

A History of Zionism and the Creation of Israel

by Martin Peretz provides some more in-depth historical background as well as an evaluation of Zionism:
Zionism - The God that Did Not Fail This article provides an overall history of Israel and Palestine:
History of Israel, Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Zionism did not spring full blown from a void with the creation of the Zionist movement in 1897. Jews had lived in "Eretz Yisrael (called Palestine by the Romans and Greeks) since about 1200 years B.C.E. The land was at a crossroads of the Middle East and the Mediterranean and was therefore conquered many times: by Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Seleucid Greeks and Romans, as well as invading Philistines. Of these, only the Jews made the land into their national home. Jewish national culture, fused with religion, centered around the geography, seasons and history of the land and of the Jews in the land. The Jews created the Old Testament Bible- The Tanach, which described their history and the history of the land, and their connection to it. The bible formed the backbone of Jewish culture and later was to form the backbone of Western Christian culture, so that the entire world recognized the connection between the Jews and their land. When the Romans conquered Palestine, and Jews were exiled, the connection to the land was preserved in the Bible, and in prayers that daily called for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and it was expressed in the writings of medieval poets,

In the Diaspora, religion became the medium for preserving Jewish culture and Jewish ties to their ancient land. Jews prayed several times a day for the rebuilding of the temple, celebrated agricultural feasts and called for rain according to the seasons of ancient Israel, even in the farthest reaches of Russia. The ritual plants of Sukkoth were imported from the Holy Land at great expense. A Holy-Land centered tradition persisted in Diaspora thought and writing. This tradition may be called "proto-nationalist" because there was no nationalism in the modern sense in those times. It was not only religious or confined to hoping for messianic redemption, but consisted of longing for the land of Israel. It is preserved in the poetry of Yehuda Halevi, a Spanish Jewish physician, poet and philosopher, who himself immigrated to "the Holy Land" and died there in 1141.

Jews had maintained a connection with Palestine, both actual and spiritual. This continued even after the Bar Kochba revolt in 135, when large numbers of Jews were exiled from Roman Palestine, the remains of their ancient national home. The Jewish community in Palestine revived. Under Muslim rule, it is estimated to have numbered as many as 300,000 prior to the Crusades, about 1000 AD. The Crusaders killed most of the Jewish population of Palestine or forced them into exile, so that only about 1,000 families remained after the reconquest of Palestine by Saladin. The Jewish community in Palestine waxed and waned with the vicissitudes of conquest and economic hardship. A trickle of Jews came because of love of Israel, and were sometimes encouraged by invitations by different Turkish rulers to displaced European Jews to settle in Tiberias and Hebron. At different times there were sizeable Jewish communities in Tiberias, Safed, Hebron and Jerusalem, and numbers of Jews living in Nablus and Gaza. A few original Jews remained in the town of Peki'in, families that had lived there continuously since ancient times.

From time to time, small numbers of Jews came to settle in Palestine in answer to rabbinical or Messianic calls, or fleeing persecution in Europe. Beginning about 1700, groups of followers led by rabbis, reached Palestine from Europe and the Ottoman empire with various programs. For example, Rabbi Yehuda Hehasid and his followers settled in Jerusalem about 1700, but the rabbi died suddenly, and eventually, an Arab mob, angered over unpaid debts, destroyed the synagogue the group had built and banned all European (Ashkenazy) Jews from Jerusalem. Rabbis Luzatto and Ben-Attar led a relatively large immigration about 1740. Other groups and individuals came from Lithuania and Turkey and different countries in Eastern Europe.

At no time between the Roman exile and the rise of Zionism was there a movement to settle the holy land that engaged the main body of European or Eastern Jews, though many were attracted to various false Messiahs such as Shabetai Tzvi, who promised to restore Jews to their land. For most Jews, the connection with the ancient homeland and with Jerusalem remained largely cultural and spiritual, and return to the homeland was a hypothetical event that would occur with the coming of the Messiah at an unknown date in the far future.

European Jews lived, for the most part in ghettos. They did not get a general education, and did not, for the most part, engage in practical trades that might prepare them for living in Palestine. Most of the communities founded by these early settlers met with economic disaster, or were disbanded following earthquakes, riots or outbreaks of disease. The Jewish communities of Safed, Tiberias, Jerusalem and Hebron were typically destroyed by natural and man-made disasters and repopulated several times, never supporting more than a few thousand persons each at their height. The Jews of Palestine, numbering about 17,000 by the mid-19th century, lived primarily on charity - Halukka donations, with only a very few engaging in crafts trade or productive work.

Emancipation and its effect on Zionism

The French revolution and the rise of Napoleon hastened the emancipation of European Jewry, who were no longer confined to the ghettos of European cities, and became citizens like everyone else. Eventually, the liberalization reached Eastern Europe and Russia as well. The enlightenment of the 18th century and the emancipation of the 19th were a great shock for Jewish culture and identity. Jews split into several groups during the nineteenth century. Ultraorthodox Jews remained faithful to the culture of the ghetto, which excluded the possibility of intermingling in modern society or gaining a modern education. A second group attempted to assimilate completely into European society, converting to Christianity and losing their Jewish identity. A third group believed that they could integrate as modern citizens, with equal rights and still maintain their Jewish faith, while renouncing any cultural or group allegiance to Judaism. In effect, their Judaism became somewhat like a section of the Protestant religion. They found various euphemisms for their identity, such as Hebrews or Germans of the Mosaic faith. This group founded the Reform Judaism movement. The assimilationist viewpoints took it on faith that once the Jews "became like everyone else" they would be accepted in society as equals, and would become Germans, Italians, Englishmen or Frenchmen. However, it became increasingly evident to many during the nineteenth century that assimilation was not necessarily desirable. Perhaps it was impossible as well, since anti-Jewish feeling did not abate. The newly coined Christians and "Germans of the Mosaic Faith" found themselves the objects of increasing anti-Jewish sentiment, which took on the title of "anti-Semitism" in 19th century Germany.

See also History of anti-Zionism *Jewish anti-Zionism *Reform Jewish anti-Zionism

Proto-Zionism



Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh
Kalischer (Kalisher)
(1795-1874)

At the same time, after the French Revolution and the emancipation of European Jewry, the vague spiritual bonds of the Jewish people began to express themselves in more concrete, though not always practical ways. About 1808, groups of Lithuanian Jews, followers of the Vilna Gaon (a famous rabbi and opponent of Hassidism) arrived in Palestine and purchased land to begin an agricultural settlement. In 1836, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer petitioned Anselm Rothschild to buy Palestine or at least the Temple Mount for the Jews. In 1839-1840, Sir Moses Montefiore visited Palestine and negotiated with the Khedive of Egypt to allow Jewish settlement and land purchase in Palestine. However, the negotiations led to nothing, possibly frustrated by the outbreak of an anti-Semitic blood-libel in Damascus. Thereafter, Montefiore continued with less ambitious philanthropic schemes in Palestine and in Argentina. In the 1840s, Rabbi Kalischer in Poland, and Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai, a Sephardic Jew, wrote articles urging practical steps for hastening redemption by settling in the Holy Land, to be sponsored by the efforts of philanthropists.



Rabbi Judah ben
Shlomo Alkalai
(Alkali) (1798-
1878)

British Zionism - The idea of a Jewish restoration also took the fancy of British intellectuals for religious and practical reasons. The restoration was championed in the 1840s by Lords Shaftesbury and Palmerston, who in addition to religious motivations thought that a Jewish colony in Palestine would help to stabilize and revive the

country, Jewish national stirrings were also voiced by novelists and writers such as Lord Byron, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot and Walter Scott. (for a detailed discussion of British Zionism [click here](#)).

Role of Sephardic Jews - Through an accident of history, European (Ashkenazy) Jews took the lead in organized Zionism for many years. However, Sephardic (Spanish) Jews and Jews in Arab lands maintained a closer practical tie with the holy land and with the Hebrew language than did Ashkenazy Jews and also influenced and participated in the the Zionist movement from its inception. Sarajevo-born Judah ben Solomon Hai Alkalai (1798-1878,) is considered one of the major precursors of modern Zionism. Alkalai believed that return to the land of Israel was a precondition for the redemption of the Jewish people. Alkalai's ideas greatly influenced his Ashkenazy contemporary, Rabbi Tsvi Hirsch Kalischer. Alkalai was also a friend of the grandfather of Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism. Another Sephardi Jew, David Alkalai, a grand-nephew of Judah Alkalai, founded and led the Zionist movement in Serbia and Yugoslavia., and attended the first Zionist Congress in Basel (1897).

Early Zionists

The modern formulation of Zionism was divorced from religious aspirations. The 19th century enlightenment allowed the Jews to leave the ghettos of Europe for the first time. Some converted to Christianity and assimilated to surrounding society. Others, exposed to a general education, dropped their religious beliefs, but understood that both they and others still considered them to be Jews. This suggested a conundrum. If one could be a non-believer and still be a Jew, then "Jew" must be more than just the name of a religion. German racists solved this conundrum by inventing a racial theory, which lacked any real scientific basis. Socialists cited the aberrant class structure of Jewish society and labeled Jews a "caste.". Zionists solved the conundrum by declaring that Jews are a people, a fact implicit in the Jewish biblical and cultural concept of "am Yisrael." The Jews were a people without a country however, and would remain politically powerless as long as they did not have a national home. They would be guests everywhere and at home nowhere, according to Zionist ideology. This homelessness was the cause of the "Jewish Problem," and it could not fail to be exacerbated by the rise of nationalism and nations in the 19th century. This explained why, paradoxically, anti-Jewish sentiment might become more pronounced in "enlightened" Europe than it had been in previous centuries.



Moses Hess, a more or less secular Jew and a socialist, was probably the first to enunciate these ideas in so many words in his book *Rome and Jerusalem*, published in 1862, calling for a Jewish national movement similar to the Italian *risorgimento* nationalist movement. These and similar sentiments were adopted by numerous small groups that formed primarily in Eastern Europe, but also in Britain and in the United States.

The "First Aliya"

The first groups of immigrants who came to the land with the idea of turning the land into a national home for the Jews are known as the "first Aliya." "Aliya" literally means "going up" and it is term Jews have used for a long time for coming to the holy land. Beginning in the 1870s, religious and nonreligious Jews established several study groups and societies for purchasing land in Palestine and settling there. In 1870 the Alliance Israelite, an ostensibly non-Zionist organization, founded the *Miqve Yisrael* agricultural school near Beit Dagan.

In 1882, the BILU (an acronym for "Beyt Ya'akov Lechu Venelcha" - House of Jacob let us go) and Hibbat Tziyon (love of Zion) and Hovevi Tziyon groups were established. They were inspired by the impetus of the wave of anti-Jewish violence that had swept Russia in 1881. Hibbat Tziyon began as a network of independent underground study groups, eventually forming larger groups called Hovevei Tziyon. These and similar groups established a number of early Jewish settlements including Yesod Hamaalah, Rosh Pinna, Gedera, Rishon Le Tziyon, Nes Tziyonna and Rehovot on land purchased from Arab owners with the aid of Jewish philanthropists, chiefly Lord Rothschild. Joel Solomon led a group of orthodox Jews out of Jerusalem to found Petah Tiqva in 1878.



Petah Tiqva

The settlements were characteristically vineyards and orange orchards. The settlers were mostly religious Jews, though the religious Jewish establishment frowned on Zionism. In 1882, 150 Yemenite Jews also found their way to Palestine. The first Aliya numbered about 25,000 persons, primarily from Eastern Europe. Many of them returned home defeated by disease, poverty and unemployment.

Revival of Hebrew - Among the first arrivals of the first Aliya was Eliezer ben Yehuda (Perelman). Inspired by European, particularly Bulgarian nationalism, Ben Yehuda was moved to settle in Palestine. He arrived in 1881 and undertook to revive the Hebrew language. With the help of Nissim Bechar, principal of a school operated by the Alliance Israelite Universelle, Ben Yehuda began teaching Hebrew. Later he founded and published the Hatzvi newspaper and set up a linguistic council. Ben Yehuda's work was the major force in the revival of Hebrew as a modern language.

Leon Pinsker and Hovevei Tziyon - Inspired by the anti-Semitic violence in Russia, Leon Pinsker formulated the modern idea of Zionism in a small pamphlet called Auto-Emancipation, published in 1882. Pinsker believed that anti-Semitism was inevitable as long as Jews were guests in every country and at home nowhere, and wrote that the Jews' only salvation lay in liberating themselves and settling in their own country. Pinsker favored Argentina or other countries as sites for the Jewish homeland. However, Western Jews who might have favored this idea rebuffed him. In his native Russia, however, his ideas were well received, but they were channeled to settlement in Palestine. In 1884, Pinsker was made head of the Hovevei Tziyon organization, which united many small and scattered groups, primarily in Russia, into a single organization. Pinsker favored "political Zionism," that is, organization of Jews in Europe and petitioning the great powers for land on which to establish a national home. However, his efforts in this direction were rebuffed by the Russian government. Instead, he directed his energies to the gradual purchase of land and settlement of small groups in Palestine.

Early settlers faced innumerable cultural and economic difficulties. In 1800, the ravages of misadministration and war had reduced the population to about 200,000. By the 1880s, the land had recovered somewhat, but it was still poor and disease ridden. The total population was about 450,000. Jerusalem was a small town of 25,000 inhabitants, slightly more than half Jewish. The first settlement of Petah Tiqva in 1878 failed and was later refounded. The Ottoman government barely tolerated the settlers, especially those who retained their foreign nationality, and occasionally the government restricted immigration. Settlers who adopted Ottoman nationality were liable for the Turkish draft. Disease, poverty and unemployment caused many to leave.



Early Jewish Settlers

Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Zionist Movement

The Dreyfus affair, which developed in France beginning in 1893, made Western European Jews conscious of their national identity, and in particular, affected a young Vienna journalist, Theodor Herzl and his friend Max Nordau. Herzl's pamphlet *The Jewish State*, was published in 1896. Herzl's plan for creating a Jewish State, arrived at after contemplating other solutions as well, provided the practical program of Zionism, and led to the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, in August, 1897



Theodor Herzl (1860 - 1904)

After the first Basle Congress, Herzl wrote in his diary, "Were I to sum up the Basle Congress in a word- which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly- it would be this: 'At Basle, I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. If not in 5 years, certainly in 50, everyone will know it.'"

In 1902, Herzl published a utopian novel to popularize the Jewish state, *Altneuland*, (old-new land). Set in Eretz Yisrael (Palestine), *Altneuland* is a pluralistic multicultural vision complete with monorails, modern industry and equality for Arabs. The novel concludes, "If you will, it is no legend."

Herzl thought that diplomatic activity would be the main method for getting the Jewish homeland. He called for the organized transfer of Jewish communities to the new state. Of the location of the state, Herzl said, "We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by public opinion."

Herzl attempted to gain a charter from the Sultan of Turkey for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, then ruled by the Ottoman Empire. To this end he met in 1898 with the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, in Istanbul and Palestine, as well as the Sultan, but these meetings did not bear fruit.

Herzl negotiated with the British regarding the possibility of settling the Jews on the island of Cyprus, the Sinai Peninsula, the El Arish region and Uganda. After the Kishinev pogroms, Herzl visited Russia in July 1903. He tried to persuade the Russian government to help the Zionists transfer Jews from Russia to Palestine. At the Sixth Zionist Congress Herzl proposed settlement in Uganda, on offer from the British, as a temporary "night refuge" (*nachtasyl*). The idea met with sharp opposition, especially from the same Russian Jews that Herzl had thought to help. Though the congress passed the plan as a gesture of esteem for Herzl, it was not pursued seriously, and the initiative died after the plan was withdrawn. In his quest for a political solution, Herzl met with the king of Italy, who was encouraging, and with the Pope, who expressed opposition. A small group, the Jewish Territorialist Organization ("Territorial Zionists") led by Israel Zangwill, split with the Zionist movement in 1905, and attempted to establish a Jewish homeland wherever possible. The organization was dissolved in 1925.

The insistence of Eastern European Jews on Palestine as the Jewish homeland, coupled with the failure of alternatives, maintained the focus of the Zionist movement on Palestine.

The Second Aliyah and Socialist Zionism Jewish History. History of Zionism, Zion, anti-Semitism, Zionism on the Web, Zionism and the Creation of Israel

The "political Zionism" approach originally tried by Montefiore, Pinsker and Herzl, which attempted to obtain a Jewish homeland from colonial powers, failed to attain results at least initially. Meanwhile, however, practical settlement efforts gradually increased the Jewish population of Palestine from about 25,000 in 1882 to approximately 85,000 to 100,000 just prior to World War I.

A fresh wave of anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia provided the impetus for a second wave of immigration, beginning about 1904 and called the Second Aliyah. At the same time, the rise socialist - Zionist stirrings had inspired several socialist Zionist movements. Thousands of new immigrants dedicated to the conquest of labor ethic and socialist ideals arrived in Palestine. Their Zionism was typified by the thinking of men like Ber Borochov and A.D. Gordon. Hapoel Hatzair, ("The young worker") was founded by A.D. Gordon, Poalei Tziyon ("workers of Zion") , and later Hashomer Hatzair ("the young guard) were inspired by Ber Borochov. Borochov, an ideologue of the Poalei Tziyon movement, did not cite anti-Semitism as the basis or motivation of Zionism. According to him, the Diaspora produced aberrant social conditions that made Jews economically inferior and politically helpless. The normal organization of society was a pyramid, according to Borochov, with a large body of workers and smaller groups of intelligentsia, land owners and capitalists. The Diaspora had created an 'inverted pyramid' in Jewish society, with no Jewish peasant or worker class. Self-liberation of the Jews would come about by proletarianization of the Jews in their homeland, and the nascent Jewish proletariat would join the socialist international. Similarly, A.D. Gordon, inspired by 19th century romanticism, called for a Jewish return to the soil and virtually made a religion of work. These ideas fused into the ideals of "productivization" (returning the Jews, who engaged mostly in professional and mercantile trades, to productive labor) and "conquest of labor" (Kibbush Haavoda). "Conquest of labor" later took on additional meanings. (See also Labor Zionism and Socialist Zionism)



Labor Zionism - Detail of photo showing delegates to the fourth meeting of the Hapoel Hatzair, about 1909. more about labor Zionism and socialist Zionism.

The new immigrants arrived with the ideals of socialist Zionism, but reality was not favorable to implementing those ideas. The Zionist movement attempted to find them work. but the new immigrants , who had no training in agriculture and poor physical stamina, were unable to compete with Arab peasants. Arabs certainly would not hire Jewish workers, who could not work well and could not speak Arabic. Arab labor was also preferred by the plantation and vineyard owners of the First Aliya. Arabs were experienced and hard workers, and were able to work for much lower wages because they were often members of an extended family that made its main income from sharecropping. The plantation owners had also developed a superior colonialist mentality which suited the hiring of "natives," and clashed with the egalitarian ideas and social demands of the newly arrived socialists.

The socialist Zionist movements tried to force plantation owners to grant higher wages, and also began to insist that plantation owners hire only Jewish workers. This aspect of "conquest of labor" was controversial within the socialist-Zionist movements because it engendered lack of solidarity with the Arab working class and was discriminatory. One labor Zionist leader wrote:

"How can Jews, who demand emancipation in Russia, rob rights and act selfishly toward other workers upon coming to Eretz Israel? If it is possible for many a people to hide fairness and justice behind cannon smoke, how and behind what shall we hide fairness and justice? We should absolutely not deceive ourselves with terrible visions. We shall never possess cannons, even if the goyim shall bear arms against one another for ever. Therefore, we cannot but settle in our land fairly and justly, to live and let live. " (Meir Dizengoff (writing as "Dromi") "The Workers Question," Hatzvi, September 21, 22, 1909)

At the same time, Conquest of Labor was a central part of Labor Zionist ideology, as a means of rebuilding the Jewish people, not a discriminatory ideology. A.D. Gordon wrote

But labour is the only force which binds man to the soil... it is the basic energy for the creation of national culture. This is what we do not have, but we are not aware of missing it. We are a people without a country, without a national living language, without a national culture. We seem to think that if we have no labour it does not matter - let Ivan, John or Mustafa do the work, while we busy ourselves with producing a culture, with creating national values and with enthroning absolute justice in the world.

(A.D. Gordon, "Our Tasks Ahead" 1920)

The boycott of Arab labor, only partly successful, was carried out reluctantly as a matter of necessity, and because the establishment of Jews as a class of colonial plantation owners seemed worse than the alternative. In 1934, David Ben-Gurion told Palestinian leader Musa Alami,

“We do not want to create a situation like that which exists in South Africa, where the whites are the owners and rulers, and the blacks are the workers. If we do not do all kinds of work, easy and hard, skilled and unskilled, if we become merely landlords, then this will not be our homeland” (Shabtai Teveth, Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War, London: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 140).

The discriminatory program of "conquest of labor" provoked bitterness among some Arabs, particularly watchmen who lost their jobs to Jews. In the main however, the "conquest of labor" movement was not successful at the time, nor could it have much real influence on the economic prospects of Arabs. Only a few thousand Jewish workers were involved. Gershon Shafir (Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914, University of California Press, 1996) estimates that about 10,000 such workers passed through Palestine in the second Aliya, many leaving in discouragement. Other sources claim there were about 3,000 workers out of approximately 33,000 who came to Palestine in the second Aliya. Because of the wage differential and because of the expertise of Arab workers, Arab labor continued to find employment in Jewish settlements. Conquest of Labor was to become important in the late 1930s, when the Arab revolt and strikes, as well as swelling Jewish immigration cause a much more significant displacement of Arabs from Jewish industry and agriculture. Even so it must be remembered that Arabs almost never hired any Jews, especially not for agricultural or industrial labor, and this discrimination was taken for granted.

Arthur Ruppin and Practical Zionism

In 1907, a young economist named Arthur Ruppin was sent to Palestine to study the conditions of the Yishuv. Arthur Ruppin's report and ideas formed the basis for the Zionist action program in the coming years, and shaped the second Aliya as well as the future of Zionist settlement and the character of the state. Rupin understood that it was impossible to continue with the plantation model introduced by the first Aliya settlement program. He backed a small group of socialist settlers who wanted to found a commune at Sejera. This became Kibbutz Degania in 1909, later followed by Kinnereth, Merchavia and other kibbutzim. The arrangement, originally thought to be temporary, proved to be practical, as well as suited to the socialist ideals of the new settlers. It soon inspired several other kibbutzim (collective farms). The Kibbutz movement was to become the backbone of Labor Zionism in Palestine, and eventually provided political and military leadership. Kibbutzim provided ideal places for hiding arms from the British and recruiting and training troops, as well as for organizing local defense and guarding borders.

The British Mandate - The first Achievement of Political Zionism

The Zionist movement did not give up efforts to find a political solution. The political Zionism and practical settlement approaches were merged into "Synthetic Zionism" advocated by Chaim Weizmann. The efforts ultimately bore fruit in the Balfour Declaration, a promise by Britain to further efforts for a Jewish national home in Palestine, and in the League of Nations Mandate, which gave international sanction to the Jewish national home. Weizmann became head of the Zionist organization and later was the first President of Israel. The British split the large area of Transjordan from the Palestine Mandate (see map at right). This was part of the basis for an eventual split in the Zionist movement. The revisionists refused to accept the loss of Transjordan and eventually left the Zionist movement over that and other issues. In 1923 the British also split off a tiny portion of northern Palestine, northeast of the sea of Galilee, and gave it to French mandated Syria.



Jewish Immigration under the Mandate

Jewish immigration after the British entered Palestine is somewhat arbitrarily divided into three further Aliyoth (plural of Aliya):

The third Aliya - The third aliya consisted mostly of Eastern European and Russian Jews including some who had left or been expelled by the Turks during the war. This immigration began about 1919 when Palestine was still under British military rule and is considered to have ended about 1923. Perhaps 35,000- 40,000 Jews came to Palestine in this period.

The fourth Aliya - After the institution of the mandate, immigration quotas were established, and applicants had to prove that they had some capital with which to begin life in Palestine. The fourth Aliya lasted from 1924 to 1929 or 1932 and consisted in large part of Polish Jews who were motivated to come to Palestine by the anti-Zionist regime and the new immigration quotas imposed in the United States. The fourth Aliya is generally considered to have ended in 1929, after Arab riots in Jerusalem seemed to show that settlement in Palestine was not a safe solution for Jews, or in 1932, after which immigrants began coming from Nazi Germany in large numbers. About 60,000-70,000 Jewish immigrants came to Palestine in this period.

The fifth Aliya - The fifth Aliya lasted from 1929 or 1933 to 1939, when the British White Paper closed the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration due to the Arab revolt and international Arab pressure on Great Britain. About 200,000- 250,000 Jews arrived in this period; 174,000 of them came between 1933 and 1936, when severe quotas were first introduced. Many of them were German Jews fleeing Nazism. The Germans allowed the Jews to leave in part because of the "hesder" or "ha'avara" agreement under which the property Jews took with them was treated as "export goods" in return for a ransom paid to the Reich.

The Jewish Agency

The Jewish Agency was set up formally in 1929 through the efforts of Chaim Weizmann and others, in accordance with the stipulation of the League of Nations Mandate that an agency comprised of representatives of world Jewry assist in the establishment of the Jewish National Home. The agency was the official interlocutor for the Jews of Palestine and the Zionist endeavor with the British Mandate and the League of Nations. The Jewish Agency was not a Zionist organization, however, since it was set up by the World Zionist Organization and non-Zionist groups and leaders, including Leon Blum, Felix Warburg and Louis Marshall.

Zionism and the Arabs Jewish History. History of Zionism, Zion, anti-Semitism, Zionism on the Web, Zionism and the Creation of Israel

When Zionism had its first beginnings, in the early 19th century, there were about 200,000 Arabs living in all of the land, mostly concentrated in the countryside of the West Bank and Galilee, and mostly lacking in national sentiment. Palestine was, in Western eyes, a country without a nation, as Lord Shaftesbury wrote. Early proto-Zionists did not trouble themselves at all about the existing inhabitants. Many were heavily influenced by utopianism. In the best 19th century tradition, they were creating a Jewish utopia, where an ancient people would be revived. They envisioned a land without strife, where all national and economic problems would be solved by good will, enlightened and progressive policies and technological know-how. Herzl's *Altneuland* was in fact just such a utopia. Jewish population grew, but Arab population grew more rapidly. By 1914, there were over 500,000 Arabs in Palestine.

At the same time, Zionist pronouncements and outlook were often frankly colonialist, especially when addressing leaders of foreign powers. The plantations sponsored by Baron Rothschild were modeled on plantation settlement in Algeria and other colonies. Colonialism was fashionable and "progressive," and early Zionist leaders saw nothing wrong in assimilating this idea to Zionism along with other "modern" ideas such as socialism, utopianism and nationalism.

Later Zionists were heavily influenced by socialism and embarrassed at the colonialist aspects of the Zionist project. They were also aware, of course, that Palestine was already occupied by Arabs. Many however, including the young David Ben-Gurion, who headed the Executive Committee of the Zionist Yishuv (Jewish community) in Palestine and was later the first Prime Minister of Israel, initially thought that the Arabs could only benefit from Jewish immigration and would welcome it. Others, such as Eliezer ben Yehuda, frankly envisioned removal of the Arabs from Palestine.

One of the earliest warnings about the Arab problem came from the Zionist writer Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg), who wrote in his 1891 essay "Truth from Eretz Israel" that in Palestine "it is hard to find tillable land that is not already tilled", and moreover

From abroad we are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all desert savages, like donkeys, who neither see nor understand what goes on around them. But this is a big mistake... The Arabs, and especially those in the cities, understand our deeds and our desires in Eretz Israel, but they keep quiet and pretend not to understand, since they do not see our present activities as a threat to their future... However, if the time comes when the life of our people in Eretz Israel develops to the point of encroaching upon the native population, they will not easily yield their place.

Ahad Ha'am, believed that the new Jewish homeland should be primarily a cultural center for Jews of the Diaspora. Revitalization of Jewish culture was needed before large numbers of Jews would come to Palestine. Nevertheless he was an enthusiastic supporter of Zionism and wrote an article eulogizing Leon Pinsker in glowing terms.

Arab opposition to Zionism grew after 1900. The birth of Arab nationalism and Arab political aspirations in the Ottoman empire coincided with the arrival of fairly sizeable number of Zionists with the announced program of settling the land and turning it into a Jewish national home. In his book, *Reveil de la Nation Arab* in 1905, Najib Azouri stated that the Jews wanted to establish a state stretching from Mt. Hermon to the Arabian Desert and the Suez Canal. Azoury wrote:

Two important phenomena of the same nature but opposed, are emerging... They are the awakening of the Arab nation and the latent effort of the Jews to reconstitute on a very large scale the ancient kingdom of Israel. These movements are destined to fight each other continually until one of them wins.

*Mandel, Neville, *The Arabs and Palestine*, UCLA, 1976

Rashid Khalidi (*Palestinian Identity*, Columbia, 1997) notes that beginning about 1908 Palestinian newspapers offer extensive evidence of anti-Zionist agitation. Actual conflicts flared up because the Zionists purchased large

tracts from landowners and subsequently evicted the tenant farmers. The former tenants, though they had received some compensation, continued to insist that the land was theirs under time honored traditions and tried to take it back by force. A notable case was Al-Fula, where Zionists had purchased a large tract of land from the Sursuq family of Beirut. Local officials took the side of the Arab peasants against the Zionists and against the Ottoman government, which upheld the legality of the sale. One hundred and fifty Palestinian notables cabled the Ottoman government to protest land sales to Jews in March 1911. Azmi Bey, Turkish governor of Jerusalem responded:

We are not xenophobes; we welcome all strangers. We are not anti-Semites; we value the economic superiority of the Jews. But no nation, no government, could open its arms to groups... aiming to take Palestine from us.

(Benny Morris, Righteous Victims, Knopf 1999 Page 62)

Likewise, the Kibbush Haavoda "conquest of labor" movement displaced some Arab watchmen and led to violence. While the actual number of persons displaced or dispossessed may have been small, and may have been offset by real economic benefits and increased employment provided by Zionist investment, the feeling grew among the Arabs that the Zionists had arrived to dispossess them. A Nazareth group complained that the Zionists were "a cause of great political and economic injury... The Zionists nourish the intention of expropriating our properties. For us these intentions are a question of life and death." (Morris, loc cit.) As the conflict intensified, the Zionists formed a guard association, Hashomer, to guard the settlements in place of Arab guards. The attempts to retake land and disputes with Jewish guards led to increased violence beginning in the second half of 1911.

Following World War I, Palestine came under British rule. Even before they had conquered Palestine from the Ottoman Turkish Empire, owing to the efforts of Zionists, the British government declared its intentions, in the Balfour declaration, of sponsoring a "national home" for the Jews in Palestine. Britain was given a League of Nations Mandate to develop Palestine as a Jewish National home. The Arabs of Palestine were appalled at the prospect of living in a country dominated by a Jewish majority and feared that they would be dispossessed. Anti-Jewish rioting and violence broke out in 1920 and 1921. By this time, Zionist leaders could no longer ignore the conflict with the Arabs. By 1919, representatives of the Jaffa Muslim-Christian council were saying

"We will push the Zionists into the sea or they will push us into the desert"

(Benny Morris, Righteous Victims, Knopf 1999 Page 91)

Arab opposition to Zionism was not based only on economic and social issues. It was colored by the traditional Muslim vision of the Jews as second class citizens. By the 1920s, it was also motivated by a strong admixture of Western anti-Semitism. In March of 1921, Musa Kazim El Husseini, deposed as Mayor of Jerusalem because of his part in riots earlier that year, told Winston Churchill:

The Jews have been amongst the most active advocates of destruction in many lands... It is well known that the disintegration of Russia was wholly or in great part brought about by the Jews, and a large proportion of the defeat of Germany and Austria must also be put at their door.

(Benny Morris, Righteous Victims, Knopf 1999 Page 99)

It is not clear how Churchill received this amazing and unwitting testimonial to the aid proffered to his country's war effort by the Jews, or what Husseini thought to accomplish by it. Aref Dajani had earlier voiced similar sentiments to the King- Crane Commission

It is impossible for us to make an understanding with them or or even to live with them... Their history and all their past proves that it is impossible to live with them. In all the countries where they are at present they are not wanted... because they always arrive to suck the blood of everybody...

(Benny Morris, Righteous Victims, Knopf 1999 Page 91)

While Palestinian Arabs viewed themselves as a small group of helpless victims of powerful British and Jewish "interests," the Zionists saw the opposite side of the coin. The militant Zionist leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky, asked in 1918:

The matter is not ... an issue between the Jewish people and the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, but between the Jewish people and the Arab people. The latter, numbering 25 million, has [territory equivalent to] half of Europe, while the Jewish people, numbering ten million and wandering the earth, hasn't got a stone...Will the Arab people stand opposed? Will it resist? [Will it insist] that...they...shall have it [all] for ever and ever, while he who has nothing shall forever have nothing?

(Caplan, Neil, Palestine Jewry and the Palestine Question, 1917-1925, Frank Cass, 1978)

Not all Zionists however, believed that conflict was inevitable, and certainly most Zionist thinkers did not contemplate expulsion of the Arabs. Ber Borochov, the founder of socialist Zionism, said in his last speech:

Many point out the obstacles which we encounter in our colonization work. Some say that the Turkish law hinders our work, others contend that Palestine is insignificantly small, and still others charge us with the odious crime of wishing to oppress and expel the Arabs from Palestine...

When the waste lands are prepared for colonization, when modern technique is introduced, and when the other obstacles are removed, there will be sufficient land to accommodate both the Jews and the Arabs. Normal relations between the Jews and Arabs will and must prevail. (Ber Borochov - Eretz Yisrael in our program and tactics - Kiev, September 1917)

Soon after World War I, Zionist leaders clearly recognized the problem of conflict with the Arabs. David Ben Gurion told members of the Va'ad Yishuv (the temporary governing body of the Jewish community in Palestine) in June 1919:

But not everybody sees that there is no solution to this question. No solution! There is a gulf; and nothing can bridge it.... I do not know what Arab will agree that Palestine should belong to the Jews...We, as a nation, want this country to be ours; the Arabs, as a nation, want this country to be theirs.

(Benny Morris, Righteous Victims, Knopf 1999 Page 91)

By 1923, in his Iron Wall article, Jabotinsky had answered his own question. He argued that agreement with the Arabs was not possible, because they

...look upon Palestine with the same instinctive love and true fervor that any Aztec looked upon his Mexico or any Sioux looked upon his prairie. To think that the Arabs will voluntarily consent to the realization of Zionism in return for the cultural and economic benefits we can bestow on them is infantile.

Jabotinsky was initially against expulsion of the Arabs, which he was "prepared to swear, for us and our descendants, that we will never [do]". Rather in The Iron Wall, he argued that the Jewish presence should be imposed by forming a strong defense that would demonstrate to the Arabs that the Jews could not be forced out of Palestine. However, while The Iron Wall expressed a comprehensive philosophy, its practical background and intent were much more limited. Jabotinsky wanted the British authorities to allow the Jews to form a separate defensive force under British supervision, to combat attacks such as the riots that had occurred in 1920 and 1921. The British refused, and the Zionist organization resigned themselves to the British decision, but Jabotinsky wanted to continue with the formation of such a force. Though the Haganah defensive underground was founded in 1920 by Jabotinsky, it didn't become a major project of the Zionist movement until after the riots of 1930.

Meanwhile the Arab and Jewish communities grew progressively apart. Arabs refused to participate in a Palestinian local government which gave equal representation to the Jewish minority. The British, nearly bankrupt after WW I, insisted that the mandate should be self-sufficient. Mandate services were paid for from taxes paid by the Jewish and Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Additional services were funded by philanthropists from abroad and from membership dues in various organizations. Zionist philanthropy and organization far-outstripped what Palestinian Arabs could provide. Neither Arabs nor Jews wanted integrated schools. Zionist groups funded religious, secular and labor-Zionist educational networks for Jewish children in Hebrew, but few comparable schools were set up for Arabs. The Zionists founded the Histadrut Labor federation to encompass Jewish workers, providing Hebrew education, medical care, worker-owned enterprises and cultural facilities as well as representation of labor rights. No comparable association was created by the more numerous Arabs of Palestine, though the Histadruth made some efforts to organize Arab labor beginning in 1927, and the Palestine Communist party attempted to represent both Jewish and Arab labor.

The Mandate: Zionism, the Arab Revolt and the Conflict With Britain

From the beginning of the British Mandate, Arab opposition to Zionism coalesced into organized resistance, taking the form of riots and later a revolt. The chief architects of this mischief were the Husseini clan led by Haj Amin El Husseini, the Grand Mufti. The Mufti and others convinced Palestinian Arabs that the Zionists were going to dispossess them of their lands by force, and spread false rumors that the Jews were going to desecrate the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Riots and pogroms were instigated in 1920, 1921 and 1929 resulting in deaths and injuries in Jaffa, Hebron, Jerusalem, Motza and elsewhere. The British government increasingly understood that its promises to the Zionists and Mandate obligations were very unpopular in the Arab world. They split off a large part of the Palestine Mandate territory to form Transjordan and issued the Passfield White Paper that proposed limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Passfield White Paper was quietly withdrawn under pressure from Zionists, from British public opinion and from the League of Nations. However, Palestine did not remain quiet. The Mufti allied himself with Fascist Italy and Germany, and probably was funded by the Italian government beginning about 1936.

These policies turned the once-friendly British into antagonists of the Zionist movement. Labor Zionists and the Zionist Executive were in favor of moderate policies that would try to work around the British opposition to Zionism. A faction led by Ze'ev Jabotinsky believed in confronting the British and the Arabs, and if necessary, using force. In 1933, Jabotinsky split from the main Zionist movement and formed the Revisionist movement.

In 1936, in response to the large Jewish immigration from Europe, open Arab Revolt broke out. Three years of bloody riots instigated by the Mufti and his allies resulted in hundreds of Jewish casualties and an estimated 4,500 Arabs were killed, many by the Mufti. The rioting forced the British to take draconian measures. The Mufti fled to Iraq in 1937 and then to Nazi Germany in 1941 after instigating an Axis Coup in Iraq. In 1937, the British proposed tentatively to partition Palestine in the Peel report. This caused additional divisions in the Zionist movement. Some believed in a bi-national Jewish Arab state and objected to the idea, contained in the Peel recommendations, of transferring Arabs "voluntarily" out of the territory to be allotted to the Jewish state. The revisionists and religious Zionists, on the other hand, objected to giving up any part of the territory of Palestine. Subsequently the British issued the White Paper of 1939, severely limiting Jewish immigration. The Revisionists formed the Irgun underground army, which attacked British soldiers and administrators and perpetrated terror attacks against Arabs in retaliation for Arab attacks on Jews.

Zionism during the Holocaust



Mufti Haj Amin el Husseini featured on the cover of Vienna Illustrated (Wiener Illustrierte) magazine. Husseini is apparently reviewing troops he had recruited.

The murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime in the Holocaust has become inevitably and inextricably bound up to the history of Zionism. The relation of the Holocaust to Zionism has provoked controversy and resentment, particularly among anti-Zionists. Zionists have been accused of indifference to the plight of European Jews. To an extent it was true at first. Initially, the reports of Nazi persecution did not seem to be any worse than persecution of Jews that had occurred in Europe for hundreds of years - confiscation of businesses, discriminatory legislation and expulsion. The Yishuv was struggling with an Arab revolt and trying to build a Jewish society. The tiny, more or less powerless and poor Israeli Yishuv and the Zionist movement that supported it, could do very little to aid the Jews of Europe in any case. Nonetheless, the Zionist organization and the Yishuv ransomed Jews from Nazi Germany in return for economic concessions. The Zionists managed to save over 200,000 European Jews before World War II. When the British responded to Arab pressure and ended Jewish immigration to Palestine, the Zionists, attempting to rescue Jews from the Nazis, organized illegal immigration through the "Institution for Illegal Immigration" (Hamossad L'aliya Beth).

Illegal immigration (Aliya Bet) was organized by the Jewish Agency between 1939 and 1942, when a tightened British blockade and stricter controls in occupied Europe made it impractical, and again between 1945 and 1948. Rickety boats full of refugees tried to reach Palestine. Additionally, there were private initiatives, an initiative by the Nazis to deport Jews and an initiative by the US to save European Jews. Many of the ships sank or were caught by the British or the Nazis and turned back, or shipped to Mauritius or other destinations for internment. The Patria (also called "Patra") contained immigrants offloaded from three other ships, for transshipment to the island of Mauritius. To prevent transshipment, the Haganah placed a small explosive charge on the ship on November 25, 1940. They thought the charge would damage the engines. Instead, the ship sank, and over 250 lives were lost. A few weeks later, the SS Bulgaria docked in Haifa with 350 Jewish refugees and was ordered to return to Bulgaria. The Bulgaria capsized in the Turkish straits, killing 280. The Struma, a vessel that had left Constanta in Rumania with about 769 refugees, got to Istanbul on December 16, 1941. There, it was forced to undergo repairs of its engine and leaking hull. The Turks would not grant the refugees sanctuary. The British would not approve transshipment to Mauritius or entry to Palestine. On February 24, 1942, the Turks ordered the Struma out of the harbor. It sank with the loss of 428 men, 269 women and 70 children. It had been torpedoed by a Soviet submarine, either because it was mistaken for a Nazi ship, or more likely, because the Soviets had agreed to collaborate with the British in barring Jewish immigration. Illegal immigration continued until late in the war, apparently without the participation of the Mossad 'aliya Bet. Despite the many setbacks, tens of thousands of Jews were saved by the illegal immigration.

To circumvent British regulations against creating new settlements, the Zionists initiated the "stockade and tower" ("homa umigdal") program, that allowed overnight creation of a new "settlement," consisting of a wall and watch tower. Under the law, the British could not destroy such an 'established' settlement.

The Zionists wanted to fight Fascism and rescue European Jews, but they could not do so except as permitted by the British government. The British recruited soldiers in Palestine. About 26,000 Jews out of a population of perhaps 500,000 and 6,000 Arabs out of a population of over a million, volunteered to fight in the British army. The Zionists pleaded for combat duty in Europe in a special Jewish Brigade. For the most part, however, they were employed in the Middle East. Eventually a Jewish Brigade was formed. The Jewish Agency proposed a scheme to send hundreds of Jewish commandos into occupied Europe to liaison with partisan groups and rescue Jews. Over a year passed before the British finally approved of a limited version of this plan. About 110 Zionist Parachutists were trained of the 250 who volunteered, but less than 40 reached Europe.

Reports of Nazi atrocities became increasingly frequent and vivid. Despite the desperate need to find a haven for refugees, the doors of Palestine remained shut to Jewish immigration. The Zionist leadership met in the Biltmore Hotel in New York City in 1942 and declared that it supported the establishment of Palestine as a "Jewish Commonwealth." This was not simply a return to the Balfour declaration repudiated by the British White Paper, but rather a restatement of Zionist aims that went beyond the Balfour declaration, and a determination that the British were in principle, an enemy to be fought, rather than an ally. This was a defeat for the left-wing party of the Labor Zionists, Mapam, who wanted a bi-national Zionist state, and for Chaim Weizmann, who opposed confrontation with the British and favored partition. The Revisionists rejoined the Zionist movement, but were

still called "dissidents" and did not merge their underground armies, the Irgun and the Lehi (also called the "Stern Gang") into the Hagannah defense organization of the mainstream Zionists.

On November 6, 1944, members of the Lehi underground Eliyahu Hakim and Eliyahu Bet Zuri assassinated Lord Moyne in Cairo. Moyne, a known anti-Zionist, was in charge of carrying out the terms of the 1939 White Paper. The assassination turned Winston Churchill against the Zionists. The Jewish Agency and Zionist Executive believed that British and world reaction to the assassination of Lord Moyne could jeopardize cooperation after the war, that had been hinted at by the British, and might endanger the Jewish Yishuv if they came to be perceived as enemies of Britain and the allies. Therefore they embarked on a campaign against the Lehi and Irgun, known in Hebrew as the "Sezon" ("Season"). Members of the underground were to be ostracized. Leaders were caught by the Hagannah, interrogated and sometimes tortured, and about a thousand persons were turned over to the British.

Following World War II, Britain continued to limit Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Zionist factions united and conducted an underground war against the British, as well as applying pressure on the British government through the United States. In June of 1947, the British rammed the Jewish illegal immigrant ship Exodus (formerly "President Warfield") on the high seas. They towed it to Haifa where it was the subject of extensive publicity, generating public sympathy for the Zionist cause. The passengers were eventually disembarked in Hamburg. The incident set world opinion, and particularly US opinion against the British, and caused the British to intern illegal immigrants thereafter in Cyprus, rather than attempting to return them to Europe.



The Exodus - 1947

Israel - a State is born

The British found it necessary to maintain a large military establishment in Palestine to enforce the draconian immigration policy and respond to Jewish underground attacks on British personnel. This policy was increasingly unpopular at home and forced the British to announce in February 1947 that they were returning their mandate to the UN. A special commission, UNSCOP, was set up to recommend a solution to the UN. The commission recommended partition. The Arabs were opposed to either partition or a binational state. The U.S. and the USSR supported partition of Palestine, and carried a large bloc of votes with them. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states in General Assembly Resolution 181. A war broke out in fact, while the British were still in Palestine. The Arabs initiated a war against the Jewish community and the Jewish state, with the declared aim of "driving the Jews into the sea." There was little doubt about their intentions. The Mufti, a Nazi collaborator who escaped the clutches of the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, had told the British that in his view the preferred solution for the Jews of Palestine was the one adopted in Europe, in other words, annihilation. Almost as soon as the UN decided on partition of Palestine, Arabs began attacking Jews, beginning with lethal riots in Jerusalem and attacks on Jewish transportation. The British allowed a volunteer army under Fawzi El Kaukji, to enter Palestine in January of 1948. During the fighting, with Jerusalem virtually blockaded, the state of Israel was established on May 15, 1948. Arab countries, chiefly Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq, invaded almost immediately.

Map of the UN Partition Plan for Palestine, 1947



Zionism, the Establishment of Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Question

The Arabs of Palestine were not well organized and could not attain their goal of



cleansing Palestine of Jews. Likewise, the Jews were able to hold their own against the invading armies of Arab states. Instead, it was they who suffered expulsion. As a result of the war, between 600,000 and 800,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes. Massacres and ethnic cleansing are deplorable, but they often happen as a result of war. The Czechs expelled the Sudeten Germans after World War II, because like the Arabs of Palestine, the Germans of Czechoslovakia sought to destroy the state in which they lived. It is absurd to claim that the Czechs had planned to expel the Germans since the beginnings of Czech nationalism. In a civil war such as occurred in 1948, armed militias use villages and neighborhoods as bases. Civilian casualties were therefore inevitable, and it was very likely that once the war was initiated, one side or the other would suffer massive displacement and tragedy. For the Arabs of Palestine, their Nakba, or catastrophe, vindicated their fears that the Zionists were bent on dispossessing them.

Map of Israel showing the 1949 armistice lines.

Both anti-Zionists and right-wing Zionists have claimed that the expulsion of Arabs in 1948 was a more or less deliberate result of Zionist policy and ideology. Anti-Zionists make this claim to discredit Zionism, while right-wing Zionists make this claim in order to justify possible transfer or expulsion of Arabs in the future. This is the main basis of the often repeated "Zionism is Racism" slogan. The evidence does not seem to support those claims. It is true that some Zionists were (and are) in favor of "voluntary transfer," which is not the same thing as forcible expulsion and genocide. A great many quotes of Zionist leaders about "voluntary transfer" are cited in this connection. For the most part, these statements were made in a very specific historical context. In 1937, the British were considering creation of a tiny Jewish state, and it was the British Peel and Woodhead commissions that proposed transfer as part of this plan, which was discussed with varying reluctance by different Zionist leaders. However, there is no decisive evidence that transfer or expulsion became part of Zionist or Israeli government planning. Several Zionist political parties strongly protested incidents of massacre and expulsion in 1948. Ben Gurion was apparently genuinely surprised by the early flight of Palestinian Arabs in 1948, and in Haifa and a few other places, Zionist leaders tried to convince Palestinian Arabs to stay. The Haganah plan "D," (plan Daleth) is frequently cited by anti-Zionists as the Zionist blueprint for expelling the Arabs of Palestine. However, the plan did not call for mass expulsion, but only for temporary occupation of villages as part of a defensive strategy.

From the first, the Zionist plan was to buy land and not to expel Arabs by force. Arthur Ruppin, the Palestine land agent, described in detail some of the difficulties involved in Palestine purchases. Purchase of land was hampered by lack of money, by the unwillingness of Palestinian landowners to sell land to Jews, and by the arduous conditions obtaining in the Middle East in those days. Additionally, and perhaps more important, there was not much land to buy. Under Turkish law, most of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine leased their land from the government or cultivated village land that was held in common. The Turks had introduced private land ownership in the Tanzimat reform of 1858. However, as few wished to pay taxes, they did not register their lands. Large tracts were bought by notables close to the ruling circles, but much of this land was in the West Bank. Land was also purchased in the Galilee, and part of this land was purchased by the Jewish Agency. Some land was and is owned either by the Waqf (Muslim religious endowment), The Greek Catholic Church or other religious institutions. The Greek Orthodox church was and remains one of the largest landholders in Palestine, and some of this land was leased by the Zionist leadership, including the land where the Israeli Knesset (parliament) is located. The Greek Orthodox Church however, could not sell its land. The British regularized the registry of land to the extent that land that was not village land or government or waqf land was considered taxable, regardless of who owned it. The person or persons who worked the land paid taxes and it was theirs to use, but not to sell as long as the land did not lie fallow for three years. The lands of the Negev, which were not arable before the national water carrier was built, were owned by the government and were not for sale. The government owned about 48% of the land. The Jewish Agency managed to purchase only about 6% of the land area of Palestine that became Israel by 1948. This was a small percentage of the total area, but it was a large percentage of the land that was privately owned and could be bought.

The UN Partition Resolution and Israeli Legitimacy

Some argue that it was "understandable" that the Palestinians would defy the U.N. partition resolution, because the resolution "took Palestine away from them and threatened to dispossess them of their homes. However, there is no evidence that Jewish leaders planned to dispossess Arabs or threatened to do so. Just before the establishment of the State of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, head of the World Zionist Organization and first President of Israel, wrote in his autobiography, *Trial and Error*, "... the world will judge the Jewish state by what it will do with the Arabs." (Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1949, p. 566). That was Zionist policy and intent, but the war forced upon Israel by the Palestinians and the Arab states produced an impossible reality. The right of the Jews to self-determination in Palestine was recognized not only by the United States, South American and Western European countries, but by the USSR as well. There is hardly a more eloquent defense of Zionism than the one given by the Soviet representative, Andrei Gromyko in the United Nations:

The delegation of the USSR maintains that the decision to partition Palestine is in keeping with the high principles and aims of the United Nations. It is in keeping with the principle of the national self-determination of peoples...

The solution of the Palestine problem based on a partition of Palestine into two separate states will be of profound historical significance, because this decision will meet the legitimate demands of the Jewish people...
UN Debate on Palestine Partition- November, 26, 1947

Besides, the disposition of Palestine as a Jewish national home had already been recognized as part of the post World War I peace settlement, and in the League of Nations British Mandate for Palestine. Those who claim that this settlement was illegitimate because it was inspired by imperialism and colonialist greed, must remember that the same arrangements created all the Arab states of the Middle East as well as Czechoslovakia, Poland and other countries. The Arab defiance of the UN in 1947 was not very different than the German defiance of the League of Nations when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in 1938. Indeed, the Nazis used parallel arguments: the Versailles treaty was unjust, Czechoslovakia was an "artificial state" and the Sudetens Germans had, according to Hitler a "general right to self-determination."

The Holocaust in Zionist Controversy

The Holocaust and the historical view of the Holocaust has been made into a major item of contention by anti-Zionists. The Holocaust was the tragic and dramatic fulfillment of Zionist claims that Jews would never be safe without a sovereign Jewish homeland. This prophecy was not just an abstract ideological principle. In particular, the revisionist Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky repeatedly warned Polish Jews of the coming catastrophe. For example, in August of 1938, he wrote, in an article published in Warsaw:

"...it is already three years that I am calling upon you, Polish Jewry, who are the crown of world Jewry. I continue to warn you incessantly that a catastrophe is coming closer. I became gray and old in these years, my heart bleeds, that you, dear brothers and sisters, do not see the volcano which will soon begin to spit its all consuming lava. I know that you are not seeing this because you are immersed in your daily worries. Today, however, I demand your trust. You were convinced already that my prognoses have already proven to be right. If you think differently then drive me out from your midst.

"However, if you do believe me, then listen to me in this 11th hour: In the name of G-d, Let any one of you save himself as long as there is still time. And time there is very little.

Jabotinsky's warnings went largely unheeded.

The Holocaust seemed to be a solemn warning that Jews could not ever integrate securely into European society. That question itself became moot after World War II, because there were so few Jews left in Europe, and there was so much revulsion at the crimes of the Nazis, that for a long period anti-Semitism seemed to have disappeared entirely. Nonetheless, the Holocaust remains a major embarrassment for anti-Zionist ideologues, and they in turn, have attempted to counter this impression in different ways. Some have resorted to Holocaust denial, others insist

that the Zionists were somehow at fault for the Holocaust, because they didn't do enough to save European Jewry. Others insist that "the Zionists" have made too much of the Holocaust and have created a "Holocaust industry," and that in fact, the Holocaust was not aimed particularly at Jews, since some gypsies and homosexuals and mental defectives were also killed by Nazis. Of course, nobody could have really foreseen the extermination of European Jews, despite Jabotinsky's warning, and even if they had, there was little more that the Zionists could have done than what they did. The tiny Yishuv (community) and the struggling Zionist movement managed to save only a few hundreds of thousands of Jews out of all the millions of European Jewry, but the fact is that nobody else saved more. The US Jewish community did little to protest the Nazi policies even after there was hard evidence of the murders in the 1940s, and even if they had, it is unlikely that the US government, fearing anti-Semitic backlash, would have done very much about it.

To an outsider it may seem that the state of Israel would not have come into existence without the Holocaust. Anti-Zionists have used this impression to claim that the state was "given" to the Jews by the world as a "special favor" and that therefore the legitimacy of the existence of Israel depends on the morality of Israeli acts, as judged by them. The same people often give the idea that there were no Jews in Palestine before World War II, and that immediately after the war, Zionists brought hundreds of thousands of Jews, creating the state at the expense of the Palestinians, to atone for European misdeeds. That idea is certainly false, since most of the 1948 Jewish population of Palestine had arrived before the war, and since Zionism, born in 1897, could not have been motivated by the Holocaust that happened nearly half a century later.

While it is certain that the Holocaust helped to mobilize international opinion in favor of a Jewish state, it is by no means certain that it was a critical factor or necessary cause. Sever Plocker and Tom Segev have both argued that without the Holocaust, a Jewish state would have been born in any case, and it would have been much stronger because of the support and presence of European Jews. Certainly, the Zionists envisioned that the Jewish state would be built by European Jews. The Holocaust, and the imprisonment of Soviet Jewry made this impossible and changed the nature of the state, exacerbating the problems it faced. Segev wrote:

... After three decades of Zionism in Palestine, there was still no clear timetable for the Jewish state, but no doubts remained that Jewish independence was on the horizon. The social, political, economic and military foundations of the state to-be were firm, and a profound sense of national unity prevailed. The Zionist dream was about to become a reality.

There is therefore no basis for the frequent assertion that the state was established as a result of the Holocaust...." (Tom Segev in "One Palestine Complete" pp 490-491)

It is probably philosophically unsound to insist on the inevitability of the creation of the state either with or without the Holocaust. However it is certainly unprovable that the state would not have been created without the Holocaust. Israel came about through a series of improbable events. Only a tiny group of people believed in 1897 that it could be possible to establish a Jewish national home anywhere, that any power would grant a charter for such a home, or that Jews would come to live in this country. However the Zionist movement was opportunistic. Zionist leaders leveraged on anti-Semitic notions of mysterious "Jewish power" as well as on Christian sentiment for restoration of Israel to obtain the Balfour declaration during World War I. Faced with the tragedy of the Holocaust, Zionist leaders used it to lobby for a Jewish state. The Holocaust was a unique event in many ways, but there is little doubt, given the nature of European history, that an anti-Semitic upheaval of some kind would have occurred in Europe, as indeed it occurred in the USSR despite Soviet anti-Fascist propaganda. There is also little doubt that any such anti-Semitic manifestation would have helped to mobilize Jewish and world sentiment in favor of a Jewish state. The relatively small numbers of the Jews in Palestine masked their potential, which was due to organization and economic power. The organization was due to the ability of the Zionist leaders, despite differences, to unite around a common program and to provide essential services that bound the community to them. The economic power was due in part to the organizational ability, which produced the kibbutzim, the Histadrut labor union, school systems, agricultural training schools and an agricultural advisory service among other institutions. In part, the economic power was due to the relatively large investment in Palestine made by the Zionist organization. As a result, each Jew in Palestine produced several times the amount that each Palestinian

Arab produced, and Zionist investment accounted in large part for the prosperity of the Palestinian Arabs. (see Zionism and its Impact) The Arabs of Palestine, in effect, had no independent economic and social existence. The Jews did. Wars are decided by economic power.. If conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine was unavoidable, the outcome of such a conflict was predictable in advance. The Jews, being the more organized and economically stronger power, would have won in any case, and certainly would have had a better chance of success with the backing of a large population of European Jews. See also discussion here and here).

Labor Zionism vs Revisionism - After independence, the Labor Zionist movement became, for many years, the leading political force in Israel. Mapai (Miflegeth Poalei Eretz Yisrael - the party of the workers of the land of Israel) party led by David Ben-Gurion and his successors held power continuously until 1977. The Zionist movement had split when Jabotinsky led the revisionists out of the Zionist organization in the 1930s. The Zionist executive was led by Labor Zionism under David Ben-Gurion. Revisionists and Labor Zionists had separate underground armies. Revisionists and Labor Zionists cooperated against British after World War II. However, the "Sezon" in 1944-45, the massacre perpetrated at Deir Yassin by the Revisionists in April 1948, and the subsequent sinking of the "Altalena" Irgun arms ship by the Israeli government, as well as numerous smaller incidents, helped to deepen the split between mainstream Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism. Begin, the leader of the Revisionist Zionists, was distrusted by Ben-Gurion and viewed a dangerous extremist. It was not until the 6-day war in 1967 that revisionists were allowed to participate in a government coalition.

Anti-Zionism

Zionism was popular among Jewish people as a movement they might support with money or at political meetings. However, few, especially in Western countries, thought of coming to Palestine or Israel until the latter decades of the twentieth century, except when in danger of persecution. Palestine was too far, economically backward and dangerous to draw many immigrants. Nonetheless, non-Zionist groups like Alliance Israelite Universelle and many others helped Zionist efforts in Palestine and joined the Jewish Agency for Palestine.

Several organized Jewish groups were actively opposed to Zionism. Jews who sought to assimilate in their own countries claimed that they were loyal citizens of a different faith, sometimes styling themselves "of the Mosaic persuasion." They felt that the Zionist movement and the concept of a "Jewish People" would raise questions about their own loyalty, and they resented the fact that Zionists often spoke as though they represented all Jews. This movement was particularly prevalent in Germany, where Jews were staunch supporters of German nationalism. At one point, the reform Jewish movement went so far as to systematically remove all references to the Holy Land and Jerusalem from their liturgy. A large segment of ultraorthodox Jews were displeased by the secular ideas that dominated Zionism, and insisted that the rebuilding of Israel must await the coming of the messiah. In Europe, the agitation of assimilationist and ultraorthodox Jews helped to actively block Zionist rescue efforts in the 1930s, when it began to be apparent that Nazism would soon make Europe very dangerous for Jews. Jewish communists were and are opposed to Zionism because Marxism posited the disappearance of the Jews as a historic anomaly, once international atheistic communism triumphed over nationalist particularism, and religion, the opium of the people, died out. In the USSR, as part of his "nationalities" policy, which assimilated or murdered numerous national groups, Stalin tried to handle the Jewish problem by creating an autonomous Jewish republic in the wastelands of Birobidjan. This project was never supported very seriously and was later abandoned. Though the USSR supported the creation of the state of Israel, Stalin was opposed to Zionism inside Russia and the USSR suppressed Zionist activities and at times persecuted Jews as well as Zionists.

Most religious Jews and the reform movement, initially anti-Zionist, reconciled themselves with the Jewish state, after the Holocaust seemed to bear out the basic thesis that Jews required a homeland of their own and would not necessarily be safe even in the best circumstances, and after the creation of Israel proved that Zionist aspirations could become a reality. Nonetheless, anti-Zionist ideologies and their representatives persist among religious groups such as the ultraorthodox Neturei Karteh and writers such as Noam Chomsky.

This ideological opposition to Zionism later dovetailed with the anti-Israel cold-war politics of the Soviet Union and the Arab antagonism to Israel, as well as with anti-Semitism. Retrospectively, communist ideologues pegged Zionism as a colonialist ideology bent on exploiting and dispossessing the native inhabitants of Palestine, and

creating an apartheid colonialist fascist Jewish state. In 1975, a pro-Soviet and pro-Arab majority in the UN passed General Assembly Resolution 3397, branding Zionism as racism. The resolution was repealed in 1991, but similar sentiments were repeated at a conference of non-government organizations in Durban, South Africa in 2001. The rationale for this idea is that Zionism is a colonialist movement that assumes that the racial superiority of the Jews gives them the right to dispossess the Arabs of Palestine. However, Zionist ideology is not based on racial notions and didn't assume superiority of the Jews. Zionist theorists assumed that the Jews are socially inferior and "abnormal" because they did not have a national home. The "abnormal" Diaspora character of Jews would be corrected when the people returned to their own land, realized their right to self-determination and renewed their nation existence. Zionists believe that the Jewish right to the land is based on ancient historical links, not racial superiority. Some Zionists see the Arabs as usurpers, just as the Arabs see the Zionists as usurpers.

It is undeniable that early Zionist leaders used the language and rhetoric of colonialism and established organizations with names like "The Jewish Colonial Trust." In part, this reflects the influence of the 19th century European cultural milieu, when colonialism was a perfectly acceptable concept. In part, it reflects efforts of Zionist leaders to sell leaders of the great powers on the idea of supporting a Jewish colonization scheme that would support German or British or French interests in the Middle East. The Socialist-Zionist movement certainly did not see themselves as colonialists and were opposed to colonialism and imperialism, nor did the USSR originally oppose Zionism on the basis that it is a colonialist movement.

Anti-Semitic writers identify Zionism with the spurious program enunciated in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a nineteenth century forgery of the Russian secret police, and insist that Zionists are intent on taking over the world.. A related notion, perhaps inspired by the writings of Najib Azouri, is that Zionism insists on expanding the Jewish state to the borders promised in the Old Testament - the Nile and Tigris Euphrates rivers. Though there are at present some religious and nationalist extremists in Israel who want such borders, Zionism never had any such program. Early Zionists did not always envision a national home in the Middle East, and "Palestine" did not exist as a political entity before 1922. The map of Zionist borders presented by Zionists to the Paris conference in 1919 was somewhat larger than modern Israel. It covered parts of what are now Jordan and Lebanon and Syria, ending just west of the Damascus-Hejaz railway. However, this optimistic (from the Zionist point of view) proposal was a bargaining position, had little to do with biblical promises, and did not reflect any deep-seated ideology.

Zionism After the Establishment of the State of Israel

The Zionist organization has continued to function after the establishment of the Jewish state. It has helped to bring millions of new immigrants to Israel; it encourages the teaching of Hebrew and Jewish culture abroad; it lobbies for Israel with the US and other governments, and rallies support to Israel in times of crisis. However, in Israel, "Zionism" became somewhat of a pejorative, associated with government propaganda, super-patriotism and regimentation. The Labor Zionist movement, that had founded the state, eventually found itself in a minority, replaced in large part by more militant religious Zionists and the Likud party, which inherited the mantle of revisionism, carried on by Menachem Begin after the death of Ze'ev Jabotinsky.

For many people in Israel and abroad, "Zionism" came to imply support for the settlement of Jews in the territories occupied by Israel in the six-day war, and assumed a very negative connotation for those who oppose the occupation.

Post-Zionism - Beginning in the 1980s, some Israeli historians and sociologists began to question facts about the official history of Israel and Zionism, as well as the Zionist ideology. They reasoned that Zionism had accomplished its purpose in creating the Jewish state, and that now it was time to move on. They posited that Israel and the Zionists had a large share of the blame for the animosity between Jews and Arabs, and had in fact, ignored the existence of the Arabs in Palestine and then dispossessed the Palestinians by force. This reasoning was supported by new histories, that talked frankly about less savory aspects of Israeli history that had been previously ignored. The new historians made a case that at least part of Zionism had always envisioned expulsion or transfer of the Arabs, and described massacres and expulsions which took place in 1948, often claiming that these were

part of a deliberate policy. The historians claimed that these new facts were revealed by declassified archives. Actually, the main facts supposedly "revealed" by the new historians were known to all Israelis who wanted to know them, though perhaps not in detail, and not presented in the particular way that new historians presented them, and not written up in English. These ideas, called by some "Post Zionism," do not form a coherent ideology and their practitioners do not generally see themselves as members of a movement or followers of a distinct philosophy. Some "post-Zionists" like Ilan Pappé are avowedly anti-Zionist, while others, like Benny Morris, use the same facts to arrive at very different conclusions that might support a militant Zionist ideology. Post-Zionism attained a wide popularity for a while, but fell into eclipse after peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israel failed, and violence flared in September of 2000.

Ami Isseroff

This history was adapted by permission from Zionism - Definition and Brief History at MidEastWeb Portions of this text are copyright © by MidEastWeb for Coexistence. Additional material and adaptations are copyright © 2005 by the author. This material must not be copied to other Web sites or public forums or used for any other purpose without express permission. You are encouraged to link to this page. The text on this page must not be used for any commercial purpose without express permission of the author.

Fairness and Accuracy Policy

External Zionism Links

This site provides resources about Zionism and Israeli history, including links to source documents. We are not responsible for the information content of these sites.