



# Whose Land Is It?

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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# The Palestinian Position

- Israel has no claims on the land because the Palestinians are the indigenous people in the region, and thus, should be afforded the right to return to their homeland.
- In a 2012 speech, Mahmoud Abbas said, “The nation of Palestine upon the land of Canaan had a 7,000-year history B.C.E. This is the truth, which must be understood, and we have to note it, in order to say: ‘Netanyahu, you are incidental in history. We are the people of history. We are the owners of history.’”



# Genesis 12:1-3

**1** Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; **2** And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; **3** And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”



# Genesis 22:17; 17:8

**17** indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

**8** I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

## Deuteronomy 11:24

**“Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your border will be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea.”**







# After Rome Began Their Domination

- Jews twice fought for their independence, but both revolts failed.
  - The 1<sup>st</sup> (A.D. 66-73) saw the destruction of Jerusalem.
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> (A.D. 132-135) also ended in failure, with the Romans banishing Jews from Jerusalem, renaming the city Aelia Capitolina the nation Syria Palestina, and building a pagan temple on the site where the Jewish temple had stood.

What happened to Israel between these revolts and the modern period?

# Roman Rule (135-313 A.D.)

- There was a Roman ban on Jews living in Jerusalem, so Galilee became the center of Jewish life.
- **The Sanhedrin reconvened in Tiberias.**
- A nasi (prince) was appointed to lead the Jewish people both in the land of Israel and the Diaspora.
- **Despite initial economic hardship, the Jewish community in Galilee was reinforced by returning exiles.**

## By the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century...

- The Romans began to ignore their ban on Jerusalem, so Jewish people returned to their holy city.
- Archaeological remains of synagogues in the region have demonstrated a continuing and vital Jewish presence throughout the land.
- During this period, Rabbinic law was codified, and there was a significant Jewish population and economic growth.



# Byzantine Rule (313-636 A.D.)

- Began as a continuation of Roman rule when Emperor Constantine left Rome and established his capital in Byzantium (renamed Constantinople).
- When Constantine “converted” to Christianity and made it the religion of the Byzantine Empire, the majority of the population of Israel also “became Christian.”

# Helena, Mother of Constantine

She identified alleged holy sites and churches were built in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Galilee.

Constantine enacted restrictive legislation, including prohibiting Jews from owning non-Jewish slaves, proselytizing non-Jews, and marrying Christian women.





# Nevertheless...

- A significant population of Jewish people remained in the land.
- Julian the Apostate's (360-363) ascension to the throne brought new opportunities for Jews, and he even wanted to rebuild the temple.
- His reign was short, however, and after his death the government enacted severe persecution of the Jews.
- The Theodosian Code (late 4<sup>th</sup> century) made anti-Jewish laws part of the area's justice system.



## In 614 A.D.

- The Jewish population supported the Persian invasion of the land, and the Persians showed their appreciation by giving them administration of Jerusalem.
- When the Byzantines recaptured the city, they expelled the Jewish populace.
- Nevertheless, the entire Byzantine period saw a significant Jewish presence in the land, so much so that the Talmud of the land of Israel was completed and codified in Galilee by the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

# Arab Rule (636-1099)

- Islamic conquest of the land began a period of 1300 years of continued foreign rule by various empires and governments.
- The Arabs were the first of these rulers; they began their conquest from Arabia, and the Arab caliphs ruled Israel for 400 years, 1<sup>st</sup> from Damascus, then Baghdad, and finally, Egypt.
- For the first 300 years, the Omayyad Dynasty, based in Damascus, governed as military rulers and did not establish an Arab population in the land of Israel.

# By the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century of Muslim Rule

- Syrians, Mesopotamians, and Persians began to profess Islam.
- These multiethnic converts then moved to the land of Israel and began to spread Islam and the Arabic language to the locals.
- Initially with the Muslim conquest, Jewish life in the land improved.
- Jews were protected as “people of the book,” in the sense that they were given security and religious freedom in exchange for taxes and property.



# However, by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century...

- Restrictions against Jews were introduced, which included heavy taxes, abridgement of rights, change in legal status, and limitations of religious observances.
- Jewish people moved to towns and became artisans, while scribes known as Masoretes worked on the biblical text in Tiberias.
- There was also considerable Jewish population in Jerusalem, consisting mostly of Rabinnic scholars.

## By the 10<sup>th</sup> Century...

- 300,000 Jews lived in the land of Israel.
- Muslim authorities continued to persecute the Jewish community, leading to a decline in size by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with a loss of organizational and religious cohesiveness.





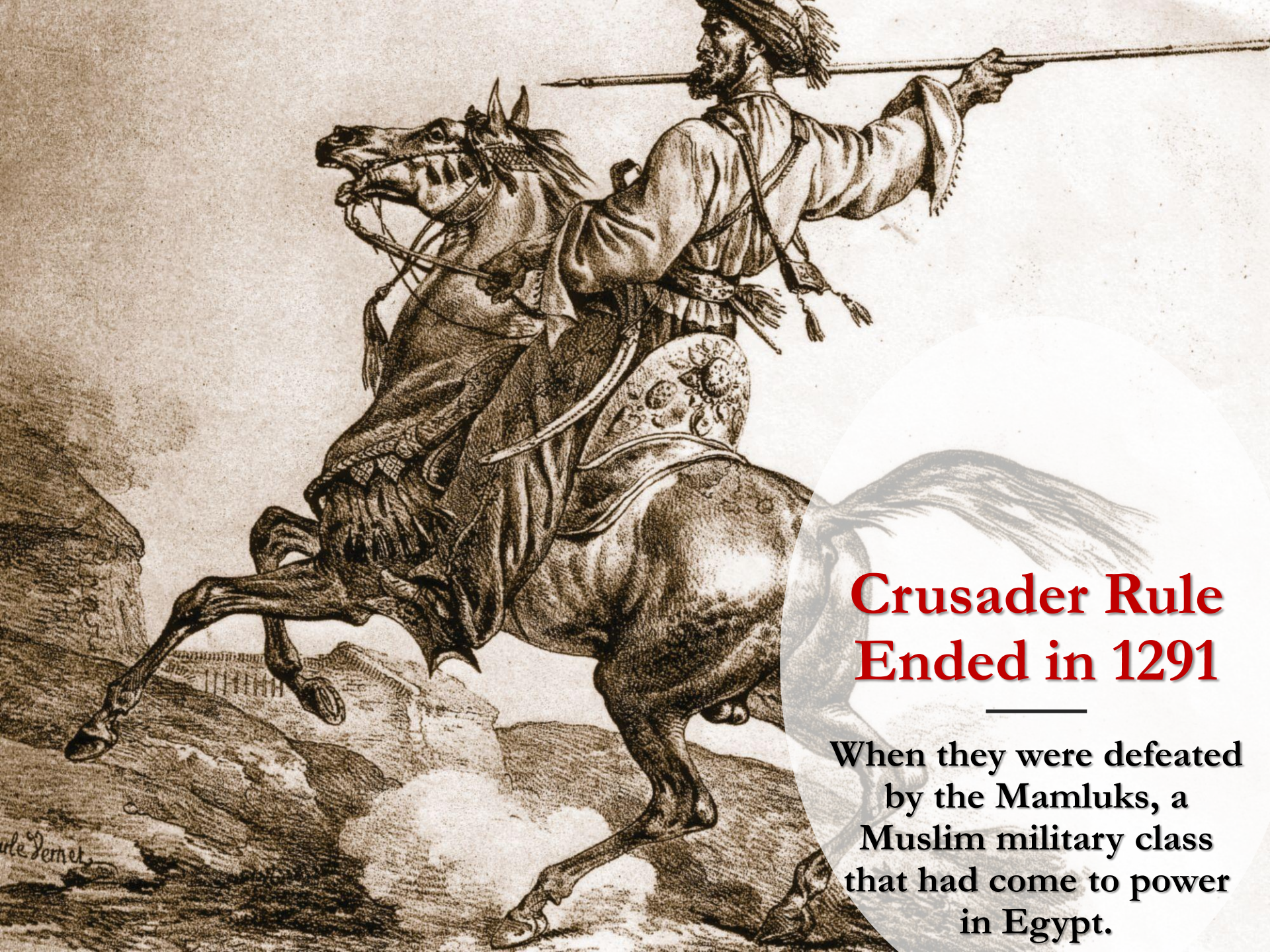
# The Crusader Period (1099-1291)

- Following an appeal by Pope Urban II to recover the Holy Land from Muslims, Crusaders captured Jerusalem in July of 1099 and massacred the non-Christian population.
- As Jews attempted to defend their quarter, they were either burnt to death or sold into slavery.
- The Jewish population dropped dramatically; by 1167 there were only 1,000 Jewish families in the land.

# The Crusaders Settled in the Land

- Pilgrims arrived from Europe; increasingly, Jews sought to return to their land.
- When Saladin (a Kurdish officer from Iraq who had become the sultan of Egypt) defeated the Crusaders in 1187, he called for Jews the world over to settle in the land, which led to significant population growth, primarily in the city of Acre.
- Jewish population in Jerusalem continued to decline.





## Crusader Rule Ended in 1291

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When they were defeated  
by the Mamluks, a  
Muslim military class  
that had come to power  
in Egypt.



# Mamluk Rule (1291-1516)

- Mamluks feared the return of Crusaders by sea, so they destroyed the seaports of Jaffa and Akko, which hampered trade with Europe.
- Before long, the land of Israel became a desolate province, governed from Damascus.
- The cities became ruins, Jerusalem was deserted, and the small Jewish communities that remained lived in abject poverty.

# Not to Mention...

- Those remaining in the land experienced plagues, locust invasions, and earthquakes.
- By the end of the Middle Ages, as Mamluk rule came to an end, the Holy Land had become a devastated and dismal place, a far cry from the land of milk and honey described in Scripture.

# **Ottoman Rule (1517-1917)**

- **Ottoman Turks defeated the Mamluks so that by 1517 their empire included Egypt, Syria, Iraq, western Arabia, and the land of Israel.**
- **The Turks had a tolerant attitude towards the Jews, leading to a Jewish return to the land, in cities such as Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safad.**





# Ottomans Were More Efficient

- However, after the death of Suleiman the Magnificent in 1566, the land began to languish once again.
- **Palestine was viewed solely as a source of revenue and taxed heavily.**
- Once again, Jews took flight, so that by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there were about 7,000 in the land.

# To Make Matters Worse...

- By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the land was owned by absentee landlords, who leased it to destitute tenant farmers, who were heavily taxed.
- To avoid paying a tree tax that the Ottomans imposed, many of the trees were cut down, robbing the land of its forests.
- As a result, the agriculturally rich land became a swamp in the north and a desert in the south.



# By 1800

- The total population of Palestine was less than 300,000, of which 25,000 were Christian and 5,000 Jewish.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europe and America began to take an interest in the land again, establishing schools of archaeology in the land.
- The Suez Canal increases traffic and commerce; a road is built between Jerusalem and Jaffa; by 1840 the Jewish population had doubled, and by 1856 there were 17,000 Jews in the land.

# By the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Enough Jews had returned to cause overcrowding in the old city of Jerusalem.
- As a result, in 1860, Jews built the first neighborhood outside the city walls; in the next 20 years, 7 more neighborhoods were established forming the beginnings of the new city of Jerusalem.
- By 1880, 25,000 Jews lived in the land, and the city of Jerusalem had a Jewish majority, consisting almost entirely of ultra-orthodox Jews.

**Pause...**

**Have we seen any “Palestinians” yet?**

**What about a state or nation called  
Palestine?**





# The 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Saw the ~~beginning~~ of Jewish interest in a large scale return to the land.
- Many were shocked at the plight of their ancient homeland.
- In what condition was the land?

# 1. Palestine was a Wasteland

- “Under the Ottoman Empire, the policy of defoliation continued; the hillsides were denuded of trees and the valleys robbed of their topsoil.”
- According to Peters, an 1827 German encyclopedia described Palestine as “desolate and roamed through by Arab bands of robbers.”

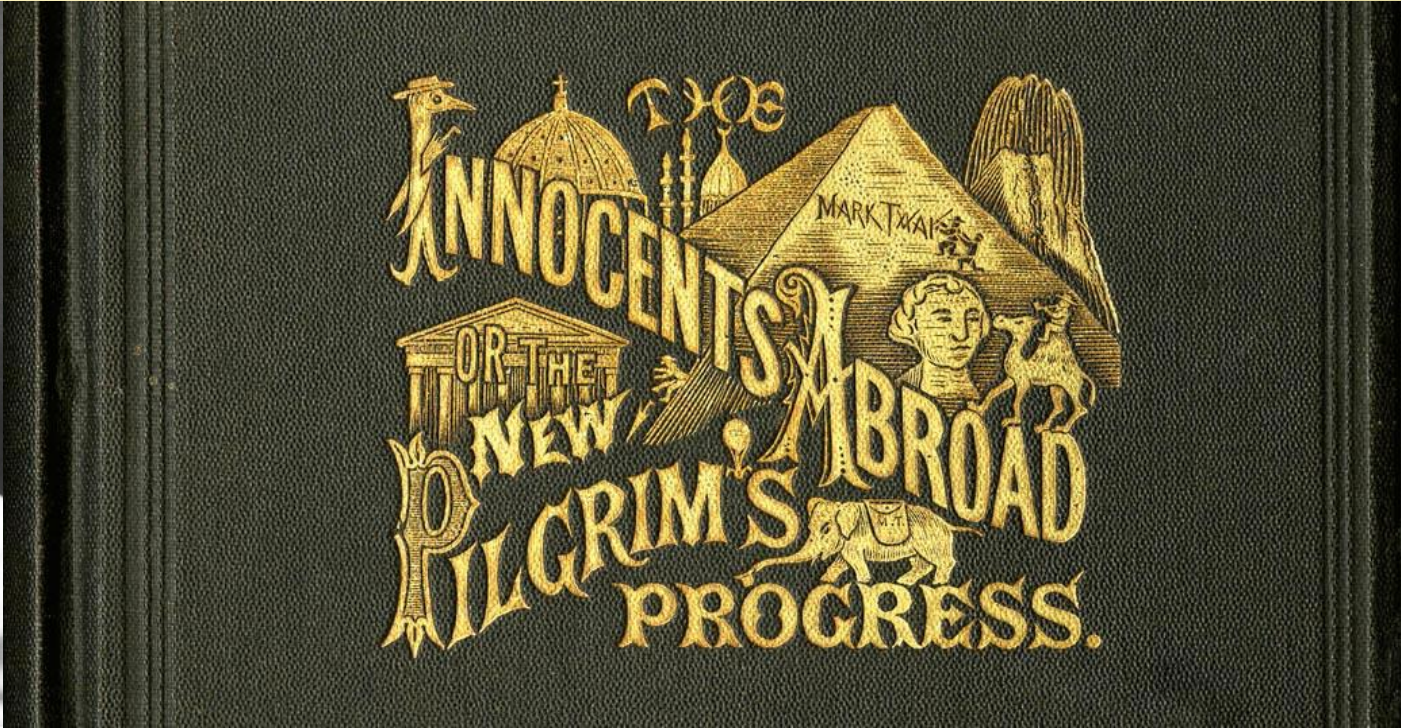
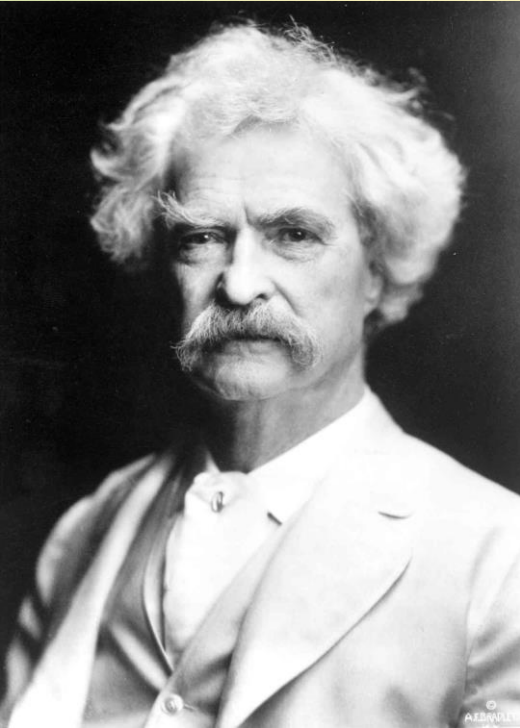
## 2. Palestine had Become Depopulated

- The British consul in Palestine reported in 1857 that “the country is in a considerable degree empty of inhabitants and therefore its greatest need is that of a body of population.”
- Writing of his 1867 visit to the Holy Land, Mark Twain described the nature of the Jezreel Valley:

“There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent—not for thirty miles in either direction. There are two or three small clusters of Bedouin tents, but not a single permanent habitation. One may ride ten miles hereabouts and not see ten human beings.”



# Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad* (1869)



“Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes.”

### 3. Palestine was a Melting Pot

- By 1882, Palestine population had shrunk to 260,000 Arabs and 25,000 Jews.
- Although the predominant population was considered Arab, that was more of a linguistic definition than an ethnic one.
- After the Arab conquest, various people groups entered the land and became part of the population.



## Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial*

“Among the peoples who have been counted as ‘indigenous Palestinian Arabs’ are Balkans, Greeks, Syrians, Latins, Egyptians, Turks, Armenians, Italians, Persians, Kurds, Germans, Afghans, Circassians, Bosnians, Sudanese, Samaritans, Algerians, Motawila, and Tartars.”

Encyclopedia Britannica (1911) describes the population of Palestine as composed of a widely differing group of inhabitants with no less than fifty languages.



# The Encyclopedia stated:

- “It is no easy task to write concisely...on the ethnology of Palestine.”
- Thus, an official British historical analysis published in 1920 stated that the people living west of the Jordan “are not Arabs, but only Arabic speaking,” and are of “mixed race.”

## 4. Palestine Consisted of a Migratory Population

- For centuries, Muslim inhabitants of Palestine consisted of immigrants and peasants who had originated in other lands.
- Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslims from Egypt and Turkey, Algerians from Damascus, Kurds, and Berbers all settled in Palestine.
- It has been deduced that 25% of the Muslim population present in 1882 had arrived only after 1831.

# By the Close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Palestine had not had an indigenous government since the fall of the Jewish commonwealth in A.D. 73; instead, it had been ruled for 2,000 years by foreign, imperial governments.
- The land was barren, inhabited by a migratory, mixed population.
- The time appeared ripe for the Jewish people to return to their ancient homeland, prompting the first *Aliyah*.



# Precursors to Zionism

- In eastern Europe, anti-Semitism was commonplace.
- In Russia, for example, Jews were forced to live within a prescribed area and Jewish boys were conscripted into the czarist military at age 10 for 25 year terms.
- Jewish communities regularly encountered *pogroms*, government-sponsored riots against the Jews; Jewish people were assaulted, raped, and murdered.

# In Western Europe...

- After centuries of persecution and oppression, Jews were being granted citizenship.
- As a result, Jewish people were assimilating into the European cultures around them.
- Traditional Jews began to worry about a loss of national identity and culture.

# Both Religious and Secular Jews

- Called for a return to the Jewish homeland.
- **Theodore Herzl formed the World Zionist Organization and convened the World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897.**
- He anticipated that within 50 years a revived Jewish state would exist in what was then known as Palestine.





# Anti-Semitism as a Motivator

- On April 6-7, 1903, state sponsored attacks (under czarist rule) against Jews occurred in Moldova—mobs murdered 49 Jews, injured 500, destroyed 700 homes, and 600 businesses were looted.
- Another pogrom on October 19-20, 1905 left 19 Jews dead and 56 injured.
- Many Jews fled to the United States, but some chose to flee to Israel, including David Ben-Gurion (Israel's 1<sup>st</sup> Prime Minister), which came to be known as the second *Aliyah*.

# Fiddler

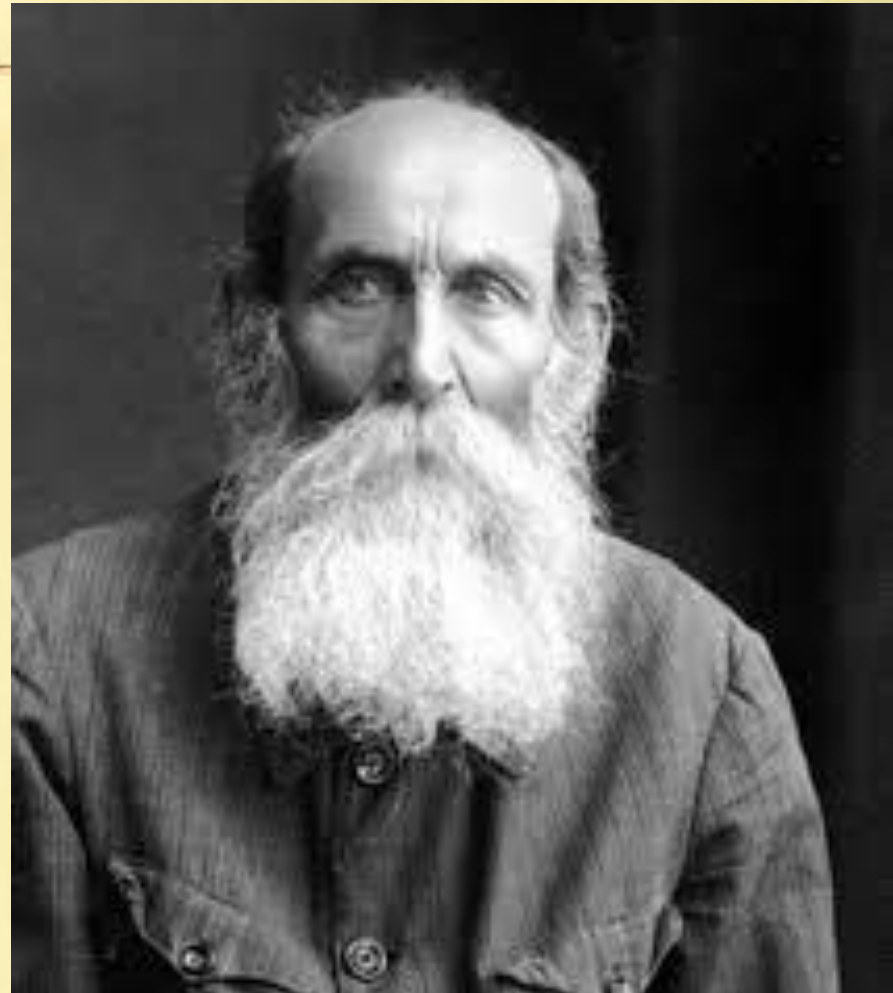
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# Roof



# An Important Immigrant: A.D. Gordon

- Gordon arrived from the Ukraine and articulated a philosophy of labor (Avodah Ivrit), which called upon Jews to work the soil themselves rather than employing others.
- His goal was to restore the land to usefulness through Jewish sweat and tears.





### **3 Misconceptions About Zionism**

- 1. Zionism is a colonial movement**
- 2. Zionism is imperialistic and seeks to conquer Arab territory**
- 3. Zionism is racist and hateful of Arabs**

# 1. Zionism is a colonial movement

- Zionist settlers strove to be farmers and laborers.
- Emir Feisal, King of Greater Syria, wrote in 1919:  
“The Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with the deepest sympathies on the Zionist movement...We will wish the Jews a hearty welcome home...We are working together for a reformed and revised Near East and our two movements complete one another. The Jewish movement is nationalist and not imperialist.”

## 2. Zionism is imperialistic

- If this were true:
  - Israel would have never returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for peace in 1979
  - Or offered the return of the Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for a full peace agreement
  - Nor would they have offered all of Gaza and 97% of the West Bank to the Palestinians in exchange for a full peace agreement





צילום: יח' אווירית



### 3. Zionism is racist

- Israel's democratic society is evident in its 1.7 million Arab citizens who have more freedom than Arabs in any Arab country.
- The state of Israel has been scrupulous in protecting the religious, civil, and political rights of Christians and Muslims in the state.

# Immigrants of the Second *Aliyah*

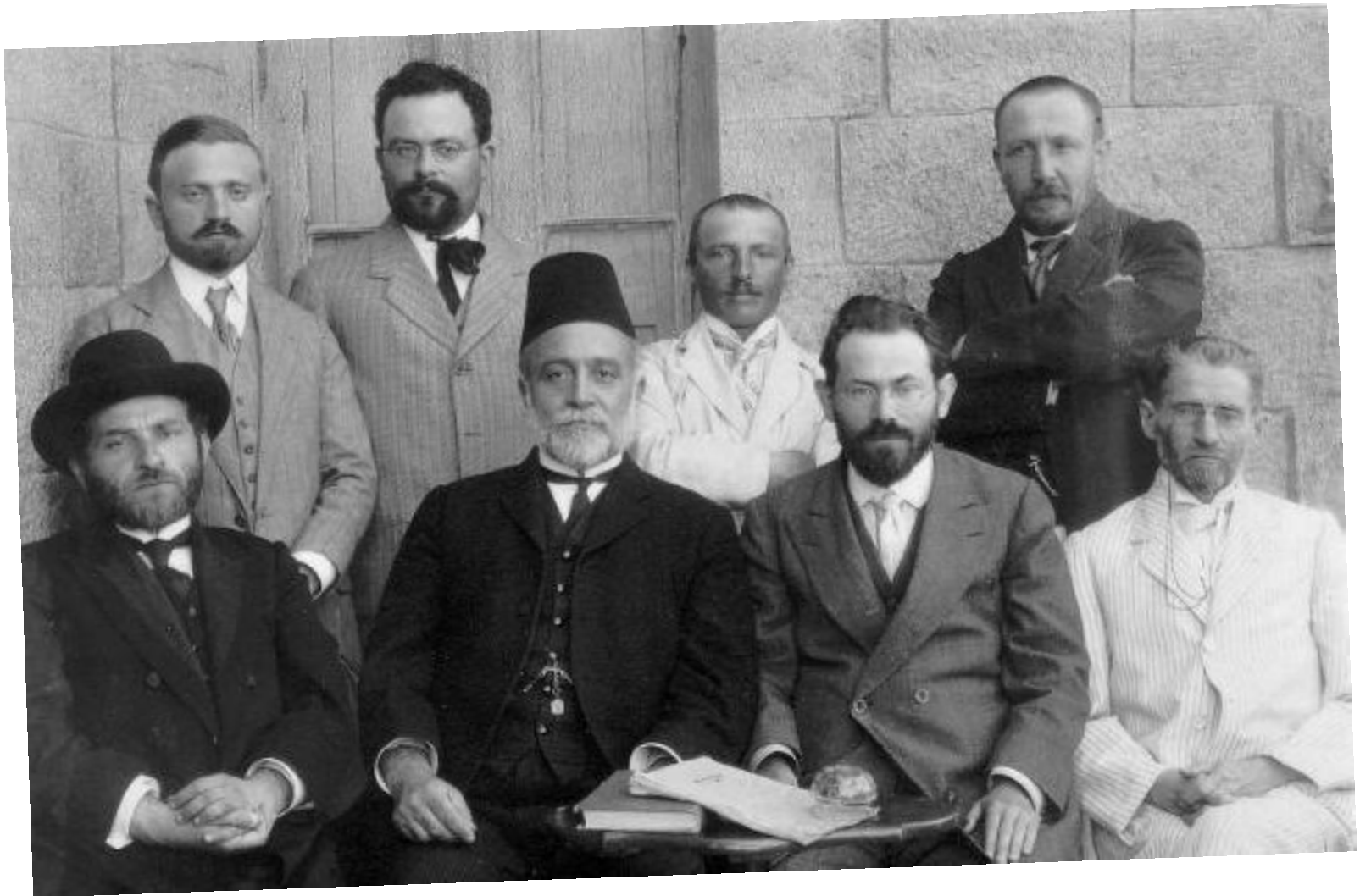
- Did the backbreaking work of draining swamps in the Galilee, as well as irrigating and reforesting the barren areas of Judah.
- Embracing socialist ideas, the pioneers formed *kibbutzim* based on strict equality and communal property.
- These settlements, purchased at exorbitant prices from Arab landowners, became the key to Jewish expansion, unity, and defense.











**The 1<sup>st</sup> Committee of the Hebrew Language, Jerusalem 1912**



# Another 40,000 Jews Arrived

- Hebrew was firmly rooted as the language of the settlers.
- Hebrew newspapers and periodicals began to flourish.
- The future for Zionist growth was hopeful despite Turkish reluctance to support the new movement.
- But World War I would bring drastic change to the Middle East generally and the Zionist movement specifically.

# **World War I**

## **Disrupted the Return Effort**

- **The Ottoman Turks were suspicious of Jewish settlers and made life difficult for them; food shortages caused starvation, and 12,000 settlers fled the region.**
- **The war also brought Great Britain into the fold, which would drastically change the fortune of the Jewish people.**
- **They would issue the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917.**

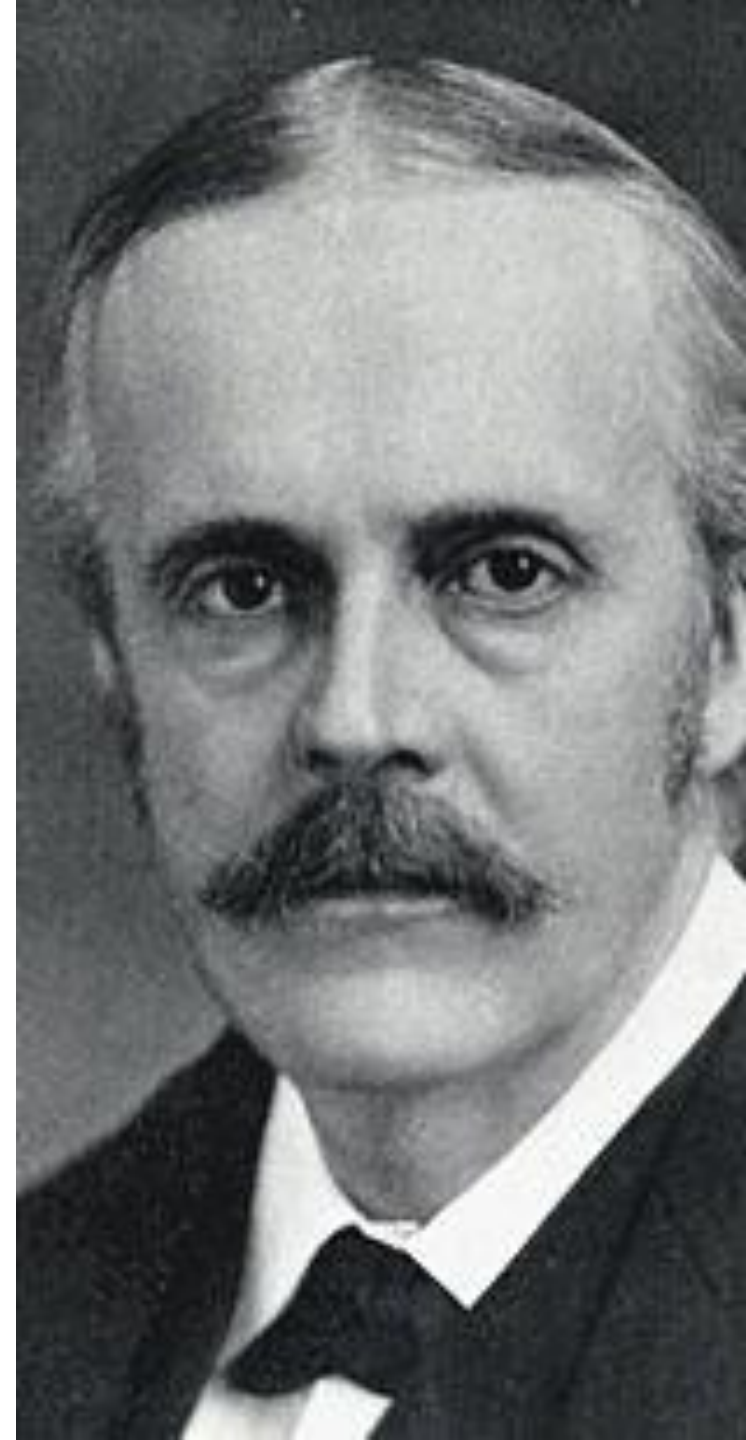
## **Arthur Balfour, British foreign secretary**

**“His Majesty’s Government views 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 another country.”**



# Why Did Britain Issue the Declaration?

1. They believed in national self-determination for the Jewish people.
2. They felt a sense of gratitude to Chaim Weizmann, a scientist and leader of the Zionist movement, who aided the British in the war.
3. They were motivated by political self interest, in that they thought American Jewish support for the declaration would influence the Americans to enter the war.
4. Some British leaders were influenced by their own faith in the Scriptures, including Balfour himself.



# British Forces Conquered Palestine

- Under T.E. Lawrence, and after the war, the Balfour Declaration was accepted by the League of Nations; the British Mandate for Palestine was formalized on September 23, 1922.
- The intent was to grant temporary authority to the British until a self-governing Jewish national homeland could be established in Palestine.
- The Zionist movement now had international recognition.





**Next Week:**  
**The Rocky Road to Statehood**



