

The Palestine Issue

Historical Background & Contemporary Developments



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Chapter One

*Background of the Palestine Issue
Until 1918*

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Background of the Palestine Issue Until 1918

First: Palestine

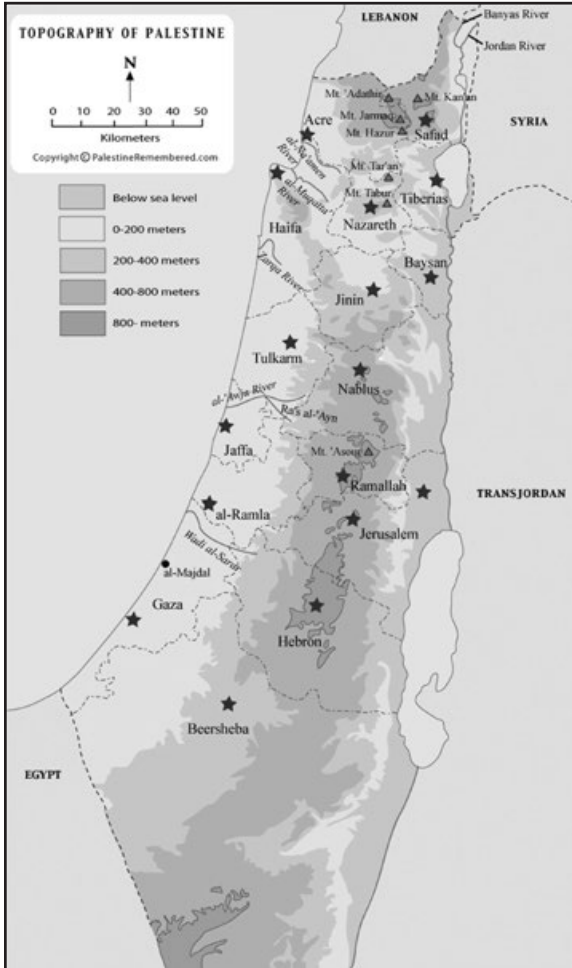
Palestine is the name given to the southwestern part of *Bilad al-Sham* (i.e., Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon), located in western Asia, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Palestine has a significant strategic location, as it is considered to act as a bridge between Asia and Africa, and as the meeting point of these two wings of the Islamic world.

Man has inhabited the land of Palestine since time immemorial, as is evidenced by various excavations and archaeological finds. It is where the first human developments took place, from pastures to agriculture. According to archeologists, Jericho, located in northeastern Palestine, was the first city that was ever built, around 8000 BC.

The oldest known name of this land is the Land of Canaan, since the first known people to have ever inhabited it were the Canaanites, who came from the Arabian Peninsula around 2500 BC. The name Palestine is derived from the Sea Peoples, who possibly came from west Asia Minor and the Aegean Sea around the 12th century BC. Their name appears in Egyptian engravings as P L S T, and the N was perhaps added later for plural. They lived in the coastal areas and they quickly mingled with the Canaanites, thus leaving no remarkable trace other than giving their name to the land.¹

As for the land of Palestine, its recognized geographical borders were only defined during the British occupation of Palestine, particularly in 1920–1923. In fact, Palestine's borders have widening and narrowed throughout history, but have generally covered the land situated between the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. In the Islamic period, the *Bilad al-Sham* was divided into *ajnad* (singular *jund* or part), and the Palestine *jund* extended from Rafah on the border with Sinai in Egypt to al-Lajjun village located 18 km northwest of Jenin city. But regardless of the divisions made during the various

Islamic eras, Palestine remained part of *Bilad al-Sham*. Such divisions never changed the sentiment of its inhabitants that they belonged to the same Muslim *Ummah* (Nation), while their allegiance to the ruling power did not waver as long as it was Muslim. In any case, Palestine has a surface area of 27,009 km² according to contemporary divisions.²



Palestine enjoys the moderate climate of the Mediterranean Sea, which is conducive to stability and productivity. It can be divided into three main sections: the coastal plain, the central mountain range, and the Jordan Rift Valley. Most of the Palestinians live on the coastal plain where the ports are located, as well as the centers of trade and economic and agricultural activity. The central mountain range encompasses the Galilee, Nablus, Hebron, and the Negev plateau, with its highest peak being Mount Meron North of Palestine, at 1,207 meters. Palestinian

peasants have lived in these mountains for thousands of years, planting grains, fruits, and vegetables, and breeding cattle. The Jordan Rift Valley, where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea, is considered to be the lowest land elevation (400 meters below sea level) on Earth. It is characterized by its warm climate all year round, and is known for producing palm trees, bananas and vegetables.

Second: Palestine's Religious Status

Palestine has a great importance in the eyes of the followers of heavenly religions (i.e., Islam, Christianity and Jadaism), who consist around 55% of the world population.

1. Palestine's Islamic Status

The land of Palestine has a privileged position in the hearts of Muslims, since:

- It is a sacred land according to the Holy Qur'an: "*O my people! Enter the holy land which Allah hath assigned unto you.*"⁷³
- It is a blessed land according to the Holy Qur'an: "*Glory to ((Allah)) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque [al-Aqsa Mosque], whose precincts We did bless,*"⁷⁴ and "*(It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon, to his order, to the land which We had blessed: for We do know all things.*"⁷⁵



• Palestine's Location in the Muslim World

- It is the site of the holy *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the first *Qiblah* [the direction Muslims face when performing their prayers] for Muslims and the third holiest mosque in Islam to which pilgrimage is encouraged, and where prayer is considered to equal 500 prayers in other mosques. In the words of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), "*Do not undertake journey but to three mosques: this mosque of*

mine, the Mosque of al-Haram [The Holy Mosque] and the Mosque of Aqsa [Bait al-Maqdis],”⁶ and also “Prayer in the inviolable mosque [in Makkah] is like 100,000 prayers [elsewhere]. And prayers in my mosque [in Medinah] is like one thousand prayers [elsewhere]. And a prayer in Bait al-Maqdis [in Jerusalem] is like five hundred prayers [elsewhere].”⁷

- Palestine is the land and birthplace of many prophets (PBUT), and was inhabited by Abraham (*Ibrahim*), Lut (*Lut*), Ishmael (*Isma‘il*), Isaac (*Ishaq*), Jacob (*Ya‘qoub*), Joseph (*Yusuf*), David (*Dawud*), Solomon (*Sulaiman*), Saleh (*Saleh*), Zachary (*Zakariyya*), John the Baptist (*Yahya*), and Jesus (*‘Issa*) (PBUT), who were all mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. It was also visited by the Prophet (SAWS) and inhabited by many Israelite prophets who were not mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, and one of the prophets who was mentioned in *Hadith Sahih* [authentic Hadith] was Joshua (*Yusha‘ bin Nun*) (PBUH).
- Palestine is the land of *Isra’*—The Night Journey, since *Allah* (SWT) chose *al-Aqsa* Mosque to be the Prophet’s destination for his night journey from The Holy Mosque, and then his *Mi‘raj* (night ascension) to Heaven. *Allah* (SWT) thus bestowed a great honor upon the land of Palestine and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, where He gathered all the prophets, who were led in prayer by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), in an indication of the continuity of the message of monotheism brought by the prophets, and the bequeathal of the heritage of these prophets, the Imamate, and the burdens of *Allah*’s message to the Islamic nation.
- According to the authentic Hadith, regarding Jerusalem: “*It is the land where they [all people] will be gathered (al-Mahshar) and resurrected (al-Manshar).*”⁸
- The *Bilad al-Sham*, of which Palestine is a part, is “*the center of the realm of Islam*”⁹ according to the authentic Hadith, and “*Certainly, safety during tribulations is to be found in al-Sham.*”¹⁰
- Those who inhabit this land are in a constant state of *jihad* [fighting in the way of *Allah*] and *ribat* [keeping guard], according to the Prophet (SAWS): “*The people of al-Sham with their wives and husbands, off-spring and slaves to the boundaries of the Peninsula are in a state of ribat (keeping guard) in the*

way of Allah (SWT). Whosoever settles in one of its cities is in a state of ribat (keeping guard), and whoever occupies a border outpost in it, is in a state of struggle in the way of Allah [jihad].”¹¹

- According to the authentic Hadith the Victorious Group, which shall adhere to the truth until the Day of Judgment, lives in *al-Sham*, particularly in Jerusalem and its surroundings.¹²

Hence, it is not surprising in the least that the hearts of Muslims are attached to this blessed Holy Land, for which they are ready to sacrifice their lives.

2. Palestine’s Christian Status

Christians call Palestine the Holy Land, because, according to the Christian faith, Jesus Christ and his disciples were born and lived there; and most of the events mentioned in the New Testament and many of the events mentioned in the Old Testament took place there. According to the Christian heritage, the Christian Annunciation was launched from northern and central Palestine, then spread all over the world.

Palestine contains many holy places for Christians; foremost among them is the city of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, where the Church of the Nativity stands. There is also the city of Nazareth where the Virgin Mary received the Annunciation of Christ’s birth, and where Christ grew up; and the city of Jerusalem, where Christ pursued his calling and walked his last steps in the Via Dolorosa (Latin for Way of Grief), and according to the Christian faith, where his “crucifixion and burial” took place. Christians believe in the existence of Christ’s tomb in the Church of the Resurrection in the city, considered one of the most important churches in the world. West of Jenin, there is the church of Burqin or St. George’s Church, the place where Jesus healed ten leprosy patients. Christians revere different places in the Galilee, especially around Lake Tiberias and on the banks of the Jordan River. The importance of this city as a sacred city did not diminish except after 590 CE, when the throne of Pope Gregory the first became the power center of Christianity, and Rome took precedence over Jerusalem; and the Bishop of Jerusalem started to be ranked fifth in the hierarchy of the Catholic priesthood. Nevertheless, Palestine (the Holy Land) continued to permeate the lives and imagination of Christians in general.

3. Palestine's Jewish Status¹³

Jerusalem (“*Yerushalayim*” in religious terms) occupies a central place in the Jewish conscience. For after it was seized by David, the Ark of the Covenant was transferred to it; afterwards Solomon, built his temple in it. In the religious heritage, the city is called “Zion.” It includes Mount Zion, the tomb of David, and the “Wailing Wall” (al-Buraq Wall i.e., the Western Wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque). The city became a center of Jewish religion, toward which Jews face in their prayers. Its name is mentioned in their prayers, especially during the celebration of Easter, when they repeat the chant: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

Jewish legislation and heritage have imparted to the city of Jerusalem many laws and legends. The Talmud describes it as the navel of the world; it says that its beauty is not matched by any other city, that God created Jerusalem when He created the world, and that He established the Tent of Meeting in it.

According to the Jewish faith, Jerusalem was depicted as the place where the blessings of heaven will flow, and from there they will be distributed to the rest of the world. It would be, also, the “Shekinah,” which denotes the dwelling or the settling of the Divine Presence of God, especially, in the “Temple” in Jerusalem. Hills surround Jerusalem so that the “forces of darkness” will not reach it; while the Shekinah angels guard it. In Judaism, nothing separates Jerusalem from the God, and all Yisrael’s group prayers ascend on high through it. In addition, Jerusalem plays an important role in “repairing the world” (Tikkun); for its walls will rise and it will come near the divine throne. Thus, the balance will return to the world, and to the world of emanations (Sephiret). Jerusalem is also one of Palestine’s four holy cities, where Jewish prayers should never stop (in addition to Hebron, Safed and Tiberias.)

Nevertheless, rabbinic Judaism forbids the return to Palestine (Eretz Yisrael), including Jerusalem, except in the last days. Reform Judaism has tried to soften the nationalist side of Judaism by turning the idea of “next year in Jerusalem” to a moral idea, similar to that of the golden age, the dream of happiness and paradise. However, Zionism interpreted the religious slogan literally and turned it into a political slogan.

Third: Palestine Throughout History

There are traces that indicate that humans have inhabited Palestine since the Old Stone Age (500 thousand–14 thousand BC). Moreover, it appears that there existed a civilization in the Middle Stone Age (14 thousand–8 thousand BC), known as the Natufian civilization. When the Canaanites came from the Arabian Peninsula (around 2500 BC), they became the region's indigenous inhabitants, building no less than 200 cities and towns in Palestine, such as Bisan, Ashkelon, Acre, Haifa, Hebron, Ashdod, Beersheba, and Bethlehem.¹⁴

Historians believe that most of Palestine's current inhabitants, particularly in rural areas, are the descendants of the Canaanite, Amorite and Philistine tribes, and also of the Arab tribes that settled in Palestine both before and after the Islamic openings (conquests).^{*} All these peoples blended into a single fabric, brought together by Islam and the Arabic language, under an Islamic rule that lasted 13 centuries.

The coming of Abraham (PBUH) to Palestine (around 1900 BC) became a shining light for monotheism (*al-Tawhid*) in this blessed land. He was a contemporary of the ruler of Jerusalem, the Melki Sadek, who was apparently a monotheist and his friend. The Father of Prophets, Abraham, played an important role in spreading the message of monotheism, and it seems that he was not met with any adversity on the part of the inhabitants of Palestine and did not have to leave because of his religion or his calling. He thus stayed in Palestine, where he moved about freely, until he died in the city that bore his name, *al-Khalil* or Hebron. His sons the prophets followed in his footsteps; Isma'il (PBUH) settled in Mecca, and Isaac (PBUH) and his son Jacob (PBUH) settled in Palestine. Jacob had twelve sons, who were known as the Israelites (Jacob was known by the name of Israel). They immigrated to Egypt, where they and their descendants settled and were prosecuted by the Pharaohs for several centuries. *Allah* (SWT) sent them Moses (*Musa*) (PBUH) (in the 13th century BC) to save them from

^{*} The Muslims usually use the term *Futuh*, which literally means "openings"; as the term conquests may not give the exact meaning, because it implies using force against societies and nations. Using force by Muslims was only confined against tyrant regimes that prevent spreading Islam. While in Islam, it is absolutely forbidden to force people to convert to Islam, as they have the full choice, either to convert or to continue on their own religions and believes.

Pharaoh's oppression, and smote Pharaoh and his soldiers. However, since the Israelites in those times had grown used to humiliation and cowardice, they refused to go to the Holy Land and told Moses: "*Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch).*"¹⁵

Moses (PBUH) passed away before he entered Palestine, and when a strong generation of Israelites emerged 40 years later, they were led by Joshua (PBUH) (around 1190 BC) and crossed the Jordan River. The Israelites were able to seize control of some parts of northeastern Palestine. But the 150 years that followed witnessed much chaos, conflict, and religious and moral depravity among the Israelites, until the coming of King Saul (*Talut*), who was able to achieve victory over his enemies.

The arrival of King David (PBUH) (around 1004 BC), who succeeded King Saul, heralded the beginning of a new stage for monotheism in the Blessed Land. He pursued his war against non-believers in the Holy Land, whom he yielded into submission. He was able to move his capital to Jerusalem in 995 BC and controlled most of Palestine, except for most of the coastal areas which did not submit to him. His rule lasted until 963 BC, when he was succeeded by his son Solomon (PBUH) (963–923 BC), during whose reign Palestine flourished, enjoying a strong renaissance. *Allah* (SWT) harnessed the winds and the Jinn for Solomon, and gave him powers not matched by any who came after him. David and Solomon's reign was a golden age, during which Palestine was ruled for around 80 years under the banner of faith and monotheism before the Muslim conquest.

After Solomon's death, his kingdom split into two separate states that were hostile to one another for most of the time that followed. The Kingdom of Israel was established north of Palestine in 923–721 BC (it was scornfully described as a rump kingdom by Encyclopedia Britannica).¹⁶ It grew weak and corruption prevailed among its rulers, before it fell to the Assyrians, led by Sargon II, and was destroyed. Its inhabitants, the Israelites, were moved to Harran, Khabur, Kurdistan, and Persia, and were replaced by the Aramaeans. Thus, no trace remained of the 10 Children of Israel who formed this state. As for the Kingdom of Judah, it lasted from 923 BC to 586 BC. Its capital was Jerusalem, and it suffered from several weaknesses falling under foreign influence for long

periods of time. It was subsequently defeated by Pharaoh Shishaq of Egypt (near the end of the 10th century BC) and then by the Philistines during Jehoram's reign (849–842 BC). It also had to pay tributes to the Assyrians, and finally fell to the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, taking around 40 thousand Jews as prisoners. This kingdom ultimately fell in 586 BC.

The Torah mentions, in the words of Isaiah, one of their prophets, the evils of the Israelites for which they deserved to witness the destruction of their kingdom: *“Woe to a sinful nation, a people heavy with iniquity, evildoing seed, corrupt children. They forsook the Lord; they provoked the Holy One of Israel; they drew backwards”* (Isaiah-Chapter 1), and: *“And the land has deceived because of its inhabitants, for they transgressed instructions, infringed statutes, broke the everlasting covenant”* (Isaiah-Chapter 24).¹⁷

Therefore, the Kingdom of the Israelites in Palestine lasted no longer than four centuries, during which they mostly ruled part of its land in a weak and fragmented manner, often submitting to the influence and control of strong neighboring countries. Meanwhile, the Canaanites and other inhabitants of Palestine remained on their land.

When the Persian Emperor Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Palestine, a small number of them went back and lived side by side with the Palestinians. During 539–332 BC, Jerusalem was granted some autonomy while still being under Persian control, which was followed by the Hellenistic conquest of Palestine in 332–63 BC. Jewish affairs were managed by a “High Priest,” and, starting 164 BC, the Jews managed to achieve self-governance that would strengthen and weaken, depending on how the conflict among the major powers progressed in Palestine at the time (e.g., Roman, Ptolemaic, Seleucid, etc.).

The Romans were able to control Palestine in 63 BC and submitted it to their direct rule starting in the year 6 CE, when they abolished Jewish autonomy in Jerusalem. The Jews rebelled in 66–70 CE, but the Roman General Titus crushed their rebellion and destroyed the Temple. The Jews rebelled again in 132–135 CE, but the Roman leader Julius Severus invaded and destroyed Jerusalem, and the Roman Emperor Hadrian established atop its ruins a new city called Aelia

Capitolina, which was later known as Aelia, Hadrian's first name. Jews were prohibited from entering Jerusalem for nearly 200 years after that,¹⁸ and their numbers dwindled relative to the other inhabitants throughout the 18 centuries that followed. Meanwhile, the indigenous inhabitants (Canaanites and the Arab tribes that mingled with them) remained settled in the country before, during, and after the presence of the Israelites, and to this day.

The Byzantine state took charge of the eastern part of the Roman state starting in 394 CE and maintained its control over Palestine, with the exception of short periods of Persian control, until the Islamic openings of Palestine in 15 AH/ 636 CE.

Fourth: Palestine in the Islamic Era

Before the Islamic state was established in Medina, the weak minority of Muslims in Mecca had their eyes turned towards *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem in Palestine, as the *Isra'*—The Night Journey miracle took place from The Holy Mosque to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, which was the first *Qibla* or direction of Muslim prayer. The battle of Khaybar and Fadak (7 AH), the battles of Mu'tah (8 AH) and Tabuk (9 AH), and the campaign of Usama bin Zayd (11 AH), all represented a prelude for the Muslims' yearnings for the *Bilad al-Sham*.

The most prominent battle fought during the conquest of Palestine was the battle of Ajnadayn, which was led by Khalid bin al-Walid on 27 Jumada al-Awwal 13 AH/ 30 July 634 CE close to Beit Jibrin, which resulted in the deaths of around three thousand Romans. This is in addition to the battle of Fahl-Bisan on 28 Dhu'l-Qa'dah 13 AH/ 23 January 635 CE, which took place between the western part of the Jordan River and the south of Bisan. But the decisive battle was the one that took place at Yarmuk, in the north of Jordan, on 5 Rajab 15 AH/ 12 August 636 CE, in which (according to Islamic sources) the Muslim forces (36 thousand soldiers) led by Abu 'Ubaida bin al-Jarrah and Khalid bin al-Walid confronted the Roman army (200 thousand soldiers), which ultimately suffered great losses, estimated by some historians that around 130 thousand were killed. This battle led to the conquest of the *Bilad al-Sham*. The Caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattab himself came to take the keys of Jerusalem after the Muslims besieged it for several months. Its inhabitants

wanted peace, provided that ‘Umar would take care of it in person. Jerusalem was the only city in the era of the Rightly-Guided (*al-Rashidin*) Caliphs whose keys were received by a Caliph himself. Around four thousand Companions of the Prophet (SAWS) took part in the opening with ‘Umar, and Bilal bin Rabah’s voice chanted the call to prayer, although he refrained from doing so after the Prophet’s death.¹⁹ ‘Umar bin al-Khattab wrote a covenant to the inhabitants of Jerusalem which was known as the Covenant of ‘Umar:²⁰

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

This is an assurance of peace and protection given by the servant of Allah Omar [Caliphate Omar Ibn Khattab], Commander of the Believers to the people of Ilia’ [al-Quds/ Jerusalem]. He gave them an assurance of protection for their lives, property, church and crosses as well as the sick and healthy and all its religious community.

Their churches shall not be occupied, demolished nor taken away wholly or in part. None of their crosses nor property shall be seized. They shall not be coerced in their religion nor shall any of them be injured. None of the Jews shall reside with them in Ilia’.

The people of Ilia’ shall pay Jizia tax [head tax on free non-Muslims living under Muslim rule] as inhabitants of cities do. They shall evict all Romans and thieves.

He whoever gets out shall be guaranteed safety for his life and property until he reach his safe haven. He whoever stays shall be [also] safe, in which case he shall pay as much tax as the people of Ilia’ do.....

To the contents of this convent here are given the Covenant of Allah, the guarantees of His Messenger, the Caliphs and the Believers, provided they [the people of Ilia’] pay their due Jizia tax.

Witnesses hereto are:

Khalid Ibn al-Waleed, ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ass, ‘Abdul-Rahman Ibn ‘Auf and Mu‘awiyah Ibn Abi-Sifian, made and executed in the year 15 AH.

This text reflects the religious tolerance of Muslims in a world that was clouded by blind fanaticism and coercion in religion. The conquest of Jerusalem was probably achieved in Rabi‘ al-Akhir 16 AH/ May 637 CE. Caesarea was the last town to be conquered in Palestine in Shawwal 19 AH/ October 640 CE. It was a prosperous port town, and the Romans sought to keep it for as long as possible.



In accordance with the administrative divisions, Palestine became a *jund* of the *Bilad al-Sham*, which was split into four *jund* during the era of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and five during the Umayyad Caliphate. Palestine remained an intrinsic part of the Islamic state, interacting with its political and cultural developments. No change in the states or the governing families affected the fact that the inhabitants of Palestine were Arab Muslims, loyal to the Islamic state.

The rule of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs lasted until 41 AH/ 661 CE, and was followed by the rule of the Umayyads until 132 AH/ 750 CE. Then came the rule of the Abbasids, whose direct rule of Palestine lasted until it began to suffer from weakness and disintegration, with the end of the first Abbasid era, and the death of Caliph Al-Mutawakkil in 247 AH/ 861 CE. This allowed governors to form local and hereditary authorities, such as the Tulunid dynasty, which ruled Egypt

and annexed Palestine during 264–292 AH/ 878–905 CE. Then the Ikhshidid dynasty followed suit, when it ruled Egypt during 323–358 AH/ 935–969 CE. The Tulunid and Ikhshidid dynasties both ruled under the banner of the Abbasids, but only in name.

In 358 AH, the Fatimids, who are Isma‘ili Shi‘a Muslims, were able to wrest control of Palestine, but they struggled with local rebellions, as well as with the Qarmatians and the Seljuqs over control of this land. Then the Seljuqs managed to control most of Palestine in 464 AH/ 1071 CE, but more clashes took place among the Seljuqs themselves and between them and the Fatimids, as the latter

were able to control Tyre in 1097 CE and Jerusalem in February 1098 CE. This conflict took place in the midst of the First Crusade, whose first vanguards had begun to reach the *Bilad al-Sham*. The Fatimids contacted the Crusaders, offering their cooperation in combating the Seljuqs, in exchange for giving the northern part of the *Bilad al-Sham* to the Crusaders and Palestine to the Fatimids.²¹

We do not intend to discuss the Crusades in detail in this study,²² but it must be mentioned that the Crusaders were able to dominate Palestine and control Jerusalem in 492 AH/ 1099 CE after they massacred around 70 thousand Muslims. However, the Islamic nation still had a lot of strength and vitality left in it, and was culturally and scientifically superior to the European Crusaders, despite its fragmentation, political struggles, and internal strife. Indeed, there were fighters who continued to fight and drain the Crusaders throughout their reign, such as Aq-Sunqur al-Bursuqi (508–520 AH) and Imad al-Din Zengi (*Zenki*) (521–540 AH) who brought down the Crusader County of al-Ruha (Edessa), and the latter's son Nur al-Din Mahmud Zengi (541–569 AH/ 1146–1174 CE), who gave an exceptional example of Muslim leadership and adopted a revival project parallel to the liberation project that occupied him throughout his reign. He was able to unite the Islamic forces under his leadership in the *Bilad al-Sham*, before annexing Egypt to his rule. He brought down the Fatimid Caliphate there at the hands of his governor in Egypt, Saladin (*Salah al-Din Yusuf bin Ayyoub*), and was able to liberate around 50 cities and fortresses from the Crusaders. However, he passed away after he secured Egypt and the *Bilad al-Sham* as the two claws of a pincer looming over the Crusaders' necks.

Saladin carried on with the struggle after Nur al-Din in 569–589 AH/ 1174–1193 CE, and reunited the *Bilad al-Sham* and Egypt under his leadership. He fought the decisive battle of Hattin against the Crusaders in 24 Rabi' al-Akhir 583 AH/ 4 July 1187 CE, which struck a decisive blow against the presence of the Crusaders, reconquering Jerusalem in 27 Rajab 583 AH/ 2 October 1187 CE, after 88 years of Crusader rule.

The Crusaders carried on with their campaigns and were able to control a stretch of coastal land between Jaffa and Tyre, as well as Jerusalem once again (due to internal conflicts within the Ayyubid state) for most of the 626–642 AH/ 1229–1244 CE period, until it ultimately returned to the Muslim rule, and remained so until the British occupation of Palestine in 1917 CE.

The Mamluks succeeded the Ayyubid state in 648 AH/ 1250 CE and confronted the Mongol army on the land of Palestine in the battle of ‘Ain Jalut on 25 Ramadan 658 AH/ 6 September 1260 CE, under the command of Qutuz (Mahmoud bin Mamdud). This battle is considered to be one of the most decisive battles in history. The Mamluks then carried on with the project of liberating Palestine and the *Bilad al-Sham* from any remnants of the Crusaders. To this end, Baibars made great efforts as he recovered many regions in Palestine and the *Bilad al-Sham*. He was followed in this by Saif al-Din Qalawun, and then by his son al-Ashraf Khalil bin Qalawun, who ended the Crusader presence in the *Bilad al-Sham* by bringing down the Acre Kingdom, which he liberated on 17 Jumada al-Awwal 690 AH/ 18 May 1291 CE. He then rapidly took over Sidon, Tyre, Haifa, and ‘Atlit, submitting once again Palestine and the *Bilad al-Sham* to Islamic rule.

After the Mamluks grew weak, the Ottomans came to control Palestine and the rest of the *Bilad al-Sham* in 1516 CE, then Egypt, Hijaz, Yemen, and Algeria the following year. They expanded their control during half of the following century over most of the Arab world, including Iraq, the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, Libya, and Tunisia. They ruled Palestine until the end of World War I (WWI) in 1918 CE.

Palestine had acquired its Islamic character with Caliph ‘Umar’s conquest, and its inhabitants converted to Islam in their droves. They took up Arab customs and language by mingling with the Arab tribes that came from the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of the Islamic civilization. By contrast, the Crusades did not significantly influence the identity of the land and the inhabitants, as the Palestinians held on to their land and remained steadfast in it, while the Crusaders often found themselves on the defensive.

In any case, Islamic rule of Palestine lasted for around 1,200 years until 1917 CE, which is the longest period in history compared to any other rule. It was a Muslim rule over a Muslim people, and it included all of Palestine. Muslims showed exemplary religious tolerance and freedom of faith, and stood guard over the Holy Land to protect its sanctity.

Islam became firmly established in Palestine when some of the Companions of the Prophet settled there, spreading the religion, including: ‘Ubadah bin al-Samit, Shaddad bin Aus, Usama bin Zayd bin Harithah, Wathilah bin al-Asqa’, Fayruz al-Daylami, Dihyah al-Kalbi, ‘Abdulrahman bin Ghanm al-Asha’ri, ‘Alqamah

bin Majzar al-Kanani, Aus bin al-Samit, Mass'oud bin Aus bin Zayd, Zinba' bin Ruh, Abu Raihanah Sham'oun al-Ansari, Souwaid bin Zayd, Thul Asabi' al-Tamimi, Abu Ubai bin Um-Haram al-Ansari, Anif bin Mullah al-Jathami, Abu Ruwayhah al-Faz'i.... and many other Companions who lived and died in Palestine.

Among the Followers of the Prophet (*al-Tabi'un*— second generation Muslims born after the death of the Prophet) who were born in the land of Palestine were: Raja' bin Haywah al-Kindi, who was born in Bisan and who asked Caliph Sulaiman bin 'Abdumelik to appoint 'Umar bin 'Abdulaziz as his successor, as well as 'Ubadah bin Nassi al-Kindi, and Ruh bin Zinba'. Among the Followers of the Prophet who visited or lived in Palestine were: Malik bin Dinar, Al-Ouza'i, Hani' bin Kulthum, Hamid bin 'Abdullah al-Lakhmi, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri.

Among the great imams and scholars who were born in Palestine was Imam al-Shafi'i (born in Gaza). Among the imams who visited or lived in Palestine: Ibrahim bin Adham, al-Layth bin Sa'd, Abu Bakr Muhammad al-Tartushi, Abu Bakr al-Jurjani, and Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi.

The conqueror of Andalusia, Musa bin Nusayr al-Lakhmi, hailed from Palestine, as well as 'Abd al-Hamid bin Yehya, a master of literature, diction and poetry in his time. This is in addition to the first great chemist in Islamic history, the Umayyad Khalid bin Yazid. For the sake of avoiding digression, we shall only mention that the Holy Land was a center for Islamic civilization, whose inhabitants effectively participated in building the great edifices of the Islamic nation and civilization.²³

Fifth: The Religious and Historical Claims of the Jews in Palestine

The Jews today base their occupation of Palestine on religious and historical claims. They say that *Allah* (SWT) promised them this land, and point to their historical bonds to it, having ruled it at one point in ancient history. They talk about their presence on this land, their emotional and spiritual bonds to it, and its sanctity. We believe that the Jews enjoy their freedom of creed, and no one has the right to force them to change it. However, the Jews have no right to force their beliefs upon others or to displace a people from their homeland, violate their territory, possessions, and holy sites in the name of their religious claims.

As for the Muslims, they believe that the Jews are not entitled to this land. Religiously speaking, this land was given to the Israelites back when they raised the banner of monotheism (*al-Tawhid*) under the leadership of their prophets and righteous rulers. However, they deviated from their path and killed their prophets, wreaking havoc and spreading corruption, and thus lost their legitimacy. Muslims believe they are the real heirs of the banner of monotheism and the only true extension of the nation of monotheism and of the mission of the Messengers. They also believe that the call to Islam is the continuity of the mission of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Isma'il, Moses, David, Solomon, and 'Issa. Muslims today are the people most meriting this heritage, after the others deviated from the path. It is not a matter of ethnicity, ancestry, or patriotism, but is linked to following the righteous path. Muslims believe that the experiences of the prophets are their experiences, the history of prophets is theirs, and the legitimacy that *Allah* (SWT) gave the prophets and their followers to rule the Holy Land is an indication of the Muslim's legitimacy and right to this land. *Allah* (SWT) said: "*Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah. Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Messenger and those who believe: And Allah is the Protector of those who have faith.*"²⁴ Also: "*And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; 'Oh my sons! Allah hath chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the Faith of Islam.*"²⁵ And: "*And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: 'I will make thee an Imam to the Nations.' He pleaded: 'And also (Imams) from my offspring!' He answered: 'But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.'*"²⁶ Hence, *Allah* (SWT) told Abraham (PBUH) that the evil-doers among his offspring shall not become leaders and imams, since it is a matter linked to following *Allah*'s path. If it had been a birthright linked to procreation, then the Israelites cannot understand the promise to be restricted to them alone, and Isma'il (PBUH) and his descendants would have been worthy of the promise that was given to Abraham, as well as the Arabs who are descendants of Isma'il, the ancestor of the Adnanite Arabs, including Quraish and its master Muhammad (SAWS).

Historically speaking, the Israelite ruled some parts of Palestine for less than four centuries, but their rule did not encompass the whole land. As for Islamic

rule, it went on for around 12 centuries (636–1917 CE), a period that was briefly interrupted by the Crusades. Most of the Jews left Palestine and their ties to it were severed for 18 centuries (from 135 CE until the 20th century). By contrast, the original inhabitants of Palestine had not left throughout the past 4,500 years, until a large number of them were forcefully displaced by Zionist gangs in 1948 CE. They are still trying to this day to return to their land and show no willingness to relinquish it.

Moreover, according to Jewish scholars and researchers, notably Arthur Koestler (author of *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage*), A.N. Polak, K.L. Brook, S. Sand and E. Elaik, more than 80% of Jews today are not related to the ancient Israelites, whether by blood or by history. For most of the contemporary Jews are Khazar Jews whose origins go back to ancient Tatar-Turkish tribes that settled in the north of Caucasia (south of Russia) and converted to Judaism in the 8th century CE under the leadership of their King Bulan in 740 CE. After the fall of their kingdom, they spread into Russia and Eastern Europe, becoming what is known today as the Ashkenazi Jews.²⁷ So if they have any right of return to a certain place, then it is to the south of Russia!



• Arthur Koestler

Sixth: Background of the Emergence of the Palestine Issue in Modern History

As mentioned earlier, the Jews practically lost all of their direct links to Palestine for 1,800 years, and only had their religious sentiments to connect them to the land. Their rabbis refused to turn sentiment into a practical program, since they believed that they had deserved to see their state destroyed and to be dispersed because of their sins, and that they had to wait for the Messiah, as only then would they be allowed to settle in Palestine and establish their homeland.

But many important changes took place in modern European history that affected the Jews and precipitated the establishment of the Zionist project. The 16th century saw the emergence of the **Protestant Reformation**, which

focused on faith in the Torah (the Old Testament) and considered the Jews to be the “inhabitants of Palestine” who were displaced from their land. Many Protestants believed in the millennial prophecy stating that the Jews will be gathered once again in Palestine in preparation for the return of the awaited Messiah. He would then convert them to Christianity and lead them in the battle of Armageddon, where he will vanquish his foes, after which a millennium of great happiness would begin. The followers of Protestant churches accounted for a majority of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (US), and the Netherlands, and for around half the inhabitants of Germany. Non-Jewish Zionism thus emerged, particularly among Protestants, who supported the Zionist project based on their religious and cultural beliefs.²⁸

On the other hand, Europe witnessed—particularly in the 19th century—significant political shifts. Indeed, the **modern European nation state** took form following the French revolution of 1789 CE, and **nationalism** and feelings of patriotism followed. Secular regimes were established, separating religion from the state and marginalizing the role of the Church. The Jews were “emancipated” and given full citizenship rights, particularly in Western Europe. It was therefore easier for them to integrate into these societies and systems and reach high positions on the political, economic and social ladder, thus achieving greater influence in political, economic, and media circles.

Moreover, the nationalist state and nationalist sentiment in Russia and Eastern Europe, where most of the Jews of the world resided, took a different turn. Russian Jews resisted Russian integration and modernization processes, which were characterized by discrimination, coercion, and terrorism. There was an increase in the participation of many Jews in Leftist revolutionist movements against the Czarist Russian government. The hostility against the Jews became blatant following the assassination of Russia’s Czar Alexander II in 1881 CE, as they were accused of being behind the plot. Thus began a wave of strict and violent measures against Jews, known as anti-Semitism, i.e., hostility to Jews because they are Semitic. This led to the **emergence of what is known as the Jewish Question**;²⁹ millions of Jews in Russia began to search for a way out, and they migrated in large numbers to Western Europe, and North and South America. The Zionist movement took advantage of this opportunity to make

its appearance, and to call for resolving the Jewish Question by establishing a secure and independent homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Many Europeans and Americans sympathized with this idea, whether because of their religious background, or because they wanted to get rid of the burden posed by the influx of Jews to their land.

The **weakness of the Ottoman state**, which ruled Palestine during 1516–1917 CE, and the bid by the Western powers to divide its land, led to the emergence of better circumstances for establishing the Zionist project. Indeed, there was a Western desire to fill the vacuum that would be caused by the fall of the Ottoman state, and prevent the reemergence of a great Muslim force that would succeed the Ottomans, and would pose a challenge to western powers, hegemony and imperialism.

At that time, the idea of establishing a **buffer state** between the east of the Suez Canal and the West of the *Bilad al-Sham*, at the end of the 19th century emerged. This implies the implanting of a foreign entity in the heart of the Arab and Muslim world that would separate its Asian and African wings, and impede its unification. As a result, this Arab Muslim region would remain fragmented, as the survival of the entity (**buffer state**) is intricately linked to the weakness surrounding it. This entity would also deal a blow to any strong civilizational development in the region. Thus, the region would be preoccupied with a long and complicated problem that would drain its resources and energies, leaving it to the largest extent possible in a state of submission, weakness, and need for the Western powers. It would also leave it as a source of raw materials and a market for Western products. However, just as this entity would require Western support to guarantee its survival, the Western powers would also need it to guarantee the weakness, disintegration, and submission of the region, i.e., keeping it under control. Hence, an unbreakable bond would be born between the two. Here, it is imperative for Arabs and Muslims of the region to realize that this project would increasingly go against their hopes of unity, revival, and progress, and not just against the Palestinians.

Thus, the idea of a **buffer state**, coincided with the idea of resolving the Jewish Question, securing the western powers interests, including protecting the Eastern wing of the Suez Canal.

Seventh: The Political Development of the Palestine Issue Until 1914

Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt, which he effortlessly invaded in July 1798, highlighted the extent of the Ottoman state's weakness and tempted European colonialism to partition the remnants of this state.

In February 1799, he launched a campaign in Palestine, occupying its south and center, and on 6/3/1799, he occupied Jaffa, where the French committed a brutal massacre by killing two thousand of Jaffa's garrison, whom Napoleon did not want to bear the costs of feeding and guarding. In March 18th, the French sieged Acre, however they failed to enter it due to the steadfastness of its garrison and people. It is the city that had defeated Napoleon. The French withdrew to Egypt on 20/5/1799.³⁰



• **Napoleon Bonaparte**

Some references indicate that Napoleon was the first European political figure to address an official call to the Jews to realize their hopes and establish their entity on the land of Palestine. He made this call on 20/4/1799 during his siege of Acre. However, it seems that there is no scientific proof or documents that prove it.³¹

The particular significance of Egypt and the *Bilad al-Sham* was never far from the mind of the British, who were the world's biggest superpower at the time. Britain opened its first consulate in Jerusalem in 1838. In its first letter to the vice-consul in Jerusalem, the British Foreign Office asked him to provide protection for the Jews, even if they were not British citizens. The consulate thus remained a center for defending the interests of the Jews until the start of WWI in 1914.³¹ When the British took over Cyprus in 1878 and Egypt in 1882, it became the only colonial power to have bases east of the Mediterranean. In addition to religious and historic backgrounds, it started to look at Palestine in light of the colonialist race for the region and in light of its need to protect the eastern wing of the Suez Canal, which became a vital artery of British shipping lanes, especially to India. When the Zionist project was established and the buffer state idea emerged, it no doubt served many religious, cultural, political,

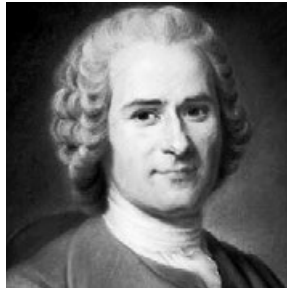
and strategic motives and backgrounds. It took practical dimensions that could be executed in light of the rapidly deteriorating Ottoman state.

Yet the calls made by Jews and non-Jewish Zionists for a “return” to Palestine did not take a serious turn before the end of the 19th century. The early signs of such calls appeared in the 16th century, in the first work published on the subject, *The World’s Great Restoration, or the Calling of the Jews*, by British lawyer Henry Finch in 1621. They also appeared in the writings and calls by renowned Christians, such as Isaac Newton (1643–1727), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), Shaftesbury, and Laurence Oliphant.

There were also similar calls by Jews, such as Shabbetai Tzvi (1626–1676), Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), Judah Alkalai (1798–1878), Moses Hess (1812–1875) and others.³² However, the coming of the Jews remained linked to traditional religious sentiment for visiting holy places or living in their vicinity, and to “charitable” settlement projects, rather than being an overt organized political program. There were around five thousand Jews in Palestine in 1799,³³ which increased to 13,920 Jews in 1876.³⁴



• Isaac Newton



• Jean-Jacques Rousseau



• Joseph Priestley



• Moses Hess



• Zvi Hirsch Kalischer



• Judah Alkalai

Jewish immigration became more organized and intense from 1882, following the escalation of the “Jewish Question” in Russia. The Ottoman authorities took measures to prevent Jewish settlements in Palestine and in 1887 separated the sanjak of Jerusalem (Turkish administrative division) from the province of Syria and put it directly under the supervision of the central government (Sublime Porte), thus attaching more importance and care to this region.³⁵ Although the number of Jews who left their countries of origin, especially Russia and Eastern Europe, was around two million and 367 thousand in 1881–1914, only around 55 thousand of them (2.32%) managed to immigrate to Palestine, while the overwhelming majority immigrated to the US, Western Europe, and South America.³⁶ This highlights the relative success of the Ottoman authorities in limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine.



• **The First Zionist Congress 1897**

The establishment of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and its first conference held in Basel, Switzerland, on 29–31/8/1897 headed by Theodor Herzl, represented the beginning of organized institutional political Zionist action to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Herzl was keen on achieving the Zionist project through diplomatic efforts and attempting to encourage the major powers, particularly the UK, to adopt this project, in light of the interests and the benefits that could be reaped by the colonial Western powers from supporting it. He tried in vain to convince the Ottoman state to grant autonomy to the Jews in Palestine under Ottoman sovereignty, as well as opening the doors of Jewish immigration in exchange for attractive proposals which the Ottoman

state was in dire need of. However, Sultan ‘Abdulhamid II (1876–1909) rejected the suggestion and replied to Herzl’s offer by saying:

I advise him to never move in that direction. I cannot sell even one foot of the country, since it belongs not to me, but to my people. They obtained this empire by shedding their blood and they fed it with their blood, and we are ready to cover it with our blood before we allow anyone to take it from us... Let the Jews keep their billions. If the empire is divided, then the Jews would obtain Palestine without anything in return. But it will only be divided over our corpses, and I will not accept for us to be split for any purpose whatsoever.³⁷



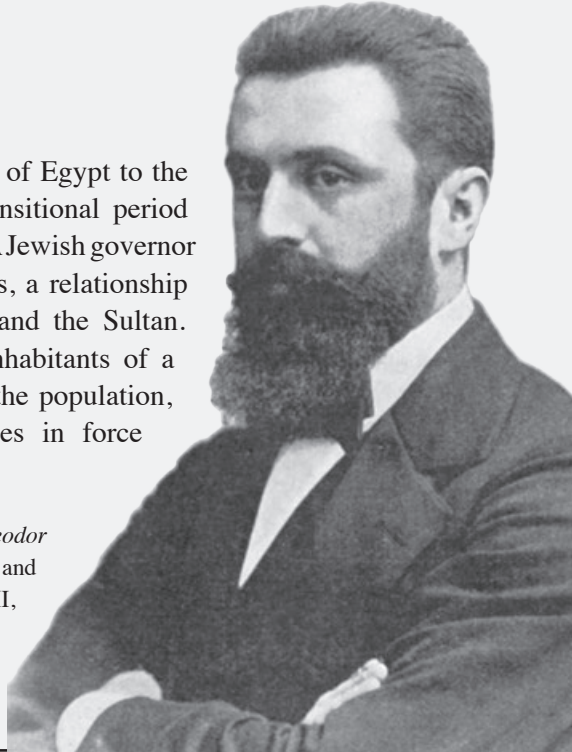
• Sultan ‘Abdulhamid II

The Jews participated effectively in bringing about the fall of Sultan ‘Abdulhamid through their great influence on the Young Turks Party and its Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which led a military coup against the Sultan and forced him to step down. One of its leaders, Emanuel Karasu (a Masonic Zionist Jewish leader), was part of the delegation that announced to Sultan ‘Abdulhamid that he had been impeached. Karasu had tried to influence the Sultan to let the Jews live in Palestine, so the latter expelled him.³⁸

The Jews wielded great influence under the rule of the CUP in 1909–1914; three out of 13 ministers in the CUP government that was formed in 1913 were Jews, while the Arabs, who constituted more than half of the empire’s inhabitants, were only represented by one minister.³⁹

“Area: from the Brook of Egypt to the Euphrates. Stipulate a transitional period with our own institutions. A Jewish governor for this period. Afterwards, a relationship like that between Egypt and the Sultan. As soon as the Jewish inhabitants of a district amount to 2/3 of the population, Jewish administration goes in force politically.”

> *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (New York: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), vol. II, p. 711, cited in:
<http://mailstar.net/tmf.html>



The inhabitants of Palestine fought early on against the Zionist project. The first armed clashes between Palestinian peasants and Zionist settlers erupted in 1886. The Palestinians also submitted petitions to the Ottoman authorities. This is in addition to founding newspapers like *Carmel* and *Palestine*, which highlighted the Zionist danger. Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Rida, the Lebanese Islamic reformer who lived in Egypt, played a pioneering role in this matter through *al-Manar* magazine. Also, among the Palestinian figures who spoke out about the Zionist danger were: Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi, Suleiman al-Taji al-Faruqi, and Is‘af al-Nashashibi. The “Turkification” policies and favoritism to Zionism practiced by the CUP government were a major motive for Palestinians and Arabs to join Arab movements which demanded reform within the Ottoman state, such as the Decentralization Party, the Young Arab Society, and others.⁴⁰



• Yusuf Diya al-Khalidi

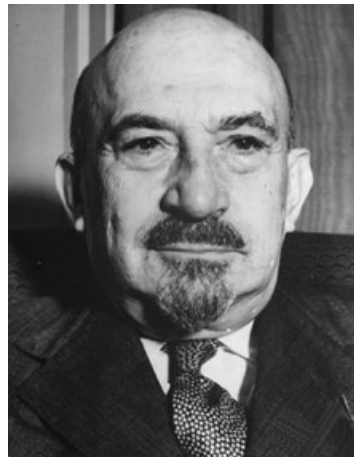


• Is'af al-Nashashibi

Eighth: The Palestine Issue During WWI (1914–1918)

At the start of WWI in 1914, there were around 80 thousand Jews in Palestine. However, the biased stance of the Jews in favor of Britain and its allies against the Ottoman state led to the Ottomans tightening their grip on the Jewish population during the war (1914–1918). Their number thus decreased to around 55 thousand by the end of the war.

WWI posed a great threat on all levels, but it also represented at the same time an opportunity for each party to benefit from its results in case of victory. Hence, negotiations, secret communications, and agreements were actively conducted among various parties in preparation for the post-war phase. Although the WZO suffered momentarily from a state of dispersal because of the presence of many of its leaders in Germany, Chaim Weizmann was able to reshuffle the cards, and went on to lead the organization thanks to his position in Britain. As for Britain, it strove to secure its influence in the *Bilad al-Sham* and Iraq by moving in three opposite and conflicting directions at once, in order to achieve its objectives and emerge victorious in the war.



• Chaim Weizmann

The **first direction** involved negotiations with Sharif Hussein bin ‘Ali, Emir of Hijaz, in what became known as the Hussein-McMahon Correspondences



• Sharif Hussein bin ‘Ali

(July 1915–March 1916), to encourage him to launch an Arab revolt against the Ottomans in exchange for promises of independence of most Arab regions in the Arabian Peninsula, the *Bilad al-Sham*, and Iraq, under his rule. Many Arab figures were disenfranchised by CUP policies which stripped the Ottoman state of its Islamic credibility. They were also angry at the execution of several Arab leaders in May 1915 by Jamal Pasha, the governor (*wali*) of Syria, even though the leaders of Arab parties had announced at the

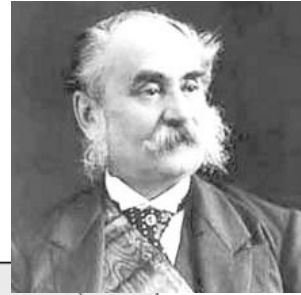
beginning of the war that they had set their disagreements with the Ottomans aside and stood beside them in combating “non-believers.”

Britain thus adopted a policy of deliberate ambiguity in determining its obligations, but was pressured by Sharif Hussein to be clearer about them, especially regarding the borders of the proposed Arab state. So, on 24/10/1915, Britain sent its reservations regarding the borders, such as its demand of not annexing Mersin and Adana, as well as the areas located west of the sanjaks (Turkish administrative division) of Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Damascus. This was in addition to its continued colonization of the south of Yemen and the Arab Gulf emirates, and its demand for a special administrative status in the south of Iraq that would guarantee British interests. Although Sharif Hussein was aware that he was unable to change anything regarding the colonized Arab countries, and expressed his readiness to discuss British interests in the south of Iraq, he insisted on the Arab identity of the areas located west of the sanjaks of Aleppo, Homs, Hama, and Damascus (what is known today as Lebanon). There was an agreement on the necessity to launch the revolt as soon as possible, provided that the suspended issues would be discussed after the war. Sharif Hussein thus launched the revolt in Hijaz on 10/6/1916 and allied himself with the British. He was supported by Arab parties, which had strong influence, especially in the *Bilad al-Sham*, such as the Young Arab Society, the Decentralization Party, and the Covenant Society (*al-‘Ahd*).

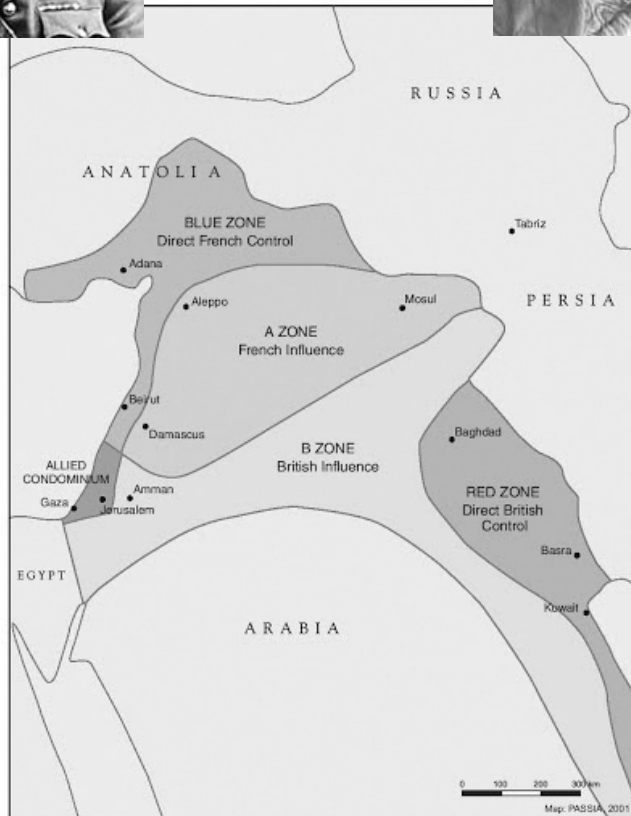
The **second British direction** involved negotiations with France (Russia joined later) on the future of Iraq and the *Bilad al-Sham*. In what was known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement in May 1916, it was agreed to grant the British most of Iraq (relative to its current borders), Transjordan, and Haifa in Palestine. Lebanon and Syria were to be put under French control. Since all the parties wished to put Palestine under their mandate, it was agreed that it would be put under international supervision.



• Sir Mark Sykes



Georges Picot •



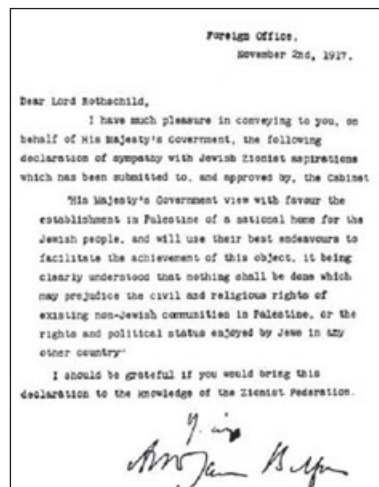
• Sykes-Picot Agreement 1916

As for the **third British direction**, it consisted of negotiations with WZO on the future of Palestine, due to Britain's dire need to use Jewish influence in the US to push it to take part in the war alongside Britain and its allies (this actually happened in March 1917). This is in addition to the presence of the Jewish Zionist influence in Britain and the British government itself, through the Jewish-Zionist Home Secretary Herbert Samuel, and Zionist Christians such as Prime Minister Lloyd George and Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour—not to mention the previously discussed religious, political, and strategic motives and backgrounds. Thus emerged the Balfour Declaration on 2/11/1917, in which Britain committed to establishing a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. This was one of the most unusual promises in the history of humankind, since not only it was in conflict with all other agreements, but it also presumptuously overstepped the wishes and desires of the country's native inhabitants, and promised a land it did not own, even more, a land it had not yet invaded, to an undeserving people, amidst talk of British honor and the defense of values and principles.



• **Herbert Louis Samuel**

The Sykes-Picot Agreement did not remain secret, as the Russians uncovered it after the Communist revolution toppled the Czarist rule in Russia in October 1917, and the country withdrew from the war. People also became aware of the Balfour Declaration after it reached the press in Arab countries, specifically Egypt, less than one week after it was issued. It constituted a huge shock to the Arab revolt, as the rebels never imagined such extreme British duplicity, and they thus refused to continue with their revolt unless things were made clear. This



• **The Balfour Declaration**

led Britain to send an envoy, David Hogarth, in January 1918, to allay Sharif Hussein's fears. He carried a British declaration stating that Jewish immigration to Palestine would not conflict with the political and economic interests of its inhabitants. The declaration also carried for the seven Syrian leaders in June 1918 clear assurances that the land occupied by the British (south of Palestine and south of Iraq) would be ruled according to the wishes of its inhabitants. This is in addition to agreeing to the independence of what was still under Ottoman sovereignty in the north of Palestine, the east of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the north of Iraq. On 7/11/1918, after the end of WWI, there was an Anglo-French Declaration which reaffirmed the pledges of freedom and independence to the Arabs that were under Ottoman rule.⁴¹

“In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country.... The four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder importance than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.”



• **Arthur James Balfour**



• **Lord Curzon**

> Balfour memo to Lord Curzon, 11/8/1919, Public Record Office (PRO) (The National Archives), Kew Gardens, London, Files: Foreign Office (FO) 371/4183.

Endnotes

- ¹ For more details on the ancient history of Palestine, refer for example to Muhammad Adib al-‘Amiri, *‘Urubat Filastin fi al-Tarikh* (The Arab Identity of Palestine Throughout History) (Saida-Beirut: Al Maktaba Al Assrya (Modern Library), 1972); and *al-Mawsu‘ah al-Filastiniyyah* (The Palestinian Encyclopedia), supervised by Ahmad al-Mir‘achli (Damascus: The Foundation of the Palestinian Encyclopedia, 1984), vol. 1, p. 37, vol. 3, pp. 273–279 and vol. 4, p. 174.
- ² See *al-Mawsu‘ah al-Filastiniyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 117–129.
- ³ *Surat al-Ma‘idah* (The Table): 21, <http://www.islam101.net/QURAN/5.htm>
- ⁴ *Surat al-Isra’* (Isra’): 1, <http://www.islam101.net/QURAN/17.htm>
- ⁵ *Surat al-Anbiya’* (The Prophets): 81, <http://www.islam101.net/QURAN/21.htm>
- ⁶ Narrated by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah and Abu Dawud, for the English translation see <http://hadithcollection.com/sahihmuslim/135-Sahih%20Muslim%20Book%20007.%20Pilgrimage/10876-sahih-muslim-book-007-hadith-number-3218.html>
- ⁷ *Hadith Hasan*, narrated by al-Tabarani, for the English translation see <http://www.hadithcollection.com/fiqh-ussunnah/350-Fiqh-us%20Sunnah%20Section%2027.%20The%20Mosques/21019-fiqh-us-sunnah-volume-002-supererogatory-prayer-fiqh-2070a.html>
- ⁸ *Hadith Sahih*, narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* and Ibn Majah in his *Sunan*, for the English translation see <http://www.palscholars.com/ar/articleDetails.php?articleId=1006&page=21&Next=20&type=7>
- ⁹ *Hadith Sahih*, narrated by al-Tabarani, for the English translation see http://aqsamn.org/PDF_Files/IslamicProspectOfPalestine.pdf
- ¹⁰ *Hadith Sahih*, compiled by al-Hakim and Abu Na‘im in *Hilyat al-Awliya’*, for the English translation see http://aqsamn.org/PDF_Files/IslamicProspectOfPalestine.pdf
- ¹¹ Narrated by al-Tabarani, and al-Haythami said that this *Hadith* has a trustworthy chain of narrators except Arta‘ah Bin al-Mundhir. For the English translation see http://aqsamn.org/PDF_Files/IslamicProspectOfPalestine.pdf
- ¹² There was a *Hadith* in this sense narrated by Imam Ahmad, saying “A group of my Ummah will remain on the truth, they will vanquish their enemy and those who disagree with them will not be able to harm them until commands.” “Where are these people?” the companions (ra) asked. The Prophet (SAW) said, “In and around Al-Quds (Jerusalem).” Trustworthy chain of narrators except Mahdi Bin Ja‘far al-Ramli, as Ibn Habban and Yahya Bin Mu‘in documented him, while al-Bukhari graded him weak. For the English translation see <http://hamzajennings.com/2009/02/11/course-history-of-the-crusades-and-salahuddin/>
- ¹³ See “Jerusalem: its place in the Jewish religious conscience,” in ‘Abd al-Wahhab el-Messiri, *Encyclopedia of Jews, Judaism and Zionism*, <http://www.elmessiri.com/encyclopedia/JEWISH/ENCYCLOPID/MG4/GZ1/BA07/MD23.HTM>
- ¹⁴ See *al-Mawsu‘ah al-Filastiniyyah*, vol. 3, pp. 271–279 and 666–670.
- ¹⁵ *Surat al-Ma‘idah*: 24.

- ¹⁶ See Encyclopedia Britanica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/439645/Palestine/45049/Late-Bronze-Age#toc45050>; and see Zafarul Islam Khan, *Tarikh Filastin al-Qadim 1220 BC–1359 CE: Mundhu Awwal Ghazu Yahudi Hatta Akhir Ghazu Salibi* (The Ancient History of Palestine 1220 BC–1359 CE: From the First Jewish Invasion to the Last Crusader Invasion), 4th ed. (Beirut: Dar An-Nafaes, 1984), p. 54.
- ¹⁷ See Yeshayahu-Isaiah, Chapter 1, http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15932; and Yeshayahu-Isaiah, Chapter 24, http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15955
- ¹⁸ Regarding the ancient history of Israelites, see Zafarul Islam Khan, *op. cit.*; and *al-Mawsu'ah al-Filastiniyyah*, vol. 1, p. 238, vol. 3, pp. 184–186 and 266–268, and vol. 4, pp. 216–218.
- ¹⁹ Regarding the conquest of Palestine and *Bilad al-Sham*, see al-Azdi, *Tarikh Futuh al-Sham* (History of the Sham Conquest), edited by 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abdullah 'Amir (Cairo: Mu'assasat Sijill al-Arab, 1970); Ahmad 'Adil Kamal, *al-Tariq ila Dimashq* (The Road to Damascus) (Beirut: Dar An-Nafaes, 1980); and Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Tariq ila al-Quds* (The Road to Jerusalem), 3rd ed. (London: Filastin al-Muslimah, 1998), pp. 49–77.
- ²⁰ *Al-'Uhdah al-'Umariyyah* (638 AD The Covenant of Omar), Historical Documents (until 1948), al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/en/resources/documents/index.1.html>
- ²¹ On Palestine during the era of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Fatimids, and the Ayyubids, see *al-Mawsu'ah al-Filastiniyyah*, vol. 3, pp. 242–266 and 426–428.
- ²² The researcher discussed in Chapter 3 of his book *al-Tariq ila al-Quds* the struggle of the Muslims to free Palestine from the Crusaders and the Tatars. See Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Tariq ila al-Quds*, pp. 89–128.
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This book seeks to present a comprehensive overview of the Palestine issue, its historical background, as well as its modern and contemporary developments.

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The Palestine Issue

Historical Background & Contemporary Developments



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