected by Jews from 26 countries.

In 1929 tensions grew over the Kotel (Wailing Wall), a narrow alleyway where Jews were banned from using chairs or any furniture (many of the worshipers were elderly). The Mufti claimed it was Muslim property and that the Jews were seeking control of the Temple Mount. This (and general animosity) led to the August 1929 Palestine riots. The main victims were the ancient Jewish community at Hebron, which came to an end. The riots led to right-wing Zionists establishing their own militia in 1931, the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (National Military Organization, known in Hebrew by its acronym "Etzel").

Zionist political parties provided private education and health care: the General Zionists, the Mizrahi and the Socialist Zionists, each established independent health and education services and operated sports organizations funded by local taxes, donations and fees (the British administration did not invest in public services). During the whole interwar period, the British, appealing to the terms of the Mandate, rejected the principle of majority rule or any other measure that would give the Arab population, who formed the majority of the population, control over Palestinian territory.

Increase of Jewish immigration

In 1933, the Jewish Agency and the Nazis negotiated the Ha'avara Agreement (transfer agreement), under which 50,000 Jews would be transferred to Palestine. The Jews' possessions were confiscated and in return the Nazis allowed the Ha'avara organization to purchase 14 million pounds worth of German goods for export to Palestine (which was used to compensate the immigrants). Although many Jews wanted to leave Nazi Germany, many could not afford the British immigration fees or were afraid to leave as the Nazis prevented Jews from taking money or more than two suitcases. The agreement was controversial and the Labour Zionist leader who negotiated the agreement, Haim Arlosoroff, was assassinated in Tel Aviv in 1933. The assassination was a source of tension between the Zionist left and Zionist right. Arlosoroff had been the boyfriend of Magda Ritschel some years before she married Joseph Goebbels.^[93] There has been speculation that he was assassinated by the Nazis to hide the connection, which only emerged recently but there is no evidence for it.^[94] In Palestine, Jewish immigration (and the Ha'avara goods) helped the economy to flourish. The British used the taxes paid by the Jewish population to build a port and oil refineries at Haifa, and there was an increasing industrialization in the predominantly agricultural Palestinian economy.

Between 1929 and 1938, 250,000 Jews arrived in Palestine (Fifth Aliyah). 174,000 arrived between 1933 and 1936, after which the British increasingly prevented immigration. Many of the migrants were from Germany and included professionals, doctors, lawyers and professors. German architects of the Bauhaus school made Tel-Aviv the world's only city with purely Bauhaus neighbourhoods and Palestine had the highest per-capita percentage of doctors in the world.

Fascist regimes were emerging across Europe and persecution of Jews increased. In many countries, Jews reverted to being non-citizens deprived of civil and economic rights, subject to arbitrary persecution. Significantly antisemitic governments came to power in Poland (the government increasingly boycotted Jews and by 1937 had totally excluded all Jews),^[95] Hungary, Romania and the Nazi created states of Croatia and Slovakia, while Germany annexed Austria and the Czech territories.

Arab revolt and the White Paper

Jewish immigration and Nazi propaganda contributed to the large-scale 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine, a largely nationalist uprising directed at ending British rule. The head of the Jewish Agency, Ben-Gurion, responded to the Arab Revolt with a policy of "Havlagah"—self-restraint and a refusal to be provoked by Arab attacks in order to prevent polarization. The Etzel group broke off from the Haganah in opposition to this policy.

The British responded to the revolt with the Peel Commission (1936–37), a public inquiry that recommended that an exclusively Jewish territory be created in the Galilee and western coast (including the population transfer of 225,000 Arabs); the rest becoming an exclusively Arab area. The two main Jewish leaders, Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-

Gurion, had convinced the Zionist Congress to approve equivocally the Peel recommendations as a basis for more negotiation.^{[96][97][98]} The plan was rejected outright by the Palestinian Arab leadership and they renewed the revolt, which caused the British to appease the Arabs, and to abandon the plan as unworkable.^{[99][100]}

Testifying before the Peel Commission, Weizmann said "There are in Europe 6,000,000 people ... for whom the world is divided into places where they cannot live and places where they cannot enter." In 1938, the US called an international conference to address the question of the vast numbers of Jews trying to escape Europe. Britain made its attendance contingent on Palestine being kept out of the discussion.^[101] No Jewish representatives were invited. The Nazis proposed their own solution: that the Jews of Europe be shipped to Madagascar (the Madagascar Plan).

With millions of Jews trying to leave Europe and every country in the world closed to Jewish migration, the British decided to close Palestine. The White Paper of 1939, recommended that an independent Palestine, governed jointly by Arabs and Jews, be established within 10 years. The White Paper agreed to allow 75,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine over the period 1940–44, after which migration would require Arab approval. Both the Arab and Jewish leadership rejected the White Paper. In March 1940 the British High Commissioner for Palestine issued an edict banning Jews from purchasing land in 95% of Palestine. Jews now resorted to illegal immigration: (Aliyah Bet or "Ha'apalah"), often organized by the Mossad Le'aliyah Bet and the Irgun. Very few Jews managed to escape Europe between 1939 and 1945. Those caught by the British were mostly sent to Mauritius.



Jewish Settlement Police members watching the settlement Neshet during 1936–1939 Arab revolt

World War II and the Holocaust



Jewish Brigade headquarters under both Union Flag and Jewish flag

During the Second World War, the Jewish Agency worked to establish a Jewish army that would fight alongside the British forces. Churchill supported the plan but British Military and government opposition led to its rejection. The British demanded that the number of Jewish recruits match the number of Arab recruits,^[102] but few Arabs would fight for Britain, and the Palestinian leader, the Mufti of Jerusalem, allied with Nazi Germany.

In May 1941, the Palmach was established to defend the Yishuv against the planned Axis invasion through North Africa. The British refusal to provide arms to the Jews, even when Rommel's forces were advancing through Egypt in June 1942 (intent on occupying Palestine) and the 1939 White Paper, led to the emergence of a Zionist leadership in Palestine that believed conflict with

Britain was inevitable.^[103] Despite this, the Jewish Agency called on Palestine's Jewish youth to volunteer for the British Army (both men and women). 30,000 Palestinian Jews^[104] and 6,000 Palestinian Arabs enlisted in the British armed forces during the war. In June 1944 the British agreed to create a Jewish Brigade that would fight in Italy.

Approximately 1.5 million Jews around the world served in every branch of the allied armies, mainly in the Soviet and US armies. 200,000 Jews died serving in the Soviet army alone.^[105] Many of these war veterans later volunteered to fight for Israel or were active in its support.

A small group (about 200 activists), dedicated to resisting the British administration in Palestine, broke away from the Etzel (which advocated support for Britain during the war) and formed the "Lehi" (Stern Gang), led by Avraham Stern. In 1943, the USSR released the Revisionist Zionist leader Menachem Begin from the Gulag and he went to Palestine, taking command of the Etzel organization with a policy of increased conflict against the British. At about the same time Yitzhak Shamir escaped from the camp in Eritrea where the British were holding Lehi activists without trial, taking command of the Lehi (Stern Gang).

Jews in the Middle East were also affected by the war. Most of North Africa came under Nazi control and many Jews were used as slaves.^[106] The 1941 pro-Axis coup in Iraq was accompanied by massacres of Jews. The Jewish Agency put together plans for a last stand in the event of Rommel invading Palestine (the Nazis planned to exterminate Palestine's Jews).^[107]

Between 1939 and 1945, the Nazis, aided by local forces, led systematic efforts to kill every person of Jewish extraction in Europe (The Holocaust), causing the deaths of approximately 6 million Jews. A quarter of those killed were children. The Polish and German Jewish communities, which played an important role in defining the pre-1945 Jewish world, mostly ceased to exist. In the United States and Palestine, Jews of European origin became disconnected from their families and roots. Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, who had been a minority, became a much more significant factor in the Jewish world. Those Jews who survived in central Europe, were displaced persons (refugees); an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, established to examine the Palestine issue, surveyed their ambitions and found that over 95% wanted to migrate to Palestine.^{[108][109][110]}

In the Zionist movement the moderate Pro-British (and British citizen) Weizmann, whose son died flying in the RAF, was undermined by Britain's anti-Zionist policies.^[111] Leadership of the movement passed to the Jewish Agency in Palestine, now led by the anti-British Socialist-Zionist party (Mapai) and led by David Ben-Gurion. In the diaspora, US Jews now dominated the Zionist movement.

Illegal Jewish immigration and insurgency

The British Empire was severely weakened by the war. In the Middle East, the war had made Britain conscious of its dependence on Arab oil. British firms controlled Iraqi oil and Britain ruled Kuwait, Bahrain and the Emirates. Shortly after VE Day, the Labour Party won the general election in Britain. Although Labour Party conferences had for years called for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, the Labour government now decided to maintain the 1939 White Paper policies.^[112]

Illegal migration (Aliyah Bet) became the main form of Jewish entry into Palestine. Across Europe Bricha ("flight"), an organization of former partisans and ghetto fighters, smuggled Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe to Mediterranean ports, where small boats tried to breach the British blockade of Palestine. Meanwhile, Jews from Arab countries began moving into Palestine overland. Despite British efforts to curb immigration, during the 14 years of the Aliyah Bet, over 110,000 Jews entered Palestine. By the end of World War II, the Jewish population of Palestine had increased to 33% of the total population.^[113]

In an effort to win independence, Zionists now waged a guerrilla war against the British. The main underground Jewish militia, the Haganah, formed an alliance called the Jewish Resistance Movement with the Etzel and Stern Gang to fight the British. In June 1946, following instances of Jewish sabotage, the British launched Operation Agatha, arresting 2700 Jews, including the leadership of the Jewish Agency, whose headquarters were raided. Those arrested were held without trial.

In Poland, the Kielce Pogrom (July 1946) led to a wave of Holocaust survivors fleeing Europe for Palestine. Between 1945 and 1948, 100,000–120,000 Jews left Poland. Their departure was largely organized by Zionist activists in Poland under the umbrella of the semi-clandestine organization Berihah ("Flight").^[114] Berihah was also responsible for the organized emigration of Jews from Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, totalling 250,000 (including Poland) Holocaust survivors. The British imprisoned the Jews trying to enter Palestine in the Atlit detainee camp and Cyprus internment camps. Those held were mainly Holocaust survivors, including large numbers of children and orphans. In response to Cypriot fears that the Jews would never leave (since they lacked a state or documentation) and because the 75,000 quota established by the 1939 White Paper had never been filled, the British allowed the refugees to enter Palestine at a rate of 750 per month.



Buchenwald survivors arrive in Haifa to be arrested by the British, 15 July 1945

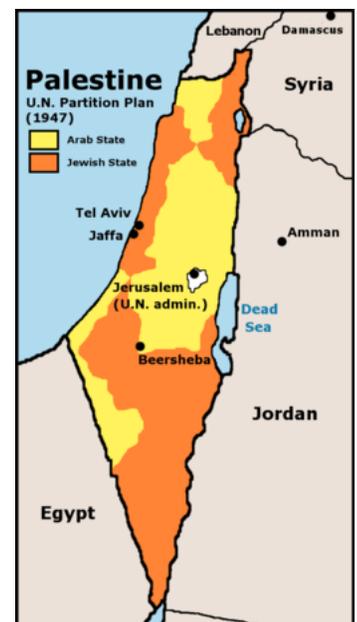
The unified Jewish resistance movement broke up in July 1946, after Etzel bombed the British Military Headquarters in the King David Hotel killing 91 people. In the days following the bombing, Tel Aviv was placed under curfew and over 120,000 Jews, nearly 20% of the Jewish population of Palestine, were questioned by the police. In the US, Congress criticized British handling of the situation and delayed loans that were vital to British post-war recovery. By 1947 the Labour Government was ready to refer the Palestine problem to the newly created United Nations.

United Nations Partition Plan

On 2 April 1947, the United Kingdom requested that the question of Palestine be handled by the General Assembly.^[115] The General Assembly created a committee, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), to report on "the question of Palestine".^[116] In July 1947 the UNSCOP visited Palestine and met with Jewish and Zionist delegations. The Arab Higher Committee boycotted the meetings. During the visit the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin ordered an illegal immigrant ship, the Exodus 1947, to be sent back to Europe. The migrants on the ship were forcibly removed by British troops at Hamburg.

The principal non-Zionist Orthodox Jewish (or Haredi) party, Agudat Israel, recommended to UNSCOP that a Jewish state be set up after reaching a religious status quo agreement with Ben-Gurion regarding the future Jewish state. The agreement granted an exemption from military service to a quota of yeshiva (religious seminary) students and to all orthodox women, made the Sabbath the national weekend, guaranteed Kosher food in government institutions and allowed Orthodox Jews to maintain a separate education system.^[117]

The majority report of UNSCOP proposed^[118] "an independent Arab State, an independent Jewish State, and the City of Jerusalem", the last to be under "an International Trusteeship System".^[119] On 29 November 1947, in Resolution 181 (II), the General Assembly adopted the majority report of UNSCOP, but with slight modifications.^[120] The Plan also called for the British to allow "substantial" Jewish migration by 1 February 1948.^[121]



United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, 1947

Neither Britain nor the UN Security Council took any action to implement the resolution and Britain continued detaining Jews attempting to enter Palestine. Concerned that partition would severely damage Anglo-Arab relations, Britain denied UN representatives access to Palestine during the period between the adoption of Resolution 181 (II) and the termination of the British Mandate.^[122] The British withdrawal was finally completed in May 1948. However, Britain continued to hold Jews of "fighting age" and their families on Cyprus until March 1949.^[123]

Civil War



Supply convoy on its way to besieged Jerusalem, April 1948

The General Assembly's vote caused joy in the Jewish community and discontent among the Arab community. Violence broke out between the sides, escalating into civil war. From January 1948, operations became increasingly militarized, with the intervention of a number of Arab Liberation Army regiments inside Palestine, each active in a variety of distinct sectors around the different coastal towns. They consolidated their presence in Galilee and Samaria.^[124] Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni came from Egypt with several hundred men of the Army of the Holy War. Having recruited a few thousand volunteers, he organized the blockade of the 100,000 Jewish residents of Jerusalem.^[125] The Yishuv tried to supply the city using convoys of up to 100 armoured vehicles, but largely failed. By March, almost all Haganah's armoured vehicles had been destroyed, the blockade was in full operation, and hundreds of Haganah members who had tried to bring supplies into the city were killed.^[126]

Up to 100,000 Arabs, from the urban upper and middle classes in Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem, or Jewish-dominated areas, evacuated abroad or to Arab centres eastwards.^[127] This situation caused the US to withdraw their support for the Partition plan, thus encouraging the Arab League to believe that the Palestinian Arabs, reinforced by the Arab Liberation Army, could put an end to the plan for partition. The British, on the other hand, decided on 7 February 1948 to support the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine by Transjordan.^[128]

David Ben-Gurion reorganized Haganah and made conscription obligatory. Every Jewish man and woman in the country had to receive military training. Thanks to funds raised by Golda Meir from sympathisers in the United States, and Stalin's decision to support the Zionist cause, the Jewish representatives of Palestine were able to purchase important arms in Eastern Europe.

Ben-Gurion gave Yigael Yadin the responsibility to plan for the announced intervention of the Arab states. The result of his analysis was Plan Dalet, in which Haganah passed from the defensive to the offensive. The plan sought to establish Jewish territorial continuity by conquering mixed zones. Tiberias, Haifa, Safed, Beisan, Jaffa and Acre fell, resulting in the flight of more than 250,000 Palestinian Arabs.^[129] The situation pushed the leaders of the neighbouring Arab states to intervene.

On 14 May 1948, on the day the last British forces left from Haifa, the Jewish People's Council gathered at the Tel Aviv Museum and proclaimed the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.^[130]



David Ben-Gurion proclaiming the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948

State of Israel (1948–present)

War of Independence

Immediately following the declaration of the new state, both superpower leaders, US President Harry S. Truman and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, recognized the new state. The Arab League members Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq refused to accept the UN partition plan and proclaimed the right of self-determination for the Arabs across the whole of Palestine. The Arab states marched their forces into what had, until the previous day, been the British Mandate for Palestine, starting the first Arab–Israeli War. The Arab states had heavy military equipment at their disposal and were initially on the offensive (the Jewish forces were not a state before 15 May and could not buy heavy arms). On 29 May 1948, the British initiated United Nations Security Council Resolution 50 declaring an arms embargo on the region. Czechoslovakia violated the resolution, supplying the Jewish state with critical military hardware to match the (mainly British) heavy equipment and planes already owned by the invading Arab states. On 11 June, a month-long UN truce was put into effect.



Avraham Adan raising the Ink Flag marking the end of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War

Following independence, the Haganah became the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The Palmach, Etzel and Lehi were required to cease independent operations and join the IDF. During the ceasefire, Etzel attempted to bring in a private arms shipment aboard a ship called "Altalena". When they refused to hand the arms to the government, Ben-Gurion ordered that the ship be sunk. Several Etzel members were killed in the fighting.

Large numbers of Jewish immigrants, many of them World War II veterans and Holocaust survivors, now began arriving in the new state of Israel, and many joined the IDF.^[131]

After an initial loss of territory by the Jewish state and its occupation by the Arab armies, from July the tide gradually turned in the Israelis' favour and they pushed the Arab armies out and conquered some of the territory that had been included in the proposed Arab state. At the end of November, tenuous local ceasefires were arranged between the Israelis, Syrians and Lebanese. On 1 December King Abdullah announced the union of Transjordan with Arab Palestine west of the Jordan; only Britain recognized the annexation.

Armistice Agreements

Israel signed armistices with Egypt (24 February), Lebanon (23 March), Jordan (3 April) and Syria (20 July). No actual peace agreements were signed. With permanent ceasefire coming into effect, Israel's new borders, later known as the Green Line, were established. These borders were not recognized by the Arab states as international boundaries.^[132] The IDF had overrun Galilee, Jezreel Valley, West Jerusalem, the coastal plain and the Negev. The Syrians remained in control of a strip of territory along the Sea of Galilee originally allocated to the Jewish state, the Lebanese occupied a tiny area at Rosh Hanikra, and the Egyptians retained the Gaza strip and still had some forces surrounded inside Israeli territory. Jordanian forces remained in the West Bank, where the British had stationed them before the war. Jordan annexed the areas it occupied while Egypt kept Gaza as an occupied zone.

Following the ceasefire declaration, Britain released over 2,000 Jewish detainees it was still holding in Cyprus and recognized the state of Israel. On 11 May 1949, Israel was admitted as a member of the United Nations.^[133] Out of an Israeli population of 650,000, some 6,000 men and women were killed in the fighting, including 4,000 soldiers in the IDF. According to United Nations figures, 726,000 Palestinians had fled or were evicted by the Israelis between 1947 and 1949.^[134] Except in Jordan, the Palestinian refugees were settled in large refugee camps in poor, overcrowded conditions.

In December 1949, the UN (in response to a British proposal) established an agency (UNRWA) to provide aid to the Palestinian refugees. It became the largest single UN agency and is the only UN agency that serves a single people.

1948–1955: Ben-Gurion I; Sharett

A 120-seat parliament, the Knesset, met first in Tel Aviv then moved to Jerusalem after the 1949 ceasefire. In January 1949, Israel held its first elections. The Socialist-Zionist parties Mapai and Mapam won the most seats (46 and 19 respectively). Mapai's leader, David Ben-Gurion, was appointed Prime Minister, he formed a coalition which did not include Mapam who were Stalinist and loyal to the USSR (another Stalinist party, non-Zionist Maki won 4 seats). The Knesset elected Chaim Weizmann as the first (largely ceremonial) President of Israel. Hebrew and Arabic were made the official languages of the new state. All governments have been coalitions—no party has ever won a majority in the Knesset. From 1948 until 1977 all governments were led by Mapai and the Alignment, predecessors of the Labour Party. In those years Labour Zionists, initially led by David Ben-Gurion, dominated Israeli politics and the economy was run on primarily socialist lines.

Within three years (1948 to 1951), immigration doubled the Jewish population of Israel and left an indelible imprint on Israeli society.^{[135][136]} Overall, 700,000 Jews settled in Israel during this period.^[137] Some 300,000 arrived from Asian and North African nations as part of the Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries.^[138] Among them, the largest group (over 100,000) was from Iraq. The rest of the immigrants were from Europe, including more than 270,000 who came from Eastern Europe,^[139] mainly Romania and Poland (over 100,000 each). Nearly all the Jewish immigrants could be described as refugees, however only 136,000 who immigrated to Israel from Central Europe, had international certification because they belonged to the 250,000 Jews registered by the allies as displaced after World War II and living in displaced persons camps in Germany, Austria and Italy.^[140]

In 1950 the Knesset passed the Law of Return, which granted to all Jews and those of Jewish ancestry, and their spouses, the right to settle in Israel and gain citizenship. That year, 50,000 Yemenite Jews (99%) were secretly flown to Israel. In 1951 Iraqi Jews were granted temporary permission to leave the country and 120,000 (over 90%) opted to move to Israel. Jews also fled from Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. By the late sixties, about 500,000 Jews had left Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Over the course of twenty years, some 850,000 Jews from Arab countries (99%) relocated to Israel (680,000), France and the Americas.^{[141][142]} The land and property left behind by the Jews (much of it in Arab city centres) is still a matter of some dispute. Today there are about 9,000 Jews living in Arab states, of whom 75% live in Morocco and 15% in Tunisia.

Between 1948 and 1958, the population of Israel rose from 800,000 to two million. During this period, food, clothes and furniture had to be rationed in what became known as the Austerity Period (*Tkufat haTsena*). Immigrants were mostly refugees with no money or possessions and many were housed in temporary camps known as ma'abarot. By 1952, over 200,000 immigrants were living in tents or prefabricated shacks built by the government. Israel received financial aid from private donations from outside the country (mainly the United States).^[143] The pressure on the new state's finances led Ben-Gurion to sign a reparations agreement with West Germany. During the Knesset debate some 5,000 demonstrators gathered and riot police had to cordon the building.^[144] Israel received several billion marks and in return agreed to open diplomatic relations with Germany.

At the end of 1953, Ben-Gurion retired to Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev.



1949 Green Line



Menachem Begin addressing a mass demonstration in Tel Aviv against negotiations with Germany in 1952

In 1949, education was made free and compulsory for all citizens until the age of 14. The state now funded the party-affiliated Zionist education system and a new body created by the Haredi Agudat Israel party. A separate body was created to provide education for the remaining Palestinian-Arab population. The major political parties now competed for immigrants to join their education systems. The government banned the existing educational bodies from the transit camps and tried to mandate a unitary secular socialist education^[145] under the control of "camp managers" who also had to provide work, food and housing for the immigrants. There were attempts to force orthodox Yemenite children to adopt a secular life style by teachers, including many instances of Yemenite children having their side-curls cut by teachers. This led to the first Israeli public inquiry (the Fromkin Inquiry),^[146] the collapse of the coalition, and an election in 1951, with little change in the

results. In 1953 the party-affiliated education system was scrapped and replaced by a secular state education system and a state-run Modern Orthodox system. Agudat Israel were allowed to maintain their existing school system.

In its early years Israel sought to maintain a non-aligned position between the super-powers. However, in 1952, an antisemitic public trial was staged in Moscow in which a group of Jewish doctors were accused of trying to poison Stalin (the Doctors' plot), followed by a similar trial in Czechoslovakia (Slánský trial). This, and the failure of Israel to be included in the Bandung Conference (of non-aligned states), effectively ended Israel's pursuit of non-alignment. On 19 May 1950, Egypt announced that the Suez Canal was closed to Israeli ships and commerce. In 1952 a military coup in Egypt brought Abdel Nasser to power. The United States pursued close relations with the new Arab states, particularly the Nasser-led Egyptian Free Officers Movement and Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. Israel's solution to diplomatic isolation was to establish good relations with newly independent states in Africa^[147] and with France, which was engaged in the Algerian War.

In the January 1955 elections Mapai won 40 seats and the Labour Party 10, Moshe Sharett became prime minister of Israel at the head of a left-wing coalition. Between 1953 and 1956, there were intermittent clashes along all of Israel's borders as Arab terrorism and breaches of the ceasefire resulted in Israeli counter-raids. Palestinian fedayeen attacks, often organized and sponsored by the Egyptians, were made from (Egyptian occupied) Gaza. Fedayeen attacks led to a growing cycle of violence as Israel launched reprisal attacks against Gaza.^[148] In 1954 the Uzi submachine gun first entered use by the Israel Defense Forces. In 1955 the Egyptian government began recruiting former Nazi rocket scientists for a missile program.^{[149][150]}

Archaeologist and General Yigael Yadin purchased the Dead Sea Scrolls on behalf of the State of Israel. The entire first batch to be discovered were now owned by Israel and housed in the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum.

Sharett's government was brought down by the Lavon Affair, a crude plan to disrupt US–Egyptian relations, involving Israeli agents planting bombs at American sites in Egypt.^[151] The plan failed when eleven agents were arrested. Defense Minister Lavon was blamed despite his denial of responsibility. The Lavon affair led to Sharett's resignation and Ben-Gurion returned to the post of prime minister.

1955–1963: Ben-Gurion II

In 1956, the increasingly pro-Soviet President Nasser of Egypt, announced the nationalization of the (French and British owned) Suez Canal, which was Egypt's main source of foreign currency. Egypt also blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba preventing Israeli access to the Red Sea. Israel made a secret agreement with the French at Sèvres to co-ordinate military operations against Egypt. Britain and France had already begun secret preparations for military action. It has been alleged that the

French also agreed to build a nuclear plant for the Israelis and that by 1968 this was able to produce nuclear weapons. Britain and France arranged for Israel to give them a pretext for seizing the Suez Canal. Israel was to attack Egypt, and Britain and France would then call on both sides to withdraw. When, as expected, the Egyptians refused, Anglo-French forces would invade to take control of the Canal.

Israeli forces, commanded by General Moshe Dayan, attacked Egypt on 29 October 1956. On 30 October Britain and France made their pre-arranged call for both sides to stop fighting and withdraw from the Canal area, and for them to be allowed to take up positions at key points on the Canal. Egypt refused and the allies commenced air strikes on 31 October aimed at neutralizing the Egyptian air force. By 5 November the Israelis had overrun the Sinai. The Anglo-French invasion began that day. There was uproar in the UN, with the United States and USSR for once in agreement in denouncing the actions of Israel, Britain and France. A demand for a ceasefire was reluctantly accepted on 7 November.



Israeli paratroopers dig in near the Mitla Pass, 31 October 1956

At Egypt's request, the UN sent an Emergency Force (UNEF), consisting of 6,000 peacekeeping troops from 10 nations to supervise the ceasefire. This was the first ever UN peacekeeping operation. From 15 November the UN troops marked out a zone across the Sinai to separate the Israeli and Egyptian forces. Upon receiving US guarantees of Israeli access to the Suez Canal, freedom of access out of the Gulf of Aqaba and Egyptian action to stop Palestinian raids from Gaza, the Israelis withdrew to the Negev.^[152] In practice the Suez Canal remained closed to Israeli shipping. The conflict marked the end of West-European dominance in the Middle East.

Nasser emerged as the victor in the conflict, having won the political battle, however the Israeli military learnt that it did not need British or French support in order to conquer Sinai and that it could conquer the Sinai peninsula in a few days. The Israeli political leadership learnt that Israel had a limited time frame within which to operate militarily after which international political pressure would restrict Israel's freedom of action.

In 1956, two modern-orthodox (and religious-zionist) parties, Mizrachi and Hapoel HaMizrachi, joined to form the National Religious Party. The party was a component of every Israeli coalition until 1992, usually running the Ministry of Education. Mapai was once again victorious in the 1959 elections, increasing its number of seats to 47, Labour had 7. Ben-Gurion remained Prime Minister.

In 1959, there were renewed skirmishes along Israel's borders that continued throughout the early 1960s. The Arab League continued to maintain an economic boycott and there was a dispute over water rights in the River Jordan basin. With Soviet backing, the Arab states, particularly Egypt, were continuing to build up their forces. Israel's main military hardware supplier was France.

Rudolph Kastner, a minor political functionary, was accused of collaborating with the Nazis and sued his accuser. Kastner lost the trial and was assassinated two years later. In 1958 the Supreme Court exonerated him. In May 1960 Adolf Eichmann, one of the chief administrators of the Nazi Holocaust, was located in Argentina by the Mossad, which later kidnapped him to Israel. In 1961 he was put on trial, and after several months found guilty and sentenced to death. He was hanged in 1962 and is the only person ever sentenced to death by an Israeli court. Testimonies by Holocaust survivors at the trial and the extensive publicity that surrounded it has led the trial to be considered a turning point in public awareness of the Holocaust.^[153]

In 1961 a Herut no-confidence motion over the Lavon affair led to Ben-Gurion's resignation. Ben-Gurion declared that he would only accept office if Lavon was fired from the position of the head of Histadrut, Israel's labour union organization. His demands were accepted and Mapai won the 1961 election (42 seats keeping Ben-Gurion as PM) with a slight reduction

in its share of the seats. Menachem Begin's Herut party and the Liberals came next with 17 seats each. In 1962 the Mossad began assassinating German rocket scientists working in Egypt after one of them reported the missile program was designed to carry chemical warheads. This action was condemned by Ben-Gurion and led to the Mossad director, Isser Harel, resignation.^[154] In 1963 Ben-Gurion quit again over the Lavon scandal. His attempts to make his party Mapai support him over the issue failed. Levi Eshkol became leader of Mapai and the new prime minister.



US newsreel on the trial of Adolf Eichmann

1963–1969: Eshkol

In 1963 Yigael Yadin began excavating Masada. In 1964, Egypt, Jordan and Syria developed a unified military command. Israel completed work on a national water carrier, a huge engineering project designed to transfer Israel's allocation of the Jordan river's waters towards the south of the country in realization of Ben-Gurion's dream of mass Jewish settlement of the Negev desert. The Arabs responded by trying to divert the headwaters of the Jordan, leading to growing conflict between Israel and Syria.^[155]

In 1964, Israeli Rabbinical authorities accepted that the Bene Israel of India were indeed Jewish and most of the remaining Indian Jews migrated to Israel. The 2,000-strong Jewish community of Cochin had already migrated in 1954. Ben-Gurion quit Mapai to form the new party Rafi, he was joined by Shimon Peres and Moshe Dayan. Begin's Herut party joined with the Liberals to form Gahal. Mapai and Labour united for the 1965 elections, winning 45 seats and maintaining Levi Eshkol as Prime Minister. Ben-Gurion's Rafi party received 10 seats, Gahal got 26 seats becoming the second largest party.

Until 1966, Israel's principal arms supplier was France, however in 1966, following the withdrawal from Algeria, Charles de Gaulle announced France would cease supplying Israel with arms (and refused to refund money paid for 50 warplanes).^[156] On 5 February 1966, the United States announced that it was taking over the former French and West German obligations, to maintain military "stabilization" in the Middle East. Included in the military hardware would be over 200 M48 tanks. In May of that year the US also agreed to provide A-4 Skyhawk tactical aircraft to Israel.^{[157][158][159]} In 1966 security restrictions placed on Arab-Israelis were eased and efforts made to integrate them into Israeli life.^[160]

In 1966, Black and white TV broadcasts began. On 15 May 1967, the first public performance of Naomi Shemer's classic song "Jerusalem of Gold" took place and over the next few weeks it dominated the Israeli airwaves. Two days later Syria, Egypt and Jordan amassed troops along the Israeli borders, and Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Nasser demanded that the UNEF leave Sinai, threatening escalation to a full war. Egyptian radio broadcasts talked of a coming genocide.^{[161][162][163]} On 26 May Nasser declared, "*The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel*".^[164] Israel considered the Straits of Tiran closure a Casus belli. Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq signed defence pacts and Iraqi troops began deploying to Jordan, Syria and Egypt.^[165] Algeria also announced that it would send troops to Egypt. Between 1963 and 1967 Egyptian troops had tested chemical weapons on Yemenite civilians as part of an Egyptian intervention in support of rebels.^[166]

Israel responded by calling up its civilian reserves, bringing much of the Israeli economy to a halt. The Israelis set up a national unity coalition, including for the first time Menachem Begin's party, Herut, in a coalition. During a national radio broadcast, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol stammered, causing widespread fear in Israel. To calm public concern Moshe Dayan (Chief of Staff during the Sinai war) was appointed Defence Minister.



Gen. Uzi Narkiss, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, Chief of staff Yitzhak Rabin and Gen. Rehavam Ze'evi in the Old City of Jerusalem, 7 June 1967

On the morning before Dayan was sworn in, 5 June 1967, the Israeli air force launched pre-emptive attacks destroying first the Egyptian air force, and then later the same day destroying the air forces of Jordan and Syria. Israel then defeated (almost successively) Egypt, Jordan and Syria. By 11 June the Arab forces were routed and all parties had accepted the cease-fire called for by UN Security Council Resolutions 235 and 236. Israel gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the formerly Jordanian-controlled West Bank of the Jordan River. East Jerusalem was arguably^[167] annexed by Israel. Residents were given permanent residency status and the option of applying for Israeli citizenship. The annexation was not recognized internationally (the Jordanian annexation of 1948 was also unrecognized).

Other areas occupied remained under military rule (Israeli civil law did not apply to them) pending a final settlement. The Golan was also annexed in 1981.

On 22 November 1967, the Security Council adopted Resolution 242, the "land for peace" formula, which called for the establishment of a just and lasting peace based on Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 in return for the end of all states of belligerency, respect for the sovereignty of all states in the area, and the right to live in peace within secure, recognized boundaries. The resolution was accepted by both sides, though with different interpretations, and has been the basis of all subsequent peace negotiations. After 1967 the US began supplying Israel with aircraft and the Soviet block (except Romania) broke off relations with Israel. Antisemitic purges led to the final migration of the last Polish Jews to Israel.

For the first time since the end of the British Mandate, Jews could visit the Old City of Jerusalem and pray at the Western Wall (the holiest site in modern Judaism), to which they had been denied access by the Jordanians in contravention of the 1949 Armistice agreement. The four-meter-wide public alley beside the Wall was expanded into a massive plaza and worshippers were allowed to sit, or use other furniture, for the first time in centuries. In Hebron, Jews gained access to the Cave of the Patriarchs (the second most holy site in Judaism) for the first time since the 14th century (previously Jews were only allowed to pray at the entrance).^[168] A third Jewish holy site, Rachel's Tomb, in Bethlehem, also became accessible. Sinai oil fields made Israel self-sufficient in energy.

In 1968 Moshe Levinger led a group of Religious Zionists who created the first Jewish settlement, a town near Hebron called Kiryat Arba. There were no other religious settlements until after 1974. Ben-Gurion's Rafi party merged with the Labour-Mapai alliance. Ben-Gurion remained outside as an independent. In 1968, compulsory education was extended until the age of 16 for all citizens (it had been 14) and the government embarked on an extensive program of integration in education. In the major cities children from mainly Sephardi/Mizrahi neighbourhoods were bused to newly established middle schools in better areas. The system remained in place until after 2000.

In March 1968, Israeli forces attacked the Palestinian militia, Fatah, at its base in the Jordanian town of Karameh. The attack was in response to land mines placed on Israeli roads. The Israelis retreated after destroying the camp, however the Israelis sustained unexpectedly high casualties and the attack was not viewed as a success. Despite heavy casualties, the Palestinians claimed victory, while Fatah and the PLO (of which it formed part) became famous across the Arab world. In early 1969, fighting broke out between Egypt and Israel along the Suez Canal. In retaliation for repeated Egyptian shelling of Israeli positions along the Suez Canal, Israeli planes made deep strikes into Egypt in the 1969–1970 "War of Attrition".

1969–1974: Meir

In early 1969, Levi Eshkol died in office of a heart attack and Golda Meir became Prime Minister with the largest percentage of the vote ever won by an Israeli party, winning 56 of the 120 seats after the 1969 election. Meir was the first female prime minister of Israel and the first woman to have headed a Middle Eastern state in modern times.^[169] Gahal remained on 26 seats, and was the second largest party.

In December 1969, Israeli naval commandos took five missile boats during the night from Cherbourg Harbour in France. Israel had paid for the boats but the French had refused to supply them. In July 1970 the Israelis shot down five Soviet fighters that were aiding the Egyptians in the course of the War of Attrition. Following this, the US worked to calm the situation and in August 1970 a cease fire was agreed.

In September 1970 King Hussein of Jordan drove the Palestine Liberation Organization out of his country. On September 18, 1970, Syrian tanks invaded Jordan, intending to aid the PLO. At the request of the US, Israel moved troops to the border and threatened Syria, causing the Syrians to withdraw. The centre of PLO activity then shifted to Lebanon, where the 1969 Cairo agreement gave the Palestinians autonomy within the south of the country.

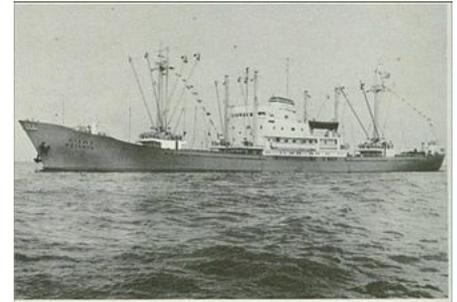
The area controlled by the PLO became known by the international press and locals as "Fatahland" and contributed to the 1975–1990 Lebanese Civil War. The event also led to Hafez al-Assad taking power in Syria. Egyptian President Nasser died immediately after and was succeeded by Anwar Sadat.

Increased Soviet antisemitism and enthusiasm generated by the 1967 victory led to a wave of Soviet Jews applying to emigrate to Israel. Those who left could only take two suitcases. Most Jews were refused exit visas and persecuted by the authorities. Some were arrested and sent to Gulag camps, becoming known as Prisoners of Zion. During 1971, violent demonstrations by the Israeli Black Panthers, made the Israeli public aware of resentment among Mizrahi Jews at ongoing discrimination and social gaps.^[170] In 1972 the US Jewish Mafia leader, Meyer Lansky, who had taken refuge in Israel, was deported to the United States.

At the 1972 Munich Olympics, two members of the Israeli team were killed, and nine members taken hostage by Palestinian terrorists. A botched German rescue attempt led to the death of the rest along with five of the eight hijackers. The three surviving Palestinians were released by the West German authorities eight weeks later without charge, in exchange for the hostages of hijacked Lufthansa Flight 615.^[171] The Israeli government responded with a bombing, an assassination campaign against the organizers of the massacre and a raid on the PLO headquarters in Lebanon (led by future Prime Minister, Ehud Barak).

In 1972 the new Egyptian President Anwar Sadat expelled the Soviet advisers from Egypt. This and frequent invasion exercises by Egypt and Syria led to Israeli complacency about the threat from these countries. In addition the desire not to be held responsible for initiating conflict and an election campaign highlighting security, led to an Israeli failure to mobilize, despite receiving warnings of an impending attack.^[172]

The Yom Kippur War (also known as the October War) began on 6 October 1973 (the Jewish Day of Atonement), the holiest day in the Jewish calendar and a day when adult Jews are required to fast. The Syrian and Egyptian armies launched a well-planned surprise attack against the unprepared Israeli Defense Forces. For the first few days there was a great deal of uncertainty about Israel's capacity to repel the invaders. Both the Soviets and the Americans (at the orders of Richard Nixon) rushed arms to their allies. The Syrians were repulsed by the tiny remnant of the Israeli tank force on the Golan and, although the Egyptians captured a strip of territory in Sinai, Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal, trapping the Egyptian Third Army in Sinai and were 100 kilometres from Cairo. The war cost Israel over 2,000 dead, resulted in a



MV *Netanya*, one of the ships assigned to support boats in the Cherbourg Project



143rd Division crossing the Suez Canal in the direction of Cairo during the Yom Kippur War, 15 October 1973

heavy arms bill (for both sides) and made Israelis more aware of their vulnerability. It also led to heightened superpower tension. Following the war, both Israelis and Egyptians showed greater willingness to negotiate. On 18 January 1974, extensive diplomacy by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger led to a Disengagement of Forces agreement with the Egyptian government and on 31 May with the Syrian government.

The war led the Saudi government to initiate the 1973 oil crisis, an oil embargo in conjunction with OPEC, against countries trading with Israel. Severe shortages led to massive increases in the price of oil, and as a result, many countries broke off relations with Israel or downgraded relations, and Israel was banned from participation in the Asian Games and other Asian sporting events.

State funding was introduced for elected parties. The new system made parties independent of wealthy donors and gave Knesset members more power over party funding, however it also made them less dependent on existing party structures and able to take their funding elsewhere.^[173] Prior to the December 1973 elections, Gahal and a number of right-wing parties united to form the Likud (led by Begin). In the December 1973 elections, Labour won 51 seats, leaving Golda Meir as Prime Minister. The Likud won 39 seats.

In May 1974, Palestinians attacked a school in Ma'alot, holding 102 children hostage. Twenty-two children were killed. In November 1974 the PLO was granted observer status at the UN and Yasser Arafat addressed the General Assembly. Later that year the Agranat Commission, appointed to assess responsibility for Israel's lack of preparedness for the war, exonerated the government of responsibility, and held the Chief of Staff and head of military intelligence responsible. Despite the report, public anger at the Government led to Golda Meir's resignation.

1974–1977: Rabin I

Following Meir's resignation, Yitzhak Rabin (Chief of Staff during the Six Day War) became prime minister. Modern Orthodox Jews (Religious Zionist followers of the teachings of Rabbi Kook), formed the Gush Emunim movement, and began an organized drive to settle the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In November 1975 the United Nations General Assembly, under the guidance of Austrian Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, adopted Resolution 3379, which asserted Zionism to be a form of racism. The General Assembly rescinded this resolution in December 1991 with Resolution 46/86. In March 1976 there was a massive strike by Israeli-Arabs in protest at a government plan to expropriate land in the Galilee.

In July 1976, an Air France plane carrying 260 people was hijacked by Palestinian and German terrorists and flown to Uganda, then ruled by Idi Amin Dada. There, the Germans separated the Jewish passengers from the non-Jewish passengers, releasing the non-Jews. The hijackers threatened to kill the remaining, 100-odd Jewish passengers (and the French crew who had refused to leave). Despite the distances involved, Rabin ordered a daring rescue operation in which the kidnapped Jews were freed.^[174] UN Secretary General Waldheim described the raid as "a serious violation of the national sovereignty of a United Nations member state" (meaning Uganda).^{[175][176]} Waldheim was a former Nazi and suspected war criminal, with a record of offending Jewish sensibilities.^{[177][178]}

In 1976, the ongoing Lebanese Civil War led Israel to allow South Lebanese to cross the border and work in Israel. In January 1977, French authorities arrested Abu Daoud, the planner of the Munich massacre, releasing him a few days later.^[179] In March 1977 Anatoly Sharansky, a prominent Refusenik and spokesman for the Moscow Helsinki Group, was sentenced to 13 years' hard labour.

Rabin resigned on April 1977 after it emerged that his wife maintained a dollar account in the United States (illegal at the time), which had been opened while Rabin was Israeli ambassador. The incident became known as the Dollar Account affair. Shimon Peres informally replaced him as prime minister, leading the Alignment in the subsequent elections.

1977–1983: Begin

In a surprise result, the Likud led by Menachem Begin won 43 seats in the 1977 elections (Labour got 32 seats). This was the first time in Israeli history that the government was not led by the left. A key reason for the victory was anger among Mizrahi Jews at discrimination, which was to play an important role in Israeli politics for many years. Talented small town Mizrahi social activists, unable to advance in the Labour party, were readily embraced by Begin. Moroccan-born David Levy and Iranian-born Moshe Katzav were part of a group who won Mizrahi support for Begin. Many Labour voters voted for the Democratic Movement for Change (15 seats) in protest at high-profile corruption cases. The party joined in coalition with Begin and disappeared at the next election.

In addition to starting a process of healing the Mizrahi–Ashkenazi divide, Begin's government included Ultra-Orthodox Jews and was instrumental in healing the Zionist–Ultra-Orthodox rift, however it did so at the cost of expanding the exemption from military service to all Haredi Jewish students of military age. This led to creation of a huge class of unemployed Haredi Jews (the exemption was conditional on attendance of a religious seminary, so they kept studying until they were too old for military service). By remaining students, they were a massive burden on the state, while also failing to participate in the military burden.

Begin's liberalization of the economy led to hyper-inflation (around 150% inflation) but enabled Israel to begin receiving US financial aid. Begin actively supported Gush Emunim's efforts to settle the West Bank and Jewish settlements in the occupied territories received government support, thus laying the grounds for intense conflict with the Palestinian population of the occupied territories.

In November 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat broke 30 years of hostility with Israel by visiting Jerusalem at the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Sadat's two-day visit included a speech before the Knesset and was a turning point in the history of the conflict. The Egyptian leader created a new psychological climate in the Middle East in which peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours seemed possible. Sadat recognized Israel's right to exist and established the basis for direct negotiations between Egypt and Israel. Following Sadat's visit, 350 Yom Kippur War veterans organized the Peace Now movement to encourage Israeli governments to make peace with the Arabs.

In March 1978, eleven armed Lebanese Palestinians reached Israel in boats and hijacked a bus carrying families on a day outing, killing 38 people, including 13 children. The attackers opposed the Egyptian–Israeli peace process. Three days later, Israeli forces crossed into Lebanon beginning Operation Litani. After passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 425, calling for Israeli withdrawal and the creation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peace-keeping force, Israel withdrew its troops.

In September 1978, US President Jimmy Carter invited President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin to meet with him at Camp David, and on 11 September they agreed on a framework for peace between Israel and Egypt, and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It set out broad principles to guide negotiations between Israel and the Arab states. It also established guidelines for a West Bank–Gaza transitional regime of full autonomy for the Palestinians residing in these territories, and for a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. The treaty was signed 26 March 1979 by Begin and Sadat, with President Carter signing as witness. Under the treaty, Israel returned the Sinai peninsula to Egypt in April 1982. The final piece of territory to be repatriated was Taba, adjacent to Eilat, returned in 1989. The Arab League reacted to the peace treaty by suspending Egypt from the organization and moving its headquarters from Cairo to Tunis. Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by Islamic fundamentalist members of the Egyptian army who opposed peace with Israel. Following



Menachem Begin, Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat celebrating the signing of the Camp David Accords

the agreement Israel and Egypt became the two largest recipients of US military and financial aid^[180] (Iraq and Afghanistan have now overtaken them).

In December 1978 the Israeli Merkava battle tank entered use with the IDF. In 1979, over 40,000 Iranian Jews migrated to Israel, escaping the Islamic Revolution there. On 30 June 1981, the Israeli air force destroyed the Osirak nuclear reactor that France was building for Iraq. Three weeks later, Begin won yet again, in the 1981 elections (48 seats Likud, 47 Labour). Ariel Sharon was made defence minister. The new government annexed the Golan Heights and banned the national airline from flying on Shabbat.^[181] By the 1980s a diverse set of high-tech industries had developed in Israel.

In the decades following the 1948 war, Israel's border with Lebanon was quiet compared to its borders with other neighbours. But the 1969 Cairo agreement gave the PLO a free hand to attack Israel from South Lebanon. The area was governed by the PLO independently of the Lebanese Government and became known as "Fatahland" (Fatah was the largest faction in the PLO). Palestinian irregulars constantly shelled the Israeli north, especially the town of Kiryat Shmona, which was a Likud stronghold inhabited primarily by Jews who had fled the Arab world. Lack of control over Palestinian areas was an important factor in causing civil war in Lebanon.

In June 1982, the attempted assassination of Shlomo Argov, the ambassador to Britain, was used as a pretext for an Israeli invasion aiming to drive the PLO out of the southern half of Lebanon. Sharon agreed with Chief of Staff Raphael Eitan to expand the invasion deep into Lebanon even though the cabinet had only authorized a 40 kilometre deep invasion.^[182] The invasion became known as the 1982 Lebanon War and the Israeli army occupied Beirut, the only time an Arab capital has been occupied by Israel. Some of the Shia and Christian population of South Lebanon welcomed the Israelis, as PLO forces had maltreated them, but Lebanese resentment of Israeli occupation grew over time and the Shia became gradually radicalized under Iranian guidance.^[183] Constant casualties among Israeli soldiers and Lebanese civilians led to growing opposition to the war in Israel.

In August 1982, the PLO withdrew its forces from Lebanon (moving to Tunisia). Israel helped engineer the election of a new Lebanese president, Bashir Gemayel, who agreed to recognize Israel and sign a peace treaty. Gemayal was assassinated before an agreement could be signed, and one day later Phalangist Christian forces led by Elie Hobeika entered two Palestinian refugee camps and massacred the occupants. The massacres led to the biggest demonstration ever in Israel against the war, with as many as 400,000 people (almost 10% of the population) gathering in Tel Aviv. In 1983, an Israeli public inquiry found that Israel's defence minister, Sharon, was indirectly but personally responsible for the massacres.^[184] It also recommended that he never again be allowed to hold the post (it did not forbid him from being Prime Minister). In 1983, the May 17 Agreement was signed between Israel and Lebanon, paving the way for an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory through a few stages. Israel continued to operate against the PLO until its eventual departure in 1985, and kept a small force stationed in Southern Lebanon in support of the South Lebanon Army until May 2000.

1983–1992: Shamir I; Peres I; Shamir II

In September 1983, Begin resigned and was succeeded by Yitzhak Shamir as prime minister. The 1984 election was inconclusive, and led to a power sharing agreement between Shimon Peres of the Alignment (44 seats) and Shamir of Likud (41 seats). Peres was prime minister from 1984 to 1986 and Shamir from 1986 to 1988. In 1984, continual discrimination against Sephardi Ultra-Orthodox Jews by the Ashkenazi Ultra-Orthodox establishment led political activist Aryeh Deri to leave the Agudat Israel party and join former chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef in forming Shas, a new party aimed

at the non-Ashkenazi Ultra-Orthodox vote. The party won 4 seats in the first election it contested and over the next twenty years was the third largest party in the Knesset. Shas established a nationwide network of free Sephardi Orthodox schools. In 1984, during a severe famine in Ethiopia, 8,000 Ethiopian Jews were secretly transported to Israel. In 1986 Natan Sharansky, a famous Russian human rights activist and Zionist refusenik (denied an exit visa), was released from the Gulag in return for two Soviet spies.

In June 1985, Israel withdrew most of its troops from Lebanon, leaving a residual Israeli force and an Israeli-supported militia in southern Lebanon as a "security zone" and buffer against attacks on its northern territory. Since then, IDF fought for many years against the Shia organization Hezbollah, which became a growing threat to Israel. By July 1985, Israel's inflation, buttressed by complex index linking of salaries, had reached 480% per annum and was the highest in the world. Peres introduced emergency control of prices and cut government expenditure successfully bringing inflation under control. The currency (known as the old Israeli shekel) was replaced and renamed the Israeli new shekel at a rate of 1,000 old shkalim = 1 new shekel. In October 1985, Israel responded to a Palestinian terrorist attack in Cyprus by bombing the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Growing Israeli settlement and continuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, led to the first Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in 1987, which lasted until the Madrid Conference of 1991, despite Israeli attempts to suppress it. Human rights abuses by Israeli troops led a group of Israelis to form B'Tselem, an organization devoted to improving awareness and compliance with human rights requirements in Israel.

In August 1987, the Israeli government cancelled the IAI Lavi project, an attempt to develop an independent Israeli fighter aircraft. The Israelis found themselves unable to sustain the huge development costs, and faced US opposition to a project that threatened US influence in Israel and US global military ascendancy. In September 1988, Israel launched an Ofeq reconnaissance satellite into orbit, using a Shavit rocket, thus becoming one of only eight countries possessing a capacity to independently launch satellites into space (two more have since developed this ability). The Alignment and Likud remained neck and neck in the 1988 elections (39:40 seats). Shamir successfully formed a national unity coalition with the Labour Alignment. In March 1990, Alignment leader Shimon Peres engineered a defeat of the government in a non-confidence vote and then tried to form a new government. He failed and Shamir became prime minister at the head of a right-wing coalition.

In 1990, the Soviet Union finally permitted free emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. Prior to this, Jews trying to leave the USSR faced persecution; those who succeeded arrived as refugees. Over the next few years some one million Soviet citizens migrated to Israel. Although there was concern that some of the new immigrants had only a very tenuous connection to Judaism, and many were accompanied by non-Jewish relatives, this massive wave of migration slowly transformed Israel, bringing large numbers of highly educated Soviet Jews and creating a powerful Russian culture in Israel.

In August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, triggering the Gulf War between Iraq and a large allied force, led by the United States. Iraq attacked Israel with 39 Scud missiles. Israel did not retaliate at request of the US, fearing that if Israel responded against Iraq, other Arab nations might desert the allied coalition. Israel provided gas masks for both the Palestinian population and Israeli citizens, while Netherlands and the United States deployed Patriot defence batteries in Israel as protection against the Scuds. In May 1991, during a 36-hour period, 15,000 Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) were secretly airlifted to Israel. The coalition's victory in the Gulf War opened new possibilities for regional peace, and in October 1991 the US President, George H.W. Bush, and Soviet Union Premier, Mikhail Gorbachev, jointly convened a



Patriot missiles launched to intercept an Iraqi Scud over Tel Aviv during the Gulf War

historic meeting in Madrid of Israeli, Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, and Palestinian leaders. Shamir opposed the idea but agreed in return for loan guarantees to help with absorption of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. His participation in the conference led to the collapse of his (right-wing) coalition.

1992–1996: Rabin II; Peres II

In the 1992 elections, the Labour Party, led by Yitzhak Rabin, won a significant victory (44 seats) promising to pursue peace while promoting Rabin as a "tough general" and pledging not to deal with the PLO in any way. The pro-peace Zionist party Meretz won 12 seats, and the Arab and communist parties a further 5, meaning that parties supporting a peace treaty had a full (albeit small) majority in the Knesset. Later that year, the Israeli electoral system was changed to allow for direct election of the prime minister. It was hoped this would reduce the power of small parties (mainly the religious parties) to extract concessions in return for coalition agreements. The new system had the opposite effect; voters could split their vote for prime minister from their (interest based) party vote, and as a result larger parties won fewer votes and smaller parties becoming more attractive to voters. It thus increased the power of the smaller parties. By the 2006 election the system was abandoned.

On 25 July 1993, Israel carried out a week-long military operation in Lebanon to attack Hezbollah positions. On 13 September 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo Accords (a Declaration of Principles)^[185] on the South Lawn of the White House. The principles established objectives relating to a transfer of authority from Israel to an interim Palestinian Authority, as a prelude to a final treaty establishing a Palestinian state, in exchange for mutual recognition. The DOP established May 1999 as the date by which a permanent status agreement for the West Bank and Gaza Strip would take effect. In February 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a follower of the Kach party, killed 29 Palestinians and wounded 125 at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which became known as the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre. Kach had been barred from participation in the 1992 elections (on the grounds that the movement was racist). It was subsequently made illegal.

Israel and the PLO signed the Gaza–Jericho Agreement in May 1994, and the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities in August, which began the process of transferring authority from Israel to the Palestinians. On 25 July 1994, Jordan and Israel signed the Washington Declaration, which formally ended the state of war that had existed between them since 1948 and on 26 October the Israel–Jordan Treaty of Peace, witnessed by US President Bill Clinton.^{[186][187]}

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat signed the Israeli–Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on 28 September 1995 in Washington. The agreement was witnessed by President Bill Clinton on behalf of the United States and by Russia, Egypt, Norway and the European Union, and incorporates and supersedes the previous agreements, marking the conclusion of the first stage of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. The agreement allowed the PLO leadership to relocate to the occupied territories and granted autonomy to the Palestinians with talks to follow regarding final status. In return the Palestinians promised to abstain from use of terror and changed the Palestinian National Covenant, which had called for the expulsion of all Jews who migrated after 1917 and the elimination of Israel.^[188]

The agreement was opposed by Hamas and other Palestinian factions, which launched suicide bomber attacks at Israel. Rabin had a barrier constructed around Gaza to prevent attacks. The growing separation between Israel and the "Palestinian Territories" led to a labour shortage in Israel, mainly in the construction industry. Israeli firms began



Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, and Yasser Arafat during the Oslo Accords signing ceremony at the White House on 13 September 1993

importing labourers from the Philippines, Thailand, China and Romania; some of these labourers stayed on without visas. In addition, a growing number of Africans began illegally migrating to Israel. On 4 November 1995, a far-right-wing religious Zionist opponent of the Oslo Accords, assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In February 1996 Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, called early elections. In April 1996, Israel launched an operation in southern Lebanon as a result of Hezbollah's Katyusha rocket attacks on Israeli population centres along the border.

1996–2001: Netanyahu I; Barak

The May 1996 elections were the first featuring direct election of the prime minister and resulted in a narrow election victory for Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu. A spate of suicide bombings reinforced the Likud position for security. Hamas claimed responsibility for most of the bombings. Despite his stated differences with the Oslo Accords, Prime Minister Netanyahu continued their implementation, but his prime ministership saw a marked slow-down in the Peace Process. Netanyahu also pledged to gradually reduce US aid to Israel.^[189]

In September 1996, a Palestinian riot broke out against the creation of an exit in the Western Wall tunnel. Over the subsequent few weeks, around 80 people were killed as a result.^{[190][191]} In January 1997 Netanyahu signed the Hebron Protocol with the Palestinian Authority, resulting in the redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron and the turnover of civilian authority in much of the area to the Palestinian Authority.

In the election of July 1999, Ehud Barak of the Labour Party became Prime Minister. His party was the largest in the Knesset with 26 seats. In September 1999 the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that the use of torture in interrogation of Palestinian prisoners was illegal.^[192] On 21 March 2000, Pope John Paul II arrived in Israel for a historic visit.

On 25 May 2000, Israel unilaterally withdrew its remaining forces from the "security zone" in southern Lebanon. Several thousand members of the South Lebanon Army (and their families) left with the Israelis. The UN Secretary-General concluded^[193] that, as of 16 June 2000, Israel had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 425. Lebanon claims that Israel continues to occupy Lebanese territory called "Sheba'a Farms" (however this area was governed by Syria until 1967 when Israel took control).^[194] The Sheba'a Farms provided Hezbollah with a ruse to maintain warfare with Israel.^[195] The Lebanese government, in contravention of the UN Security Council resolution, did not assert sovereignty in the area, which came under Hezbollah control. In the Fall of 2000, talks were held at Camp David to reach a final agreement on the Israel/Palestine conflict. Ehud Barak offered to meet most of the Palestinian teams requests for territory and political concessions, including Arab parts of east Jerusalem; however, Arafat abandoned the talks without making a counterproposal.^[196]

Following its withdrawal from South Lebanon, Israel became a member of the Western European and Others Group at the United Nations. Prior to this Israel was the only nation at the UN which was not a member of any group (The Arab states would not allow it to join the Asia group), which meant it could not be a member of the Security Council or appoint anyone to the International Court and other key UN roles. Since December 2013 it has been a permanent member of the group.^[197]

In July 2000, Aryeh Deri was sentenced to 3 years in prison for bribe taking. Deri is regarded as the mastermind behind the rise of Shas and was a government minister at the age of 24. Political manipulation meant the investigation lasted for years. Deri subsequently sued a Police Officer who alleged that he was linked to the traffic-accident death of a witness, who was run over in New York by a driver who had once been in the employ of an associate of Deri.^[198]

On 28 September 2000, Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the Al-Aqsa compound, or Temple Mount, the following day the Palestinians launched the al-Aqsa Intifada. David Samuels and Khaled Abu Toameh have stated that the uprising was planned much earlier.^{[199][200]} In October 2000, Palestinians destroyed Joseph's Tomb, a Jewish shrine in

Nablus.

The Arrow missile, a missile designed to destroy ballistic missiles, including Scud missiles, was first deployed by Israel. In 2001, with the Peace Process increasingly in disarray, Ehud Barak called a special election for Prime Minister. Barak hoped a victory would give him renewed authority in negotiations with the Palestinians. Instead opposition leader Ariel Sharon was elected PM. After this election, the system of directly electing the Premier was abandoned.

2001–2006: Sharon

The failure of the peace process, increased Palestinian terror and occasional attacks by Hezbollah from Lebanon, led much of the Israeli public and political leadership to lose confidence in the Palestinian Authority as a peace partner. Most felt that many Palestinians viewed the peace treaty with Israel as a temporary measure only.^[201] Many Israelis were thus anxious to disengage from the Palestinians. In response to a wave of suicide bomb attacks, culminating in the "Passover massacre" (see List of Israeli civilian casualties in the Second Intifada), Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield in March 2002, and Sharon began the construction of a barrier around the West Bank. Around the same time, the Israeli town of Sderot and other Israeli communities near Gaza became subject to constant shelling and mortar bomb attacks from Gaza.

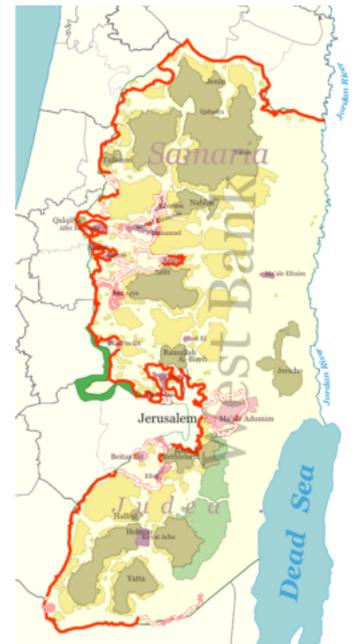
Thousands of Jews from Latin America began arriving in Israel due to economic crises in their countries of origin. In January 2003 separate elections were held for the Knesset. Likud won the most seats (27). An anti-religion party, Shinui, led by media pundit Tommy Lapid, won 15 seats on a secularist platform, making it the third largest party (ahead of orthodox Shas). Internal fighting led to Shinui's demise at the next election. In 2004, the Black Hebrews were granted permanent residency in Israel. The group had begun migrating to Israel 25 years earlier from the United States, but had not been recognized as Jews by the state and hence not granted citizenship under Israel's Law of Return. They had settled in Israel without official status. From 2004 onwards, they received citizen's rights.

The Sharon government embarked on an extensive program of construction of desalinization plants that freed Israel of the fear of drought. Some of the Israeli desalinization plants are the largest of their kind in the world.^[202]

In May 2004, Israel launched Operation Rainbow in southern Gaza to create a safer environment for the IDF soldiers along the Philadelphi Route. On September 30, 2004, Israel carried out Operation Days of Penitence in northern Gaza to destroy the launching sites of Palestinian rockets which were used to attack Israeli towns. In 2005, all Jewish settlers were evacuated from Gaza (some forcibly) and their homes demolished. Disengagement from the Gaza Strip was completed on 12 September 2005. Military disengagement from the northern West Bank was completed ten days later.

In 2005 Sharon left the Likud and formed a new party called Kadima, which accepted that the peace process would lead to creation of a Palestinian state. He was joined by many leading figures from both Likud and Labour.

Hamas won the Palestinian legislative election, 2006, the first and only genuinely free Palestinian elections. Hamas' leaders rejected all agreements signed with Israel, refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, refused to abandon terror, and occasionally claimed the Holocaust was a Jewish conspiracy. The withdrawal and Hamas victory left the status of Gaza



The Israeli West Bank barrier route built (red), under construction (pink) and proposed (white), as of June 2011

unclear, Israel claimed it was no longer an occupying power but continued to control air and sea access to Gaza although it did not exercise sovereignty on the ground. Egypt insisted that it was still occupied and refused to open border crossings with Gaza, although it was free to do so.^[203]

On April 2006 Ariel Sharon was incapacitated by a severe haemorrhagic stroke and Ehud Olmert became Prime Minister.^[204]

2006–2009: Olmert

Ehud Olmert was elected Prime Minister after his party, Kadima, won the most seats (29) in the Israeli legislative election, 2006. In 2005 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was officially elected president of Iran; since then, Iranian policy towards Israel has grown more confrontational. Israeli analysts believe Ahmadinejad has worked to undermine the peace process with arms supplies and aid to Hezbollah in South Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza,^[205] and is developing nuclear weapons, possibly for use against Israel.^[206] Iranian support for Hezbollah and its nuclear arms program are in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1747. Iran also encourages Holocaust denial. Following the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah had mounted periodic attacks on Israel, which did not lead to Israeli retaliation. Similarly, the withdrawal from Gaza led to incessant shelling of towns around the Gaza area with only minimal Israeli response. The failure to react led to criticism from the Israeli right and undermined the government.

On 14 March 2006, Israel carried out an operation in the Palestinian Authority prison of Jericho in order to capture Ahmad Sa'adat and several Palestinian Arab prisoners located there who assassinated Israeli politician Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001. The operation was conducted as a result of the expressed intentions of the newly elected Hamas government to release these prisoners. On 25 June 2006, a Hamas force crossed the border from Gaza and attacked a tank, capturing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, sparking clashes in Gaza.^[207]



Nahal Brigade soldiers returning after the 2006 Lebanon War

On 12 July, Hezbollah attacked Israel from Lebanon, shelled Israeli towns and attacked a border patrol, taking two dead or badly wounded Israeli soldiers. These incidents led Israel to initiate the Second Lebanon War, which lasted through August 2006. Israeli forces entered some villages in Southern Lebanon, while the air force attacked targets all across the country. Israel only made limited ground gains until the launch of Operation Changing Direction 11, which lasted for 3 days with disputed results. Shortly before a UN ceasefire came into effect, Israeli troops captured Wadi Saluki. The war concluded with Hezbollah evacuating its forces from Southern Lebanon, while the IDF remained until its positions could be handed over to the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL.

In 2007 education was made compulsory until the age of 18 for all citizens (it had been 16). Refugees from the genocide in Darfur, mostly Muslim, arrived in Israel illegally, with some given Asylum.^{[208][209]} Illegal immigrants arrived mainly from Africa in addition to foreign workers overstaying their visas. The numbers of such migrants are not known, and estimates vary between 30,000 and over 100,000.

An American billionaire casino owner, Sheldon Adelson, set up a free newspaper Israel Hayom with the express intention of reducing the influence of the dominant (centre-left) newspaper Yediot Ahronot and causing a right-ward shift in Israeli politics by supporting Netanyahu.^[210]

In June 2007, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in the course of the Battle of Gaza,^[211] seizing government institutions and replacing Fatah and other government officials with its own.^[212] Following the takeover, Egypt and Israel imposed a partial blockade, on the grounds that Fatah had fled and was no longer providing security on the Palestinian side, and to prevent arms smuggling by terrorist groups. On 6 September 2007, the Israeli Air Force destroyed a nuclear reactor in Syria. On 28 February 2008, Israel launched a military campaign in Gaza in response to the constant firing of Qassam rockets by Hamas militants. On July 16, 2008, Hezbollah swapped the bodies of Israeli soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, kidnapped in 2006, in exchange for the Lebanese terrorist Samir Kuntar, four Hezbollah prisoners, and the bodies of 199 Palestinian Arab and Lebanese fighters.^[213]

Olmert came under investigation for corruption and this led him to announce on 30 July 2008, that he would be stepping down as Prime Minister following election of a new leader of the Kadima party in September 2008. Tzipi Livni won the election, but was unable to form a coalition and Olmert remained in office until the general election. Israel carried out Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009 in response to rocket attacks from Hamas militants,^[214] leading to a decrease of Palestinian rocket attacks.^[215]

2009–present: Netanyahu II

In the 2009 legislative election Likud won 27 seats and Kadima 28; however, the right-wing camp won a majority of seats, and President Shimon Peres called on Netanyahu to form the government. Russian immigrant-dominated Yisrael Beiteinu came third with 15 seats, and Labour was reduced to fourth place with 13 seats. In 2009, Israeli billionaire Yitzhak Tshuva announced the discovery of huge natural gas reserves off the coast of Israel.^[216]

On 31 May 2010, an international incident broke out in the Mediterranean Sea when foreign activists trying to break the maritime blockade over Gaza, clashed with Israeli troops. During the struggle, nine Turkish activists were killed. In late September 2010 took place direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians without success. As a defensive countermeasure to the rocket threat against Israel's civilian population, at the end of March 2011 Israel began to operate the advanced mobile air defence system "Iron Dome"^[217] in the southern region of Israel and along the border with the Gaza Strip.

On 14 July 2011, the largest social protest in the history of Israel began in which hundreds of thousands of protesters from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds in Israel protested against the continuing rise in the cost of living (particularly housing) and the deterioration of public services in the country (such as health and education). The peak of the demonstrations took place on 3 September 2011, in which about 400,000 people demonstrated across the country.



Protest in Tel Aviv on 6 August 2011

In October 2011, a deal was reached between Israel and Hamas, by which the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was released in exchange for 1,027 Palestinians and Arab-Israeli prisoners.^{[218][219]} In March 2012, Secretary-general of the Popular Resistance Committees, Zuhir al-Qaisi, a senior PRC member and two additional Palestinian militants were assassinated during a targeted killing carried out by Israeli forces in Gaza.^{[220][221]} The Palestinian armed factions in the Gaza Strip, led by the Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees, fired a massive amount of rockets towards southern Israel in retaliation, sparking five days of clashes along the Gaza border.

In May 2012, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reached an agreement with the Head of Opposition Shaul Mofaz for Kadima to join the government, thus cancelling the early election supposed to be held in September.^[222] However, in July, the Kadima party left Netanyahu's government due to a dispute concerning military conscription for ultra-Orthodox Jews

in Israel.^[223]

In June 2012, Israel transferred the bodies of 91 Palestinian suicide bombers and other militants as part of what Mark Regev, spokesman for Netanyahu, described as a "humanitarian gesture" to PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas to help revive the peace talks, and reinstate direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.^[224] On 21 October 2012, United States and Israel began their biggest joint air and missile defence exercise, known as Austere Challenge 12, involving around 3,500 US troops in the region along with 1,000 IDF personnel, expected to last three weeks.^[225] Germany and Britain also participated.^[226] In response to over a hundred rocket attacks on southern Israeli cities, Israel began an operation in Gaza on 14 November 2012, with the targeted killing of Ahmed Jabari, chief of Hamas military wing, and airstrikes against twenty underground sites housing long-range missile launchers capable of striking Tel Aviv. In January 2013, construction of the barrier on the Israeli-Egyptian border was completed in its main section.^[227]

Benjamin Netanyahu was elected Prime Minister again after the Likud Yisrael Beiteinu alliance won the most seats (31) in the 2013 legislative election and formed a coalition government with secular centrist Yesh Atid party (19), rightist The Jewish Home (12) and Livni's Hatnuah (6), excluding Haredi parties. Labour came in third with 15 seats.^[228] In July 2013, as a "good will gesture" to restart peace talks with the Palestinian Authority, Israel agreed to release 104 Palestinian prisoners, most of whom had been in jail since before the 1993 Oslo Accords,^[229] including militants who had killed Israeli civilians.^{[229][230]} In April 2014, Israel suspended peace talks after Hamas and Fatah agreed to form a unity government.^[231]

Following an escalation of rocket attacks by Hamas, Israel started an operation in the Gaza Strip on 8 July 2014,^[232] which included a ground incursion aimed at destroying the cross-border tunnels.^[233] Differences over the budget and a "Jewish state" bill triggered early elections in December 2014.^[234] After the 2015 Israeli elections, Netanyahu renewed his mandate as Prime Minister when Likud obtained 30 seats and formed a right-wing coalition government with Kulanu (10), The Jewish Home (8), and Orthodox parties Shas (7) and United Torah Judaism (6), the bare minimum of seats required to form a coalition. The Zionist Union alliance came second with 24 seats.^[235]

On 6 December 2017, President Donald Trump of the United States formally announced United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.^[236]

Demographics

Population of the Land of Israel 65–650^[237]

	65	100	150	300	550	650
Estimated Jewish Population (thousands)	2,500	1,800	1,200	500	200	100
Estimated Total Population	3,000	2,300	1,800	1,100	1,500	1,500

Development of Israel by decade^{[238][239][240]}

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Population (thousands)	1,370.1	2,150.4	3,022.1	3,921.7	4,821.7	6,369.3	7,695.1
World Jewry percentage	6%	15%	20%	25%	30%	38%	42%
GDP per capita (current US\$)		1,366	1,806	5,617	11,264	19,859	28,522

See also

- Archaeology of Israel

- [Hebrew calendar](#)
- [History of the Arab–Israeli conflict](#)
- [History of Israeli nationality](#)
- [History of Jerusalem](#)
- [History of the Jews and Judaism in the Land of Israel](#)
- [History of the Middle East](#)
- [History of Palestine](#)
- [History of Zionism](#)
- [Jewish history](#)
- [Jewish military history](#)
- [LGBT history in Israel](#)
- [List of Israeli museums](#)
- [List of Jewish leaders in the Land of Israel](#)
- [List of years in Israel](#)
- [Politics of Israel](#)
- [Postage stamps and postal history of Israel](#)
- [Timeline of Israeli history](#)

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