

Timeline of Key Moments in the History of the Jewish People

Jewish history is a thread that runs through many of the writings in this book. I regard Jewish history as the face of the Jewish people—here we provide a glimpse as a condensed timeline. It describes the chain of events that left an impression on me and my generation and, more broadly, on the Jewish world. These events made us who we are.

We begin the timeline with Biblical stories and move into historical events. The Biblical stories constitute the fabric into which much of Jewish wisdom, teachings, and philosophy has been woven. Naturally, these dates—from Abraham up to King David, or about 1000 BCE—are approximate. Further, the role of God in these stories should be understood as a metaphor through which the author(s) expressed the pressing philosophical and social questions of their time.

1800–1700 BCE | Abraham

The Book of Genesis relates how God spoke to Abraham, bidding him to leave his home (in what is now Iraq): “Go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace and the house of your father, to the land that I will show you.”¹ This land was Canaan, a region including modern-day Israel. Abraham moves to Canaan, establishes neighborly relations with the locals, and purchases and develops a parcel of land. He devotes himself to God and His guidance. God rewards him by designating him to be the builder of a new nation: “I will make you there into a great nation, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”²

For most Jews, this journey signifies the beginning of monotheism, Jewish nationhood, and collective responsibility—the revolutionary Jewish idea that adherence to moral behavior leads to collective rather than personal reward.

1600–1500 BCE | Jacob and His Sons in Egypt

Genesis continues with the story of Jacob, grandson of Abraham, who left famine in Canaan and, following his favorite son Joseph, traveled with the rest of his family to Egypt, where there were food reserves. God promises Jacob that he will return to Canaan one day.

While in Egypt, Jacob and his 12 sons—who become the 12 Tribes of Israel—live as subjects of a benign Pharaoh. The Israelites grow and prosper.

1400–1300 BCE | Exodus from Egypt and Mount Sinai

The Book of Exodus relates that after more than 210 years of hard labor and oppression under hostile Pharaohs, God commands an initially reluctant Moses to demand his people’s freedom. The Pharaoh refuses to release the Israelites until God brings down 10 plagues on him and his people.

¹ Genesis 12:1.

² Genesis 12:2.

Led by Moses, the Israelites flee Egypt and journey through the Sinai Desert on their way back to Canaan. At Mount Sinai, Moses receives the Ten Commandments, a concise encoding of basic Jewish laws, beliefs, and moral principles. The reception of the Ten Commandments is considered a key event in the formation of the Jewish people.

God commands the Israelites that in addition to worshipping Him, they must never forget their enslavement and liberation, essentially arguing that if they forget their history, they abandon their religion. At this point the Jews become storytellers, recounting their liberation every year during the holiday of Passover. Bonded by their history, the Jews further solidify into a people with mutual responsibility and a common destiny.

1300–1200 BCE | Arrival in The Promised Land

The Israelites reach the Jordan River along the eastern border of Canaan, where Moses dies and Joshua takes over. According to the Book of Joshua, God facilitated their successful entry into Canaan by drying the river’s waters to allow them to cross. After crossing, the Israelites begin the conquest of Canaan, starting with the town of Jericho. They divide the land into areas governed by the 12 Israelite tribes and begin to coalesce into one nation.

“I vividly remember crossing the Jordan River with Joshua. I wish [the Palestinians] had similar memories, as vivid as mine, so they wouldn’t think I’m faking it.”³

—JP

1200–1000 BCE | Tribes, Judges, and Consolidation into a Monarchy

The 12 tribes, previously ruled by independent judges, consolidate into a sovereign kingdom when the prophet and judge Samuel anoints their first king, Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin.

1000–970 BCE | Jerusalem Becomes the Capital City

David, the second king of Israel, establishes his kingdom in Hebron. Seven or eight years later, he conquers the city of Jebus from the Canaanite tribe of the Jebusites, makes it his capital city, and expands his rule over the entire land of Israel. David renames Jebus Jerusalem, meaning “They will see peace.”

970–930 BCE | Solomon’s Reign and the Building of the First Temple

King Solomon, son of David, builds the First Temple in Jerusalem. It becomes the focal point of the Israelite state, religion, and culture.

Solomon further expands the kingdom’s territory and develops trade relations with its neighbors, including the Phoenicians and the Ethiopians.

930 BCE | Israelite Monarchy Splits

The Israelite Monarchy splits into two separate kingdoms: Israel and Judea.

³ Judea Pearl, Post on X, March 5, 2024, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1765006280442479026> (accessed March 5, 2024).

Israel, a kingdom composed of 10 of the 12 tribes, establishes itself in the northern part of the land, with its capital in Samaria (about 50 miles north of Jerusalem). Judea, a kingdom composed of the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah, establishes itself in the southern part of the land, with its capital in Jerusalem.

734–720 BCE | The Assyrians Conquer Israel

The Assyrians undertake a series of assaults on both Israel and Judea, ultimately conquering the kingdom of Israel. They exile its people, forcibly scattering them throughout the Assyrian Empire, ranging from modern-day Syria to Iraq.

597–586 BCE | Babylonian Diaspora

Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar conquers the kingdom of Judea, destroys the First Temple, and sends its people into exile and servitude in Babylonia. Some people flee to Egypt, while a small number remain in their conquered Judean kingdom.

This was the start of the first Jewish diaspora and the concomitant yearning to return to their homeland as expressed in the Book of Lamentations, as well as in other books of the period, e.g. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!”⁴

539–516 BCE | Second Temple

Judea becomes a province of the Persian Empire, ruled by Cyrus the Great, which superseded the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus decrees that all exiled nations may return to their homelands. Taking advantage of this decree, Ezra, a scribe and priest, leads his fellow Jews back to Judea. Many Jews choose to stay where they have settled instead of returning with Ezra. Those that do return rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, ushering in the period of the Second Temple.

336–323 BCE | Reign of Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, overthrows the Persian Empire. Judea becomes part of his vast Macedonian Empire, which extends from Sicily in the west to India in the east. He allows the Jews to manage their internal affairs and practice Judaism, while also introducing and encouraging them to adopt Hellenistic culture.

Upon Alexander’s death in 323 BCE, his generals go to war to supersede him. Three main victors emerge: Ptolemy establishes the Ptolemaic Empire, based in Egypt; Seleucus establishes the Seleucid Empire, based in Syria; and Antigonus establishes the Antigonid Empire, based in Greece. Eretz Israel falls under control of Ptolemy.

198 BCE | The Seleucids Conquer Judea

Antiochus III, king of the Seleucid Empire, captures Judea from the Ptolemaic Empire.

175–164 BCE | Reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, nicknamed the “Mad One” for his eccentricities, assumes the kingship of the Seleucid Empire and expresses hostility toward the Jews in Eretz Israel.

⁴ Psalm 137.

167 BCE | Judah the Maccabee

Antiochus IV defiles the Jewish Temple by erecting an altar to Zeus inside and forcing the Jews to worship this ancient Greek god.

A small part of the Jewish population refuses to succumb to Antiochus's religious edicts. They coalesce behind a warrior called Judah the Maccabee, who leads them in a successful rebellion against the overwhelming force of Antiochus's Syrian army.

161 BCE | Chanukah

Judah and his small army, the Maccabees, retake the Second Temple and restore its Jewish character. To this day, Jews commemorate this successful rebellion during the holiday of Chanukah.

“Chanukah is our *trust deed* to the birthplace of our history, more solid even than the ancient synagogues they are excavating in Israel or the Arch of Titus in Rome⁵, with the Temple ornaments carved in marble. Stones can be faked...not so a continuous collective memory, passed on from father and mother to son and daughter, over 110 generations. An unassailable proof that no one can fake.”⁶

—JP

142 BCE | Judea's Sovereignty Reestablished

The Maccabees reestablish Judea as a sovereign Jewish kingdom, with its territory extending up to southern Syria. The kingdom is ruled by the Hasmonean Dynasty, composed of descendants of Matityahu, father of Judah the Maccabee. They maintain independence for roughly 80 years fraught with internal feuding and intrigue, which often results in foreign intervention from their neighbors, including the Egyptians, the Syrians, and the Edomites.

63 BCE | Roman Domination

Led by Roman general Pompey the Great, the Romans enter Jerusalem and turn Judea into a much-diminished province of the Roman Empire.

40 BCE | Herod the Great Appointed King of Judea

The Romans appoint Herod the Great as king of Judea (client king of Rome). Herod, of Edomite descent, renovates and expands the Second Temple built by Ezra in an attempt to restore it to the grandeur associated with the First Temple and solidify his own standing among his subjects. The renovated Temple becomes the monumental center of Jewish life.

29–33 | Christianity, a New Jewish Sect

⁵ A triumphal arch built in c. 82 CE commemorating Roman Emperor Titus's victory over the Jews. One of the arch's carved marble panels shows Titus's soldiers processing through Rome holding the sacred objects of the Second Temple, including its menorah, high above their heads.

⁶ Judea Pearl, “Chanukah—Our Trust Deed to History,” *Jewish Journal*, December 22, 2019, [see p. X](#).

Jesus (born Jehoshua), a Jewish carpenter from the town of Nazareth in the Galilee, becomes an itinerant preacher, folk healer, and leader of a new Jewish sect eventually called the Christians. Considering him a threat to their power, the Romans crucify him on charges of treason. After his death, Jesus's disciples deem him a messiah, testify to his resurrection, and propagate his teachings throughout the Roman Empire.

The Christians ultimately diverge from their Judaic roots. They deemphasize their attachment to Eretz Israel and the Temple services, elevate belief in the divinity of Jesus and original sin over the Mosaic code of conduct, and emphasize universal principles of compassion and forgiveness over peoplehood. Further, they make proselytizing an important part of their religious practice. These revisions help Christianity grow into a major world religion.

66 | Jewish Rebellion Against the Romans

Tired of harsh treatment by Gessius Florus, the Roman governor of Judea, a significant part of the Jewish population launches an ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful rebellion against the Romans.

67–70 | Second Diaspora

Determined to crush the rebellion, Roman Emperor Nero dispatches Vespasian to lay siege to Jerusalem. Vespasian succeeds Nero as emperor and deputizes his son, Titus, to defeat the Jews once and for all. Titus razes Jerusalem and the Second Temple and kills or exiles nearly every Jew living in and around the city. As with the Babylonian exile, a mostly agricultural community of Jews remains in their vanquished homeland. This is the start of the second Jewish diaspora.

Forced from their homeland by the Romans, the Jews become a dispersed nation without a territory. Bereft of their Temple, they make their religion transportable, transmitted through prayers, Torah study, holidays, and the synagogue, which become a kind of stand-in Temple and center of Jewish life.

132 | Bar Kochva Revolt

Led by Shimon Bar Kochva, the Jews who remained in Judea launch another ambitious but ultimately ill-fated rebellion against the Romans. They are endorsed by Rabbi Akiva, the spiritual leader at the time.

Bar Kochva and his army achieved an early but short-lived independence from the Romans, which he marked by minting coins. This success is commemorated in the Jewish psyche through the holiday of Lag B'Omer, a 24-hour period of joyful celebration featuring bonfires, play with bows and arrows, dancing, and weddings.

135 | Roman Victory and Revenge

Under Emperor Hadrian, the Romans crush the Bar Kochva Revolt, which devastates the countryside and leads to the massive expulsion of the Jews. Hadrian changes the region's name from Judea to Palestina (later called Palestine by the Ottomans) in reference to the Philistines, longtime enemies of the Jews—e.g. the Biblical giant Goliath was a

Philistine—who had disappeared centuries ago. The Jews, however, continue to call their land Eretz Israel (The Land of Israel) or Eretz HaKodesh (The Holy Land). The Romans build a new city on the ruins of Jerusalem and call it Aelia Capitolina.

With these name changes, the Romans intended to erase the connection of the Jewish people to the land. Ironically, the arch that Titus built to signify this erasure ended up becoming one of the most vivid historical proofs of that connection.

200–220 | The Mishnah

Jewish life continues, principally in the Galilee, under relatively benign Roman rule. Taking advantage of the favorable political climate, Rabbi Judah HaNasi (“The Elevated”) compiles Jewish oral law and commentary on the Biblical scripture into a text known as the Mishnah.

325 | Council of Nicaea

Roman Emperor Constantine the Great convenes the first council of the Christian church in the ancient city of Nicaea, during which he declares Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and designates Alexandria and Jerusalem as seats of Christian authority. He establishes a significant Christian presence in Jerusalem in part by building basilicas and churches, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (still active today).

Constantine regards the Jews as false descendants of the ancient Israelites for their refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah. He issues laws that make it punishable by death for the Jews to prevent their own from converting to Christianity or for any citizen of the Roman Empire to convert to Judaism.

410 | Sack of Rome

The Visigoths (a Germanic people) sack Rome, and the empire splits into western and eastern parts. Byzantium, the eastern part of the empire, with its capital in Constantinople, retains control of Palestine.

Several richly decorated synagogues from this period have been excavated by Israeli archeologists, indicating a thriving Jewish community under Byzantine rule.

613–622 | Advent of Islam

Mohammed starts a new religion on the Arabian Peninsula that becomes known as Islam, based partly on the Hebrew Bible. Mohammed declares Islam to be a supersession of Judaism and Christianity, a purer replacement for both religions, and begins the Muslim conquest of the Middle East and North Africa. Under Islam, Jews are deemed *dhimmi*, a protected minority of lower status.

638–1291 | The Muslims, Crusaders, and Mamluks Rule The Holy Land

638 | Byzantium loses Palestine to the Muslims. Much of the Jewish population is coerced into converting to Islam in order to retain their land.

1099 | The Muslims lose Jerusalem to the Crusaders, a Christian movement that started in Europe with the aim of reclaiming The Holy Land for Christendom.

1187 | Under the powerful Egyptian sultan Saladin, the Muslims retake Jerusalem from the Crusaders, reestablishing control over Palestina.

1193 | The Crusaders regain a foothold in Jerusalem, at Christian holy sites, and in a network of fortified castles.

1291 | The Crusaders are finally pushed out of Palestina by the Mamluks, a military caste descended from Turkish slaves that ruled Egypt and Syria for around 260 years.

Whether they reside in or outside of Palestina, the Jews are at the mercy of the rulers of the day. Sometimes, as in Moorish Spain, they are granted a degree of autonomy that allows them to thrive: they practice Judaism openly, attain important positions in society, and produce some of the greatest leaders and thinkers in Jewish history, including Moses Maimonides (the Rambam). At other times the Jews endure forced conversions to Christianity, second-class citizenship under Muslim rule, and eruptions of persecution, expulsion, and massacre across the Diaspora. All throughout this period, they never stop yearning for Eretz Israel. For example, the Rambam insisted that he be buried in Tiberia, and the Spanish rabbi and poet Yehuda HaLevi wrote in a famous 12th-century poem: “My heart is in the East, and I in the uttermost West.”⁷

1492 | Spanish Expulsion and Inquisition

The new rulers of Spain, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, issue an edict to their Jewish subjects: accept conversion into Catholicism or leave. As a result, more than 160,000 Jews are expelled from the country. The Jews who convert (“Conversos”) are brutally harassed and interrogated under suspicion of practicing Judaism in secret, which is why this period became known as the “Inquisition.” (In 1536, Portugal follows Spain in launching its own Inquisition).

The exiled Spanish and Portuguese Jews resettle principally in the Netherlands, Italy, the Balkans, and North Africa, becoming known as Sephardic Jews for their Spanish and Portuguese roots.

1500–1600 | Tzfat Revived

Some of the most distinguished rabbis in Jewish history resettle the northern town of Tzfat, turning it into a center of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) and culture. The first moveable-type printing press in Asia is established in Tzfat and allows for the dissemination of key texts throughout the Jewish world. These include Rabbi Joseph Caro’s *Shulchan Aruch* (*The Table Prepared for a Meal*), a book codifying Jewish customs and practices, and liturgical songs like “L’Cha Dodi” (“Come, My Beloved”) by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, with which Jews welcome Shabbat to this day. Such texts further unify the Jews as a people.

⁷ Yehuda HaLevi, “My Heart Is in the East,” Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-my-heart-is-in-the-east-quot-yehuda-halevi> (accessed February 20, 2024).

1517 | The Ottoman Conquest

The Ottomans (modern-day Turks) conquer The Holy Land, call it Palestine, and absorb it into their empire, which includes the Balkans and the entire Middle East. Sultan Bayezid II welcomes exiled Sephardic Jews to resettle in the Ottoman Empire.

1648–49 | The Chmielnicki Pogroms in Ukraine

Led by Bogdan Chmielnicki, nicknamed “Chmiel the Wicked” by the Jews, masses of Cossacks and Ukrainian peasants rise up against the repressive rule of the Polish nobility in Ukraine. Fired by antisemitism and resentment toward the Jews for providing services to the Polish nobility, Chmielnicki and his followers wipe out hundreds of Jewish communities as they wage their rebellion against the Poles. These pogroms have come to be known as “the decrees of 1648–1649.”

1665–1676 | The Messianic Cult of Shabbetai Zvi

Reeling from the Chmielnicki pogroms, the Jewish community latches onto Shabbetai Zvi, who declares himself the Messiah in 1665. He gains a significant following throughout the Jewish world. In 1666, he is brought before the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV and threatened with death or conversion to Islam. He chooses conversion and slanders the Jewish community, for which he is excommunicated by the rabbinical authorities. A small percentage of his followers continue Zvi’s messianic cult for at least a century after his death. His messianic stint makes the Jewish community more sensitive to deviation from rabbinical orthodoxy than it had ever been before.

1789–1791 | Emancipation in France

The French Revolution explodes in full force with the storming of the Bastille in Paris in 1789. Two years later, on September 27, 1791, the Jews are granted emancipation. They become equal citizens of the French Republic, though they are not recognized as a nation. As Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre argued during the National Assembly debate about Jewish emancipation: “The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals....The existence of a nation within a nation is unacceptable to our country.”⁸

1853 | Publication of *Ahavat Zion* (*The Love of Zion*)

Considered to be the first modern Hebrew novel, Abraham Mapu’s *Ahavat Zion* imagines life in Jerusalem during the time of Judean king Chizkiyyahu. The book becomes a surprise hit throughout the Jewish world, because it describes Jewish life as that of any normal nation, with people from all walks of life, among them army officers, thieves, noblemen, beggars, and prostitutes. The novel inspires yearning for the life of a normal people in its own land. Many early Zionists credit *Ahavat Zion* with awakening their zeal for normalcy.

1879 | Publication of “She’ela Nichbada” (“A Serious Question”)

⁸ Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, in Jewish Virtual Library, “Emancipation: France,” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/emancipation#France> (accessed October 19, 2023).

Writer, lexicographer, and Zionist leader Eliezer ben Yehuda publishes the essay “She’ela Nichbada” (“A Serious Question”), in which he argues that Diaspora Jews should emulate the oppressed European populations fighting for political freedom and national revival by reestablishing themselves in Eretz Israel and regenerating their culture and language.

1881 | Hebrew Revived

Eliezer ben Yehuda moves to Jerusalem, where he launches a one-man effort to restore Hebrew as a spoken language.

1881–1882 | Czar Alexander II Assassinated and the “May Laws” Enacted

On March 13, 1881, Czar Alexander II of Russia is killed in St. Petersburg when his carriage hits a bomb planted by a group of radicals. His assassination, falsely blamed on the Jews, ignites mass pogroms throughout the Russian Empire, some carried out spontaneously by the public and others organized with the help of the new czarist government of Alexander III (son of Alexander II).

On May 15, 1882, Czar Alexander III enacts the “May Laws,” which codify professional and educational restrictions against the Jews. He also forces them out of the cities and back into the Pale of Settlement, a rural region in the western part of his empire.

Spurred by these events, some two million Jews flee the Russian Empire in one of the largest migrations in history. Most find refuge in America, with a much smaller number moving to Eretz Israel. In America, their great numbers overwhelm the existing Jewish population of 250,000, transforming the face of American Jewry.

1882 | First Aliyah

Organized by Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), an Odessa-based movement established in 1881, 35,000 Jewish immigrants relocate to Eretz Israel. Most come from Russia, which they leave to escape crushing poverty, antisemitism, persecution, and pogroms. Among the leaders of Hovevei Zion is Leon Pinsker, who advocates in his 1882 pamphlet, “Auto-Emancipation,” that Jews should not wait for the Messiah to free them but, rather, should take emancipation into their own hands.

From this point forward, significant waves of Jewish immigration from Europe and Russia, as well as a trickle from Arab and Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa, feed a developing Jewish presence in Palestine.

“We must humbly admit that homecoming after 2,000 years is rather unprecedented in the history of nations. We must strongly insist, though, that yearning for 2,000 years is equally unprecedented, and perhaps doubly relevant to what counts as ‘indigenous.’”⁹

—JP

⁹ Judea Pearl, Post on X, May 2, 2023, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1653457589429211136?cxt=HHwWgMDQ0dm6ofItAAAA> (accessed May 2, 2023).

1897 | Zionism Catalyzed

Zionism is catalyzed when Austro-Hungarian lawyer, journalist, and author Theodor Herzl convenes the First International Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland on August 29. At the congress, the delegates define its aim: “Zionism seeks to establish for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secured homeland in Palestine.”¹⁰ This sets in motion a political process that will ultimately give rise to the modern State of Israel.

Herzl was motivated by the danger of rising antisemitism in Europe and Russia, particularly after covering the Dreyfus Affair for the *Neue Freie Presse*, in which Alfred Dreyfus, an assimilated Jewish captain in the French army, was falsely convicted of espionage and humiliated in front of a crowd shouting, “Death to Judas, death to the Jews!” A year after this event, in February 1896, Herzl published *Der Judenstaat* (*The State of the Jews*), in which he argued that the only way to guarantee a future for the Jewish people is for them to reestablish sovereignty. As he wrote: “The whole plan is in its essence perfectly simple....Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the reasonable requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage for ourselves.”¹¹ In the first edition of *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl debated between Argentina and Palestine as the location for the Jewish nation. In the Hebrew translation, published in August 1896, he insisted that the state must be in Palestine, after listening to the sentiments of Eastern European Jews.

“If I had to choose the single most significant impact that the Basel Congress has had on our lives...I would name one forgotten statement that Herzl made in his first speech....On the morning of Aug. 29, 1897, after 15 minutes of wild cheering, Herzl took the stage and said, ‘Zionism is a homecoming to the Jewish fold even before it becomes a homecoming to the Jewish land....’ It was the future of the Jewish people, not just of Israel, that was forged there in Basel....”¹²

—JP

1903 | Kishinev Pogrom

Incited by a blood libel, and tacitly encouraged by the central government, a mob rampages through the town of Kishinev, Russia (modern-day Moldova) for nearly three days, murdering 49 Jews and injuring hundreds, raping at least 600 Jewish women, and destroying and looting Jewish property. Hayim Nahman Bialik (who would later become Israel’s national poet) travels to Kishinev from his home in Odessa to document the atrocities. The experience leads him to write one of his most famous poems, “In the City of Slaughter,” in which he condemns the Jews as cowards for not defending themselves.

News of the pogrom makes a notably strong impact around the world, including in America, strengthening recognition that Zionism may be the only solution to Jewish

¹⁰ Judea Pearl, “The Basel Congress’s Unexpected Result, 120 Years Later,” *Jewish Journal*, August 30, 2017, [see p. X](#).

¹¹ Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, trans. Sylvie D’Avigdor (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2019), 8.

¹² Pearl, “Basel Congress’s Unexpected Result,” [see p. X](#).

persecution. In Ottoman Palestine, the Yishuv forms a self-defense group called Bar-Giora, forerunner of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

In the months following the pogrom, one of its chief instigators, the publisher Pavel Krushevan, publishes the notorious antisemitic forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” which portrays Jews as a cabal aiming to control the world. This forgery and its lies have been adopted by many antisemitic leaders and movements ever since, from Henry Ford to the Nazis to Islamic governments to Hamas.

1909 | Tel Aviv Founded

Sixty-six families from Jaffa found Tel Aviv—the first modern Jewish city—on sand dunes north of the city. Tel Aviv will blossom into a major urban center of entrepreneurship, culture, and modernity.

The city’s name comes from writer and Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow’s Hebrew translation of a novel by Theodor Herzl titled *Altneuland* (1902), in which Herzl depicts his vision of the future Jewish state. Sokolow translated the novel’s title as “Tel Aviv,” meaning “Spring Hill,” in reference to a verse in the book of Ezekiel.

1917 | Balfour Declaration

In anticipation of the British capturing Palestine from the Ottomans, and due mainly to the efforts of Chaim Weizmann, the British government publicly endorses Zionism. In a short letter to Lord Walter Rothschild, a scion of one of the world’s most prominent banking families and an active Zionist, British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour writes:

Foreign Office
November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,

Arthur James Balfour¹³

This letter becomes known as the Balfour Declaration. It encourages the third aliyah, when Diaspora Jews take its declaration seriously as a license to move to Eretz Israel.

“By focusing on the Jewish narrative, the [Balfour Declaration] broadened the concept of indigeneity to include peoples who have maintained vivid collective memories of past civilizations and who shaped their identity through dreams of returning to the cradles of those civilizations.... Balfour understood that Eretz Israel is an inextricable part of Jewish identity. Accordingly, he also understood that indigeneity is based on intellectual attachment and historical continuity no less than on physical presence or genetic lineage.”¹⁴

—JP

1920–1921 | Arab Riots

Led by Haj Amin al-Husseini (later appointed Mufti, the top religious leader, of Jerusalem) and fearing Jewish return to Palestine, the Arabs launch a series of violent attacks against the Jews in Jaffa and Jerusalem. This begins a relentless, obsessive rejection of Jewish sovereignty that continues to this day. As a result of the riots, the idea of Jewish self-defense gains new urgency, and the Jews form a paramilitary organization called the Haganah (Defense).

Under the pretense that the Jews planned to destroy the Al Aqsa Mosque (Dome of the Rock), the Mufti exploited his connections with the Muslim communities of India, Egypt, and Iraq to enlist their support in his rejection of Zionism, thereby turning this rejection into a religious conflict.

1922 | British Mandate of Palestine

The League of Nations (predecessor to the United Nations) meets in London and votes to grant Great Britain an official mandate to administer Palestine. The land becomes known as the British Mandate of Palestine or the British Mandate of Palestina EY, with “EY” standing for Eretz Yisrael.

Article 2 of The League of Nations mandate reads: “The Mandatory shall be responsible for... secur[ing] the establishment of the Jewish national home... and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.”¹⁵

To pacify the Arabs, the British give them Transjordan (modern-day Jordan), which the British carve out of what was originally supposed to be part of the Jewish national home

¹³ Letter from Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild, November 2, 1917, in Jewish Virtual Library, “Balfour Declaration: Text of the Declaration (November 2, 1917),” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-balfour-declaration> (accessed January 20, 2023).

¹⁴ Judea Pearl, “The Balfour Declaration at 100 and How It Redefined Indigenous People,” *Jewish Journal*, November 3, 2017, [see p. X](#).

¹⁵ Text of the Mandate, Article 2, in Jewish Virtual Library, “British Palestine Mandate: Text of the Mandate (July 24, 1922),” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-british-mandate-for-palestine> (accessed April 25, 2023).

in Palestine. They grant the kingship of Transjordan to the Hussein family of Saudi Arabia, from which the current royal family is descended.

1929 | Hebron Massacre

Incited by the Mufti, an Arab mob massacres 81 Jews in Hebron and riots in Jerusalem near the Wailing Wall.

David Ben-Gurion and the Zionist leadership remain hopeful for reconciliation after the massacre, but for a portion of the Yishuv, it dispels the dream that peaceful coexistence could be achieved with the local population.

1933 | Assassination of Chayim Arlosoroff

Chayim Arlosoroff is assassinated on the beach in Tel Aviv. The identity of the assassin(s) remains a mystery. Accusations about who did it polarize the Yishuv. One theory connects his assassination to his controversial negotiations with Germany.

As head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Arlosoroff had entered into negotiations with Hitler deputy Hermann Goering shortly before his assassination in order to secure a deal for Jewish immigration from Germany. Called the Ha'Avara (Transfer) Agreement, it permitted approximately 60,000 German Jews to immigrate to Mandate Palestine with their capital between 1933 and 1939. Their capital and intellectual and industrial expertise led to the development of commerce and industry, creating many jobs, which allowed some 200,000 impoverished Jews from Eastern Europe to immigrate. Further, the German-Jewish immigrants developed the civil service and infrastructure for the nascent Jewish state, without which the size and status of the Jewish community in Palestine would not have justified a claim for a state, and the Jewish community would not have been able to repel the 1948 Arab assault.

1936–1939 | Arab Riots and the Peel Commission

The Jewish population in the British Mandate of Palestine reaches 450,000. In response, the Arabs launch large-scale riots against the Jews and the British Mandate authorities, which they continue for three years. The British army eventually quashes the riots, severely weakening Arab fighting capabilities.

The British dispatch Lord Earl Peel to lead a commission to discover the cause of the violence and propose solutions to stop it. In 1937, after completing interviews with dozens of prominent Arab and Jewish leaders, Peel and his commissioners recommend that the land be partitioned into two separate territories, one for the Jews, one for the Arabs. The portion allotted to the Jews is about 30 percent of present-day Israel.

This is the first time the idea of partition is proposed. Jewish leadership reluctantly agrees to the plan, while the Arabs reject it out-of-hand.

1939–1945 | The White Paper, World War II, and the Holocaust

With Hitler's rise to power in 1933, increasing numbers of Jews seek safe haven. On May 23, 1939, the British government, anxious not to provoke the Muslim populations of

Egypt, Iraq, and India, capitulates to Arab pressure and issues a White Paper. Among other things, the White Paper rejects Lord Peel’s partition plan and severely curbs Jewish immigration to Mandate Palestine. European Jews are forced into a bind: they cannot remain where they are but they are barred from entering almost every country or territory that could offer them refuge, especially Mandate Palestine. There the Yishuv is prepared to receive them, but a British naval blockade prevents their entry. As a result, one-third of world Jewry is stranded in Europe, most of whom (six million) are murdered in extermination camps.

“Tomorrow [January 27, 2023]...is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, marking the 78th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. I’ll share two personal notes. 1. I find solace thinking that my grandparents weren’t entirely hopeless when they were pushed into their death train, in Kielce, [Poland], August 1942. I know that they were thinking about me, six years old, growing up free in Israel, singing Hebrew songs at school, in contrast to the humiliating experience they had had at their school. I cherish the thought that I was there for them, to comfort their last hours. 2. I find the words ‘never again’ somewhat hollow when spoken at Holocaust museums and education centers that memorialize the destruction of European Jewry, yet fail to document its resurrection—Israel.”¹⁶

—JP

1945 | World War II Ends

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrenders to the Allies (France, Great Britain, America, and the Soviet Union), ending World War II in Europe and leaving the surviving Jews homeless, scattered throughout Europe, or stranded in Displaced Persons (DP) camps.

1946 | Kielce Pogrom

On July 4, incited by a blood libel against the remnants of the Jewish community in Kielce, Poland, a mob of soldiers, police officers, and civilians murder at least 42 Jews and injure more than 40. It is the worst outburst of antisemitic violence in postwar Poland and is intended to discourage Jewish Holocaust survivors from returning to their homes. It convinces many Polish Jews that they have no future in Poland and sparks the mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Eastern to Western Europe.

The pogrom also convinces U.S. President Harry Truman that Jews have no future in Europe. Truman instructs his generals to allow the Jews free passage across American zones from Eastern Europe to the ports of France and Italy. From there, many Jews manage to board one of the 120 illegal ships that sailed to Palestine to try to break the British naval blockade. About 100,000 Jews enter Palestine by this and other routes. The Yishuv welcomes them. Their harsh experience makes international news and is instrumental in the U.N. sending special commissions to the area and eventually proposing a Jewish state.

1947 | U.N. Partition Plan

¹⁶ Judea Pearl, Post on X, January 26, 2023, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1618759846849032192> (accessed April 25, 2023).

On November 29, the General Assembly of the United Nations votes to adopt U.N. Resolution 181, also known as the Partition Plan, calling for the end of British rule in Palestine and the creation of two states in the land, one for the Jews, one for the Arabs.

The vote takes place after a major diplomatic effort by the Zionist movement, which welcomes the plan wholeheartedly. The Arabs apply their own pressure to oppose the plan. A month before the vote, Azzam Pasha, the secretary general of the Arab League, vowed in an interview with an Egyptian newspaper that the Arabs would undertake “a war of extermination and momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacre and the Crusades.”¹⁷

On the announcement of the vote, the Jews react with jubilation, while the Arabs resort to hostilities against the Yishuv in line with Azzam Pasha’s threat, leading to heavy casualties on both sides. Alarmed by these hostilities, and fearful of an all-out Arab invasion, the U.S. State Department advises the Zionist leadership to postpone declaring a state until things quiet down. After a fierce debate, the Zionist leadership rejects the advice by one vote.

“[O]ne of the most significant events in Jewish history, perhaps the most significant since the Exodus from Egypt—Nov. 29, 1947—the day the U.N. General Assembly voted 33-13 to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state.”¹⁸

—JP

1948 | Declaration of Independence and War of Independence

Upon the ending of the British Mandate, Israel is officially reconstituted into today’s modern state. On Friday, May 14, in the events hall of the Tel Aviv Museum, David Ben-Gurion (soon to be elected Israel’s first prime minister) reads aloud The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, opening with: “The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance, and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.”¹⁹

On Saturday, May 15, the last British soldiers leave the country and the Israeli War of Independence begins when five Arab armies—from Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq—plus a small contingent from Saudi Arabia launch an attack on Israel with the proclaimed aim to annihilate the State. As a result of this war, approximately 700,000 Arabs are displaced. The majority either leave Israel to wait out the war in safer areas or are encouraged to leave by the Arab forces to clear the path for the invasion. Some are expelled from strategic locations by local Israeli troops. This displacement, and the

¹⁷ Abdul Rahman Azzam, in David Barnett and Efraim Karsh, “Azzam’s Genocidal Threat,” *Middle East Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 85.

¹⁸ Judea Pearl, “The Forgotten Miracle: Nov. 29, 1947,” *Jewish Journal*, December 18, 2008, [see p. X](#).

¹⁹ The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, May 14, 1948, in *The Times of Israel*, “Israel’s Declaration of Independence—May 14, 1948,” <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-declaration-of-independence-may-14-1948/> (accessed January 25, 2023).

failure of the Arab attacks, has become known as the Nakba (Disaster) in the minds of the Palestinians, whose “right of return” remains a contested issue to this day.

1949 | War of Independence Ends

Israel prevails, albeit at a steep loss of 6,000 young lives. Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria establish a ceasefire line, which becomes known as the “Green Line” reportedly because the negotiators of the armistice agreement used a green pen to mark it out. The Arab refugee issue is left unresolved, in part because of the refusal of the Arab League to negotiate directly with Israel, which would be tantamount to recognition.²⁰

The ceasefire agreement leaves the West Bank under Jordanian control and the Gaza Strip under Egyptian control. Supported by these governments and the Syrian army in the Golan Heights, the Arabs continue attacking Israeli communities inside the Green Line.

“Had the partition plan been accepted, the humiliating defeat of the five Arab armies that attacked Israel in May 1948 would have been avoided, fears of Arabs’ genocidal designs would not have settled into the Israeli mindset, the Palestinian refugee problem would not have emerged, and efforts toward reconciliation and collaboration would have moved the region to a new era of dignity and prosperity.”²¹

—JP

1949–1952 | Flight of the Mizrahi Jews

With the establishment of the State of Israel, Mizrahi Jews—those from Arab and Muslim countries—become targets of increased Arab and Muslim hostility. Expelled outright or compelled to leave by increasing violence and intimidation, more than 800,000 Mizrahi Jews pour into the fledgling Jewish state from countries across North Africa and the Middle East, e.g. Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen. Most of them are forced to leave all of their possessions and capital behind.

1964 | PLO Established

Aided by the Russian KGB, and modeled on the Algerian National Liberation Front, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is established in Cairo on May 28. Its aim is to continue the war to annihilate Israel. The KGB had previously singled out Zionism for defamation as a cover for its antisemitism. They helped the PLO formulate its charter and forge a Palestinian national identity based in antisemitism and Zionophobia.

In its charter, the “Palestinian National Covenant,” the PLO’s first chairman, Ahmed Shukeiry, defines its goals to be the eradication of Israel and, thereby, the “liberation” of Palestine.

“Palestinian national identity, because it is only 102 years old [1920], has shallow historical roots. It’s sad, because roots make nations secure and pragmatic.

²⁰ See Adi Schwartz and Einat Wilf, *The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream Has Obstructed the Path to Peace*, trans. Eylon Levi (New York: All Points Books, 2020).

²¹ Judea Pearl, “Israel, Starting from Scratch,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2008, [see p. X](#).

Instead, it revolves around negating their neighbor—a futile battle, given the neighbor’s stubborn insistence on life.”²²

—JP

1967 | **Six-Day War and “The Three Nos” of Khartoum**

In response to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser closing the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping, vowing to annihilate Israel, expelling U.N. peacekeeping forces from the Sinai, and massing his army along Israel’s border, the Israeli Air Force preemptively attacks the Egyptian airfields, wiping out much of its air power. As Syria and Jordan join the fight, six days of fighting ensue (June 5 to 10) during which Israel defeats the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian armies and captures the Golan Heights (from Syria), the West Bank and East Jerusalem (from Jordan), and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula (from Egypt). With the reunification of Jerusalem, Jews are once again able to access their holiest site, the Wailing Wall (the remnant of the mount of the Second Temple).

This decisive victory also results in Israel’s military control over a large Arab population. Israel makes overtures to return the captured territory in exchange for a formal peace under a rubric that becomes known as “land-for-peace.” From August 29 to September 1, the Arab League convenes for a summit in Khartoum, Sudan, to coordinate a response. They rebuff Israel’s land-for-peace overtures with a resolution known as “The Three Nos:” No peace with Israel. No recognition of Israel. No negotiations with Israel. This rejection is traumatic for Israelis and gives rise to the settlement movement, whose rationale is: If we are destined to live by the sword until the end of time, we had better do it from a position of strength.

1968 | **PLO Campaign of Terrorism**

The PLO commits itself to terrorism against Israelis at home and abroad. It revises its charter accordingly, declaring in Article 9 that “armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine. This is the overall strategy, not merely a tactical phase.”²³

1972 | **The Munich Olympics Massacre**

On September 5, during the Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, a PLO faction calling itself Black September infiltrates the Olympic Village, kills two members of the Israeli team, and takes nine members hostage. The Palestinians later murder all nine Israeli hostages during a botched German rescue operation.

The Mossad eventually catches or kills most of the perpetrators.

1973 | **Yom Kippur War**

²² Judea Pearl, Post on X, March 21, 2023, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1638115256475209728?cxt=HHwWgMDSStbHJ4LstAAAA> (accessed April 26, 2023).

²³ The Palestine National Charter, in Jewish Virtual Library, “Palestine Liberation Organization: The Palestine National Charter (July 17, 1968),” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-palestine-national-charter-july-1968> (accessed May 3, 2023).

On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, Egypt and Syria launch coordinated surprise attacks on Israel, which retained control of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. They are backed by the Soviet Union, which provides them with advanced weaponry. The Syrian army advances through the Golan Heights, while the Egyptian army crosses the Suez Canal into the Sinai Peninsula.

After three weeks of fierce fighting, Israeli forces gain the upper hand: they cross the Suez Canal, advancing to within 62 miles of Cairo, and they enter Syria, advancing to within 25 miles of Damascus. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger pressures Israel to halt further advances and begin ceasefire negotiations.

The Israeli victory comes with heavy casualties, with about 2,700 dead and about 8,000 wounded. After the war, criticism of the government leads to the resignation of Prime Minister Golda Meir and the convening of a public inquiry to determine how Israel could have been caught so unprepared.

1976 | Entebbe Rescue Operation

Together with members of the far-Left German terror group, the Baader-Meinhof Gang, Palestinian terrorists hijack Air France flight 139 en route from Tel Aviv to Paris and divert it to Entebbe, Uganda. The terrorists separate the Jews and Israelis from the rest of the 248 passengers, allowing the latter to go free. They demand a ransom of \$5 million for the release of the plane, while for the release of the hostages they demand that Israel free 40 convicted Palestinian terrorists held in its prisons and an additional 13 terrorists held in various other countries. After a risky, nearly eight-hour flight at altitudes below 100 feet to evade radar detection and crossing over Kenya, a country not entirely friendly to Israel, Israeli commandos execute a successful rescue operation. All but four of the hostages survive and are returned to Israel.

1977 | Menachem Begin Elected Prime Minister

Menachem Begin, leader of the right-of-center Likud Party, is elected prime minister. His win becomes known as “The Upheaval,” since it breaks the rule of the left-of-center Labor Party, which had run Israel since its independence. Begin’s win also reflects a major societal shift, since it is the first time that the Mizrahi sector takes political power from the elite Ashkenazi sector, primarily associated with the Labor Party.

1979 | Peace with Egypt

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat lands in Israel and addresses the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) as Egypt becomes the first Arab state to make peace with Israel. As part of the treaty, Israel agrees to withdraw from all of Sinai, returning it to Egypt. Sadat paid for peace with his life, as a group of Islamic extremists, led by Egyptian army lieutenant Khaled el Islambouli, assassinates him two years later.

Though the peace agreement holds, it remains a cold peace, e.g. few Egyptian tourists visit Israel, Egyptian journalists are discouraged from traveling to Israel, and the Egyptian people are exposed to pervasive antisemitic and Zionophobic propaganda incorporated into school curricula and popular culture.

1982 | First Lebanon War

In an attempt to halt hostile operations from southern Lebanon, Israel launches Operation Peace for the Galilee, also known as the First Lebanon War. Israel's goal is to clear the PLO and other Palestinian and Lebanese terrorist organizations and Syrian army forces out of southern Lebanon, which had been their base since the late 1960s for ongoing terror attacks on northern Israel and worldwide.

Israel conquers southern Lebanon, enters Beirut, and encircles the PLO. Under internal and international pressure, Israel allows Yasser Arafat and other PLO leaders to relocate to Tunis, where they reestablish their headquarters. Israel maintains a military presence in southern Lebanon until 2000, when Prime Minister Ehud Barak unilaterally withdraws IDF forces.

1987–1993 | First Intifada

Mass rioting breaks out in a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza, sparking wider unrest and violence against Israelis in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem in what the Palestinians call an intifada (“uprising”). It results in thousands of Israeli casualties (mainly injuries) and crushes hopes that cohabitation would eventually lead to coexistence. The intifada also affects Palestinian society, as the PLO kills its own people for suspected collaboration with Israel or mere contact with Jews and Israel. Under the policies of Defense Ministers Yitzhak Rabin (elected prime minister in 1992) and Moshe Arens, Israel puts down the intifada with heavy force. Ultimately, the violence and chaos within Palestinian society becomes so serious that the PLO itself attempts to end the intifada.

1991 | Madrid Peace Conference

U.S. President George H.W. Bush, with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev as co-chair, convenes a conference in Madrid aimed at ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is attended by Israeli, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, and joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegations and marks the first time that all of the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict gather for direct negotiations. While no agreements are reached, the conference leads to the outlining of steps to peace and helps pave the way for the Oslo Accords and the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement.

1993 | The Oslo Accords

On September 13, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sign the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements at the White House. Popularly known as the Oslo Accords, because negotiations had begun in Oslo, Norway, the arrangements aim to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by initiating direct talks between Israel and the PLO and outlining steps to peace, including the PLO formally recognizing Israel and renouncing terror and Israel withdrawing its military from some parts of the West Bank. Within two years, Israel and the PLO agree to divide the West Bank into three areas: A, B, and C. Area A, encompassing the major Palestinian cities and towns (e.g. Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem), is controlled exclusively by the Palestinian Authority (PA). In Area B, covering around 450 Palestinian towns, villages, and refugee camps, the PA controls all public order and civil affairs, while Israel

controls security in coordination with the PA. Area C includes all of the Jewish settlements and military installations, with Israel controlling all aspects of governance except for the civil affairs of the Palestinian residents. The three core issues—the future of Jerusalem, the status of Palestinian refugees, and formal acceptance of Jewish right to sovereignty—are left to be resolved at a later date.

Contrary to the goal of the agreement, the Palestinian public is made to believe that the Oslo Accords are merely the first step toward the eventual dismantling of Israel. As Faisal Hussein, one of the leading Palestinian negotiators, stated in a 2001 interview with *Al-Arabi* reporter Shafiq Ahmad Ali, they regarded the Oslo Accords as a Trojan Horse concealing their unwavering goal of “the liberation of all historical Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea, even if this means that the conflict will last for another thousand years or for many generations.”²⁴

“The Palestinians’ greatest mistake, which has caused them tragedy after tragedy, was and is to conceptualize Israel as a colonizer, rather than a home-comer. This conception dictates that if you make its life miserable enough, the colonizer will quit, like [the French in] Algiers. Palestinians (and their supporters) fail to grasp that Israelis do not have a France to go back to. They are determined to stay or die trying to stay. Therefore, all talks about ‘decolonizing’ Palestine boil down to talks about a genocide of 8 million human beings.”²⁵

“We can say it even more concisely: ‘We don’t have a France to go back to; Israel for us means survival. Another assault on us means another tragedy for you.’”²⁶

—JP

1994 | Arafat Returns from Exile and Peace with Jordan

In compliance with the Oslo Accords, Israel allows Yasser Arafat to return to the Palestinian Territories from his Tunisian exile. He eventually establishes his headquarters in Ramallah, where he remains until his death in 2004.

On October 26, Jordan becomes the second Arab state to make peace with Israel. As with Egypt, it is a cold peace.

1995 | Rabin Assassinated

On November 4, Yigal Amir, an Israeli extremist who is against the Oslo Accords, assassinates Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as he is leaving a peace rally in Tel Aviv. The assassination culminates a period of incitement against Rabin, in which the political Right accused him of betraying Israeli interests and marked him as a traitor.

²⁴ Faisal Hussein, in The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), “Faysal al-Husseini in His Last Interview: The Oslo Accords Were a Trojan Horse; the Strategic Goal Is the Liberation of Palestine from the [Jordan] River to the [Mediterranean] Sea,” https://www.memri.org/reports/faysal-al-husseini-his-last-interview-oslo-accords-were-trojan-horse-strategic-goal#_edn1 (accessed January 16, 2024).

²⁵ Judea Pearl, Post on X, March 4, 2024, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1764560153863725548> (accessed March 4, 2024).

²⁶ Judea Pearl, Post on X, March 4, 2024, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1764637755739668898> (accessed March 4, 2024).

2000 | **Camp David Negotiations and the Second Intifada**

U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian Authority (formerly PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat gather for a summit at the Camp David presidential retreat in the summer, and again in the winter, to negotiate a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in accordance with the Oslo Accords. Both rounds of talks fail, with Arafat rejecting Barak’s offer without making counteroffers. Arafat then launches the Second Intifada, unleashing terror attacks on Israelis that persist for the next five years and result in thousands of casualties.

“The Palestinian national movement is the only national movement in human history whose ultimate goal is not to win independence but to dismantle another people’s independence.”²⁷

—JP

2002 | **Operation Defensive Shield**

Precipitated by the relentless terror attacks of the Second Intifada, and in direct response to a suicide bombing that killed 30 and wounded 150 people attending a Passover Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya, Israel launches Operation Defensive Shield, a large-scale military operation in the West Bank aimed at preventing further Palestinian terror. The IDF establishes presence and intelligence operations in Palestinian cities and towns throughout the West Bank, thereby foiling plans for terrorist operations before they are executed. Though it did not stop all West Bank terror attacks, it was the first time in Israel’s history that terrorist activities were brought largely under control. Operation Defensive Shield stands as a role model for counter-terrorism to this day.

However, terrorists continued attacking Israeli forces stationed in Gaza, which led Israelis to question the rationale of maintaining a presence there.

2005 | **Withdrawal from Gaza**

Under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Israel unilaterally withdraws from Gaza, leaving it under Palestinian sovereignty with the exception of the movement of goods and people across its borders. As part of the withdrawal, Israel removes about 9,000 Jewish settlers residing in 21 settlements inside Gaza. While the majority of these settlers follow instructions and leave on their own, one-third must be forcibly removed by the IDF. Though Sharon’s removal policy is controversial and could not guarantee peace, it is backed by a majority of the Israeli public.

Israel and Egypt maintain control over ground, sea, and air traffic into Gaza to prevent arms smuggling.

2006 | **Second Lebanon War**

Israel and Hezbollah—a paramilitary force supported by Iran and Syria entrenched in southern Lebanon—engage in a 34-day war in Lebanon. The war is instigated when

²⁷ Judea Pearl, Post on X, October 17, 2023, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1714208850759561309> (accessed October 26, 2023).

Hezbollah operatives cross into Israel under cover of a barrage of rocket attacks from inside Lebanon, kill eight IDF soldiers, and abduct two others.

The war ends inconclusively, with a ceasefire arrangement from the U.N. Security Council (Security Council resolution 1701), according to which the United National Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and Lebanese forces would control the region, and Hezbollah would not be allowed south of the Litani River. Hezbollah totally ignores the resolution while the U.N. stands by, allowing them to rearm with weapons from Iran, funneled through Syria.

2007 | The Annapolis Conference and Hamas Takes Power in Gaza

U.S. President George W. Bush convenes an international conference in Annapolis, MD, to officially revive the moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process. By the end of the conference, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas agree to continue negotiations with an aim to conclude a peace treaty by the end of the following year. Once again, these negotiations fail. According to Olmert, three issues remained unresolved: 1) Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, 2) Palestinian insistence on full right of return to Israel proper, 3) Palestinian refusal to regard a peace agreement as a formal “end of all claims.”

Hamas, a military branch of the religiously fanatic Muslim Brotherhood movement, violently overthrows Fatah leadership and takes power in Gaza. It institutes an ongoing campaign of rocket attacks aimed at civilian targets throughout southern and central Israel. The Hamas charter calls for armed struggle toward the destruction of Israel, the expulsion of most Jews from Israel, and the institution of Islamic law across the land. Israel launches multiple operations to stop the rockets, none of which achieve lasting results.

2020 | Abraham Accords

Led by the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, Israel normalizes relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and, later, Sudan. Unlike the cold peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, the Abraham Accords result in warm peace, including tourism, journalism, cultural exchange, and long-term business contracts. Unlike the Oslo Accords, which pushed the thorniest disagreements to future negotiations, the Abraham Accords began by addressing the core of the dispute: Israel’s indigenous place in the Middle East, as symbolized by the evocation of the name Abraham.

2023 | Hamas Invasion and Massacre

On October 7, under cover of a barrage of rocket attacks from inside Gaza, thousands of Hamas terrorists breach Israel’s southern border and execute the worst massacre perpetrated against the Jewish people since the Holocaust. They rampage through Israeli cities and towns, raping girls, women, and men and brutalizing and murdering everyone they encounter (mostly civilians ranging from months-old babies to the elderly), torching everything they can, and kidnapping more than 200 Israelis and foreign nationals. In

response, Israel declares war on Hamas, with the aim of ridding Gaza of Hamas control, thus preventing future attacks.

Surprising to some, this massacre evokes sympathetic support for Hamas among many Westerners, especially in higher education and on the political Left, revealing a latent unacceptance of Israel's existence, a willful dismissal of Israel's struggle for survival, and, more broadly, deep anti-Western sentiments.

“Historically speaking, the Palestinian national ethos is consistently genocidal in intent and aims, from birth (1920) to puberty (1947) to maturity (2023). In 1947, Azzam Pasha promised ‘a monumental massacre and rivers of blood,’ explaining: ‘it’s not a shame to try and fail, it’s a shame not to try.’ Today, pro-Hamas activists want them finally to succeed.”²⁸

—JP

²⁸ Judea Pearl, Post on X, January 13, 2024, <https://twitter.com/yudapearl/status/1746189123910525301> (accessed January 15, 2024).