



A WHIRLWIND HISTORY OF MODERN ISRAEL



TOGETHER THE
yachad
SCOTLAND



PREFACE

This booklet has been prepared as part of an information pack for those who have an interest in the subject of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.

It has been published to mark the 100th anniversary of the 'Balfour Declaration' which was, in effect, a mandate issued by the UK Parliament to re-establish a homeland for the Jewish people following their expulsion from the land in the 1st century under the Roman authorities of that day.

Israel in Modern History: a Whirlwind Tour

ANCIENT TIMES

“The Jews are...the only people in the world today who possess a historical record...which allows them to trace their origins back into very remote times.”



Paul Johnson – ‘A History of the Jews’ (Phoenix) p. 7

77AD-1900AD

By 135AD, following Roman suppression of two Jewish Revolts, most of the Hebrew population had been put to death or forced into exile. Descendants of the exiles were to spread into every continent; this was ‘The Diaspora’. From the early part of the 16th Century, the Land, renamed Syria Palestina, was part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1882, an estimated 250,000 Arabs and perhaps 10,000 Jews lived in Palestine but 19th Century travellers spoke of a barren, depopulated, neglected land.

“Palestine “is void and desolate and without inhabitants.”

Rev. Samuel Manning
(19th C. traveller to the Holy Land)

LATE 19TH / EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Early Jewish immigrants from Russia and E. Europe struggled to clear and cultivate land they purchased from Arab landowners. Kibbutzim were established and in 1909 work began on a suburb of Jaffa that was to become Tel Aviv. Concurrently, waves of Arab peoples arrived in Palestine. From them most present-day Palestinians are descended.

“And indeed, as the Jews came, drained the swamps and made the desert bloom, Arabs followed --- they came for jobs, for prosperity, for freedom.”



Voss ‘The Palestine Problem Today’. In ‘Draft Report on the Historical and Legal Aspects of the Arab-Jewish / Palestine-Israel Conflict’ – Gerald Adler (Yale) 2002

NOV. 1917 BALFOUR DECLARATION

The Balfour Declaration was published in November 1917. It provided for:

“...the establishment in Palestine of a national homeland for the Jewish people (providing nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”



Lord Balfour

DEC. 1917 - THE LIBERATION OF JERUSALEM

In December 1917 - Britain, having supported the 1916 Arab Revolt to drive the Turks from the Near East - General Allenby entered Jerusalem.



1920

At the post-war San Remo Conference in 1920, Britain was given a Mandate for Palestine by the League of Nations. With that Mandate the de facto Jewish homeland, already recognised by the Balfour Declaration, was bound in international law.

1922 - 1ST PARTITION

In 1922, Palestine was partitioned. Administration of the 77% east of the Jordan was delegated to Emir Abdullah of Arabia and renamed Transjordan. West of the Jordan.



“Britain not only turned a blind eye to extensive illegal Arab immigration (but) severely restricted Jewish immigration.”

Joan Peters 'From Time Immemorial' Harper and Row 1984

1947 - 2ND PARTITION

On 29th November 1947, the UN General Assembly, shocked by evidence of the Holocaust, voted to establish a Jewish State and a second Arab State in Palestine. The Arabs rejected the Resolution and immediately began attacks on Jewish installations.

Yitzhak Rabin recalled: "I joined the jubilant throng in Tel Aviv but I harboured few illusions."

'The Rabin Memoirs' – University of California Press 1979



1948 - FOUNDATION OF THE MODERN STATE AND FIRST ARAB/ISRAELI WAR

On 14th May 1948, the Union Flag was lowered, the British left and David ben Gurion declared the existence of the 'Sovereign State of Israel'. The following day, the infant State was invaded by five Arab armies.

By October 1949, the Jewish State mourned the deaths of 6,000 young soldiers but had survived. As Jordan had occupied Judea and Samaria which, in 1950, it illegally annexed and renamed 'West Bank of the Jordan' and Egypt had occupied the Gaza Strip, 77.5% of Mandate Palestine was by that time under Arab control.

"The Palestinians did not seem to care that their land, villages and cities were occupied as long as they were not occupied by Jews."

'The Case for Israel' Alan Dershowitz (Wiley) p 89



"The Arabs conquered the Tartars and the Crusaders and they are now ready to defeat the new enemy"

Azzam Pasha (Secretary General of the Arab League)

to students at the University of Cairo December 1947

In the years that followed, 800,000 Jewish refugees expelled from Arab territories were granted citizenship in the Jewish State. Between 650,000 and 800,000 Arab refugees - many having been persuaded by Arab propaganda to leave their homes until, following Israel's anticipated defeat, they could return - were distributed in camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of their descendants are there to this day.

1948 - FOUNDATION OF THE MODERN STATE AND FIRST ARAB/ISRAELI WAR (CONTD.)

“*The refugee problem was a particularly effective weapon for putting Israel on the defensive in the court of international public opinion.*”

‘The Iron Wall’ Avi Schlaim (Penguin) p.50

1967 - THE SIX DAY WAR



On 22nd May 1967, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Widely regarded as a gesture intended to impress Arab opinion, Egyptian President Nassar nevertheless observed:

“*We knew the closing of the Gulf of Aqaba meant war.*”

‘The Iron Wall’ Avi Schlaim (Penguin) p.92



With Syrian as well as Egyptian troops massing on their borders, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike against Egyptian air-fields on 5th June.

“*The Six Day War was won in the first two hours.*”

Shimon Peres - ‘Israel’ Martin Gilbert (Transworld Publishers) p.384

Jordan had rejected Israel’s plea to stay out of the war. On 7th June, two Jewish brigades, having fought their way into the Old City, stood before the Western Wall. Many soldiers removed their helmets, many wept; for the first time since 70AD, Old Jerusalem was under Jewish control. The Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem observed:

“*Your men are making history. What is going on in Sinai is nothing compared with this.*”

Chief Rabbi of Israeli forces to
Brigadier General Uzi Narkiss

On 9th June, Israeli troops launched an offensive on the Golan. Fighting uphill through minefields and trench systems, they took many casualties. However, under heavy air attack Syrian forces began to abandon heavily fortified positions and before the UN ceasefire came into effect on 10th June, Israeli troops had taken the Golan.

1967 - THE SIX DAY WAR (CONTD).



UN Res 242 called for: (i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict. (Not all territories) (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for -- sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. (Never recognized by Palestinians)

Without precedent, the U.N. General Assembly, in passing 'Resolution 242' ordered a nation to return territories lawfully captured in a defensive war.

1973 - THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

Israel was caught unprepared in October 1973, when Egypt and Syria again launched an attack on her borders. Israel prevailed militarily but her initial unpreparedness drew criticism and combined with national grief over the loss of 2,522 men, ended Israel's twenty-five year political unity.

1982 - THE LEBANON WAR

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) having been driven out of Jordan for plotting against King Hussein, had established Command Bases in Lebanon.

In June 1982 in response to frequent shelling of Jewish Settlements in the Galilee from these bases, Israel launched 'Operation Peace for Galilee.' Television news carried reports of the damage inflicted on Beirut as Israeli forces bombarded P.L.O. strongholds, of the assassination of Phalange President-Elect Bashir Jemayel and of the massacre of Palestinians by Phalange forces in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps. For allowing the Phalange - thirsting to avenge Jemayel's death - to enter the camps, Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon was to be heavily censured.

1993 - THE OSLO ACCORDS AND THE PEACE PROCESS

“(Rabin) was a man who bitterly opposed Arafat -- yet when he saw a gleam of hope, he seized it.”

John Rothmann 'Remembering Yitzhak Rabin' (2015)

Following protracted, secret talks in Norway, Yasser Arafat and a clearly uneasy Yitzhak Rabin signed a 'Declaration of Principles' on the White House Lawn in September 1993 and the 'Peace Process' was born. However, its core objective, a 'Two State Solution', was (and is) rejected by extremists on both sides and following the signing, the number of Arab suicide bombings escalated.

“Today, the symbol of (Palestinian) power is the martyr.”

Dr. Eyad Sarraj - Palestinian Psychiatrist
'Dignity, Despair and the need for Hope' (2002)

2000 - CAMP DAVID AND THE SECOND INTIFADA

In December 2000, talks hosted by Bill Clinton collapsed when Arafat rejected Ehud Barak's offer to recognise an independent Palestinian State in Gaza and 90% of the West Bank in return for an end to hostilities.

The intifada, begun in October, continued to claim thousands of lives and in 2002, Israel began work on a separation barrier. The 'Wall', though hated by all, cut the number of suicide attacks initiating from the West Bank by 84% within two years.

2005- EVACUATION OF GAZA AND RISE TO POWER OF HAMAS

In September 2005, Ariel Sharon ordered the evacuation of all Israeli settlements in Gaza and – controversially – planned a disengagement from most of the West Bank. In subsequent elections to the Palestinian Legislature, Fatah was defeated by Hamas. This led to a civil war between these two Palestinian groupings during which Hamas gained control of Gaza.

Note: It is out-with the scope of this small publication to explore the complexities of the political and security issues that Israel has faced over the last decade or the conflicting and often biased reporting that has attended them. What follows seeks only to provide the briefest glimpse into some of the issues which have received media attention during these years.

RELATIONS WITH THE USA

Eleven minutes after Israel's declaration of independence. President Truman had extended recognition to the State.

While still maintaining that position, relations have been strained by President Obama's having pushed through the Iranian Nuclear Deal despite Iran's stated aim of obliterating the Jewish State.

"The American people are the best friend the Jewish people have had in all of history".

Benjamin Netanyahu. Speech to joint session of Congress May 2011

"What a farce this unsigned deal has always been. Iran continues to diplomatically delay and split hairs as the Obama administration bends over backward to grant this regime the power to make this agreement mean whatever it wishes."

Roger Aronoff - 'Accuracy in the Media.' 12.1.2016

RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK

Fatah, seen as the moderate wing of the Palestinian Authority, is governed from the West Bank by President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). Since 2007, following the violent takeover of Gaza by Hamas, widely viewed as a terrorist organization, Abbas has had little influence over Gazans who give allegiance to the leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyah.

"Israel will rise and will remain erect until Islam eliminates it, as it has eliminated its predecessors."

Extract from the Hamas Charter

2005 - 2016 (CONT).

Between 2005 and 2014, over 11,000 rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel with recent reports suggesting that international donations made for humanitarian relief are being directed to the purchase and replacement of weaponry. In response to frequent attacks on her civilians and the declared intention of Hamas to destroy the State, Israel - in 2008 and 2012 - sent ground troops into Gaza and in 2014, following the kidnap and murder of three Israeli youths, launched 'Operation Protective Edge'

At the time of writing, unrest among the Palestinian Population over civil rights and border controls has escalated. Arguably fuelled by those seeking to deflect criticism from the P.A. leadership, there have been outbreaks of violence on The Temple Mount and a wave of knife attacks and car-rammings. Grievances currently appear to focus on settlement building while Israel's perceived intransigence centres on refusal by the Palestinian leadership to recognize the State of Israel as a Jewish State.

“Despite President Obama and Secretary Kerry’s attempts to restart direct negotiation ---until today, Abbas continues to refuse to acknowledge Israel as a Jewish State”

USA - Center for Israel Education – 27.04.2016

INTERNAL SECURITY

Over 30,000 Jews immigrated to Israel in 2015 and with growing anti- Semitism in Europe, the numbers are expected to rise. In the struggle to defend her growing population against ongoing Arab aggression, the Jewish State is often cast as the Goliath. World opinion on the conflict is divided. Meanwhile Mr. Netanyahu, whose overwhelming objective is the security of the State, has no doubts:



“The truth is that if Israel were to put down its arms, there would be no more Israel. If the Arabs were to put down their arms, there would be no more war.”

Benjamin Netanyahu: Prime Minister of Israel in speech to the Knesset at the end of the 2006 Israel - Lebanon conflict.

