

Continuous Jewish Presence in the Land of Israel: From Abraham to 1948

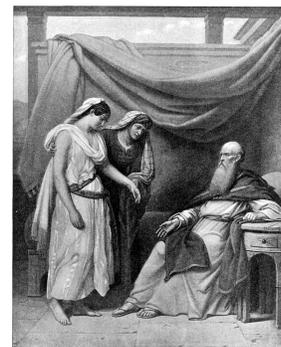
Israel's story begins with one man and his obedience to a faithful God: Abraham. Genesis 12 describes God's call to Abraham to leave his family and country, Ur, and travel to a land which God would show him. In return, God promises Abraham blessings, innumerable descendants, and land. As Abraham's story develops, God reveals the boundaries of this promised land, Israel (Genesis 13:14-18). Miraculously, Abraham and Sarah have a son, Isaac, and their line continues through his son, Jacob. From Jacob emerge twelve sons which become the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

1800 BCE

Abraham migrates to Israel, which is then called Canaan. His family thrives and grows in this Promised Land, not yet enjoying possession of it, for several generations. Genesis 37-50 describes the family's migration to Egypt during a famine under Pharaoh Ramses II.



As the tribes of Israel grow in Egypt, and God's promise of blessing Abraham with numerous descendants is being fulfilled, a new Pharaoh arises who does not trust the Hebrew people. For the first, and not the last, time, a ruler orders the execution of Jews, in this case, male Jewish babies. Through a series of events known as the Exodus, God uses Moses, a Hebrew raised by the Pharaoh's daughter, to bring His people out of Egypt. Where does God tell Moses to go?



1300-1200 BCE

The land of Israel. The Jewish people conquer the peoples of Canaan at the command of God and begin to settle in the land that God has bequeathed them. Soon, Israel develops from a group of tribes to a nation led by a King. The second king appointed by God, David, makes Jerusalem the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, a reality that has remained unchanged throughout history.



960 BCE



Solomon, David's son, leads Israel into a Golden Age of success, prosperity, and might. The Kingdom of Israel flourishes under his leadership for many years. In fulfillment of David's dream of building a permanent place for the Lord to dwell, King Solomon builds the First Temple in Jerusalem according to God's instructions and design. Eventually, however, the Kingdom is split into two—the Northern Kingdom, called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

722-721 BCE

The Assyrian kingdom had been gaining dominance throughout the ancient world during the reign of Solomon. In 721 BCE, the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and many Israelites were taken into captivity. But a number of Jews from the southern kingdom of Judah remained in the land (see 2 Kings 17:6-18).



586 B.C.—515 BCE



A new empire, Babylon, arose, and conquered the southern kingdom of Judah, destroying the First Temple and dragging many Jews into exile in Babylon (today's Iraq). During this period, some Jews remained in the land of Israel (see Daniel 9:7).

537-332 BCE

After Persia conquered Babylon, some Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls and the Temple (see Nehemiah and Ezra). During this time, synagogues emerged as centers for Jewish life and worship.



332-166 BCE



Alexander the Great conquered the Holy Land, which came under Greek control, but the land passes into the hands of numerous rulers over a short period of time, including the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Under Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the Seleucid period, Jews are viciously persecuted.

166-163 BCE

In 167 BCE, Judah Maccabeus leads a Jewish revolt against the Greek empire which had arisen in place of Persia, obtaining Jewish sovereignty and independence in the land of Israel for the first time since King Solomon. This victory is commemorated by the Jews every year in the holiday of Chanukah. The Jewish state, ruled by the Hasmonean Dynasty, lasts three years until it is defeated by Rome.



63 B.C.

The Roman Empire appointed governors for conquered regions, including Judea and Samaria which they had annexed to their empire. King Herod rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem to gain favor with the Jewish people, making it one of the wonders of the ancient world.

4 B.C.—30 CE



A Jewish rabbi by the name of Yeshua—Jesus—began to preach a gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins. After His crucifixion and resurrection, a new religion emerges from Judaism called Christianity.

70 CE

Depicted in the Arch of Titus, the Roman Empire destroys the Second Temple in Jerusalem and decimates the holy city.



132-135 CE



A second Jewish revolt led by Simon ben Kosiba, who is popularly known as Bar Kokba, is repressed by the Roman Empire. After the defeat of the Bar Kokba rebellion, no Jews are permitted to enter Jerusalem. The Roman Emperor Hadrian merges the province of Roman Syria with Judea and calls it *Syria Palestina*, after Israel's ancient enemy the Philistines, and builds the city *Aelia Capitolina* on the ruins of the Jews' beloved city Jerusalem. In the centuries to follow, the Mishnah will be completed and the Talmud compiled. Jewish life will be centered in Galilee. This is the first time the term *Palestina* – or *Palestine* – is used to reference the Holy Land.

313-637 CE

After Emperor Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Empire, Jews lose the relative autonomy they had and are subject to severe taxes and persecution. They are only allowed to enter Jerusalem once a year, on Tisha B'av, the ninth of Av, to mourn the Temple's destruction.

637-1095 CE

Four years after Mohammed's death, Muslim forces capture Jerusalem and rule over what is now called Palestine. Under Muslim rule, Jews are "dhimmis" (second-class citizens) yet they are permitted to worship freely and own property, provided they paid additional taxes.



1095-1187 CE

The Crusaders conquer Jerusalem and establish the Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders. Mobs march under the sign of the cross, sweeping through Jewish communities looting, raping, and massacring tens of thousands of Jews on the road to Jerusalem. However, Jewish communities grow in Rafah, Gaza, Ashkelon, Jaffa, and Caesarea.

1290

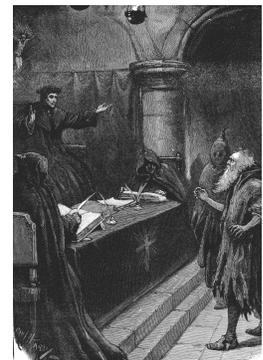
Jews in England and France are robbed and expelled from their countries.

1348

Jews, blamed for the Black Plague which lasts until 1351, are persecuted and massacred throughout Europe.

1481-1492

During the Spanish Inquisition, Jews are persecuted, killed, and forced to convert. Many Jews flee Spain to the land of Israel.



1520-1625

Jews continue to arrive in Israel, although they are harshly treated by the Ottoman Empire ruling at the time. Burgeoning Jewish communities in Safed and Jerusalem flourish.

1834

A pogrom by Muslim Arabs against the Jewish communities in Safed and Hebron results in the massacre of Jews.

1882-1903

Waves of Jews emigrate to Israel in the First Aliyah. Hebrew, the ancient language of the Jewish people, is revived as a spoken language.



1897



Theodor Herzl, considered by many to be the founder of Zionism— a nationalist and political movement of Jews and Jewish culture that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland as a modern nation-state in the historical homeland of the Jewish people—organizes the First Zionist Congress. He works alongside Reverend William Henry Hechler to advocate for the establishment of the state of Israel as the place promised by God to belong to the Jewish people forever as their rightful homeland.

1800s–1900s

Pogroms, violent attacks against Jews, increase in Russia and Eastern Europe. Many Jews flee their home countries to return to the land of Israel. By the beginning of the 19th century, there are at least 10,000 Jews living in their ancient homeland under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. By the mid-20th century, over 17,000 Jews lived in then-Palestine.

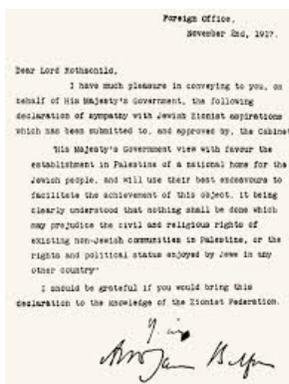
1901–1909

Jewish immigrants began to flood into then-Palestine, and purchase land from wealthy Arab landholders at exorbitant costs through the Jewish National Fund. The land had been mostly barren and sparsely populated for centuries and to most it seemed worthless except to the Jews who dreamt of coming home. In 1907, the first kibbutz, an agricultural community in which all property is shared, is established.



In 1909, many Jews band together to purchase twelve acres of sand dunes, leaving the crowded city of Jaffa and founding Tel Aviv.

1917



Christian Zionists within the British government, including the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, help rally support for the Zionist cause. Finally, in 1917, Lord Arthur Balfour sends a letter to Jewish leaders pledging Britain’s commitment to establishing the Jewish state. The Balfour Declaration becomes Israel’s first modern miracle on the path to independence and rebirth.

1920

During World War I, Britain and the Allied powers defeat the Ottoman Turks and divide its Middle Eastern empire into territories set aside for future states. The British promise Palestine to the Jewish people and assume responsibility for guarding it through the process of Jewish statehood. This temporary stewardship is entrusted to Britain by the League of Nations in 1920 at the San Remo Conference and is called the Mandate for Palestine, making the Jewish people’s right to a homeland of over 46,000 sq. mi. in Palestine binding under international law.



1920–1939

Despite Jewish attempts to build bridges of dialogue and respect with the Arabs, focusing on the Zionist hope to live in peace with the Arabs, violence breaks out against the Jews. Local Arabs massacre the Jews living in the world's oldest Jewish community, Hebron.

This violence is encouraged by Haj El Amin Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, who tells the Arabs of Palestine that the Jews intended to conquer Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem. The first major Arab riots against the Jews of Palestine occur in 1920, with violent attacks against Jews in Jerusalem and in the Galilee occurring sporadically for years. Nazi Germany gives aid to the riots by providing weapons and funds.



1937

The Arab riots of the 1920s and 1930s prompt Britain in 1937 to once again partition the land in the British Peel Commission with 80% going to an Arab state and 20% to a Jewish state. But Palestinian Arab leaders refuse to accept this partition, and it doesn't materialize.

1939–1945



During World War II, six million Jews are exterminated by Nazi Germany and its allies.

1947

The United Nations adopts a partition plan for Palestine that divides the land west of the Jordan River into two states roughly equal in size but distinctly unequal in value. Arab leaders had already made clear they would not accept any plan that included a Jewish state, and almost immediately make good on their threat to launch large-scale attacks on Jewish communities. Hundreds of Jews, of 650,000 living under the Palestine Mandate in Israel at the time, are killed in riots and other terror attacks between November 29, 1947 and the date Israel officially declares its independence on May 14, 1948.



1948



The Jewish desire for an independent homeland in their own country is finally realized in 1948, after nearly 2,000 years of exile and foreign domination. As a nation-state for the Jewish people, modern Israel becomes a country specifically dedicated to preserving the Jewish culture, language, and religion of Jews from throughout the Diaspora. As a unique ethnic group with strong ties to the Land of Israel, the Jews finally are able to come home.