

PALESTINE

A History of the Land and Its People

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Dr. Azzam S. Kanaan

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شادي الغاليه

هذا هو الجزء الأول
من المشروع الكبير الذي
بدأ قبل حوالي ٤ اعوام.
سكراً على دعمك وصبرك
لقد أخذنا هذا العمل الكبير
من دفناً مائاً.
أطلع انا اليوم الذي ينجز
هذا المشروع بكامله. اخذ
مدى اعمدة ازل ومدى
ما يجعله في حركه. اعدت
انه يكون التدبيرة كالتوقعه
انه يحتمه ما تحميمه به
انه النصحيات التي قدنا بما
لهذا المشروع قد فهم بالبراه
انما هي: لقد تمنا بالفتحه
اجل سعياً ومرتبطاً. وبتسليم
هذا المشروع على مستوى
لهذا العمل والمناجيد. اعدت
بخصوص الهدف بالتحديد الجيد

من المعرفه وفريقاً من الولاة لطلبتهم
عزاهم ٢٨/٤/١٦٦٦

Inscription written in Arabic by Azzam to Shadia upon completion of the first draft of this book. Azzam's inscription to Shadia reads as follows:

Shadia, my precious,

This is part one of the big project that began about three years ago. Thank you for your support and patience. I know that this work has taken up plenty of our time together.

I look forward to the day when this project is complete. I know the extent of your pride and what goes on in your mind. I promise that this accomplishment will be what you expect and dream it to be. The sacrifices that we both have made for this project are worthy of such an outcome. We have done a lot for our people and our country, but this project will be the crowning endeavor. I hope it will accomplish the goal of giving the new generation more information and greater loyalty to Palestine.

Azzam
28/04/2016

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I dedicate this book as follows:

To my family, for the love and attention I received throughout my life, which gave me the confidence, endurance, and the will to accomplish all I was able to achieve.

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To Rick Halpert, my brother, whose trust and friendship over the many years were a cornerstone for me and my family.

To my grandchildren: I am so proud of you, and I can only imagine how joyful and successful your futures will be. Zaid, thank you for gifting me your Michigan Petoskey stone, and Aya, thank you for always sharing mangoes and warm hugs with me.

To Sameh, my brother-in-law, my dearest friend, the finest human being and Kanaan I know to help carry on our family legacy. Thank you for helping Shadia complete our school in Nablus.

To all the other family and friends who I was privileged to walk alongside through my journey of life.

And to the people of Palestine, whose resilience, courage, and steadfastness are an example that lights the world.

Preface

Azzam Kanaan set out to write the story of his life. When he started, however, he realized he had to make sure his readers understood its context. The context in this case was the birth of human civilizations, the spread of religions, and the rise of empires. He wouldn't start recounting his life until he had described the history of the Middle East from the last ice age until 1948. He read hundreds of books and made nearly a thousand citations in order to be faithful to the truth. His humility and reluctance to talk about himself found a natural haven in the meticulous cataloging of the facts. History is what happened. If we are diligent and honest caretakers of our intellect, we can all arrive at the same conclusion of what has happened.

Dr. Kanaan started his story and tried to make a footnote of history, and discovered along the way, to his satisfaction, that he was the footnote. He would have been delighted to sit with you, the reader, and tell you about the history of the Palestinian people. But he kept his own part of the story to himself, almost until the very end of his life. Weeks from succumbing to cancer, he allowed Shadia, his wife of fifty years, to record and transcribe his recollections. He had spent years double-checking the facts for himself, and he typed them one letter at a time with his index finger. He had completed his work and was finally free of his obligation to context.

He spoke about his childhood in Palestine, his role in the Arab National Movement, and his transition to a new life in America. For anyone who knows him well, reading through his recollections could be frustrating because so many questions arise about his life. But this frustration should yield to an appreciation for his humble nature. Through his adventures and attempts to change the course of history, the answers to any questions are apparent. Above all motivations, he acted through kindness and integrity and logic. The values of his mother, of his childhood upbringing, guided him and kept him safe. And ultimately, when he realized he could not change the whole world, he settled on improving the lives of everyone he would ever meet.

Introduction

I have been asked by many people to write or record a memoir summarizing my life experiences and my thoughts regarding the different events that I went through. I have always been reluctant to go through this process for many reasons, the most important one being privacy. I felt strongly that the memories of events I had gone through are private matters that must be kept to myself. However, it is of some value to transmit to my family some of the lessons that I learned in the hopes that they would benefit from them.

The idea of this book started about ten years ago, when we were able to go to Palestine more often to spend time with the family. During these visits, I found that the younger generation of our family did not know the history of our country and our people. I was spending time with some of them talking about the past, and I found that they were eager to learn more, so I decided to leave them with a brief written history to learn who they are and find out about their roots. I felt that it was my duty to take the time to write a book telling the story of our land and its people.

I initially focused on the history of the Israeli invasion of our country, how it started, and whom it involved. I began gathering references so that I would be able to write an accurate narrative. I did not intend to make a lengthy and detailed history, and I definitely was not sure whether this writing would be available as a text to others or just a biography for my family.

In the process of writing I discovered that, as much as I knew, it was definitely very little. This became a study project for me, and I enjoyed it, as I was a good reader; it was a great pleasure for me to learn more. As time went by, I started collecting references. I expanded my project and decided to go as far as I could to learn how Palestine had developed since the earliest humans inhabited it, and to follow the thread of how they were able to create a great culture and an advanced civilization.

Palestine

Palestine is part of Greater Syria, one of the oldest places where humans settled and developed into communities and nations. We call our country Canaan, and the people of the country are the Canaanites. I learned that Canaan (Kanaan), meaning lowland, refers to the coastal plains that extend from the south all the way to the northern Syrian coastline. It also includes the plains that connect the coast with the interior. I also learned that Aram and Amoro refer to the area west of Mesopotamia. The Mediterranean Sea was called the Sea of Amoro. This land was the place where the

Semitic languages evolved and developed. The Phoenicians were Canaanites who gave the world the alphabet and the origin of all the world's languages.

Palestine has some of the oldest cities of the world, including Jericho, which is considered the world's oldest inhabited city. (Nablus, along with Damascus, is also one of the five oldest cities in the world.) Palestine is the birthplace of monotheistic religion, as the early concept of God evolved in this land. Palestine was also the place of domestication of many plants, especially olive trees, that were later brought to other regions of the Mediterranean. The Palestinians domesticated the olive tree more than six thousand years ago when they moved from the highlands to Jericho because of the drought and because of the rich springs of that city. As they spread olive trees throughout the entire Mediterranean basin, they also spread monotheistic religion to the world.

Over its long, rich history, waves of immigration and invasion brought new people to Palestine. Those who remained assimilated with the existing population and contributed to the development of its culture and technology. Religions came and went, and were adopted by different groups—but always, all those people, who endured invasion, flood, famine, and drought, were Palestinian. Those who tilled the land, died for it, were buried in its soil generation after generation, who faced armies and conquerors and prevailed to build their homes there—all are Palestinian. No single ethnic, tribal, or religious entity can lay sole claim to this land; they are us, and we are them. We are all Palestinian.

Proud to be a Kanaan

As a Kanaan born and raised in Nablus, since childhood I have been aware of the special and honorable roots that have guided me throughout my entire life. I have always been proud of who I was and who my parents were, and who the Kanaans are. Although I did not know my father, who passed away when I was not quite two years old, I knew a lot about him from my immediate family, from other members of the Kanaan family, and from friends who were very close to him. He was known for his honesty, generosity, and kindness. He did not leave us with many material assets, but he bequeathed to us his sterling reputation. I heard so many stories about him that always lifted up my spirits, especially during difficult times.

My mother, Rabeha, who took charge of the family after the early and unexpected death of my father, was a most noble lady. She devoted her life to keeping the family together and to facing every difficulty bravely and honorably. She was the best example of pride, courage, and self-control. She was the best of teachers for me and for my brothers and sisters. She taught us the right meaning of family and of our responsi-

bility towards each other. As long as I am alive, I will never forget her advice to me to always be respectful and loyal to all members of the family.

Forever in my memory are my brothers and sisters Nasouh, Rihab, Ribhai, Adli, Wisam, Siham, and Faisal, who rose up to meet their highest responsibilities and worked hard to make our family an exemplary strong, proud, Palestinian family. Likewise, I will never forget Uncle Abu Najdi, my mother's brother, a prominent figure in our life who stopped at our house every day after he closed his shop to check on his sister and her children.

The love and guidance that I received from my family, especially from my mother, during my childhood, is beyond imagination. As the youngest member of the family, I was the center of attention for everybody. There was great emphasis on education and learning. My family was aware of my potential, and everybody invested the time and effort to make sure that I excelled in school. My sisters spent time with me every evening reviewing my school assignments before going to bed. Besides the good genes I was fortunate enough to inherit from my parents, I was blessed by this great attention and mentoring that was behind my achievements in school and being the head of my class throughout my entire life.

Proud to be Palestinian

Love for my country and my people have filled my heart since early childhood.

The events of 1947–1948, which are known in our history as al-Nakba (the Catastrophe), affected the lives of Palestinians greatly. It established a dangerous base for colonial powers in the heart of the Arab world by cutting the Palestinians out from most of Palestine's lands. Most of the people of Palestine were forced out from their cities, towns, and villages during the war. Multiple war crimes were committed by the Zionists against the Palestinians, and massacres were planned by the Zionist militias in several villages to create a state of horror and fear to drive civilians from their homes.

That year I was nine years old in Nablus, and I remember very well when masses of Palestinian refugees flooded our city. Schools were closed so that people could shelter there, as well as in churches, mosques, and camps set up with tents. I remember people were calling for volunteers to help people settle down, to bring food and other supplies. Despite my young age, I remember it because it was a completely different time in our city. Everybody was talking about the trouble they had been through, recounting their stories of how they had been expelled from their homeland. During the upheaval that we call the Nakba, as a mere boy of nine, I started to live a new life. This experience had an enormous impact on my awareness of the Palestinian situation and my affiliation and belief in the justice of the cause, which became the motivation behind all my activities.

Al-Najah School

Through my nursery school, primary school, and secondary school years, I was enrolled in al-Najah school (*najah* means “success”). The history of Palestine was an essential part of the educational programs at my school. Many bright young students from all over the Arab world—North Africa, Algeria, Yemen—attended al-Najah school as boarding students. They opened new horizons for me that were the nucleus of my political and national awareness. Several of the school staff were eminent scholars and leaders in the Arab National Movement.

Nablus, my hometown, was one of the main Palestinian resistance centers against the colonial British forces and the Zionist militia. It was known as the Mountain of Fire.

Al-Najah school was a center of national spirit, and all graduates carried that spirit. I was proud to be among the graduates then, and I got involved in debate. I learned how to give political speeches and engaged in political and cultural activities.

The Arab National Movement

During the school year, I learned a lot about the history of the Zionist movement and the history of Palestine, and that was when I got involved in politics. At that time there were many groups, and I was exposed to all the ideas and political parties that sprang up in response to the Nakba.

At that point, I became aware of the Arab National Movement and its clear understanding of the nature and danger of Zionism—most importantly, that this threat was not limited to Palestine, but extended to all Arab countries, especially those of Greater Syria. The ideology of the movement, which focused on Arab unity as the strategy to combat the Zionist colonial agenda of expansion and expulsion, attracted me and convinced me to become a member and supporter.

My membership in the movement was a journey full of risks, and my history was full of obstacles and pain. It was a commitment that shaped my destiny and my life for many years to come.

The Genesis of the Movement

The idea started among Palestinian students at the American University of Beirut (AUB). The main person among the founders was Dr. George Habash, a Palestinian medical student from the town of Allud, who had been in his final year when Israel was established in 1948 and the people of Allud, including his family, were expelled. Another of the leaders of the movement was Dr. Wadie Haddad, who was a close

friend of Dr. Habash. There was also a Syrian, Hani Hindi, and many other students. The AUB, and Beirut in particular, were at the center of Arab nationalism at the time. Different cultural movements were active, as well as several writers and authors who adhered to different ideologies.

The founders of the movement were aware of the Zionist plans to take over Palestine and to transfer and expel the Palestinian people from their homes. While Zionists were using the slogan, “A land without people for people without a land” and claiming that Palestinians did not exist, they were well aware that Palestinians had in fact lived there for centuries and had a vibrant civil society. Their plan was to banish people to the most distant place possible (in their minds, this was Iraq). The program of the Arab National Movement showed a clear understanding of Zionism, its strategy, and its vision of the future of Palestine and the Palestinian people, as well as its expanded role in the entire Middle East—which basically would involve taking over Greater Syria. That was very clear for them.

More importantly, what made me join that movement was the solution that they were advocating. They believed that the issue did not concern the Palestinians alone, but all Arabs, especially the Arabs of Greater Syria. They were also aware from the start that our problem was the vassal states—the Arab regimes whose rulers served the interests of the British and the Americans so that they could retain power and reap financial benefit. The movement understood that there was no way to prevail against the Zionists without regime change in the Arab world. At the same time, it was clear that the problem was not only the Jews who had settled in Palestine, but the imperial colonial powers of the British and US, who had created Israel as part of their strategic plan to control the region and to serve their interests in faraway lands.

Medical School

The second stage in my political involvement and in my future plans was going to medical school. I wanted to attend medical school in Egypt because its standard of education in medicine was considered the highest in the region.

I graduated from al-Najah school in 1955–1956. The educational system in Jordan consisted of eleven years followed by a matriculation test, but Egypt required twelve years of high school and passing a standardized test. As I wanted to attend school in Egypt, this created a dilemma. I owe much respect and gratitude to Dr. Qadri Toukan, who was the school president at the time. He managed to add a night class to meet the Egyptian requirements to be accepted to medical schools there. Thanks to him, I was able to attend the night classes and take a teaching job during the day. I taught mathematics, first in the village of Burqa and then in Nablus, and was able

to connect with the students and instill in them national aspirations and the love for our country.

Meanwhile, I applied to medical schools in Egypt. Egyptian schools had a quota for Palestinian students in different specialties; the medical school quota was ten seats divided between the University of Cairo and Ain Shams University in Cairo. I was accepted at Ain Shams.

Funding, however, was a problem. My family was not wealthy and resources were tight. My mother called a family meeting at the house without me present, and they came up with a plan to meet my expenses. My two sisters earned a good income as teachers, and funds for my education were secured.

The First Year

At the start of my first year of medical school, as I was looking at the schedule, standing next to me was a young man with a friendly face who introduced himself as Bashir. We hit it off right away, and from that day our friendship grew. The first year was difficult because I was living with other members of the party who also went to Ain Shams, and our place was far from campus. It took me forty minutes by bus to get to school. By the next year I had gotten to know the city better, and with Bashir's help, we moved to an apartment in Hiliapolis, New Cairo, with two other students, Anan and Ghassan. The place was owned by a very nice Saudi gentleman who lived in Cairo. We had a good relationship with him, and it was a fine living arrangement. We had two bedrooms; I shared a room with Anan while Bashir shared the other with Ghassan.

As for the academic aspect, learning in medical school in Egypt was almost impossible. Lectures had more than five hundred students in a huge auditorium. The lab was more reasonable. The program consisted of a year of premedical studies and five and a half years of medical studies. The first two years were combined, with one exam at the end.

I was involved in the Palestine student union, the Rabita, in Cairo. I can say without exaggerating that I was the most prominent, the first in elections, and had connections with students everywhere in Cairo. The union played a great role in the life of Palestinians. Interestingly, the All-Palestine Government, which had been established in Gaza in 1948 and survived for one year before being forced to move to Cairo by the Egyptian government,¹ was renting offices in the same building in downtown Cairo as the Palestinian Student Union. In fact, the student union was paying the rent for the All-Palestine Government.

1. See page **XX** in part III of this book.

The student union held many activities. The previous generation of leadership had been in the hands of the communist students and the Muslim Brotherhood. Yasser Arafat was an immensely popular member of the previous generation. He used to win elections by transporting busloads of Muslim students from al-Azhar university to cast their vote in his favor. By the time I arrived, however, Arafat was retired. The new generation had several parties besides the Arab National Movement that I belonged to. I won the elections in the year that I was there. In fact, I did not pay much attention to my studies that year because of my involvement in the student union.

The United Arab Republic

In February 1958, the United Arab Republic (UAR), a union between Egypt and Syria, was established. Civil society in Syria at the time was influenced by a number of different parties, including the Ba'ath and Communist parties, and several military nationalists. It had been a center of nationalist movements since the First World War. After 1948, there had been many attempts to take over the Syrian government. In 1958, the regimes in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Jordan had conspired against Syria. The union between Egypt and Syria was formed to protect Syria from the attempts to overthrow its democratically elected government. I was present when people gathered to witness Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and the president of Syria, Shukri al-Quwatli, announcing the establishment of the union. That was a dream, and a special day in the history of the National Arab Movement.

Sadly, that union ended in a military coup three years later. Behind its downfall lay the way it had been established and how it was administered. There were grievances among the Syrians that their sovereignty had been compromised. Nasser had agreed to the union on the condition that the political parties in Syria dissolve themselves, and they agreed. But Nasser never intended to share power equally, and slowly squeezed Syrians out of influential government positions. He imposed economic reforms, including nationalization of many industries, creating backlash among Syrian businesses and the military. Military officers staged a coup and withdrew from the union in February 1961.

The other major event of that year, which took place only six months after the Arab Union, was the July 14 Revolution in Iraq, known as the 1958 Iraqi coup d'état. It resulted in the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy that had been established in 1921 when the occupying British government had installed Faysal I as king of Iraq.² The July 14 Revolution, which was extremely bloody, ended with the establishment of

2. As detailed in part III of this book, the Hashemites were an eminent Arabic tribe descended from the Prophet Muhammad. Faysal's father, Husayn, was sharif of Mecca and later king of the Hijaz; Faysal's brother Abdullah was the king of Jordan. The Hijaz was absorbed by Saudi Arabia in the 1930s; Faysal's overthrow in 1958 left Jordan as the sole remaining Hashemite monarchy.

the Iraqi Republic. The Hashemite Arab Federation between Iraq and Jordan that had been established six months earlier also came to an end. Abd al-Karim Qasim, a Communist, took power as prime minister in Iraq until February of 1963, when he was overthrown and killed in the Ramadan Revolution by the Ba'ath Party's Iraqi wing. Qasim's deputy, Abdel Salam Arif, a non-Ba'athist, was given the ceremonial position of president, but the real power was with the top Ba'athi generals. Under these generals, a dictatorial police state took control of all aspects of power, including the National Guard militias, and organized massacres of hundreds, if not thousands, of suspected Communists and other dissident rivals, including members of the Arab National Movement. (This detail will become important later in my story.)

In the summer of 1958, when I returned to Nablus after my first year of medical school in Cairo, the situation in Jordan was very tense, as army officers whose nationalistic feelings had been encouraged by the Arab Union were attempting to topple the monarchy in Jordan. In the wake of the Iraqi revolution, public opinion was in support of the movement, and demonstrations filled the Arab streets. I was one of the prominent people in these demonstrations.

The Jordanian secret service and loyalist factions of the army were able to suppress the movement. They also cracked down on everyone who participated, and I was targeted for arrest and imprisonment. The intelligence service came to my house in Nablus, but I was able to escape and went into hiding. After few days I came back, figuring it would be the last place they would look for me. Plans were then made for me to escape to Syria with other wanted people.

By September, arrangements had been made, and I left Nablus, traveling by car and sometimes by donkey, bound for the Jordan valley at the northern border of Syria close to the Sea of Galilee. We crossed the border into Syria legally; thanks to arrangements with Syrian authorities, we spent one night in jail and then were released. I spent several days in Syria and lived in the same house with Dr. George Habash, which gave me time to get to know him in person and spend time with him and learn from him. He was charming, kind, sincere, and loyal. He had a clear vision of the movement, and was able to express himself well and teach others about it.

Dropping Out of Medical School

When the school year started in the fall of 1958, I returned to Cairo to start my second year of medical studies. However, I was approached by the leadership of the Arab National Movement, who were looking for professional activists and organizers who would devote themselves to the activities of the party. The movement's leadership asked me to leave my medical studies in order to devote myself to the movement's

political, intellectual, and social activities in Syria and Lebanon. Although I had done well in my first year, I decided to quit school and devote myself to the cause.

So I left Cairo in 1959. During that time I was traveling to Lebanon and Syria, which gave me more opportunities to meet with Dr. George Habash and Dr. Wadie Haddad, the two leaders whom I liked and respected. The Lebanese members who ran the party journal were smart, but I did not trust them and did not get along with them or build a strong relationship with them.

In 1961, the night before the military coup that resulted in the breakup of the Arab Union, I was in Damascus preparing for the National Student Union convention. This was to be the first convention of the Palestinian Student Union, which would announce the establishment of the union with branches in countries throughout the Arab world and especially in Europe. The convention was to begin that night with speeches; the following day, we planned to officially establish the Palestinian Student Union at the convention. There were delegates from different countries, and everyone was excited. I was the moderator of that evening's speeches, and I was to be announced as the president the next day. We all were excited that night, even though everyone was aware of the serious attempts by the regressive regimes to break the Arab Union between Egypt and Syria. In my speech, ironically, I stated that the union was stronger than ever.

But the next morning, on September 28, 1961, the military coup took place that resulted in the breakup of the United Arab Republic. Interestingly, the officer who led the coup was the secretary of the Egyptian general Abdel Hakim Amer. Amer had trusted him, and had given him control of the country after the removal of Syria's previous leader. In my opinion, the UAR was controlled by the Egyptian secret service, which allowed the Syrian military officers who worked with the repressive regimes to succeed in breaking the union. Another major mistake on Nasser's part was that when a group of Syrian officers in northern Syria declared a mutiny against the coup leaders, Nasser declined to send Egyptian military support to support them and protect the UAR.

Sadly, on the morning of the coup there were minimal protests or demonstrations in the streets, which indicated that people were relieved to get rid of the abusive Egyptian military officers and the mistakes they made. They only realized later who was really behind the new regime—the CIA and the Arab reactionary governments. It was sad for me to observe this. They believed the army's claim that the coup was meant to correct the union, not abolish it.

Pursuing a Master's in History

I moved to Beirut after the breakup of the United Arab Republic. I enrolled in Beirut Arab University (BAU) and studied history for four years. Attendance at BAU was

very relaxed, and I hardly attended classes, as I traveled a lot, but I took the exams when offered. Because of this, I was always ahead in spite of my absences. I remember that one of the tests I took had a question about the French Revolution (which, as you may remember, began with a revolt against the king and ended with the dictatorship of Bonaparte). The question asked by the professor, a very knowledgeable Egyptian, was: "Did the French Revolution succeed, and how would you assess it?"

This untraditional question was interesting, and I answered it with one of the best essays I have ever written. Tests did not have the student's name on them; they were only numbered, and grades were listed accordingly. During another written exam, the professor walked around as the students worked. He stopped by my chair when he identified my handwriting and shook my hand, congratulating me. He said, "I have never had a student like you." That was very encouraging to me and gave me more motivation to study.

Imprisoned in Iraq

I received a baccalaureate degree in history from BAU in 1964, but I was not able to complete my master's thesis at that time due to the political situation in Iraq, which caused a fundamental change in my life. The Ba'athist coup in Iraq in 1963 had been followed by a policy of repression and dismantlement of all political parties, including the Arab National Movement. The leadership of the movement decided to send a vanguard of students from different countries to try to rebuild the organization in Iraq; I was one of this group. I left for Baghdad at that time.

We took precautionary measures, and connection between members was limited. I lived in one house by myself and knew only one other person in another house. Somehow the Ba'ath regime found out about it. The way they operated was when they arrested one person, they subjected him to torture and extracted a confession to arrest another, and so on. Thus, when I went to the one house I knew and knocked on the door, the Ba'ath secret service opened the door and arrested me.

At that time I identified myself as a student just visiting a friend, but I was still arrested and kept in jail among tens of people in one big room. Nobody interrogated me for a while, unlike the others, and I felt comfortable, thinking that I would be released soon. Unfortunately, one of the people in the room who had confessed and apparently broke under torture recognized me by my code name, Yousef, and told the officers about it. They had been looking for Yousef and had been unable to find him until now.

I was removed to isolation and taken to the torture chamber. I do not want to elaborate on that time. Fortunately, the information I had was limited, and I tried to use my head and be wise about what information to give. Still, they subjected me to all

kinds of physical torture. Much of the time I was unconscious and not aware of what was going on. Apparently other people were subjected to the same kind of treatment. One of them was a student who came from Cairo, from a prominent Palestinian family. I had never met him, but I knew of him, and he apparently knew of me. He was also tortured—so severely that he died. News about the persecution and death of members of the Arab National Movement spread all over the Arab world. My name was mentioned in a radio broadcast as one of those who had died under torture. Public opinion condemning the Ba’ath regime in Iraq grew strong, which forced them to release many prisoners, including me. I left Iraq and returned to Beirut.

My brothers and sisters thought I was dead, and they were devastated. They called a family meeting, and just as they were about to tell my mother the news, I called the phone in Nablus from Beirut to say, “It’s me! It’s me!” Everyone was greatly relieved, and the whole city of Nablus rejoiced.

Freedom

I received a warm reception upon my arrival in Beirut and was informed of what had transpired in my absence in prison. Unfortunately, a split had occurred among the elements of the movement. The main wing was led by Dr. George Habash, while the opposition movement was led by Nayef Hawatmeh, whom I never liked; Hawatmeh wanted to take the party toward a Marxist-Leninist ideology.

I attended most of the meetings and discussions aimed at healing the rift and avoiding negative publicity. It was agreed that we would call for a convention to discuss the movement’s ideology and direction. One important topic on the agenda was to turn the leadership over to a younger generation that was not involved with either wing. My name was among the nominees for temporary leadership, but that meeting did not materialize. In any case, this series of events was very psychologically shocking and disillusioning to me, and felt far from the path that I had envisioned for the liberation of Palestine.

I spoke with Wadie Haddad about my disappointment and the toxic atmosphere that prevailed in the movement. He suggested that I take on a new mission of an educational and intellectual nature in the West Bank. This was appealing, as it would give me the opportunity to educate youth on the history of Palestine and the Zionist movement. I did not even know the full names of the youth I was working with; no infiltration of the border with Israel was committed by anyone I worked with, and that section was safe from the Jordanian intelligence during the time I was there. However, in spite of all the precautions taken, the Jordanian intelligence service, whose chief was Mohammed Rasoul al-Kilani, gathered a lot of information about all the political parties in Jordan and the West Bank and started a campaign of breaking

up these groups. They arrested hundreds of people from all parties whose names were known to them without specific charges.

I was arrested and taken to Amman, where I was placed in the regular jail, which had been emptied to accommodate the large number of arrests. We could talk among ourselves, but we did not know what the situation was. From time to time they would take one or more of us to be interrogated, but the people who were interrogated never came back. I spent several weeks not knowing what was going on.

When my brother Adli, who was visiting from the US, found out that I was in jail, he managed to come see me through some connections. He gave me a message from my family urging me to leave politics and return to medical school. One day I was taken from the general prison to the center of the intelligence branch, where I met M. Rasoul and Adli. It was a strange meeting. Rasoul was talking to me, telling me to think logically, that the intelligence bureau had all the information that they needed on me, but asked me to take my time to think about it.

Afterward, I was taken to one of the isolation cells. Several nights passed with no one talking to me; they brought me food, and I slept sporadically. Then, early one morning, I was told to come to a special large room with Rasoul and other officers, as well as members of the Arab National Party who knew me and were familiar to me. At this gathering, Rasoul would ask the others to tell me what they knew. He would then ask me to do the right thing and write down any information I had. I wrote what I had deduced that my captors already knew. Fortunately, they did not know about the people I worked with. It was shocking to me to see this meeting conducted in a friendly way, with them joking and talking and enjoying good food. From that day on my treatment was different. I had to answer some questions in writing, and shortly afterward I was released.

The members of the Jordanian intelligence service that I dealt with were smarter than the ones I had dealt with in Iraq. They managed to get all the information without creating bad publicity for themselves, and at the same time managed to break apart not just the leadership, but entire organizations and all the parties without exception. Whether they had informers who infiltrated the parties, or whether members broke down under torture, they succeeded in dismantling the political life in Jordan for a comparatively small price. Furthermore, anyone who was arrested in Jordan for political reasons faced a difficult life; they were banned from employment and forbidden to leave the country.

Life Decisions

My disappointment and disillusionment after all these events, along with many other reasons, led me to make the decision to be done with politics. I did not know

what to do or what my future would be, so it was a difficult period of my life. But as I was faced with all this, I received a letter from Cairo from my dear friend Bashir, who had been my roommate and had graduated from medical school as a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology.³ He advised me to go back and finish medical school. That sounded so ridiculous at the time, as I had been away for five years, not to mention the difficult question of funding. When I mentioned this to my brother Faisal, however, he encouraged me, and promised to secure the funding for my education himself. He was by then a successful dentist living with his young family in Nablus.

The sticking point was whether the medical school would allow me to enter the second year of study after a five-year absence and to have the successful results of my preliminary year recognized. After persistent effort, and thanks to a decision by the office of President Nasser (this was due to Bashir's good relations with the top level of government), I was accepted, and my absence was considered justified. Despite the reservations of the head of the Faculty of Medicine and his warning that I would fail, I made a very serious effort and passed the two-year exam with distinction. I graduated in 1970 with first-class honors. The credit goes to my family, especially to the blessings of my mother and my brother Faisal and his wife Fatima, who provided me with the financial support for my academic journey.

Faisal was deported by Israel to Jordan in 1969, so my brother Adli secured a loan for me for that year, which I paid back after I started my medical practice. I continued my career with pride and sincerity. My goal was to continue my studies in the United States, specializing in the field of neuroscience.

One of the requirements to be admitted to medical school in the US is passing the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), which I took at the American embassy in Beirut. This was a very difficult exam, but I passed, coming one step closer to going to the US.

Shadia

In my last year of medical school in Cairo, my brother Faisal sent me a letter conveying the family's approval of my plans to go to the United States. In his letter, he suggested that I visit Nablus in the summer to have a chance to meet Shadia in the hopes that we would like one another and agree to get married before I left for the US. That idea appealed to me. I remembered her as a beautiful young college girl—we had briefly

3. Bashir later went back to Damascus and opened a women's hospital. He became involved in the diamond trade, which led to his being killed by corrupt figures in the Syrian government.

been introduced when I visited the library at the University of Jordan in Amman with my brother Faisal to donate my brother Adli's chemistry books.

While I was in the midst of taking my last two comprehensive exams in medical school, Faisal came to visit me, staying until I was done, to break to me the devastating news of my mother's passing due to a heart attack. This weighed heavily on my heart throughout my life, as I had always dreamed of the day that I would be able to make her comfortable.

Because I had not been present at the time of the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, I was not counted in the census and was therefore not considered a resident. The census was conducted door to door, and anyone who was not present at the time was denied residency status. The census had been timed with the knowledge that students studying abroad would not be present, as well as families working in the Gulf states who would return to their homes in the summer. This strategy reduced the numbers to better fit the Zionist fiction of a "land without a people." My sisters, who were residents, succeeded in getting me a visiting permit to Nablus.

In Nablus, I waited for Shadia to arrive from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where she had gone after graduating from the University of Jordan. Upon her long-anticipated arrival, we were introduced at her home. Shadia's mother, who was recently widowed, gave permission for me to visit and spend time with Shadia. For weeks that summer, I would visit her at her home and spend all day with her and the family to get to know her. I would leave in the evening when the taxi service was ready to end for the night. We spent hours talking. I found more than I expected in her, and I enjoyed her intellect and sense of humor.

One night when I returned home, I received a call from the police station, which was manned by Palestinian police under the control of the Israeli officers, inviting me to come to the station. I was asked if I wished to have their police car pick me up, but I decided to walk across town to the station myself. The minute I arrived I was put under arrest. I was transferred to the city prison, where I found a large crowd of other Palestinians. A large number of women were detained at the same time in other quarters of the prison. I spent three weeks in detention, but was never interrogated. When an Israeli officer asked me if I knew why I was there and I said no, he told me it was because there were Israeli hostages on several planes in the Jordan desert that had been hijacked by the PFLP, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.⁴ He explained that my brother Faisal, who had been deported from Nablus the year before, was a political supporter of that group. I replied to the Israeli officer that the

4. In September 1970, the PFLP hijacked four airliners, forcing three of them to land at Dawson's Field, a remote airstrip in Jordan. Their goal was the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Fifty-six Jewish hostages were kept, ultimately being exchanged for captured hijacker Leila Khalid and three PFLP members who had been imprisoned in Switzerland. The incident led to the Black September conflict in which Jordanian military forces defeated the PLO and progressive forces in Jordan and expelled the PLO from Jordan.

whole population were hostages, and there was no need to take us. He told me that if I had not been at home in Nablus, they would have taken my two older sisters.

Upon my release three weeks later, I was given just two or three days to leave the country and told never to try to return. I walked out of the prison and many people recognized me. One taxi driver saw me and called Shadia's home to tell her I was released. He elaborated that I was on my way home to take a shower and then go see her. He was right; that was exactly what I did. That was the beauty of our hometown.

The fact that I only had three days before I had to leave prompted us to arrange for an official engagement, which, according to Muslim law, was a marriage contract. On September 5, 1970, we had the *katb kitab* in a small celebration with family and friends that was arranged at Shadia's home. Two days later I left Nablus for Amman, where I planned to stay with my brother Faisal. When I arrived, however, I found that he and his family had left for Syria, because the Jordanian government was carrying out operations against the Palestinian Liberation Movement. That was the Black September war when many fighters were killed; others were arrested, and many fled across the border to Syria.⁵ I stayed with our friends and neighbors until the war ended and my brother and his family returned. Shadia visited Amman from time to time, as her grandparents lived there.

A Delayed Wedding

I had communicated with my brother Adli, who was a professor of chemistry at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, about my chances of immigrating to the US. He offered to apply for me and my wife to immigrate as relatives of a citizen. At the same time, we applied for an immigration visa through the US embassy in Amman based on my academic achievements and the need for physicians in the US. The war in Vietnam had caused a shortage of doctors.

While waiting in Amman for visa approval, I worked at the Ministry of Health as a coroner, as it was the only position available to me. When, in April 1971, we received the approval for immigration, we set April 17 as the date for our wedding. Meanwhile, as Adli advised, I applied to Borgess Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I sent an inquiry to the director of medical education, Dr. Springgate, who informed me that their policy was to grant a position only after an interview in person. (Much to his surprise, I showed up in person few months later.)

I asked the family to apply for a visiting permit for me to attend the wedding in Nablus. At the time, my cousin Hamdi Kanaan was the mayor in Nablus; he applied

5. Many of these fighters ended up in Lebanon until 1982, when they were forced to leave for Tunis. After the Oslo Accord in 1993, they were allowed to return to the West Bank, where they established the Palestinian Authority government under Arafat.

several times for a permit for me to visit, even posting a large bail to allow me a twenty-four-hour visiting permit. But on the morning of the wedding, the rejection came from the military headquarters in Jerusalem. Shadia was alone on our wedding day; the party took place in my absence. The next day, I met Shadia and her mother on the bridge that separates the West Bank from Jordan. We checked into the Hotel Intercontinental in Amman. The situation at that time was very tense because the Jordanian government had imposed curfews on sections of the city for a week at a time, and they were conducting house-to-house searches for weapons, so the different neighborhoods were isolated from each other. Nonetheless, my brother managed to have a small, special party for us at his house. Shadia wore her wedding dress, and we had our delayed wedding.

We planned to leave for the US in early May, spending a few days in Cairo on our way to show Shadia where I had lived as a student. Prior to our departure from Amman, I asked Shadia's uncle Khalid, who had friends at the Egyptian embassy, to make sure that we would be allowed to enter Cairo. At that time, relations between the Arab National Movement and Egypt were poor, as the Egyptian intelligence accused the movement of plotting against Nasser during the war in South Yemen.

The embassy personnel gave us the green light to travel to Cairo. Upon arrival, however, Shadia was allowed to enter the country, but I was not. Of course, we both stayed in the airport hotel under guard until the next day, when we boarded a plane to London. We stayed in London for three days and flew to the US on May 4. My brother Adli, his wife Carolyn, and their children Tim and Mona were waiting for us at the Detroit airport.

We continued our journey together in the US for the next fifty years.

Internship and Residency

The first thing I did after we settled in Kalamazoo was to call Dr. Springgate, the director of medical education at Borgess Hospital, for an interview for an internship. My call was a surprise for him—he told me later on that he never expected it. His previous response mentioning the requirement of an interview had been a polite rejection of my request. Apparently the hospital had had bad experiences with foreign graduates in the past, so it was decided not to accept foreign interns anymore.

We made an appointment for a few days later. Dr. Springgate invited Dr. Tucker, an oncologist, to join the interview with him. It was an interesting interview. After thoroughly grilling me on my medical knowledge, they asked several questions about how I would treat Jewish patients or deal with Jewish personnel in the hospital, including physicians.

Two days later I was offered a position, and Dr. Springgate asked me if I was willing to start on June 1 rather than July 1, which was the official starting date for the

year's new interns. I accepted. Dr. Springgate told me afterward that I had given him no reason to reject my request for a position as an intern. He also mentioned that he was happy that I was one of that year's interns.

I must say that it was challenging for me to adjust to the different culture and the new system. I had no difficulty obtaining history from patients; the problem was how to dictate the history of the physical. Initially, I would write it down and make sure it was accurate, and then I would dictate. It used to take me more time than the other interns, of course, but gradually I was able to dictate directly.

I rotated through service monthly, but because I was interested in neurology, I spent two months in the neurology service. Dr. Russell Mohny had a demanding practice as the only neurologist in the area. He was very busy seeing patients in the office, in the emergency room, and in the hospital. He used to go home for dinner with his family and return to the hospital for consults and to make rounds on his inpatients. He would call me to meet him at night in the hospital and I would comply—this was not a normal expectation for an intern. I learned a lot under his tutelage. We established a special relationship that lasted until his passing in February of 2020.

One story Russ enjoyed telling over the years was about the time we invited them to dinner at our apartment. Shadia prepared a special dinner for eight, thinking that we would be hosting Russ and his wife Cleora and their four kids. She had to borrow chairs from our neighbor across the hall. We were disappointed when just the two of them showed up alone without their kids; for their part, they were surprised that we had meant to invite the entire family, the Arab way.

After my internship, the next step was for me to find a position as a resident in a neurology program. I applied to several places with the help of my sister-in-law Carolyn, who typed more than a hundred applications for me. I was disappointed and discouraged because I was unable to secure a position. One day, Russ noticed that I was anxious and uncomfortable and asked me what was going on, so I told him. The next day he let me know that he could arrange a residency position for me in the Mayo Clinic, where he had trained; or at Wayne State in Detroit, where he had graduated; or at Indiana University in Indianapolis, where he had connections. I told him that I needed his help to choose, as I had no idea about any of these places. He patiently explained to me that the Mayo Clinic was a major referral center where I would be exposed to more specialized cases. In his opinion, Detroit was the best place to learn because of the patient population; however, he said Detroit was not a safe place. He advised me to go for an interview at Indiana University. They had a general hospital in the city, a university hospital for referrals, and a veterans' hospital. He made arrangements for me for interview. I found out later that he had secured a place for me in advance and had persuaded Dr. Dyken to offer me a position, but he did not tell me that.

It was a most interesting trip to Indianapolis. Shadia and I stayed at the student union on campus. Although we had a car—a beautiful gold Camaro—we took the bus because we were not used to driving on the interstate, and Shadia was seven months pregnant with our first child. The interview went well, and I was offered the position. It was a happy day. Russ told us that they had asked him if he would take me as a partner when I finish. He had said yes, and that was the determining factor in me being offered the residency. Interestingly, Dr. Dyken also offered me a staff position at the university when I graduated.

Residency in Indianapolis

My residency program was confirmed for the three years from 1972 to 1975, so after I completed my internship year in 1972, we moved to Indianapolis. Russ asked me to return to Kalamazoo as a partner in his neurology practice after I finished my training.

I started the residency program at Indiana University in July 1972. It was a great program. One of the more interesting features that had an impact on my future practice was a two-month dedicated course in neuroanatomy that involved no assignments other than just studying. I mention this because at that time the neuro CT scanner was under development. This course was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Dyken, the head of the program. He had the brain dissected in order to scan slices with the CT scanner. He explained that this technical modality was a scientific revolution, and we would need to have a thorough understanding of it for our future practice.

Back to Kalamazoo

Through hard work and continuous study, I became certified as a surgeon by the Michigan Medical Practice Board in 1974 and graduated from my residency in neurology at Indiana University in 1975. (Later, in 1983, I received my certification in neurology from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurosurgery.) I then returned to Kalamazoo to join Dr. Russ Mohney in his practice. This city would be our home from then on. Our second son, Khaled, had been born in Indianapolis in March of 1973, but our other sons were born in Kalamazoo: Nidal, the youngest, in 1979, Hilal in 1976, and Samer in 1972.

Russ was a visionary. He was following the technical development of the head scanner closely, and even traveled to London to inspect the device (it was called the EMI scanner back then, because it was produced by the company Electrical and Music

Industries Ltd.). He signed a contract to have the scanner brought to Kalamazoo. His reputation at the hospital and his leadership helped to have the scanner installed at the hospital. There were no neuro or radiology programs offering special training for the CT scan back then, so Russ and I traveled to Utah to get training. When he offered to partner with the radiology group in town to use the scanner, they insisted on exclusive rights to have it in the radiology department, and refused to cooperate with the neurology service. Finally, the Borgess Hospital board of directors decided to have it installed in the neurology department. This was in the summer of 1975, the year I joined Russ's practice. The intensive neuroanatomy course that I had taken in Indianapolis was of great benefit, as it allowed me to interpret the images. I also took time off to study and attend meetings to learn a lot more about CT imaging.

A Private Practice for CT Scans

The CT scanner was a revolution and a turning point in the practice of neurology. It drastically improved the limited exams that had been available to us to study brain pathology in clinical practice. Back then, each scan took more than a minute for each slice of the brain; the units these days take only two to three minutes for the entire exam.

Our practice grew over the years and became a major referral center in southwest Michigan. We opened clinics in several hospitals in the region, and we constantly received patients from hospital emergency rooms. My relationship with Dr. Mohney became stronger over time. After the second year I became a full partner, and Russ offered for me to take over the management of the practice. He must have found something special about me to allow me to expand the practice with his help. I asked him later about the reason behind his confidence in me. He said that he was sure that I would be fair and respectful to the employees.

A few years later, the body CT scan was developed and became available for clinical practice. Changes in the hospital administration at the time allowed the radiologists to have the body scanner in the radiology department. We were denied access to the new scanner and the ability to study the spinal cord, which was an important part of neurology and neurosurgery practice. That change in administration policy prompted us to think about having a body scanner as part of a private practice that would be shared with the neurosurgery department. I made a presentation to the two groups, proposing to acquire our own scanner in our office across the street from the hospital. I took charge of the project from A to Z, studying the regulations as well as developing the finance plan, which was approved by the two groups. (In 2007, neurosurgery withdrew its ownership interest.) Fortunately, Dr. Mohney owned a building across the street from the hospital, and he gave the green light to proceed with the

project. The two practices merged under the title Kalamazoo Neurological Institute, and the scanner was installed. Two years later, following another change in hospital administration, the new administration approached us about a partnership in our scanner. We accepted, as we had a special relationship with the new administration. That partnership benefited both our private practice and the hospital.

The MRI Revolution

The second revolution in imaging was the invention of the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, which came ten years after the development of the CT scan in 1975. In 1985, we added a partner to our group, Dr. Illydio Pallachini, who would be a great asset to the MRI program. Our group brought the MRI to Kalamazoo in 1986 as part of our practice. It was one of the first units in the state of Michigan (the other three were installed at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, at Michigan State in Lansing, and at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.)

After we obtained the certificate of need from the state of Michigan, we had the MRI unit installed as part of our partnership with the hospital. Fortunately, Dr. Mohny owned a house adjacent to the building where the CT scanner was housed. He gave the green light to tear down the house and erect a new building for the MRI next to the building with the CT scanner. The now-expanded facility, which was named KNI (Kalamazoo Neurological Institute), became a well-known imaging center in the region. Later, in 2012, I was honored to have the building named the Kanaan Imaging Center.

In order to control the installation of medical equipment and to keep medical expenses contained, the state of Michigan developed rules that allowed mobile MRI units to serve multiple hospitals. Aided by our good relationships with several hospitals in Michigan, we initiated the first mobile program to serve twenty-two hospitals from the Detroit area in the east all the way to the extreme west side of Michigan. This program was the first to be accredited by the Joint Commission.⁶

As time went by, a new building was erected on the Borgess campus to host our MRI unit in connection with the hospital. We eventually added two units to this hospital site and two at our KNI office, as well as mobile services in other locations in Kalamazoo. Our imaging center became a symbol of excellence, as we established the highest quality imaging systems and hired an outstanding staff of technicians, nurses, and support staff. All were recognized as the most professional, disciplined, and dedicated teams, whether at the fixed sites or the mobile units.

6. An independent, not-for-profit organization, the Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Joint Commission accreditation is considered the gold standard in health care.

I had the honor of being part of this project since the beginning, and I am proud of what we achieved. Our success was due to our dedication and discipline and our adherence to the mission of providing quality service to our patients. Finally, after thirty-seven years of serving as CEO of the organization, I felt it was time to step down. I officially retired as of September 1, 2020.

Azzam's wife, Shadia, wrote the remainder of this account of Azzam's life.

Although Azzam devoted long hours and enormous energy to his work, the compass in his life was always Nablus and Palestine. Palestine gave a sense of belonging to family and support for our people in various ways. Social solidarity involved charitable donations to civil institutions, such as the Red Crescent, the Nablus senior center, the orphanage, and the center for the blind, as well as ongoing university scholarships for Palestinian students both privately and through the Al-Birr Society. Azzam's support for Al-Ittihad Women's Hospital in Nablus was one of his priorities. He dedicated the renovation of the women's wing at Al-Ittihad Women's Hospital to the soul of his mother, Mrs. Rabiha al-Nabulsi Kanaan. He also made donations to the general budget and maintenance of the hospital every year.

Our social activities focused on raising awareness of Palestine through local media outreach, giving lectures, hosting speakers, and arranging meetings and seminars. Through these avenues, we made an effort to educate people on the issue of Palestine and clarify its legitimacy, spread positive thought, and engage in interfaith dialogue to convey the sanctity of the Islamic religion and its sublime message to humanity. This spirit was and will remain firmly established in the souls and minds of our four children and grandchildren, God willing.

Azzam was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), in May of 2019. He fought the disease for the next twenty-two months, cared for at the University of Chicago hospital. Even during these difficult months, he did not stop monitoring events in Palestine for a moment. In January 2021, he was put on a new experimental treatment regime. When it became clear that even this would not alter the course of the disease, he informed the doctors that his final wish was to die and be buried next to his beloved mother in Nablus, Palestine. And so it was.

After a long and beautiful journey across the seas of life, the ship returned to Palestine and dropped its anchor for him to bid farewell to his beloved city, Nablus, which had always been his compass, his hope, and his legend. Azzam passed away on March 3, 2021.

He devoted the last eight years of his life to his book on the history of Palestine. This book, which gives an account of Palestine's history through the last ice age, the

Stone Age, and the Bronze Age into our modern era up to the year of the Nakba in 1948, is an important historical touchstone. As I write this, it is in the final stages of revision and will be published, God willing, in the near future.

The legacy left by Azzam Kanaan stems from his keenness to remain steadfast in the land, as this is the most powerful weapon against the occupation and the policy of transfer, whether forced or voluntary. This conviction led him to build a house for our family on a farm on Jarzeem mountain in Nablus. He planted hundreds of olive trees, peach trees, apricot trees, cherry trees, and grapevines, hoping to return there to spend his retirement years. His goal was to provide work for some locals, even if simple, keeping everyone rooted in the land.

The most important part of his legacy was his last mission: to build a basic school serving the children of the old city of Nablus on the site of his ancestral home, which had been destroyed by the Israeli occupation in the invasion in 2002. (That invasion also demolished the ancient Kanaan soap factory belonging to my own grandfather, Hajj Saeed Daoud Kanaan.) His belief in the sanctity of education and its importance in creating an educated, productive generation of Palestinians motivated him to establish a trust and allocate the funds required for the school's construction.

The school will see the light in the 2024 academic year, God willing.

Azzam's legacy will endure through his book on the history of Palestine, and through the Azzam Kanaan Middle School for Girls in the old city of his beloved city of Nablus, and through the kindness with which he suffused the world.

May he rest in peace.

SHADIA KANAAN

April 2024

Son of Nablus

A eulogy for my father

I have seen the sun and empires rise and set,
Bearing witness
to the crossroads of humanity.
Just as I am cradled between two mountains,
I cradled you. Child of mine. Son of Nablus.

I heard your first cry, and echoed your laughter,
As you ran through my alleyways.

The joys of youth passed with the seasons,
Until the long winter of our people befell us.

But you endured.
Through hardship you found manhood.
And you thrived.

Even though an ocean and injustice separated us,
I still cradled the spirit of Palestine within you.
And you thrived.

Years passed and the shadows stretching across my stone arches grew longer.
And you yearned to return to me.

But my dear child, you never left.
You have always been with me.

Son of Palestine, know that I exist only through you.
My soul is your soul.
And through your love, I will live forever.

HILAL AZZAM KANAAN
(For Azzam S. Kanaan, Feb 2021)



Anchor in the front yard of the house in Nablus. The anchor was an important symbol for Azzam and Shadia; it represented their dream of returning to their homeland of Palestine as a ship that sets anchor when it returns to its harbor. (The Israeli settlement, Baraka, can be seen at the top of the hill in the background.)



This olive tree, which was imported by Azzam after a long search through villages in Palestine, dates back more than two thousand years to the Roman occupation. Olives, which originated in Palestine and spread throughout the Mediterranean, are a source of light and nourishment for the world. They are the principal source of livelihood for Palestinian farmers.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ
 دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ
 عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly star lit from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light, God guides to His light whom He wills. And God presents examples for the people, and God is Knowing of all things.

(Surah 24:35, an-Nur)



Azzam Kanaan around age twelve.



Best friends (Nablus, ca. 1999).



Tree huggers.



The newly renamed Kanaan Imaging Center, 2012.

PART I

Palestine and the Ancient World

ANCIENT PALESTINE



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Prehistoric Palestine

The past does not and can no longer exist. Archaeological materials and texts—remnants of the past—do exist. When we write history today, we attempt to explain, understand and describe these fragments of the past. History is interpretation of data that exists now. This is why we cannot write history without evidence. It is also why what we write is so fragmented and partial. We are ignorant of most of the past. And that is the beginning of wisdom in history-writing.¹

Palestine and the Palestinians

Palestine is defined as the area of southern Levant on both sides of the Jordan rift. Geographically, it is best understood as the southern fringe of Syria. It includes highlands intersected by low-lying valleys. Large areas of treeless steppeland are found in the south and east where it joins the Arabian and Sinai deserts. The land is mentioned in the Egyptian texts as the Upper Retenu and Kinahhi (Canaan), but it has been known as Palestine since the Assyrian period (1300–600 BCE). The name Palestine was also used by Herodotus, the Greek historian of the sixth century BCE, and the Romans continued to refer to it by that name. In modern times, the name Palestine was used during the British mandate period.²

Until the 1950s and the 1960s, the Old Testament was the main source of the history of Palestine. Western historians based their history of Palestine and the Near East on biblical accounts without any support from historical records or archeological

1. Thomas I. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 237.

2. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 233.

findings. During the second half of the twentieth century CE, many historians challenged accounts which used biblical stories as their reference. By the 1980s, several publications by prominent scholars presented a new history of Palestine based on the tools of historic research supported by archaeological study. Those are the sources utilized in the current narrative of the ancient history of Palestine.

The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians left behind texts that have enabled historians to construct real histories of these nations based on their content, as well as material remains extracted through excavations. In the case of ancient Palestine, the absence of textual data forced modern historians to depend to a great degree on archaeological research in their effort to construct the real history of ancient Palestine. They also utilized information from relevant contemporary textual documents which have been discovered recently in Ugarit, and from textual records of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Still some historians considered admitting material drawn from biblical narratives. **“In the main, however, the historic reconstruction of the Palestinian civilization has had to depend on the results of archaeological research undertaken in the Levant during the past one hundred and fifty years or so.”**³

Nowadays, scholars who are involved in the reconstruction of the history of ancient Palestine rely on the skills and knowledge developed by the pioneers in this field. **Sir Flinders Petrie** (1853–1942) is considered to have led these efforts. He was the first to recognize that the artificial hills or tells which are numerous throughout the landscape of the Near East “represent in themselves artifacts consisting of accumulated occupation debris resulting from the continued occupation of the same site generation after generation. . . . He believed that with careful excavation it ought to be possible to peel off the layers one after the other, from the top downward, revealing the history of occupation in reverse order.”⁴ The site at which he chose to put his idea to the test was **Tell el-Hesi** in southern Palestine, which he excavated in 1890. Through his work at Tell el-Hesi, Petrie laid the foundations for two methodological disciplines: stratigraphy—the analysis of occupation layers—and pottery chronology, the analysis of pottery from successive layers.

Palestine in the Ancient Near East

Palestine held a unique position in the ancient history of the Near East. Major historical developments resulting in prosperity or decline in the country were related to the status of rainfall and access to water resources. Palestine did not have a steady water supply, unlike both Egypt and Mesopotamia, which had major rivers. The geography of the land and the diversity of its regions, comprising

3. Jonathan N. Tubb, *Canaanites (People of the Past)* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 9.

4. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 10.

narrow coastal plains, rugged hills and mountains, deserts, valleys, and inland plains, prevented the development of a central authority and trans-regional statehood. Being a bridge between three continents of the ancient world, Palestinian society was influenced greatly by the neighboring powers, especially Egypt and Mesopotamia, and over extended periods of time, was controlled economically and politically by these powers. Palestinian society was also affected by major waves of migrants, whose migration from other regions was prompted by climate changes and severe prolonged droughts in these regions. The first major documented one was the North African migration wave, which resulted from an extended drought that occurred at the end of the seventh millennium and continued through the fifth millennium BCE. The next major one was the Mycenaean migration wave, which followed a severe extended drought in the northeastern Mediterranean basin around 1200 BCE, which lasted for two centuries. In both cases, the refugees from these regions were integrated with the indigenous people of Palestine. During the eras of Assyrian and Babylonian rule, population transfer policies were enacted by which the Palestinian population was transferred to other parts of the empires, and other populations were brought to Palestine. During the era of Persian rule, many of those who had been deported from Palestine returned. Other invaders during the different periods of the ancient history of Palestine, including the Macedonians and Romans, established their own settlements. All these factors shaped the history of Palestine and Palestinian society.

Palestine's population has paid a high price for its endurance. The imperial policies of deportation and genetic mixing failed to interrupt this historical continuity. Territories were conquered and cities were destroyed, but many Palestinians remained in the region and preserved the language, culture, religion, and way of life for the returnees.

Professor **Thomas Thompson** eloquently defined the Palestinian people and traced their ancient history as far as the Neolithic Age. He concludes:

The history of Palestine, which we have traced from at least the late Neolithic period, reflects a continuity of the people of Palestine. . . . The social and cultural continuities of Palestine's population from that time are marked and unequivocal. We see them in the material remains and particularly in the styles of pottery from cooking pots and storage jars, as well as in the later development of lamps and common ware. We find them in the structures of the economy, the political structures of patronage, the types of settlement, even the continuity of the trade routes . . . the development of religious beliefs was also progressive, involving as much a reinterpretation of the old as an

*introduction of the new. . . . As Judaism gave way to the dominance of Christianity in the Byzantine period in the course of the fourth century CE, and when both Christianity and Judaism gave place to Islam in the seventh, changes took place in the religious thoughts of the population, but such changes were developmental and incremental.*⁵

The history recounted in this book will show that the Canaanites and Amorites were the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine-Syria going back to the Neolithic period. They were not invaders from Arabia. Since the Neolithic Age, and over thousands of years, Palestine-Syria was slowly and gradually populated with immigrants from different regions who became integrated and fully assimilated with the indigenous inhabitants. This slow and continuous process brought to Palestine immigrants from the west (North Africa), from the north (Anatolia), from the northwest (Mycenae), from the northeast (Armenia and Caucasus), from the east (Mesopotamia and Elam), and from the south (Arabia). The continuity of population in the Levant from the beginning of settled communities in the Neolithic period through the Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages cannot be challenged. According to Ernest Tubb, “**Small-scale and peaceful infiltrations from beyond the Levantine cultural continuum served only to enrich the culture and not in any way to destroy or replace it.**”⁶

Prehistory: The Evolution of Humans in the Middle East

The following discussion of human evolution in the Middle East takes place in the context of four geologic periods of the earth’s history. For clarity, these are outlined below.

The Earth’s Four Most Recent Geologic Periods

THE MIOCENE EPOCH (23 million to 5.3 million years ago): Man’s earliest primate ancestors appeared during this period, around 12 million years ago. During the **Miocene epoch**, dramatic changes in geomorphology, climate, and vegetation took place. It was during this period of volcanic activity and mountain growth that the topography of the modern world was established.

THE PLIOCENE EPOCH (5.3 million to 2.6 million years ago): The earliest hominid species emerged and began walking upright during this period. The

5. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 254–55.

6. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 59.

climate became cooler and drier, and seasonal. Global average temperatures were 2–3°C higher than today, and global sea levels were 25 meters higher.

THE PLEISTOCENE EPOCH (also called the Great Ice Age; 2.5 million to 12,000 years ago): Hominids begin using tools in this era, around 2 million years ago. During this period, the climate was marked by repeated glacial cycles in which continental glaciers were pushed to as far south as the 40th parallel in some places. It is estimated that 30 percent of Earth was covered by ice. The mean annual temperature at the edge of the ice was 6°C.

THE HOLOCENE EPOCH: The Holocene is the name given to the last 11,700 years of the Earth’s history—the time since the end of the last major glacial epoch, or the Great Ice Age. Since then, there have been small-scale climate shifts—notably the “Little Ice Age” between about 1200 and 1700 CE—but in general, the Holocene has been a relatively warm period.

Periods of Human History: The Stone Age

THE PALEOLITHIC ERA (2 million to 10,000 BCE) is the earliest period of the Stone Age. This era is divided into three periods based on the kind of tools that were used: the Lower Paleolithic (2 million to 200,000 BCE); the Middle Paleolithic (200,000 to 40,000 BCE); and the Upper Paleolithic (40,000 to 10,000 BCE).

THE NEOLITHIC ERA (10,000–4000 BCE) is the last part of the Stone Age. This was the age in which humans began farming and herding animals. The early part of the Neolithic era is called the Natufian, or proto-Neolithic period; it lasted from 12,000 to around 9500 BCE in the Near East. The Pre-Pottery Neolithic, which overlapped the Natufian, lasted from around 10,500 to 6500 BCE; the Late Neolithic, in which distinctive pottery styles characterizing separate cultures emerged, began around 6500 BCE and lasted until the beginning of the Chalcolithic era.

Periods of Human History: The Metal Age

THE CHALCOLITHIC (COPPER) AGE: The Chalcolithic era in the southern Levant lasted some one thousand years (c. 4500–3500 BCE), during which time society saw major changes. Economic change can be seen in the advent of copper

metallurgy, the rise of craft specialization, and an increase in long-distance exchange networks.

THE BRONZE AGE: The Bronze Age marks the time when humans began using bronze tools and weapons in place of earlier stone versions. Ancient Sumerians in the Middle East may have been the first people to enter the Bronze Age. Humans made many technological advances during the Bronze Age, including the first writing systems and the invention of the wheel. In the Middle East and parts of Asia, the Bronze Age lasted from roughly 3300 to 1200 BCE, ending with the near-simultaneous collapse of several prominent Bronze Age civilizations.

THE IRON AGE: The final epoch of the three-age division, the Iron Age dates between 1200 and 1000 BCE, or some three thousand years prior to the present. Some scholars maintain that we are still in the Iron Age.

The Earliest Humans in Palestine

Palestine has been inhabited since the Pleistocene epoch. The earliest known remnants of humans in Southwest Asia, fossils of *Homo erectus*, have been found in Palestine at **Ubediya** on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee. These skeletal remains have been dated to about 1.4 million years ago.⁷ Finds from the late Acheulian period (middle Paleolithic period, 200,000–40,000 BCE) were discovered in different locations of Palestine ranging from good agricultural lands to desert locations, including the valley of Wadi Araba, south of the Dead Sea, and the high Jordanian plateau. “**Archaic**” *Homo sapiens* developed during this period. Modern humans—*Homo sapiens*—evolved from archaic *Homo sapiens*, who in turn evolved from *Homo erectus* (upright man), who lived 2.5 million years ago.⁸

About a hundred thousand years ago, Palestine witnessed a gradual but continuous climate shift from largely favorable weather to an increasingly arid climate. These changes, which reached their climax some forty thousand years ago, forced early humans to shift to a lifestyle of settling down around permanent sources of water.

The Neolithic Era

Around thirteen thousand years ago, the inhabitants of Palestine entered what became known as the **Natufian** era, in which a semi-sedentary lifestyle evolved. The

7. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 105.

8. Daniel Kaufman, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Origins of Modern Humans: A View from the Levant* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), 10.

hunters and food gatherers began to establish hamlets and small villages in valleys close to springs where wild grains grew. The term “Natufian” was introduced by **Dorothy Garrod**, who studied the Shuqba cave in **Wadi an-Nutuf near Ramallah and Mugharet el-wad in the Mount Carmel area**. The Natufian people lived in settlements that housed a hundred to a hundred fifty people; they were still dependent on hunting, fishing, and food gathering in addition to primitive agricultural activities. There is evidence that they cultivated cereals, specifically rye. Garrod proposed that the Natufian people represented the earliest farmers.⁹

The Natufian era was followed by the **Neolithic era**. Humans lived as hunters and food gatherers until twelve thousand to ten thousand years ago. They lived in small nomadic societies dependent on stationary food sources such as fruits, grains, and tubers beside hunting wild game.

Around 9000 BCE, a dramatic transformation in human life occurred as economic and social changes started to take place. Humans began to establish permanent settlements and moved from hunting and gathering toward a strategy of cultivation and animal domestication. This transformation, which became known as the “**Neolithic Revolution**,”¹⁰ was an economic and technical milestone as well as a dramatic social and cultural transformation which resulted in major changes in the way humans interacted with one another and with the environment. Sedentary life was instrumental to the growth of civilization. Establishing hamlets and villages required changes in political life, and subsequently the establishment of various forms of government. It also brought the beginning of social stratification, religion, and art.

Palestine was one of the earliest regions in the world to develop sedentary life. Hundreds of villages with five hundred inhabitants or more were established. Some of these villages became towns of several thousand in different regions of Palestine. Among the best-known Palestinian settlements were the oasis town of **Jericho** (often referred to as the “oldest town in the world”), the town of **Beidha** near Petra, **Ain Ghazal** near Amman, and **Byblos** on the northern coast near modern-day Beirut. Domestication of plants and animals occurred in this period. Grains, particularly wheat, barley, and oats, were the first to be planted and harvested. Meat and milk followed as goats were domesticated. Sheep, pigs, and beef cattle were added to the agricultural economy around 6000 BCE.¹¹

Between 1952 and 1958, **Dame Kathleen Kenyon** conducted excavations on behalf of the British School of Archaeology. Near the spring of **Ain es-Sultan** at the site of present-day Jericho, she found what seemed to be a settlement constructed by Natufian hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic period that predated the Neolithic

9. Alan H. Simmons, *The Neolithic Revolution in the Near East: Transforming the Human Landscape* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 49.

10. Simmons, *Neolithic Revolution*, 3.

11. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 106.

Age. Initially they built light shelters, which were eventually replaced by permanent structures built of mud bricks. Around 7000 BCE, Jericho became a well-developed settlement that could be truly described as a town, with massive defensive walls and a stone-built tower.¹²

The excavation sites of the South Levant related to the Neolithic Age show special features that distinguish the Palestinian settlers from those of the northern Levant sites. Works of art and plaster statues were found at the southern sites.¹³ In 1983, a remarkable discovery was found at the Neolithic site of **Ain Ghazal** on the outskirts of Amman. Archaeologists unearthed a cache of extraordinary statues modeled in lime plaster over armatures of reeds and twine. These statues were decorated with paint to indicate hair or items of clothing. The facial features were highlighted, and the eyes were built up in a purer white plaster, with a black material used to create the irises and pupils.¹⁴

The transition of human experience from subsisting on wild resources to domesticating both plants and animals was an ongoing subject of research and argument among anthropologists and archeologists. Many theories were introduced to explain the transition toward sedentary life. Most of them emphasized changes in climate as the main factor. The term “Neolithic Revolution” was first introduced by **Vere Gordon Childe** (1936). His theory of the transition, known as the **Oasis-Propinquity Theory**, is based on the assumption that “major climatic change at the end of the Pleistocene caused the drying of broad areas, changing them into deserts. Accordingly, plants and animals were dying or becoming scarce. This was true except for desert oases and river valleys. Here, in the only places left with water, humans, animals, and plants clustered and were forced to live in proximity. . . . people soon realized that some animals were more useful than others, so they protected them. They also would have been forced to try new plant foods. By trial and error, they eventually domesticated these, and the Neolithic Revolution was born.”¹⁵

Palestine’s landscape in the Neolithic Age was different from what exists today. The water table was much higher; the Sea of Galilee (**Lake Beisan**) extended northward to fill the Hula Basin, and filled parts of Beth Shan Valley to the south. The Jezreel and large areas of the central coastal plain were marshland. Between **9000 and 7000 BCE**, Palestine enjoyed an extended period of Neolithic prosperity. The mountainous regions of Syria and Lebanon and the high hills of Galilee received abundant rain. Adequate rain was also available in the highland of central and southern Palestine. These climatic conditions allowed Neolithic villages to develop in grassland areas that are now desert. During this period, the agricultural areas in Palestine

12. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 26–28.

13. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 106.

14. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 29–30.

15. Simmons, *The Neolithic Revolution*, 11–12.

were greater than ever: they extended in the east to include the Transjordanian plateau, and in the south to include the great plain of Beersheva Basin, Wadi Araba, the northern and central Negev, and the north Sinai highlands.¹⁶

The Stone Age Comes to an End in Palestine

Around 4000 BCE, copper began to be used in the production of metal tools in Syria-Palestine, but it did not displace stone until after 3000 BCE. Copper tools were found in **Ugarit** in northern Syria, as well as in **Tulaylat al-Ghassul** north of the Dead Sea. The fourth millennium BCE, in which copper was used by these advanced communities, is called the **Chalcolithic Age** (the name is derived from the Greek word for copper).

Excavations conducted at the site of Tulaylat al-Ghassul, situated east of the River Jordan and close to the end of the Dead Sea, revealed a large open settlement of well-constructed rectangular mud-brick houses covering some sixty acres. In addition, this settlement had two cultic centers contained within a walled enclosure. A cultic area was also found at **Ein Gedi**, a spring-fed oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea. This settlement also featured a large stone installation that appears to be an altar, as it was filled with ashes from burnt offerings. Evidence of metalworking was found at these two sites, as well as at **Abu Matar** in the Beersheba area. An extraordinary hoard of copper objects was found in the caves of **Nahal Mishmar** in the hills to the west of the Dead Sea.¹⁷ Traces of Chalcolithic culture have been found in several other sites in Palestine, such as **Jericho**, **Megiddo**, **Beth-shan**, **Lachish**, and **Byblos**. In the Chalcolithic Age, as in the Neolithic period, inhabitants of Syria-Palestine were ahead of the rest of the Near East.

Climatic Changes Set the Stage for Palestine's Mediterranean Economy

Between 9000 and 7000 BCE, **North Africa**, between the Nile in the east and Gibraltar in the west, also experienced a prosperous Neolithic period. Neolithic farmers settled in small villages along the many valleys of the coastal region. They were dependent on farming as well as on hunting and herding of pigs, beef cattle, sheep, and goats. Their main agricultural products were wheat and barley.¹⁸

Throughout the **seventh millennium BCE**, significant climate changes occurred in the entire Mediterranean basin. Sea levels fell steadily, as did the water table in most regions, especially east and south of the Mediterranean. Higher temperatures

16. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 111–112.

17. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 30–32.

18. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 112.

and longer dry summers dominated the climate. In North Africa, these changes continued throughout an extended periods of droughts that lasted for over a thousand years and resulted in the creation of the **Great Sahara of North Africa**. This drastic climate change and its effect on agriculture forced farmers and herders to move westward to the Berber lands and southward to Chad and the Darfur region. Many more moved eastward to the central Nile Valley.¹⁹

The entire ancient Near East was affected by this change in climate. The **Sinai Peninsula** changed from steppeland to desert. **Arabia**, apart from the southern corner of the peninsula (**Arabia Felix**), became a vast expanse of desert. On the other hand, the **delta marshlands of Tigris and Euphrates** valleys dried up and turned into rich agricultural lands which became the heartland of ancient **Sumer**, the oldest ancient Near Eastern civilization. In **Egypt**, the climate change resulted in the draining of the Nile Delta, creating fertile agricultural land. Dense settlements occupied the banks of the Nile from Asut in the south to the delta in the north. These changes in the delta opened up the migration route for the refugees of North Africa to move through Sinai to Palestine. Sometime between **4500 and 4000 BCE**, the expanding desert closed the migration route toward the delta and the Fertile Crescent.²⁰ In **Palestine**, the drought resulted in the retreat of the shores of Lake Beisan to what became the Sea of Galilee and Lake Hula. The dried-up swamps and marshlands in the central lowland valleys of Palestine and Syria became rich farmlands.²¹

Over a period of nearly two millennia, refugees from North Africa crossed the Nile and moved northward into Sinai, Palestine, Syria, and Arabia, where they gradually merged with the indigenous farmers and shepherds. By the early third millennium, some immigrants had moved into Mesopotamia and merged and integrated with the ancient Sumerians. Others moved from Transjordan and entered Arabia.

The early waves of refugees from North Africa to Palestine and Syria led a pastoral and nomadic life. Some of the refugees settled in previously uninhabited regions. The majority settled in the inhabited regions side by side with the indigenous population, affecting their cultures, languages, religions, and arts. By the fifth millennium BCE, the new immigrants had joined the already established populations in the northern coastal regions of Phoenicia and the Carmel range, in the southern Jordan Valley, in northern Transjordan, and the southern coastal plains. Over a long period of time—almost a thousand years—they were gradually assimilated by the indigenous population of the early Neolithic villages who had survived the drought. The natives and the

19. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 112–113.

20. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 114.

21. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 113–114.

newcomers formed a new population, a new culture, and distinctive new languages and dialects that became West Semitic.

The dry period that lasted between the seventh and fifth millennia was followed by a “**sub-pluvial**” period characterized by lower temperatures and excess rainfall. This change in climate made farming and herding possible in many places in Palestine and Syria. By the end of the fourth millennium, farming had become a permanent feature of Palestine’s landscape. These changes in climate created a major shift in settlement patterns. The bulk of the population was concentrated in regionally dominant towns whose surrounding fields had good soils and springs, such as **Megiddo, Beth Shan, and Acco in the northern lowlands; Ashqelon and Gaza in the southern lowlands; and Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh), Shechem (modern-day Nablus), Jerusalem, Lachish, and Gezer in the highlands.**²²

Once the great drought ended, the newly integrated population in Palestine and Syria began to build a stable economy that was balanced between three different specializations: grain cultivation in the plains and valleys, horticulture and viticulture focused on the production of olives and wine in the highland areas, and sheep- and goat-herding in the grassy steppelands. Other economic specializations of considerable importance existed, such as date cultivation in desert oases, metalworking in the Araba and Negev, salt harvesting on the Phoenician coast, taking tar from the Dead Sea, timber harvesting in the highlands, and fishing in the Sea of Galilee. **Trade** was the backbone of this integrated economy, which became known as the **Mediterranean economy**. Trade necessitated constant interaction between different groups and forced interdependence in all aspects of the economy. **Grapevines and olive trees were first cultivated and fully domesticated in the eastern end of the Mediterranean (Palestine), and through trade and colonization they spread through the entire Mediterranean basin.**

The survival and expansion of the economy depended on communication between the different villages and on the interchange of goods between regions. This form of economy, which was dependent on the flow of goods between regions, also opened Palestine to the outside and brought it under the influence and control of more powerful neighbors.

This unique form of agriculture, the Mediterranean economy, was to determine the basic structure of Palestine’s economy and much of its history for more than five thousand years. Palestinian agriculture pioneered the development of a type of farming that has become the hallmark of the Mediterranean world. Its centre is trade. Rather than a subsistence agriculture, which involves trade only as a result

22. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 116.

of tentative and slow development of surpluses, or through an exploitation by more powerful neighbors, Palestine's economy was oriented from its beginning toward the barter and exchange of basic trade goods. . . . These were not surpluses but the fundamentals of the economy.²³

The Bronze Age

The Bronze Age is the period during which tools and weapons were made primarily from bronze. In the Near East, this period extended between 3300 and 1150 BCE. Bronze is an alloy consisting of 85 to 95 percent copper, with the remainder consisting of tin or arsenic. Bronze melts at 950°C, so it is easier to cast than copper, which melts at 1084°C. Both copper and bronze make strong, hard tools and weapons. The Bronze Age is divided into three periods based on changes in pottery style:

Early Bronze (EB) (3300–2000 BCE)

Middle Bronze (MB) (2000–1550 BCE)

Late Bronze (LB) (1550–1150 BCE)

Palestine in the Early Bronze Period: The Rise of Urbanism (3300–2400 BCE)

The third millennium BCE witnessed the establishment of the urban civilizations of Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Consequently, a more elaborate and complex system of trade routes was developed which stimulated the Palestinian economy and led to similar urban development in Palestine. As mentioned above, farming in Palestine matured during the fourth millennium to meet the needs of trade. It evolved into what became known as the Mediterranean economy, centered on trade rather than a subsistence agriculture.

During the early Bronze Age, agricultural settlements were established in fertile valleys and plains. These settlements ranged in size from a single family or a few families to towns of a few thousand. Palestine was a land of small farmers, a heartland of villages. Farming and village life were determined by the availability of water. Wherever sufficient water was available to support its population through arid summers, and wherever rich soil was available, a village was established. Lands where water was plentiful, such as the Jezreel Valley and the coastal plains of both northern and southern Palestine, had the largest number of agricultural settlements.

23. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 119.

Palestinian farmers developed simple systems of canals and irrigation ditches in the marshlands of the Beth Shan and Jezreel valleys. In the hill country, dry farming techniques and methods for storing water for human and animal consumption were utilized. At **Arad**, a large artificial reservoir was constructed in order to collect runoff rainwater. The vast bulk of the population—estimated at about 90 percent—was engaged in farming and herding. The remainder were metalworkers, woodsmen, hunters, or traders. The agriculture of Palestine was regionally differentiated, with one area growing wheat, another investing in olives or grapes, and another committed to livestock. The economy was driven by the production of export goods. The villagers produced cash crops: wool, flax, meat, cheese, grains, nuts, fruits, olive oil, wine, timber, pottery, salt, leather, flint tools, copper and turquoise. **Olives, which served as a main food crop and the primary source of oil for lamps, were the most valuable commodity.** These cash crops linked Palestine with Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria and Mesopotamia.²⁴

As a result of greater rainfall during the early Bronze Age, the Sinai and the central and southern Negev developed into a grassland contiguous with the Great Syrian Steppe to the north. A significant population of pastoralists developed over a large area that included the whole of the eastern and southern Levant. The lower slopes of the hills and the adjacent valleys provided suitable areas for planting wheat and barley. Turquoise, copper, natron, and bitumen industries along the shores of the Dead Sea, southern Araba, and central Sinai provided supplementary occupations for the expanded population of this region.

The early Bronze Age saw the development of **strong defensive systems**. At **Jericho**, the town wall was built of mud bricks on stone foundations, and was initially a meter thick. By the end of the early Bronze Age, its thickness had increased to five meters. At **Arad**, the settlement was protected by a substantial stone-built wall supplemented at regular intervals with semicircular bastions. Excavations have revealed evidence of town planning at several sites. Within the town walls, well-constructed houses built either of stone or mud bricks on stone foundations were laid out on a grid of intersecting streets. The residences were separate from the public buildings, which included a palace, administrative buildings, and temples.²⁵

Palestine was fully urbanized during the early Bronze Age. The material culture of Palestine during this period displays a high level of technical accomplishment. Excavations have revealed advanced and elegant pottery work, including jugs, juglets, bowls, cups, platters, jars of different shapes and sizes, and cooking pots. Many of the vessels are decorated with highly burnished red or brownish-purple painted designs. Similar advances in metal technology have been revealed. Burial customs are

24. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 120–129.

25. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 36.

another indicator of the social and cultural advancement of Palestinian society: grave goods were placed inside the tombs for the afterlife.²⁶

Geographically, Palestine's regions were diverse and physically isolated from each other. The largest population centers were considered small market towns rather than cities. Politically, Palestine was made up of independent towns and villages, each ruled by an autonomous patron. The power of the patrons was based on their character and personal commitment to their small communities. The small autonomous communities were able to protect and maintain their independence by building strong fortifications and establishing alliances with other towns. Although they were competing, they realized the need for cooperation for the benefit of trade and protection. The populations of these communities were just a few thousand each, which prevented the establishment of a regional statehood. Although historians refer to these communities of the early Bronze Age as "city-states," none of these hamlets, villages or towns were in the same category as city-states like Nineveh or Babylon, which were great cities with at least a quarter of a million inhabitants. In most cases, local authorities were able to provide support and protection for local and inter-regional trade; however, they were unable to keep commerce secure over great distances.

Major trade routes in the Near East began to develop during the early Bronze Age, reaching their maturity by 1500 BCE, when Egypt dominated all of Palestine. Long-distance trade was dependent on the great powers and states of the Fertile Crescent: Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The neighboring states, especially Egypt, controlled international trade along the Mediterranean coast and throughout Palestine's lowlands. The overland international trade routes linking the Nile Valley with Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia passed through Sinai and used Palestine as a land bridge. The sea routes utilized the Phoenician ports.

During the early Bronze Age, Egypt dominated Palestine politically and economically, but not to the point of turning it into a province. Egypt formed the main market for Palestine's produce. Commodities such as wine and olive oil were in great demand in Egypt. Canaanite jugs have been found in many of the Egyptian tombs of the first dynasty at Abydos. Excavations at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh—situated in the central Jordan Valley, about 1.5 kilometers east of the River Jordan, on the south side of one of its tributaries, Wadi Kufrinjeh—uncovered evidence of industrial-scale production of olive oil, wine, and textiles.

In conclusion, the geographically fragmented Palestinian society of the early Bronze Age succeeded in developing its "Mediterranean economy" due to the following elements:

26. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 37.

- Specialized food production between the different regions of Palestine according to the topography of the land and the availability of water resources.
- Special relationships between the different regions based on cooperation and coordination between the different regions.
- Inter-regional and international trade.

Economic Recession: The End of the Early Bronze Age (2400–2000 BCE)

Around 2400 BCE, Palestine's urban culture started to decline, resulting in a severe economic recession that lasted until the end of 2000 BCE. The decline of the urban civilization in Palestine during this period was the result of a long period of devastating drought. The unprecedented population growth in the third millennium was beyond the country's capacity, especially as there were no stable sources of water. Unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia, Palestine was dependent on rainfall, not on great flowing rivers. The densely populated agricultural regions, devastated, were diminished significantly. Farmers were forced into nomadic lifestyles. Patch agriculture and sheep- and goat-herding increased.

The northern population living in the fertile zones of the agricultural heartlands of Palestine survived the drought and continued as farmers. In the south, in the central Negev highlands, Sinai, and the Transjordan Plateau, people turned to herding and spread in small groups, creating hundreds of small hamlets and villages. Pastoral nomadism and patch agriculture became distinctive ways of life throughout the steppe regions of Palestine. **"Many families were forced out of greater Palestine altogether . . . [and] emigrated northeastward into the highlands of Jebel Bishri of the Great Syrian Steppes. Yet others emigrated into the oases of the Arabian desert, destined to return to the fringes of Palestine a thousand years later as Arabs."**²⁷ Many of the inhabitants of the Negev moved to the Sinai mines and to the eastern Nile Delta. These changes in Palestinian society did not happen suddenly; rather, it was a gradual transformation. The population of Palestine as a whole was diminished significantly, and the people who remained were concentrated in the richest and largest agricultural zones.

As mentioned earlier, urbanism in Palestine during the early Bronze Age was related to the establishment of urban civilization in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The drought of the twenty-fourth century BCE affected the entire Near East, causing civil unrest and political conflict in the entire region, including Egypt and the city-states of southern Mesopotamia. Toward the end of the third millennium, the Old Kingdom in Egypt collapsed, leading to a total cessation of trade links. The shrinking of trade and commercial activities with Egypt was another negative factor that

27. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 135.

contributed to the economic recession in Palestine, especially in the central and southern regions, where there was a significant decline in urban life. The situation in northern Palestine was slightly different, as the factors contributing to the decline in urban life were offset by other circumstances. The northern towns maintained and even increased trading activities with inland Syria during EB IV (2400–2000 BCE). Economic texts from Ebla, just south of Aleppo, contain evidence of such ties. Excavations at several sites in northern Palestine unearthed a large number of imported Syrian products. Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh), Megiddo, and Beth Shan witnessed a shorter period of economic recession instead of a collapse of urban life.²⁸

The pottery of this period lacks the elaborate and delicate luxury vessels seen earlier in the Bronze Age, consisting of more functional and multi-purpose pieces. It is also characterized by the disappearance of the commercial storage jar, as there was no market for bulk commodities. This does not mean technical regression occurred. As a matter of fact, excavations at several sites demonstrate evidence of development of new advanced techniques, especially at sites that underwent extensive and more permanent occupation. **“The pottery of Tiwal esh-Sharqi [on the south bank of the River Zarqa, close to the Jordan River] was superbly made: the clays well prepared, the firing even and carefully controlled and the skillful use of the fast wheel producing wonderfully thin-walled vessels.”**²⁹ Metalwork also showed similar technological advances. Improved casting techniques produced one of the most characteristic weapon types of this era, the **“fenestrated axe”** (an axeblade with holes in it).

The end of the early Bronze Age marks a temporary setback in the developmental process of the urban civilization of Palestine. The climate changes that created the economic recession did not destroy the urban civilization completely; Palestinian society adapted to the new economic situation and established a balance between urbanism and agriculture on the one hand and semi-sedentism and pastoralism on the other.

The spectrum of sedentarization from farmers living in towns to shepherds living in forms of seasonal nomadism is related to different ways of making a living. In Palestine, such differences are created by recurring efforts to adapt to changes in the climate and the environment. The dominance of one form over another is due to the effects of trade, on which the whole of Palestine’s Mediterranean economy was dependent. The population as a whole was stable only to the extent that it was flexible. It used many forms of both nomadism and settlements, depending on the needs of the region in

28. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 49–50.

29. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 53.

which they were found and on the temporary changes in weather and economy.³⁰

Palestine witnessed several cycles of economic depression and destabilization of its agriculture, as well as periods of prosperity and sedentism. The economic depression at the end of the early Bronze Age shifted the economy toward pastoralism and grain agriculture, which resulted in population movement into hundreds of small hamlets in the steppeland of central Negev and Sinai and the Transjordan Plateau. When the drought ended, some of those who had turned to pastoralism did not return to agriculture, as there was a need to specialize in pastoralism to meet the demands of the market. The middle of the early Bronze Age and the middle of the mid Bronze Age were known as periods of relative affluence, population growth, and political concentration compared to the end of the early Bronze and the beginning of the late Bronze Age, which are described as periods of economic collapse.

In conclusion, the urban civilization of Palestine underwent a developmental process that started in the later part of the fourth millennium BCE, during which the agricultural economy matured and the Palestinians established their Mediterranean economy. Urbanism in Palestine made great progress during the early Bronze Age, between 3300 and 2400 BCE. The EB IV period between 2400 and 2000 BCE represents a temporary setback in this developmental process. It is fair to describe this period as an economic recession rather than a collapse of urbanism. The cultural changes during this period were the result of indigenous changes in lifestyle in response to economic changes. This process occurred slowly and gradually. At the beginning of the recession, the EB II and EB III elements were dominant, but as the recession became fiercer and more deeply rooted, the EB IV element took over and grew in prominence. The reversion to urbanism during the middle Bronze Age became possible with the reversal of the factors that had contributed to the decline of urbanism.³¹

Palestine During the Early Second Phase of the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1750 BCE)

When the drought ended around 2000 BCE, sedentism and intensive agriculture returned to the heartland of Palestine. Throughout Palestine more settlements were built, even in the southern hills and the coastal plain that had been abandoned during the drought. The return of a wetter, cooler climate brought economic prosperity as new agricultural areas were developed. Significant differences existed between the

30. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 131.

31. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 55–56.

north and the south, however. The densely populated north began to develop an economy and culture that were more prosperous and independent than those of the south. The annual precipitation in the north was nearly three times that of the south. Palestine's northern regions had a greater potential for producing wine, olive oil, and grains than the southern regions. They were also able to maintain a much longer period of stability.³²

The beginning of the middle Bronze Age in Palestine coincides with the beginning of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt. Around the end of the third millennium BCE, **Mentuhotep II**, the founder of the Middle Kingdom (2055–2010 BCE), reestablished a central administration in Egypt, which restored political and economic stability to that nation, and reopened the trade routes in Palestine.

The social and economic changes during the middle Bronze Age led to a revitalization of urban life and a shift in the equilibrium toward sedentism and urbanism. The material culture of the initial phase of the middle Bronze Age (2000–1750 BCE) combined the advanced production methods of the end of the early Bronze Age and the older, dormant methods used prior. The vessels of this period were the most beautiful ever produced in Palestine. Advanced techniques were applied in the production of luxury jugs, bowls, and pitchers. The return of the trade routes necessitated the production of new commercial storage jars suitable for transportation.³³

Palestine during the Late Second Phase of the Middle Bronze Age (1750–1550 BCE)

The late second phase of the middle Bronze Age coincides with the Second Intermediate Period of Egypt. This period is considered to be the golden age of the Canaanite culture; during this time, Palestine had strong diplomatic and commercial relations with the Delta pharaohs in Avaris.

Canaanite culture flourished unrestrained. Architecture, art and craftsmanship achieved levels of accomplishment and sophistication which were to provide the ancient Near East with an enduring legacy well into the following millennium. The hoard of gold jewellery found at the site of Tell el-Ajjul, for example, well illustrates the high level of expertise and skill of the Canaanite craftsman [in jewelry, ivory carving, and wooden furniture] . . . The essence of Canaanite art is its eclecticism, drawing elements from a variety of sources and countries, and blending them together to form a totally coherent, aesthetically satisfying whole. . . . [They] were laying the foundations for the Phoenicians, their

32. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 130–138.

33. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 57.

direct descendants, whose artistic traditions were to enrich so greatly the Near Eastern cultures of the first millennium BCE.³⁴

The progress of Canaanite art of the middle Bronze Age was the result of extensive commercial relations with Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, and Cyprus.

During the third millennium BCE, the Semitic language of the Canaanites was written in the cuneiform Mesopotamian system of writing founded by the Sumerians. This cumbersome system continued to be used throughout most of the ancient Near East until the beginning of the second millennium BCE, when it was replaced by an alphabetic system developed by the Canaanites. The invention of alphabetic writing is seen as the most valuable achievement of the Canaanites. The Phoenicians refined this system and transmitted it to the rest of the world in the first millennium.

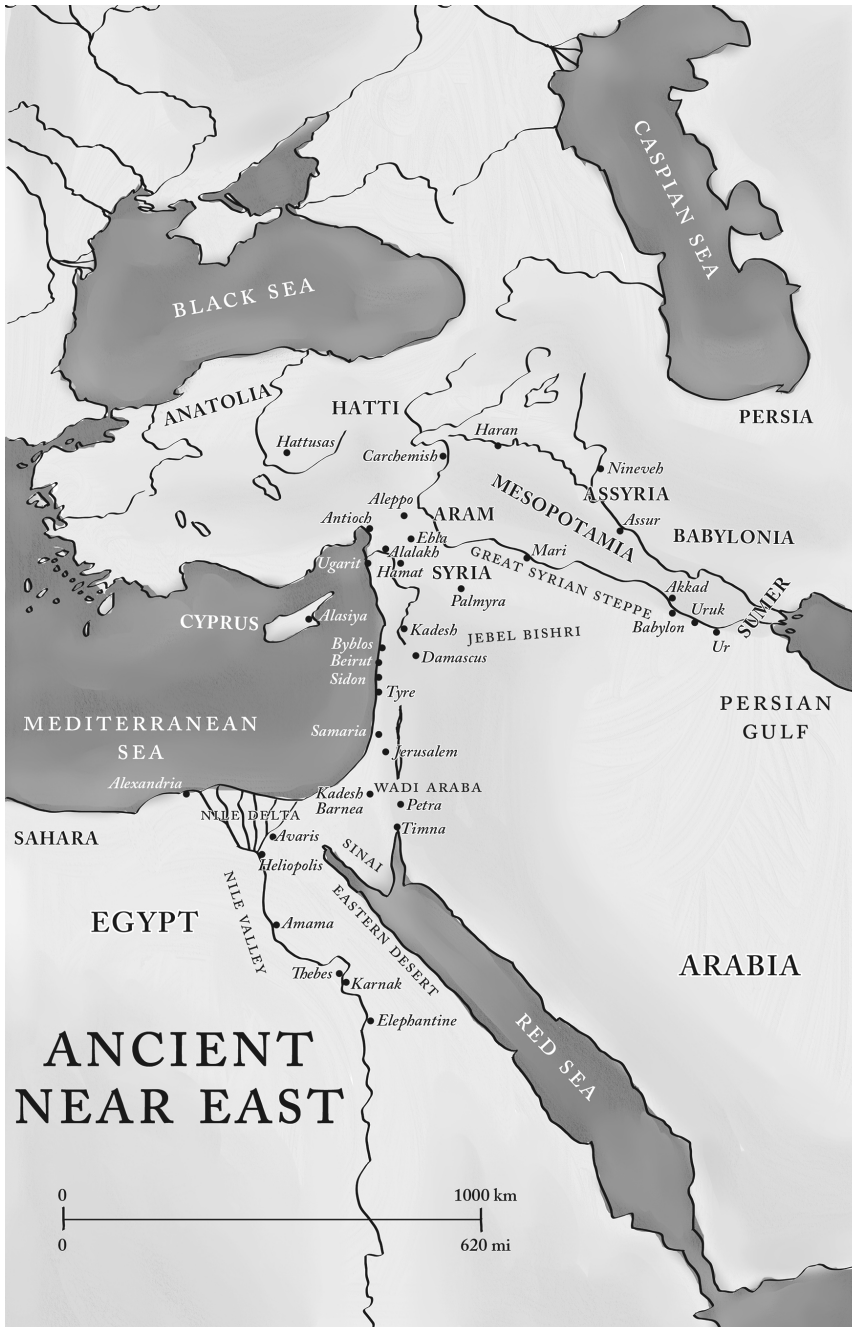
During the middle Bronze Age, the Palestinians began to show interest in temples and shrines. Excavations at **Nahariyah** revealed a Canaanite temple made of a simple structure in the form of a rectangular room with the entrance in the middle of the long wall. The altar was located south of the building on a large stone-built raised platform. A large number of animal bones were found in that location, along with pottery vessels and female figurines. It is believed that a female deity, possibly **Astarte**, was being worshipped there. Excavations at **Shechem (modern-day Nablus)**, **Tell el-Hayyat**, **Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh)**, and **Megiddo** show evidence of a distinctive new type of temple. This was still rectangular, but the entrance was located in one of the short walls surrounded by square towers. It was a long-room temple, unlike the older broad-room style. The new structure was characterized by its thick walls; hence it was called *migdol*, which means fortress.

The political structure in Palestine during this part of the Bronze Age was characterized by the establishment of large independent urban centers composed of a number of towns and villages that were controlled by a major city. This became known as the period of **Canaanite city-states**. From time to time, groups of city-states formed loose confederations for the purpose of gaining a better position in the competitive market, as well as for protection. Elaborate systems of fortification were established around each of the major cities.³⁵

The resilience of early Palestinians to withstand the changes brought by drought in the early Bronze Age laid the foundation for a rise in urbanism characterized by Canaanite refinement of language necessary for a trade-based economy. The culture of Bronze-Age Palestine was shaped by influences from Egypt, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. In the next chapter, we will explore those influences in greater detail.

34. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 65–67.

35. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 68–69.



Cultural Influences on Palestine through the Bronze Age

The history of ancient Palestine-Syria is tightly connected with the history of ancient Egypt. To understand this special relationship between Egypt and Palestine, a brief narrative of the history of ancient Egypt is presented here.

A Brief History of Egypt

Egypt is the gift of the Nile River; its water traveled through the desert, meandering in a wide floodplain and bringing its rich alluvia into Egypt. Because of its geographical position, Egypt served as a natural passage for early humans migrating from East Africa toward the rest of the Old World. Early *Homo erectus* arrived in Egypt as long as 1.8 million years ago. It is believed that small bands of *Homo erectus* remained in the Nile Valley. In some deposits from the early and middle Pleistocene, isolated choppers, chopping tools, and flakes similar to those associated with early hominids in East Africa have been recovered in gravel quarries at **Abbassiya**, as well as in **Theban** gravel deposits.³⁶

Nomadic human hunters-gatherers lived in the Nile Valley through the end of the middle Pleistocene some 120,000 years ago. **In Egypt, the earliest Neolithic cultures emerged in the western desert.** This culture was different from the Neolithic culture of Palestine that emerged around the same time. There is no evidence of agricultural development in Egypt during this period, only evidence of cattle herding and the development of ceramic tools. This is why it is called the **Saharan Neolithic/**

36. Stan Hendrickx and Pierre Vermeersch, "Prehistory: from the Paleolithic to the Badarian Culture," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16–17.

Ceramic culture. It appears that the Egyptian population between 7000 and 5000 BCE depended on fishing and hunting and gathering for subsistence.³⁷

The **Badari** culture was the earliest attestation of agriculture in Upper Egypt. Agricultural settlements dating between 5000 and 4000 BCE were discovered near the villages of **Qau el-kebir**, **Hammamiya**, **Mostagedda**, and **Matmar** in the Nile Valley. Archeological finds from Badarian settlements show evidence that the economy of this culture was an agricultural one. The storage facilities contained wheat, barley, lentils, and tubers. Some of the construction facilities were small animal enclosures. The Badari culture was known for its high-quality ceramics and its stone and copper tools. The Badari was followed by the **Amratian (Naqada I) culture**, between 4000 and 3500 BCE, and the **Gerzeh (Naqada II) culture** between 3500 and 3200 BCE. The Gerzean culture extended northward toward the delta and was in contact with **Canaan**. During the Naqada II phase, there was considerable development in techniques of stone working that paved the way for the great achievements of pharaonic stone architecture. Copper working was also intensified during this period.³⁸

The **Naqada III** phase, 3200–2686 BCE, was the last phase of the **Predynastic period**; it was here that Egypt witnessed the establishment of the first unified state that laid the foundations for its first and second dynasties. It is believed that the political unification of the north and south took place in the early Naqada III as a result of a series of alliances or through warfare, or both. **Excavations in the second half of the twentieth century CE revealed evidence of commercial contacts between northern Egypt and Palestine during the early Naqada III. During this period, the Egyptians established many settlements in north Sinai and in southern Palestine. There is also evidence of trade between the Egyptians and Mesopotamia, most likely via northern Syria.**³⁹

The Old Kingdom (2686–2160 BCE)

Egypt's ancient history is divided into three main periods—the **Old Kingdom**, the **Middle Kingdom**, and the **New Kingdom**—with intermediate periods between the three. The term “Old Kingdom” was introduced by nineteenth-century historians. It is very difficult to determine any difference between the early dynastic period (3000–2686 BCE) and the Old Kingdom (2686–2160 BCE). **King Djoser** (2667–2648), known for building projects that had a great effect on Egyptian economy and society, was the first ruler of the Old Kingdom. This period was characterized by a highly developed

37. Hendrickx and Vermeersch, “Prehistory,” 27–36.

38. Béatrix Midant-Renes, “The Naqada Period,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw, 40–56.

39. Kathryn A. Bard, “The Emergence of the Egyptian State,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw, 56–82.

administration and a strong central authority. Advanced irrigation projects were implemented, which resulted in increased agricultural productivity and economic prosperity. Other major features of the wealth and prosperity of the Old Kingdom included highly advanced architectural designs and magnificent construction projects, such as the **Giza pyramids and the Great Sphinx**.

The enormous volume of construction work during the period of the Old Kingdom had a serious effect on the country's economy and society. A large section of the labor force required for pyramid building had to be diverted from agriculture and food production, which exerted considerable pressure on the country's resources. More efficient methods of administering the country, including stricter methods of tax collection, were required to deal with such demands. The state was also forced to look for additional sources of revenue and manpower abroad. Military campaigns were carried out in Nubia (modern-day Sudan) and Libya in search of resources both human and animal.

Expeditions were sent abroad to bring materials not available in Egypt for these large building projects. During the reign of Sneferu (2613–2589 BCE), state-organized trade missions were sent to Phoenicia to bring shiploads of cedar wood. Siltstone was imported from Wadi Hammamat for the making of statues. The presence of Egyptian objects at Byblos and Ebla are evidence of diplomatic and commercial relations between Palestine-Syria and Egypt during the reign of Khafre (r. ca 2570 BCE).⁴⁰

The continuous depletion of the country's wealth due to the construction of shrines and burial structures (i.e., the pyramids) and the increase in the administration's expenses eroded the economic strength of the state until it could no longer maintain a large, centralized administration.

The First Intermediate Period

After five centuries of complete dominance by the pharaoh's authority, a major shift in power occurred in which local governors took over the management of their regions. Over the next 140 years, Egypt witnessed a new situation where local leaders were able to stabilize the economy and maintain a considerable level of prosperity. The archeological data related to the **First Intermediate Period** indicate evidence of a thriving culture among the poorer levels of society and significant advancement in the provincial towns of Upper Egypt. During this period, the principle of caring for the weak was greatly emphasized. The provincial rulers were not merely sheltering and supporting a few people, but were taking care of all of society.⁴¹

40. Bard, "The Emergence," 96.

41. Bard, "The Emergence," 83–107.

The Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BCE)

King Nebhepetra **Mentuhotep II** (2055–2004 BCE) of the eleventh dynasty is considered the founder of the Middle Kingdom. After fourteen years as the regional ruler of its capital, Thebes, he and his forces unified Egypt and established a strong central authority that became known as the Middle Kingdom.

The kings of the Middle Kingdom were concerned about the immigration of Aamu—Canaanites and Amorites from Palestine-Syria—to the eastern delta. For this reason, they built an extensive line of fortifications in the eastern delta at the eastern end of the **Wadi Tumilat**. They also carried out military campaigns in Palestine against the Aamu in Sinai, the Negev, and as far as Transjordan. These campaigns resulted in the capture of 1,554 men as prisoners; they were brought to Thebes as slaves. The records of the Middle Kingdom reveal information about the presence of a large Aamu slave population in Egypt. Some were associated with temples, but most belonged to private individuals. It is believed that most of these slaves were prisoners of war. Some historians mention the possibility of acquiring slaves through trade, while others mention that seminomadic groups chose a livelihood in Egypt in exchange for their freedom.

The Middle Kingdom period was a time when art, architecture, and religion reached new heights. It was also an age of confidence in writing, encouraged by the growth of the “middle class” and the scribal sector of society. Under the direction of the Middle Kingdom rulers, Egypt had its eyes opened to the wider world of Nubia (modern-day Sudan, south of Egypt), Asia, and the Aegean, benefiting from the exchange of materials, products, and ideas.

While they were concerned about the immigration of Aamu, the kings of the Middle Kingdom were at the same time interested in establishing commercial and diplomatic relations with the city-states of the Canaanites and the Amorites. During the middle Bronze Age, Egypt was mainly interested in trade with Canaan (Phoenicia-Palestine); however, contacts were made with the Amorite kingdoms of Aleppo and Qatana, as both were vital centers for the caravan trade between Mari and Egypt, via the coastal ports of Syria. Excavations in Syria and Palestine have unearthed a number of small statuettes and other royal objects of the Middle Kingdom. Artifacts were found at **Ugarit, Qatana (in Syria), Neirab** near Aleppo, **Beirut**, and **Byblos**. It is fair to assume that these artifacts were gifts made to Syrian princes or their temples.

The kings of the Middle Kingdom were also interested in the services provided by prominent Palestinians in trade and mining in Sinai. During the reign of **Amenemhat III (d. 1895 BCE)**, the Aamu were involved in overland caravans from the eastern delta to the Sinai mines for the purpose of transporting turquoise and copper. Most of the Aamu who were working in the caravans were of low status; many of them were slaves. A few of them were individuals of higher status who had

positions of authority and honor, as mentioned in the inscriptions of Sinai. The Sinai inscriptions of Amenemhat III refer to the “**men of Retenu**”; the term “Retenu” was used in the Middle Kingdom to refer to southern Syria and Palestine. Most likely these men were used for the purpose of managing the caravan activity and serving as desert police.

The twelfth dynasty presided over a period of great political stability for some two hundred years, but the thirteenth dynasty, which ruled Egypt for the next 150 years, did not provide Egypt with the stability that the prior dynasty had maintained. **Nehesy**, the Egyptian commander of the troops in the delta, was elected as the king of the independent kingdom of the north. He received sufficient support from the Aamu of Avaris, as well as the Egyptian noble families who became more influential during the period of dynastic weakness, to become **the first king of the fourteenth dynasty. His reign marked the end of the Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period.**⁴²

The Second Intermediate Period (1650–1550 BCE)

The Second Intermediate Period, also known as the **Hyksos Period**, is defined as an era of fragmentation of the two lands. Three distinct political entities existed in Egypt during this period:

1. **The kingdom of the Aamu (Hyksos); its capital was Avaris in the delta.**
2. **The kingdom of Kush; its capital was Kerm.**
3. **The kingdom of Upper Egypt; its capital was Thebes.**

The Three Kingdoms were in continual conflict over territory and resources, and eventually were weakened enough to allow Ahmose to take over and unite the country, establishing the New Kingdom.

Avaris

The Hyksos ruled the delta between 1650 and 1550 BCE and controlled all of Egypt for a little over a century. The delta pharaohs at Avaris were frequently referred to as **Aamu**, a term translated by Egyptologists as “**Asiatics**” (i.e., inhabitants of Western Asia). **The term “Hyksos,” a Greek word meaning “rulers of foreign countries,” was applied to the rulers of the Aamu.**

The Aamu rose to power in the administration of the northern department and gradually took control. They inherited the Middle Kingdom structures of government

42. Wolfram Grajetzki, *The Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2006), 64.

and controlled the strategic administrative capital in the delta. The gradual increase of their influence in the eastern delta is described in the ancient Egyptian records of the Admonitions: “**Foreigners have become people, Egyptians, everywhere . . . The foreigners are now skilled in the work of the delta.**” The rule of the Hyksos in Egypt was not the result of an invasion of the delta by Palestinian military forces. According to John van Seters, “No great military conquest was needed to accomplish this [the rule of Egypt by the Hyksos], and it is doubtful that any occurred.”⁴³

The Hyksos kingdom in the eastern delta was the most prosperous of the three divisions of Egypt. It controlled trade with Palestine, Syria, Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Aegean through the control of the inland trade routes as well as the sea routes. It imposed restrictions on Thebes’ commercial activities, forcing Thebes to pay tribute as a vassal state. Politically, the Hyksos state was the most stable in Egypt; the governmental structure, from an administrative point of view, was the most organized, as it was the continuation of the government of the twelfth dynasty. Avaris was the administrative capital of the Middle Kingdom.

The Hyksos also were able to control the vital access routes to Asia. The relationship between Avaris and the princes of Syria-Palestine was the same relationship that existed between Egypt and Syria-Palestine during the Middle Kingdom: one with strong and active commercial and cultural ties.⁴⁴

The kingdom of Kush

Kush was a kingdom in Nubia, south of Egypt (modern-day Sudan). The Kushites were cattle breeders and warriors, particularly famous as bowmen. Their capital was **Kerma**. The center of the city consisted of sacred and administrative buildings as well as a special royal center for ceremonies. Immense resources in material and manpower were available to the king, which allowed him to carry out an extensive building program. The Nubians were a federation of tribes, not all of whom accepted the authority of the king of Kerma. Nubia was known for its gold mines. Gold drew the Thebans and the Kerma Nubians together, first as allies but finally as enemies. Kerma maintained its independence as a vassal of Avaris until it was defeated by Ahmose, the founder of the New Kingdom. With the defeat of the Hyksos, the Theban pharaohs eventually completed the unification of Egypt.

43. John van Seters, *The Hyksos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1966), 193–194.

44. Van Seters, *The Hyksos*, 191–195.

Palestine during the Late Bronze Age (1550–1150 BCE): A Province of the Egyptian Empire

The Theban pharaohs in Upper Egypt: The New Kingdom

The era of Egypt's **New Kingdom (1550–1069 BCE)** was the era of the Egyptian empire. The pharaohs of the eighteenth dynasty adopted a new policy toward Palestine-Syria aimed at complete and direct control of this region. As soon as Ahmose defeated Avaris and unified Egypt, he marched toward southern Palestine. His first target was the fortified city of **Sharuhen (Tell Fara)**. It took the Egyptian forces three years to capture the city.

Ahmose (1550–1525 BCE) was the first king of the eighteenth dynasty. He earned the title "**Founder of the New Kingdom**" after he defeated the Hyksos capital, Avaris, in the north. His successful military campaigns in Kush led to the reunification of Egypt. Once this was achieved, he devoted his efforts to reorganizing the government and building a strong central administration. The new administration took control of irrigation and all financial matters. He opened contacts with the Near East and continued commercial relations with Phoenicia and the Aegean world.

In 1520 BCE, **Thutmose I (1525–1512 BCE)**, carried out several major military campaigns into the city-states in Palestine, advancing into Syria, reaching the upper Euphrates—the "**land of the two rivers**" (Naharin), or Iraq. However, his expeditions did not result in permanent occupation of the territories he conquered.

During the reign of **Thutmose III (1504–1450 BCE)**, a coalition of several city-states in Syria and Palestine, under the leadership of the king of Qadesh, captured the Egyptian-occupied city of Megiddo, which occupied an important strategic position in the main trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Following this victory, the Egyptian forces advanced north, crushing the western branch of the coalition and capturing all the coastal Phoenician cities. Qadesh, the main source of the resistance, was at last captured.

In the late spring of **1471 BCE**, large numbers of troops were brought by sea to Syria. These troops crossed the Orontes (al-Asi) and Euphrates rivers, incorporating new territory into the Egyptian empire and receiving tribute from Babylon, Ashur, and the Hittites. At the end of his expeditions, Thutmose III brought back to the Egyptian court thirty-six sons of chiefs; these captives were to be educated and prepared to go back to eventually replace the hostile older generations.

Thutmose III was the greatest warrior of ancient Egypt. He carried out fourteen campaigns in Palestine-Syria, resulting in the consolidation of the Asiatic territories that created Egypt's Asiatic empire. At the end, Palestine-Syria was definitely absorbed into the rising Egyptian empire. Palestine was divided into

four administrative districts. Military garrisons were built at several Palestinian cities such as Gaza and Beth Shan. A series of treaties was forced on patrons of several towns in the hills and lowland districts, including Byblos, Tyre, Acco, Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh), Megiddo, Shechem, Jerusalem, Gezer, Lachish, and Ashqelon. The rulers of the Palestinian cities became vassals of the pharaoh; they were bound to him by personal oath and forced to pay heavy taxes. Yet those rulers still enjoyed a fair amount of independence. Egypt needed timber, oil, wine, wool, cheese, and meat. Egypt also was interested in the copper and turquoise deposits of the Sinai and Negev deserts. Its goal was to secure Palestine's supplies and natural resources, and to control the trade routes.

Egypt's grip on its empire was weakened during the fourteenth century BCE. During the reign of Akhenaten (1379–1362 BCE), Egypt was preoccupied by his religious reforms, which affected its interests in the northern Syrian territory, and ignored the management of the empire's affairs. The **Hittite empire** took advantage of this situation and expanded its territories in Syria at the expense of both the Mitanni⁴⁵ and Egypt. The weakness of the Egyptian administration also allowed the local rulers to engage in quarrels and conflicts among themselves. The Egyptian records at **Tel el-Amarna**, Akhenaten's capital, revealed evidence of instability and a loss of order in Palestine. Letters to the pharaoh from the local rulers referred to the presence of lawless group of bandits called the **Apiru** who were living on the fringes of civilized society and represented a serious threat to the farming communities. These brigands preyed on trade caravans and took refuge in the caves and woods of the hills.

In the forty years following the death of Akhenaten, the country was focusing all its attention and efforts toward restoring the old order. Minimal military activities in Asia took place during this period. A limited military campaign was carried out by **Seti I** and his son **Ramesses II** against a new power, the Hittites. This campaign ended with the signing of a treaty with the Hittites in which both sides acknowledged one another's interests in northern Syria. However, Ramesses II, who was twenty-five years old when he ascended the throne of Egypt in 1304 BCE, had made up his mind to prepare a strong army for a decisive war against the Hittites. He added a fourth field army and expanded the city of Pi-Ramesses to act as the forward supply base for the future operations in the Levant.

The Ramessid Pharaohs

In the spring of 1301 BCE, Ramesses II led his army northward to the Levant. He took the coastal route, passing by Tyre and Byblos. Upon arriving in Simyra, he turned inland and attacked the kingdom of Amurru, a known vassal of the Hittites, which

45. The Mitanni were an Indo-Iranian regional power; their kingdom lasted from 1550–1260 BCE in northern Syria and southern Anatolia.

became part of the Egyptian territories in northern Syria. Following this victory, he returned to Egypt. More campaigns followed, and ultimately an offer of a military disengagement from the Hittite king was accepted by the pharaoh of Egypt. A formal treaty of peace was signed between the two nations, and was sealed by the marriage of the Hittite king's daughter to Ramesses II.⁴⁶

During the reign of Ramesses II, Egypt enjoyed peace and prosperity marked by extensive building programs. A new capital, Per-Ramesses, was established in the delta. A large number of prisoners captured in Palestine during the pharaoh's military expeditions were put to work to build this city and other construction projects in the eastern delta. Ramesses II reorganized Egypt's administration in Palestine, selecting certain Palestinian cities as command centers. Excavations at **Tell Fara**, **Tell Sera**, **Beth Shan**, **Tell es-Sa'idiyeh**, and **Aphék (Auja)** revealed a special type of building that became known as an "**Egyptian governor's residence**"; it was a large, square public building divided into storerooms and courtyards. These cities were selected for their strategic military and economic locations.⁴⁷ The major trade routes were protected by the construction of forts and way stations. **Deir el Balah** was the last way station on the "Way of Horus" before Gaza. **Permanent garrisons** of Egyptian troops were maintained at Gaza and Beth Shan, as well as a number of other bases. Finds at the burial sites in these garrisons suggest the presence of foreign soldiers of Aegean or southern Anatolian origin as part of the Egyptian forces.⁴⁸

Tell es-Sa'idiyeh was an important Egyptian command center located in the south, east of the River Jordan. Built on the most fertile agricultural land, it was to serve as an administrative center as well as a major military base, hosting a large garrison composed of Egyptian soldiers and foreign people of Aegean or southern Anatolian origin. Those people, who were raiders and pirates captured by Egyptian forces during the reign of Ramesses II, formed a mercenary unit in the Egyptian army. Archaeological finds at this site indicate the presence of a sizable number of foreign residents who traveled by overland routes from Mycenae or Hatti and arrived at the end of the thirteenth century BCE. Similar discoveries were made at **Deir 'Alla**, about ten kilometers south of es-Sa'idiyeh; at **Tell Mazar**, between Deir 'Alla and es-Sa'idiyeh; and at **Tell Fukhar**, north of es-Sa'idiyeh. It is important to mention that there was a great increase in bronze production in Palestine and Transjordan at the end of the late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. It appears that those migrants were involved in this industry. Remains of furnaces were found at **Tel Mor**, **Tel Qasile**, **Tel Masos**, Beth Shemesh, and **Deir 'Alla**. These areas were under direct Egyptian control at least until the reign of Ramesses V, around the middle of the twelfth century BCE. The Egyptians continued to control these metal-producing sites

46. Mark Healy, *New Kingdom Egypt* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1992), 48–54.

47. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 81–93.

48. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 82–84.

even when they withdrew from other regions of Palestine. Most likely the Egyptians employed the immigrants as metalworkers during the thirteenth century BCE, prior to the eighth year of the rule of Ramesses III, when the main attack by the Sea People on the delta occurred.⁴⁹

The Egyptian imperial presence in Palestine during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BCE stabilized its economy and contributed to the prosperity Palestine enjoyed during that period.⁵⁰ The strong military presence of Egypt in Palestine was of great benefit to the Palestinian economy; it provided security and protection for the farming communities, putting the Apiru attacks to an end. It appears that the Egyptian administration in Palestine was able to control these bandits. Some of them were rounded up and taken as prisoners during the Amarna period and during the campaigns of Seti I and Ramesses II, and were subsequently employed in the construction projects of Ramesses II.⁵¹

The Palestinian economy flourished as a result of the expansion of commercial activity with Egypt. Canaanite products were favored in Egypt. The advances in craftsmanship achieved during the middle Bronze Age continued during the late Bronze Age. Many Egyptian prototypes were manufactured in Palestine for export to Egypt. Trade relations with Cyprus and the Aegean were expanded and enhanced as well.

During the late Bronze Age, the Egyptian empire controlled the international trade routes linking the Nile Valley with Syria, Anatolia, and the Euphrates Valley. Three major routes crossed Palestine, going by land, by sea, and across the desert: The Way of Horus, the Desert Crossing, and the King's Highway. Overland routes passed through Sinai and Palestine, connecting Egypt with the Syrian cities of **Ebla, Hama, Aleppo, Mari, Damascus, and Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh)**. Sea-trade routes passed through the Phoenician ports. International trade transformed the towns and villages along the inland trade routes, and turned the northern ports into major trade centers.⁵²

The Collapse of the Bronze-Age Mediterranean Civilizations (1200–1150 BCE)

The Egyptian presence in Palestine continued throughout the reign of Ramesses V or Ramesses VI, around the middle of the twelfth century BCE. This is considered the transition point from the late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Several civilizations around the Aegean experienced changes such as drought, earthquakes, and invasions

49. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 95–106.

50. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 150–154; Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 11.

51. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 80–81.

52. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 126–129.

that caused them to migrate into the surrounding lands, including Syria-Palestine. The flow of Aegean migrants continued until 1150 BCE or beyond.

The Great Mycenaean Drought (1250–1050 BCE)

It appears that the collapse of the Bronze-Age Mediterranean civilizations during the late part of the thirteenth and the entire twelfth century BCE was the result of several factors, of which the prolonged and extended periods of drought were the most important. Earthquakes, internal unrest and rebellions, and invaders collectively contributed to the catastrophe. The eastern Mediterranean kingdoms faced all these threats at a time when they lacked the strength and organization needed to adapt to these challenges and to develop the necessary plans for recovery. In her book *The Sea Peoples*, Nancy Sandars points out that in the lands surrounding the Mediterranean, earthquakes, famine, droughts, and floods were ever-present. **“Catastrophes punctuate human history but they are generally survived without too much loss. They are often followed by a much greater effort leading to greater success.”**⁵³

Around 1250 BCE, the Mediterranean suffered a severe drop in sea level associated with a significant increase in temperature and sharp decrease in rainfall. This shift in climate became known as the **Great Mycenaean Drought**. It reached its height around 1200 BCE and lasted until 1050 BCE. **It caused the collapse of ancient Mycenae, the Hittite empire, and the north Syrian state of Amurru. It disrupted civilization throughout the northern and eastern part of the Mediterranean basin.** The only major Mediterranean power to survive was Egypt, which was not vulnerable to the drought as its agriculture depended on the Nile rather than on rainfall. The extended period of drought—nearly two hundred years—led to famines and widespread starvation that uprooted whole communities and forced people to leave their homes and farms. Many moved southward to Egypt, both by land and sea. Others moved to the coastal plains of Palestine.⁵⁴

Egypt devoted great efforts and resources to solving the serious problems resulting from the drought. These challenges included the movement of displaced people from the coastal cities into the central hills south of the Jezreel Valley, controlling the roaming Apiru bands and providing security for the farming communities, managing the settlement of the invaders from the sea who they captured (who became known as the **Sea People**), and maintaining and protecting the inland trade routes. The Egyptians made great efforts to deal with these urgent problems.

53. Nancy K. Sandars, *The Sea Peoples: Warriors of the Ancient Mediterranean* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 11.

54. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 155.

The **Hittite** central administration, unable to provide for the basic food needs of its citizens, was forced to ask Egypt for assistance. The Egyptians' support failed to save the empire, however, which faced a large influx of refugees from Mycenae and lacked the military power to successfully repel the refugees.

During the drought, farming throughout Palestine entered a period of crisis. Some of the major towns, like Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh), were partially destroyed. Others, like Taanach in the Jezreel Valley, were abandoned completely. A few cities, like Megiddo, survived. Prior to the drought, most of Palestine's population lived in major towns in central valleys and on the coastal plains. In response to the drought, farmers began to move out of the larger towns to more remote areas in the central coastal plain. They built multiple villages throughout the Acco plain and the Jezreel, Beth Shan, and northern Jordan valleys.

Egypt faced serious problems as a result of the drought and its impact on the entire region. The most urgent issue was helping the devastated areas with food supplies from its granaries. The second problem was controlling the massive waves of refugees arriving in the delta in Egypt and the different regions of Palestine.

Egyptian records mention intensive fighting, including sea battles against the **Sea People**. The sea attackers were raiders, not migrants; the vessels they used were warships—oared galleys carrying male warriors. These raiders appeared first in the Aegean region, then attacked several cities in Anatolia, northern Syria, Cyprus, Palestine, and Egypt, as well as the city of Ugarit.

Ugarit, the capital of the kingdom of Ugarit, was located near the sea on the **Tell of Ras Shamra**. Due to its maritime trade activities, Ugarit reached the height of its prosperity in the late Bronze Age. Between 1400 and 1350 BCE the kingdom was a vassal to Egypt, and between 1332 and 1260 BCE it was a vassal to Hatti, though it continued its commercial relations with Egypt. Based on recently discovered texts, the kingdom was defeated by the Sea People and the capital was destroyed by an earthquake and subsequent fires around 1190–1185 BCE. The reduction in the volume of sea trade affected the Phoenician ports of Byblos, Tyre, and Acco, and produced a domino effect on trade throughout Palestine. Trade-dependent agriculture diminished greatly, creating a major economic recession.

The Phoenician cities—Byblos, Sarepta, Sidon, Tyre, Acco—were not attacked by the sea raiders. The archaeologist **Carol Bell** gives a possible explanation for this: “Close commercial ties between the Aegean merchants and the Phoenician sites during the thirteenth century had resulted in personal ties with the would-be Aegean raiders of the twelfth century, causing them to spare the Phoenician sites, while Ugarit and other sites that did not have direct contact with the Aegean were destroyed.”⁵⁵

55. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 169.

The sea battles took place in the Nile Delta, while the land battles took place somewhere between Amurru and southern Canaan, or even at the margins of the delta. Most scholars believe that the land war was not a single event, but rather a series of small-scale confrontations. The land invasions were more like waves of migration. In addition to the charioteers and warriors, the forces included women, children, and noncombatant men, loaded on ox carts. According to Medinet Habu records, Ramesses took many captives in the sea battles, some of whom were pressed into military service to man the garrisons at the Egyptian control centers in Palestine.

In Palestine, the Egyptians facilitated the settlement of the refugees in different regions and helped the assimilation of newcomers with the inhabitants of Palestine. They devoted great efforts to maintaining order in the country by committing more troops, as they were concerned about the safety and security of the trade routes. To compensate for the loss of timber and other material resources, they assisted with moving the displaced population from the coastal cities into the central hills south of the Jezreel Valley.

Over the course of several generations, the newcomers integrated with the local people. This was not an easy process, as local populations were hardly looking for more mouths to feed in a period of deepening drought. At the end, and by the second half of the twelfth century BCE, the Aegean immigrants were integrated into the populations where they had settled. They adopted the Semitic languages and the Semitic gods. At the same time, they influenced the culture of the region. The lowland inhabitants, especially along the southern coast, adopted much from the immigrants. Such cultural adoptions can be seen in the wide use of the decorative pottery known as Philistine Ware. The new culture was a fully assimilated Palestinian one.⁵⁶

The Dawn of the Iron Age

In the wake of the Bronze-Age collapse, the use of iron in tools and weapons became prevalent. This transition marks the last phase of what is generally considered “prehistory” before historical recordkeeping began. The Middle East was one of the places where the Iron Age began earliest. It is possible that the Sea People, who were one of the catalysts for the devastation of the Mediterranean region around 1200 BCE, also helped to spread this new technology to Palestine.

56. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 157.

Cultural Influences on Palestine into the Iron Age

From its earliest history, the population of Palestine was enriched by numerous cultural influences arising from immigration, trade, and warfare. Among the groups that influenced Palestine were the Philistines, the Amorites, the Aramaic city-states, the Canaanite city-states, the states of Israel and Judea, and the Phoenicians.

The Philistines

The immigrants who arrived in Palestine from the Aegean during the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE became known as the **Philistines**. Most of them came to southern Palestine by land. Their arrival was not a hostile military-style invasion; rather, they were searching for a new start in a new land. From as early as the beginning of the twelfth century BCE, they established their settlements in five sites in southern Palestine: **Ashdod, Ashkelon, Tel Miqne/Ekron, Gaza, and Tell es-Safi/Gat**. This region became known as **Philistia**, and the settlement system became known as the **Pentapolis**, the five city-states, the base for a pan-Philistine confederation. The relationship between the Canaanites and the newcomers was characterized by peaceful interaction that led to integration. Archaeological finds suggest that intercultural marriages and intercultural interactions took place, which would have allowed both Canaanite and Aegean traditions to be maintained.⁵⁷ **Itamar Singer**, the history professor at Tel Aviv University, believes that the migrants came without an urban tradition of their own and adopted the Canaanite system of city-states.⁵⁸

57. Cline, *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 159–160.

58. Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 282–289.

The migration from the Aegean was not a sudden, single event. It was a prolonged process that started with the gathering of information, followed by the arrival of young men who prepared the ground for the arrival of the rest of the family or larger kinship group. It is believed by most scholars that the first wave of migrants arrived in Palestine at the beginning of the twelfth century BCE. American archeologist **William F. Albright** interpreted the Medinet Habu records as follows: **“The Philistines were first subdued by the Egyptians and then settled in Egyptian forts in Palestine. Later, they managed to break free.”**⁵⁹ As a result of intermarriages with Syrian women, a substantial number of migrants stayed in Syria for some years before continuing their journey further south into Palestine. The Aegean migration took different forms: some stayed in one site along the route, others continued on; some were joined by other groups of migrants of different origin and by people of non-Aegean origin. A significant number of the immigrants were second- or third-generation Aegeans born in different places along the migration routes, such as Cilicia, Cyprus, and Syria.

The Philistines eventually consolidated their position in the southern coastal plains. A distinctive material culture evolved as a result of the integration of the newcomers with the Canaanites, the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. The Pentapolis federation of the five Philistine cities produced a local variety of a contemporary style of Mycenaean pottery, which became known as the Philistine style. **“This wonderful, artistically inspired pottery combined in a unique painted style motifs derived from Egyptian, Canaanite and Mycenaean traditions. . . . Not only did the Philistines introduce a new and characteristic style of pottery to Canaan, but new styles of architecture . . . [that] strongly reflect the Aegean background and origin of the Philistines themselves.”**⁶⁰

The Amorites

The Amorites are the indigenous population of inland, central, and north Syria, equivalent to the Canaanites of the Levant. The people who occupied Syria during the third millennium were called the **Amorites** by their eastern neighbors the Sumerians. This word means “westerners,” and their country was known as **Amurru**, the Westland. Their capital was called **Mari**, which is also a Sumerian word. Later the Babylonians expanded the name to refer the whole of Syria; they called the Mediterranean **“the great sea of Amurru.”** The first reference to the land of the Amorites appears as early as the time of the Akkadi emperor Sargon (2450

59. Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration*, 320.

60. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 112.

BCE). Before Sargon of Akkad overran Amurru, its capital, Mari, was the seat of one of the early Sumerian dynasties.⁶¹

The Amorites' economy was based on an advanced agricultural irrigation system, as well as on commercial relations with their neighbors. From the Gulf of Alexandretta to the western bend of the Euphrates, a distance of approximately 160 kilometers, the land formed a natural corridor between the shores of the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia. The narrow, low passage through the mountains in northern Syria that connected the valley in the east and the sea in the west became known as the **Syrian Saddle**. This important corridor served as a trade route for exchanging goods as well as a cultural thoroughway for the exchange of ideas. It was also the main pass that was used by Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, and Macedonians in their military expeditions.

The name Syria was introduced by the Greeks. **In Greek and post-Greek times, the term included Palestine and Lebanon.** It described the area between the Taurus and Sinai, the Mediterranean and the Iraq desert. To Herodotus, Palestine was part of Syria, as it was to the Turks (the Ottoman Empire), and its inhabitants were the Syrians of Palestine. The Arabs gave the country a new name: **al-Sham** (as Syria is still known in Arabic) indicating it was to the left (north), relative to al-Yaman, and to the right (south) relative to al-Hijaz. Geographically, Syria occupies an important strategic position connecting the three continents, which has exposed it to invasions from all sides: from the Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Hittites, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Mongols, Turks, Crusaders, and European colonists. Throughout its long history since the Bronze Age, there has hardly been a time in which Syria as a whole stood as an independent sovereign state.⁶²

At the end of the first half of the twentieth century CE, excavations at a site in northern Syria called **Tell al-Hariri** (silk merchant's mound) revealed the ancient site of Mari. The finds included over twenty thousand cuneiform tablets, the language of which is mostly Akkadian, but the vocabulary and grammatical features leave no doubt that those who wrote them spoke Amoritic or West Semitic, which is distinct from East Semitic. The tablets represent the archives of **Zimri-Lim** (1730–1700 BCE), the last king of Mari, whose kingdom was destroyed by Hammurabi. These records revealed that horse-drawn chariots were already known, and that fire signals were used as a measure of national defense. The language of these tablets indicates that the civilization of the Amorites was a blend of Amoritic, Hurrian, and Babylonian elements. These tablets also reveal that **Halabu (Aleppo), Gubla (Jubayl, Byblos), Qatana (Qatna, north of Hims), and Haran** were centers of Amorite dynasties or were ruled by Amorite princes. They also indicate that around 1800 BCE, the entire region from the Mediterranean to the highlands of Elam was dominated by Amorite

61. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 65.

62. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 57–61.

princes. The architecture of the palace of King Zimri-Lim and the documents it contained reveal an advanced culture that rivaled those of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The ethnic composition of the population of Syria-Palestine is not clear to modern historians. People migrated there from different regions. As mentioned earlier, successive waves of migrants arrived from North Africa as a result of the extensive periods of drought that resulted in the creation of the great Sahara. These waves of immigration arrived between the seventh and fifth millennia BCE. Similar population movements of the Armenoids, the Hurrians, and the Hittites took place from the north and east toward northern and eastern Syria.

The Aramaic City-States

Between the twelfth and tenth centuries BCE, several city-states known as the Aramaean states were established in Syria. The collapse of the Hittite empire at the end of the Bronze Age, along with the withdrawal of Egypt from Palestine-Syria, created a vacuum which was filled by the Aramaic city-states of central and north Syria. Politically there was no centralized authority like a unified kingdom, but it was a formidable confederation of city-states consisting principally of Aleppo, Damascus, and Hamath. This confederation was able to resist and hold the advances of the Assyrian Empire for a relatively long period of time.

Aram Damascus played a major role in the coalition of city-states that confronted the Assyrian forces of Shalmaneser III in 853 BCE. The Aramaean language, Aramaic, was the most widely used language in the entire Near East. **It is reasonable to assume that “the Aramaean ‘culture’ [was] a revival and resurgence of the indigenous population. The Aramaeans can be defined then as the population of first millennium (Iron Age) in central and north Syria.”**⁶³

Under **Ben-Hadad I**, Damascus became the most prominent power in Syria-Palestine. The kingdom of Israel in the central highlands of Palestine (discussed in next section) was a vassal of Damascus during the last days of Omri, the king of Judea, who paid tribute to Ben-Hadad. Gilead in Transjordan was also controlled by Damascus. Aram Damascus was a prosperous community; the Aramaean merchants sent their caravans all over the Fertile Crescent. For centuries they monopolized the internal trade of Syria, while the Canaanites monopolized the maritime trade. Damascus was the port of the desert just as Gubla, Sidon, and Tyre were the ports of the sea. Aramaean merchants were responsible for spreading their West Semitic language throughout the entire Fertile Crescent, and by about 500 BCE, Aramaic had become the dominant language of the Near East. Under Darius the Great (521–486

63. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 107.

BCE) it was made the official interprovincial language of the Persian government. With the spread of Aramaic, the Phoenician alphabet, which the Aramaeans were the first to adopt, spread and was passed on to other languages in Asia.⁶⁴

The Canaanite City-States

The Canaanites were the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine during the Neolithic period who established major agricultural settlements in the coastal plains, the Jordan Valley, the inland plains, and the inland valleys. They were the inhabitants of the ancient Levant; they had dwelt in that region since the time of the very earliest settled communities in remote prehistory. They were the same people who settled in farming villages in the eighth millennium BCE.⁶⁵ **It is important to recognize that the Canaanites and Amorites were the indigenous inhabitants of the land since the Neolithic period. Over thousands of years, immigrants from different regions—the west (North Africa), the north (Anatolia), the northwest (Mycenae), the northeast (Armenia and the Caucasus), the east (Mesopotamia and Elam), and the south (Arabia)—slowly and gradually moved into Palestine-Syria, becoming integrated and fully assimilated with the indigenous inhabitants.**

The Canaanites were undoubtedly influenced by others through trade and small-scale immigration. **Nonetheless, the Ammonites, Moabites, Israelites, and Phoenicians who achieved their own cultural identities could all be classified as different parts of the multicultural entity that comprised the Canaanites.** These groups are often described as distinct kingdoms, but in fact they were interconnected and interdependent. As described in the previous chapter, the Canaanites rose through the stress of the great Mediterranean drought, which forced different cultural groups to cooperate in the Mediterranean economy. Whereas some civilizations were weakened or devastated by the drought, the Canaanites were strengthened by it, because they had to become interdependent based on the different economic specialties of each region. This drove advancements in language, technology, and trade that shaped the culture of the region.

The land of Canaan, which means “lowland,” is defined geographically as the ancient Levant, which includes the modern areas of Palestine, Transjordan, coastal Syria (including Lebanon), and southern inland Syria. The Canaanites were the indigenous inhabitants who, during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, built Megiddo, Beth Shan, and Acco in the northern lowlands; Ashqelon and Gaza in the southern lowlands; and Hazor (Tel al-Qadeh), Shechem, Jerusalem, Lachish, and Gezer in the highlands. The continuity of population in the Levant from the beginning of settled

64. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 166–169.

65. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 13–14.

communities in the Neolithic period through the Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron ages cannot be challenged.

By the eleventh century BCE, as the great Mycenaean drought came to an end, Palestine slowly began the process of rebuilding its economy and reviving its society. All the agricultural regions—Phoenicia in the north coastal region; Philistia in the southern coastal plains; Samaria in the central highlands; and Ammon, Moab, and Edom east of the Jordan rift and in the Transjordan Plateau—prospered in the tenth century BCE.

As previously noted, during the long drought years, Egypt had maintained a significant military presence in Palestine, which played a major role in overcoming the serious problems created by the extended drought. At the end of the eleventh century BCE, due to internal discord, Egypt withdrew from Palestine and ended its control and hegemony.

Palestine-Syria became independent, but fragmented, with dominant towns starting to control the small villages in the immediate neighborhood. The majority of Palestine's sedentary population lived in the Jezreel Valley and the connecting Beth Shan and northern Jordan valleys. The Iron Age witnessed the city-state system, in which major cities established their independent states, known historically as the **world of the Canaanite city-states**. This period was characterized by instability, as no single city-state was able to dominate the scene. **"This endemic fragmentation into its many small regions left Palestine not only torn by recurrent regional conflicts, but extremely vulnerable to the armies of major powers from outside Palestine."** The independence of the city-states lasted for a full century, ending around 900 BCE with the rise of the Assyrian Empire.⁶⁶

The city-states continued their commercial activities with both Egypt and Mesopotamia and tried to maintain trade routes; however, the relationship between these states was dominated by competition rather than cooperation. The Assyrians benefited from this situation, and moved to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of Egypt from Palestine-Syria. There followed an increase in the volume of international trade between Egypt and Assyria. The trade route that passed through the Jezreel Valley connected the coastal plains to the upper Jordan Valley. No single power was able to control this route and maintain security and stability. The Phoenician city of Tyre competed with Damascus for control of the valleys and the trade routes. The small mountain villages of western Galilee were allied with Tyre, while eastern Galilee was controlled by Damascus. As the people of the central hills consolidated and created the state of Israel, a three-way struggle for dominance over Jezreel developed. For more than a century, the relationship between the three states of Tyre, Samaria, and Damascus was characterized by attempts to cooperate at some times, and periods of war at others.⁶⁷

66. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 180.

67. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 180–181.

The southern highlands, which became known in the seventh century BCE as **Judea**, lacked a centralized political structure. However, the scene in this region was dominated by small autonomous towns, including Jerusalem and Hebron in the hill country and Gezer and Lachish in the Shephelah (lowlands).

The City-States of Israel and Judea (1300–600 BCE)

In Palestine, the highlanders in both the central hills (later Samaria) and southern hills (later Judea and Jerusalem) came from people displaced from the lowlands. They were part of the indigenous population of Palestine who were displaced from their towns and villages as a result of the great Mycenaean drought. The settlements of these highlands evolved into two states: the first state, which became known as Israel, was in the central hills, and its capital was Samaria; the second state, which became known as Judea, was in the south, and its capital was Jerusalem. Israel was founded in the tenth century, while the state of Judea, lagging behind Israel by three centuries, was founded in the seventh century. Their beliefs, religious practices, political system, culture, and social life were similar to those of the other communities of the southern Levant and Greater Syria.

Prior to the great drought, the majority of Palestine's population lived in the central valleys and the coastal plains, where major towns were located. During the thirteenth century BCE, in response to the drought, farmers moved out of the major towns toward more remote and isolated areas of the lowlands, establishing new villages along the northern coastal plains around Acco. More small villages were also established in the Jezreel, Beth Shan, and northern Jordan valleys. As the number of refugees increased in these regions of the lowlands, they began moving into the **central highlands** north of Jerusalem (later Samaria). Initially they settled in the fertile interior valleys where there were small streams and springs. Later on, they established new settlements beyond the valleys into high grounds where they could grow grains and where herding would be possible. Even in periods of drought, highland rains were sufficient to maintain some form of dry agriculture. The new settlers developed the central hills into rich agricultural land suitable for olive trees, vineyards, and fruit orchards. They built terraces and adopted different methods for the maintenance of the limited water resources. They used slaked-lime plaster for the lining of the water cisterns and constructed large clay-jar containers for both water and grain storage.⁶⁸

The collapse of sea trade with Hatti, north Syria, and Phoenicia caused Egypt to lose its timber and oil suppliers. Egypt looked to Palestine as a potential new supplier of these products, so it expanded its presence there. Its willingness to pay inflated

68. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 158–161.

prices for both timber and oil encouraged entrepreneurs to move to the highlands and to establish new settlements. Egypt also helped integrate the Aegean refugees with the indigenous population and provided security and political stability to the region. These measures resulted in a significant population increase in the central hills. The population of this region responded to the growing market, building a diverse economy dependent on a variety of products, including oil, wine, fruits, nuts, and grain, to meet Egypt's needs. The timber industry cleared the forest lands and turned the wilderness into the richest olive-producing area of Palestine.⁶⁹

Judea and Jerusalem

The **southern hills**, which are known as the **Judean highlands**, were dominated throughout the drought by pastoral nomads. Except for few small, scattered hamlets, sedentary life was absent. The dryness during this period prevented any agricultural activity. **Lachish**, which was located southwest of the hills, dominated the region, as it functioned as the central market that connected the highlands with the overland trade routes. Meat, cheese, butter, and wool reached the trade routes through Lachish. When the drought ended around 1050 BCE, the Judean highlands became able to support agricultural settlements. Lachish took the initiative and encouraged the nomads to convert the grazing lands into farming communities. By the end of the ninth century BCE, most of the Judean highlands had been cleared and terraced, and the region became one of the most important olive-growing areas of Palestine.

In Judea, the greatest expansion of settlements occurred between 900 and 700 BCE, lagging behind the central hills by two centuries. During this period, **Jerusalem** was a very small town, and did not play any significant political role in the region. Only after Lachish was destroyed by the Assyrians in 701 BCE did Jerusalem develop and grow to become the economic and political center of the south.⁷⁰

The northern highlands in the upper Galilee region had a different history. This region received more rainfall than any other region of Palestine; however, it was rugged and heavily wooded. Agriculture was more difficult in these hills, so settlements were fewer and widely scattered. During the Mycenaean drought, refugees settled in small farming villages in the northern hills. They were involved in grazing and grain agriculture, as well as cultivating olives and fruits. The western part of the northern highlands was connected with the Phoenician ports in the northern coastal region, while the eastern part was connected with the towns and villages located near the Sea of Galilee and the Hula basin.

69. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 158–161.

70. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 161–164.

The Origins of the City-state of Israel

Archaeological finds and historical records clearly indicate that the state of Israel in the central hills was developed on its own and was not an offshoot of a glorious “united monarchy” of the south. **The population of the highland settlements in both the central and the southern hills in the tenth century was approximately 45,000 people. Ninety percent of the population inhabited the villages of the central hills north of Jerusalem. About five thousand people lived in the southern hills, scattered among Jerusalem, Hebron, and some twenty small villages.**⁷¹ Such a small, isolated society was unlikely to support a great empire or host a great capital. There were simply not enough people in the south hills to establish such a kingdom. There is no evidence of the presence of any political force anywhere in Palestine that could establish such a state.⁷²

The development of the southern highlands into a state started around 1050 BCE, when sedentarization began and the nomads established their agricultural communities. It took the settlers three centuries to be able to build the state of Judea; around 700 BCE the region was organized in the form of a state with Jerusalem as the capital. The Iron Age town of Jerusalem that was excavated by Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s offered no significant remains from the late Bronze Age; the earliest structures discovered went back to the tenth century BCE. Thus, the history of Jerusalem began with the Iron II period. After the fall of Lachish in 701 BCE, Jerusalem’s power and influence extended southward over the Judean highlands. By the mid-seventh century, it had become a city of over 25,000 people, and was the capital of the Assyrian client state of Judea.⁷³

The biblical stories present a golden age of an ancient state of Israel with its capital in Jerusalem. This state, called the “**united monarchy**,” was supposedly established by **Saul**, and reached its peak during the period in which **King David** and his son **Solomon** controlled a huge territory from the Nile to the Euphrates. These stories also talk about a temple built by Solomon as the center of the worship of Yahweh.

According to the archaeological record, this storied kingdom does not exist in the actual historical past. Historian and archaeologist **Thomas Thompson**, who studied this era of the ancient history of Palestine, concludes:

There is no evidence of a united monarchy, no evidence of a capital in Jerusalem or of any coherent, unified political force that dominated western Palestine, let alone an empire of the size the legends describe. We do not have evidence for the existence of kings named

71. Israel Finkelstein and Neal Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Touchstone Publications, 2002), 143.

72. Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 128–133.

73. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 200–210.

Saul, David or Solomon; nor do we have evidence for any temple at Jerusalem in this early period. . . . There is . . . no artifact or archive that points to such historical realities in Palestine's tenth century. One cannot speak historically of a state without a population. Nor can one speak of a capital without a town. Stories are not enough.⁷⁴

Historically, there was a small state called **Israel (Samaria)** in the central hills of Palestine in the early ninth century BCE. This small state started as a collection of villages and hamlets established by the displaced populations from the lowlands. The settlements had started at the beginning of the thirteenth century BCE; it took more than three centuries for the region to become organized in the form of a state. The settlers worked hard to turn the wilderness into the richest olive-producing area of Palestine. They were dependent on trade and barter with each other for survival, with an economy based on **cash crops** grown primarily for market. Olives became Palestine's principal export. With the opening of international trade in the tenth and ninth centuries, sending goods to market required cooperation among the villages in the region, which led to the creation of a centralized administration and other forms of statehood, including dynastic kingship. The kingship developed from traditional forms of patronage and centered on the great families of the area. In the earliest records available that refer to this small state, one of the first families to control the central highlands was the **house of Omri**. Omri was a prominent local leader who played a significant role in creating a central authority in this region, which developed into a Canaanite city-state. The international trade route crossed through the Jezreel Valley just north of the highlands. Because its existence depended on international trade, it was destined to become a vassal state of the great empire of Egypt or the great empire of Assyria.

Religion played a major role in the new city-states of Palestine in the late Bronze and Iron ages. The religion in these states did not differ in form or content from religious practices throughout Syria. In all the Near East, people believed in the concept of a pantheon of gods. **El** was the father of the gods and the creator of heaven and earth. The human king was considered the representative of a god; he was not the patron himself, but the servant of the god, the executor of divine patronage.⁷⁵ The state of the central highlands became known historically as **Israel**. The word "Israel" is composed of two syllables: **Isr** and **El**. This name, which was given to the state by its leader **Omri**, meant "**El will rule.**"⁷⁶ The myth in the Old Testament claims that Yahweh, who fought with Jacob, gave him the name Israel, which means "the one who

74. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 164–165.

75. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 167–170.

76. John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield Press, 2002), 16.

defeated God.” Initially **Shechem** (now **Nablus**) was the most dominant city in the region, but Omri’s dynasty later built **Samaria** as their capital.

The Phoenicians

Phoenicia is the northern part of the land of Canaan along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The name originates from the Greek word *phoinix*, which means “**red-purple**” and refers to the people of that region who extracted a special colorful dye from tiny sea creatures similar to snails. The term **Phoenicians** was first applied by the Greeks to the Canaanites with whom they traded. After 1200 BCE, the term “Phoenicians” became synonymous with Canaanites (as noted above, the Canaanites were an interconnected, interdependent group of city-states linked by the Mediterranean economy).

The coastal plains along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean run from the Sinai in the south to the Gulf of Alexandretta (**Iskandarunah**) in the north. Between the sea in the west and the mountains in the east, the plain widens in the north and in the south. At **Juniyah**, north of Beirut, it is just one mile wide. About five kilometers south, at the mouth of **Nahr al-kalb**, the mountain touches the sea. At **Carmel**, the plain is just two hundred yards wide. There are two chains of mountains: the **Lebanon Mountains** (whose highest peak is 3,090 meters) and the **Anti-Lebanon Mountains** (highest peak 2804 meters) with the fifteen-kilometer-wide **Bekaa Valley** in between. The Lebanon Mountain chain contains many rivers that flow westward to the sea: the **Litany** and **Orontes** rivers provide water to the rich agricultural land of the Bekaa Valley.

Sedentary life was established in Phoenicia as early as the beginning of the Neolithic Age. Byblos was among the first Palestinian settlements of that period. During the early Bronze Age, the Phoenician ports were the most prosperous cities in Palestine. The main cities were **Byblos**, **Tyre**, **Sidon**, **Berytus**, and **Arwad**. The Mari archives refer to diplomatic and commercial relations between Egypt and Syria-Palestine during the reign of the pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom. The Egyptians were interested in raw products and luxury goods from the Aegean region and the east, through the commercial centers of Syria and Palestine.

As early as 2900 BCE, the Phoenicians were involved in sea trade and exploration. Their earliest international routes connected Byblos with Egypt. Over time these routes expanded to include the entire Mediterranean. Their trade activities reached a peak around 1000 BCE, by which time they had established several colonies around the Mediterranean and beyond. They supplied timber, wheat, oil, and wine to several Mediterranean countries. Cedar wood was an important commodity; both Egypt and Mesopotamia used it to construct temples and palaces as well as fishing boats, merchant ships, and naval vessels. Gradually the Phoenicians became the

distributing agents between west and east, practically turning the Mediterranean into a Phoenician lake.

At first, the Phoenician sailors kept the coast in sight and only traveled by day. Driven by their desire to expand their trade, they discovered the usefulness of the North Star (later called the “**Phoenician Star**”), which enabled them to navigate at night and master the art of night sailing. Gradually they developed shipbuilding techniques that allowed them to carry large cargos. They placed two or more rowers one above the other to gain more power and speed. In later times, the number of rowers reached fifty.

The Phoenicians were the first to sail around Africa—two thousand years before the Portuguese. Pharaoh **Necho** (609–593 BCE) of Egypt’s twenty-sixth dynasty reopened the ancient canal connecting the eastern arm of the Nile with the head of the Red Sea. The Phoenician vessels sailed through this sea toward the southern ocean. During the autumn they would land wherever they arrived, plant wheat, await the crop, and then depart the following year. At the end of their two-year journey, they returned to Egypt through the **Pillars of Hercules (modern-day Gibraltar)**.

The Phoenicians established several colonies throughout the Mediterranean. One trading post after another developed into a settlement, and one settlement after another into a colony, until these colonies were linked together and to the mother cities. The settlements in the mid-Mediterranean isles go back to the middle of the eleventh century. **Gades in Spain and Utica in Tunis** were founded about 1000 BCE. The founding of Gades beyond the Strait of Gibraltar introduced the Phoenicians to the Atlantic Ocean and resulted in the discovery of the ocean by the ancient world. This is considered among the greatest contributions of Palestinian-Syrian civilization to world progress. **In search of tin, they reached Cornwall in England.** The Phoenician ships carried not only cargos of different materials and products, but also ideas. Phoenician merchants and colonists influenced those whom they came in contact with in more important ways than exchanging products. They introduced culture which enhanced the civilization of the world around them. The Greeks were the ones who benefited the most from contact with the Phoenicians: they learned navigation and colonization, as well as literature, religion, and art. Through the Phoenicians, the Mediterranean became the base of cultural exchange between the Canaanites, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks. They were the middleman intellectually and spiritually, as they were commercially.⁷⁷

One of the most significant contributions of the Phoenicians to civilization was the introduction of the **alphabet**. The invention and dissemination of the alphabet system is considered their greatest gift to humanity. They were familiar with the Sumerian cuneiform method of writing as well as the Egyptian hieroglyphic method.

77. Phillip K. Hitti, *History of Syria: Including Lebanon and Palestine, Vol. I* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 109.

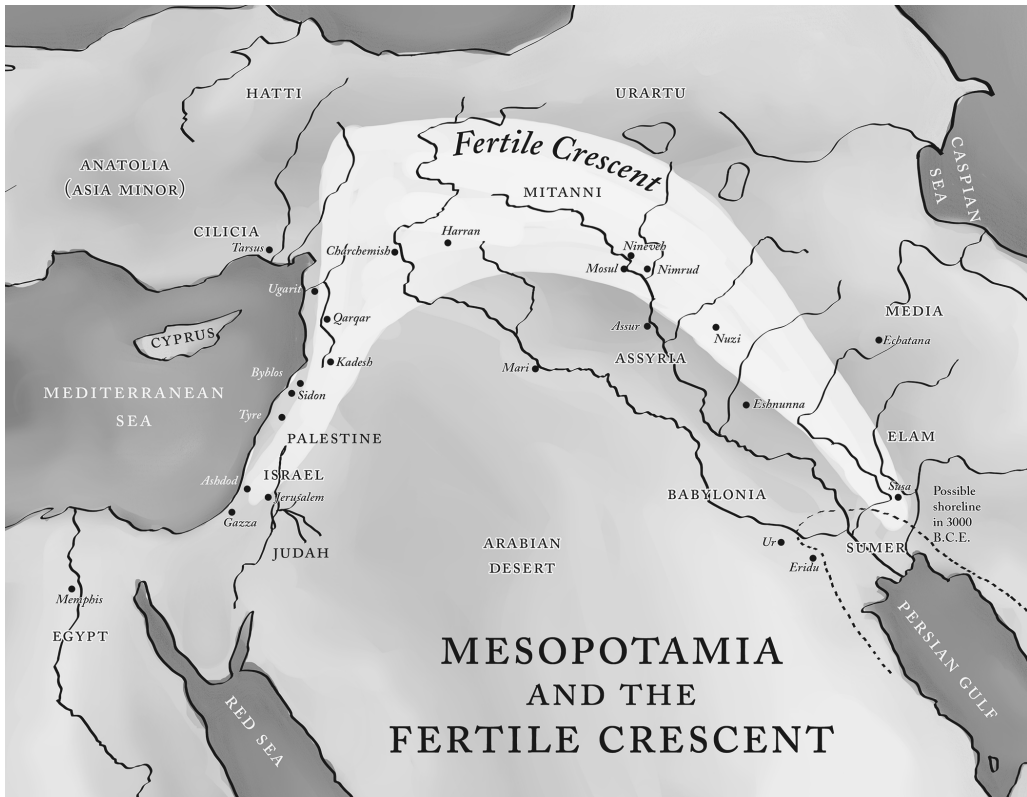
They adapted these forms of writing and developed a new system based on the principle of representing the sounds of the voice in the form of letters. **The simplicity of the Phoenician alphabet system, with its twenty-two letters written from right to left, brought the art of writing and reading within the reach of the ordinary man.**

The Phoenician cities were under the influence and control of Egypt during the reign of the pharaohs of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. This control was loose, being limited to paying tributes to Egypt and securing international trade routes. During the rule of the New Kingdom, from around 1600 BCE until about 1050 BCE, the entirety of Palestine became part of the Egyptian empire. The Phoenician cities played an extremely important role in international trade between 1600 and 1300 BCE, before the Mycenaean drought, connecting Egypt with the Aegean region and the Mediterranean isles. Between the eleventh and the tenth centuries, when Egypt started withdrawing from its Asiatic territories, the Phoenician cities, like the rest of the Palestinian cities, became independent, and were part of the Canaanite city-state system. The tenth century was the beginning of the golden age of the Phoenicians, in which they began establishing their colonies throughout the Mediterranean.

Tyre—the name means “rock”—was one of the most famous Phoenician cities. Founded around 2750 BCE, it consisted of two parts: the main trade center, which was on an island, and “old Tyre,” about a half mile away on the mainland. The people of Tyre founded several colonies around the Mediterranean. The most prominent of these was the ancient city of **Carthage (now in Tunis)**, in North Africa, which was founded around 850 BCE in a location that allowed for control of trade from the eastern to the western Mediterranean Sea. Carthage reached its peak in the sixth century BCE, when it became a mighty empire extending from Cyrenaica (modern Libya) to the Pillar of Hercules (Gibraltar), encompassing the Balearic Islands, Malta, Sardinia, and several settlements on the coast of Spain and Gaul (France). This expansion brought Carthage into conflict with Rome, “who contested with her the supremacy of the sea, on which the Carthaginian fleet had such a hold that the Romans were told they could not even wash their hands in its waters without Carthage’s permission.”⁷⁸

In summary, the history of ancient Palestine from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age was influenced by multiple overlapping and competing civilizations. All of them were greatly affected by the great Mycenaean drought. This affected the distribution of population centers and gave rise to a loose confederation of city-states, including Israel and Judea, among others. The Phoenicians, as an extension of the Canaanites, were the dominant disseminators of early Palestinian-Syrian culture, language, writing and trade throughout the Mediterranean.

78. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 107.



The History of Mesopotamia

In order to convey a better understanding of the history of Palestine under the Assyrians and the Babylonians, a narrative of the history of Mesopotamia is presented here. The political history of Mesopotamia can be summarized in the following timeline:

4500–4000 BCE	Rule by the Sumerians
2700 BCE	Treaty with the Elamites
3000–2000 BCE	The period of city-states and nation-states . The most important state is the one established by Sargon of Akkad in 2334 BCE; Akkadi rule lasts until 2112.
2000–1500 BCE	The period of the several kingdoms . The most important kingdoms are the one established in Babylon by Hammurabi in 1792 BCE, the state established by the Kassites in Babylon, and the Assyrian state of Tiglath-Pileser I . The Babylonian empire lasts from 1830 to 1595 BCE.
1365–626 BCE	The period of empires of Mesopotamia. The Assyrians take control; the Elamites are another power during this period. The most important of these are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assyrian Empire under Assurnasirpal II (883 BCE) • Shamaneser III (858–824 BCE) • Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE) • Sargon II (727–705 BCE) • Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) • Esarhaddon (713–669 BCE) Assyria falls to the Persians in 610.

586 BCE	The Neo-Babylonians and the Medes : the Neo-Babylonians exile the Jews.
539 BCE	The Achaemenids (First Persian Empire) : Cyrus the Great of Persia conquers Mesopotamia in 539 and sends the Jews home
330 BCE	Alexander the Great conquers the Medes, ending the Persian Empire.
323 BCE	Alexander the Great's death. The Seleucids inherit a large portion of his empire, including most of the Achaemenid and Persian empires.
245 BCE	Parthia takes over after the weakening of the Seleucid Empire. A period of instability follows, marked by a long series of battles between Rome and Parthia.
226 BCE	The Sassanids and the Byzantines arrive; the Sasanian Empire (also called the Neo-Persian Empire) defeats Parthia and comes to power in 87 BCE.
220 BCE–ca. 650 CE	The Persian Sassanids and the Byzantines fight long and bitter wars, opening the way for Arab rule.

In Greek, the term *mesopotamia* means “[land] between the rivers.” Originally it referred to the flat plains between the Tigris and Euphrates. Over time, the term included all the plains and hills surrounding the rivers, corresponding to modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, and the northeastern section of Syria, as well as parts of southeastern Turkey and southwestern Iran. Early scholars and historians assumed that Mesopotamia was the first part of the Near East to be settled. Most historians now believe that the Near East’s initial inhabited zone was the Fertile Crescent, a broad belt of foothills surrounding the Mesopotamian plains. The Crescent ran from central Palestine northward through Syria and eastern Asia Minor, then turned eastward to include northern Iraq and Iran. As early as 9000 BCE, this region witnessed the beginnings of agriculture and raising livestock. Over time, agriculture and herding stimulated population growth and the establishment of many settlements. By the eighth millennium BCE (7000 BCE), some of these settlements had grown larger and became towns.

Between 6000 and 5500 BCE, some of the inhabitants of the villages and towns began moving southward onto the plains of Mesopotamia. The exact reasons for the migrations are not clear. Several theories have been postulated; the most recent was proposed by a **group of scholars** at **Columbia University** who attributed these movements to a huge natural catastrophe. **William Ryan and Walter Pitman** postulate that the **Black Sea** was a closed lake, not connected to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. A huge natural dam, the **Bosporus**, separated the lake from the two seas. The ca-

tastrophe occurred around 5600 BCE, when this dam burst and allowed an enormous amount of salt water to enter the lake, which was hundreds of feet below sea level, flooding its shores for many kilometers. This disaster coincides with the time when migrations started. The historians also speculate that **this catastrophe was behind the legends of the great flood that are mentioned in the ancient Near Eastern texts.**⁷⁹

The most significant immigrant group who settled in Mesopotamia were the **Sumerians**, who settled in the flatlands just northwest of the Persian/Arab Gulf between 4500 and 4000 BCE. The Sumerians probably controlled the region after they conquered the farmers and hunters who already lived there.

Once the Sumerians controlled southern Mesopotamia, they began developing the most advanced agricultural community in their new land. They were extremely intelligent adventurers who created new methods of irrigation which turned their lands into a Garden of Eden, and over time they developed the first high civilization in human history. As Yale University scholar **Karen R. Nemet-Nejat** says, “**The Sumerians turned an agricultural community into the first urban civilization in the world.**”⁸⁰ They invented the brick mold and devised many tools, skills, and techniques: the potter’s wheel, the wagon wheel, the plow, the sailboat, the arch, the vault, the dome, casting in copper and bronze, and many other inventions. They invented a system of writing on clay which was adopted by people all over the Near East for more than two thousand years. They made significant advances in arts, literature, medicine, religion, and law. They valued personal rights and resented any encroachment on them.⁸¹

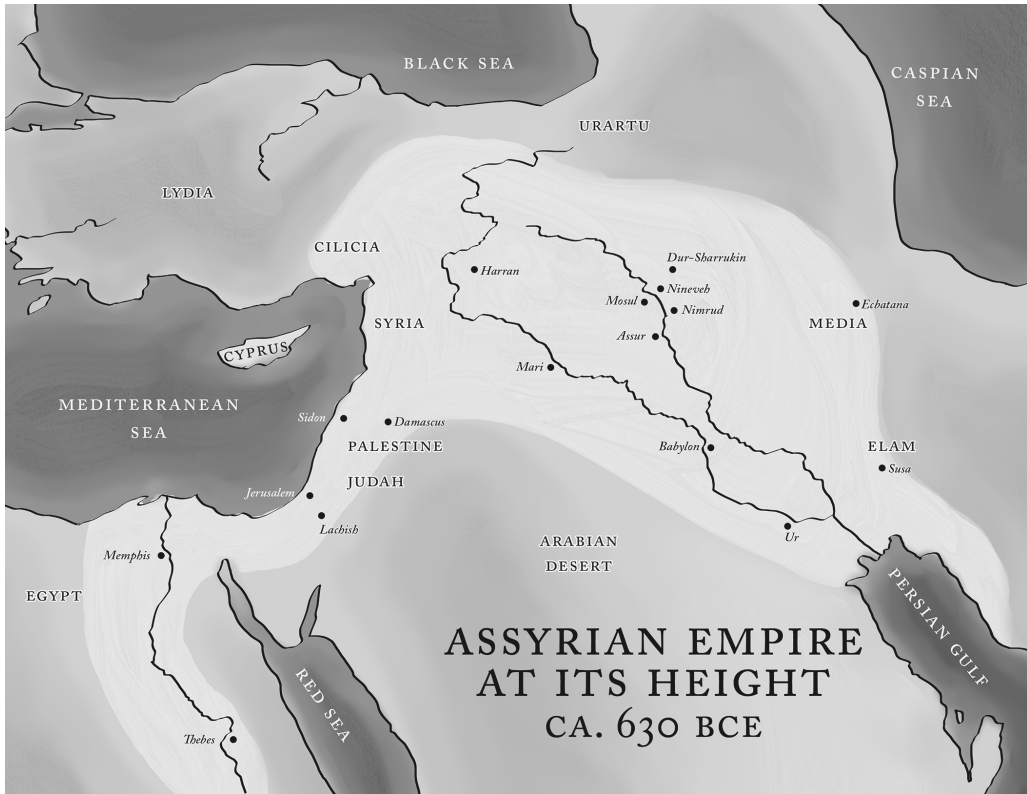
The Sumerian writing system, known as “**cuneiform**” (wedge-shaped) writing, was composed of nearly six hundred separate cuneiform signs. Thousands of clay cuneiform tablets were discovered which contained administrative and financial records as well as religious literature and myths. They also contained historical records related to Sumerian kings, their wars, and their achievements.

The Sumerian agricultural communities were dependent on a complex irrigation system which required a strong spirit of cooperation and commitment to the interests of the entire community. This was the foundation of the advanced governmental institution and the birth of the **city-states**. It was also behind the development of trade and the creation of a strong military force. The Sumerian cities were not just large, populous towns but also true city-states, each city representing a cohesive political unit controlling a large expanse of farmland and supporting villages. Competition and sometimes war dominated the relationship between these cities. **Uruk** and **Eridu** were among the first to be established. These two cities and several others, including **Lagash**,

79. William Ryan and Walter Pitman, *Noah’s Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event That Changed History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 234–236.

80. Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 14.

81. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 4.



Ur, Larsa, and Nippur were engaged in commerce, trading, and different industries. Some of the trade routes extended northward into Akkad in central Mesopotamia. **Akkad** was not as prosperous as Sumer. Competition among the cities of both regions dominated the political scene until a strong political-military ruler of one of the cities took control and created the world's first known empire. This ruler was **Sargon of Akkad**, who in 2334 BCE created the first known empire in the world.

Sargon was a royal official in Kish when that city was captured by the Sumerian king of Uruk. Sargon and other officials of Kish escaped and moved north to Akkad. They were able to form a coalition of many cities in Sumer and Akkad, and raised a strong army. Sargon marched onto Kish and defeated the Sumerian king of Uruk, then attacked and seized control of the other city-states one by one. After his armies reached the gulf in the southwest, he turned northward into Syria. Sargon's empire did not last for long; his successors failed to defend Akkad and Sumer against the Gutians and Elamites of Persia and the Amorites of Syria.

In about 2112 BCE, the Sumerian king of Ur established a new dynasty to rule the region; however, this dynasty did not last for long either, and Mesopotamia returned to its previous status of multiple city-states.

In 1813 BCE, **Shamishi-Adad**, a military leader in the city of **Ashur**, overthrew the ruler of the city and established a new dynasty which controlled all of Mesopotamia and expanded its control into the Syrian city of **Mari**.

In 1850 BCE, a new dynasty was established in **Babylon** under the leadership of **Hammurabi**, who seized many cities: **Eshnunna, Ashur, Nineveh**, and others. Hammurabi dedicated great efforts to constructing new irrigation channels, building shrines, and encouraging artists, writers, and educators. He was known as a strong ruler who established law and order. He issued a harsh law code under which many offenses were punished by death. During his reign, Babylon was a prosperous state. The kingdom of Babylon under Hammurabi's heirs did not last for long, however. By 1700 BCE, Mesopotamia was back to being a coalition of city-states.

In 1595 BCE, the forces of Hatti, in Asia Minor, marched on Babylon and destroyed the city, but they withdrew their forces shortly after their victory. The Kassites of the mountainous region of eastern Iran then marched into southern Mesopotamia and occupied Babylon. Within two or three generations, they had assimilated with the inhabitants of Babylon and become Babylonized. The Kassite rulers of Babylon managed to bring most of the city-states of southern and central Mesopotamia under Babylonian control, thus building a stable and prosperous empire that lasted more than four centuries.

In 1365 BCE, an aggressive Assyrian king, **Assurballit I**, established a new Assyrian kingdom that ruled over all of Mesopotamia. Under **Tiglath-Pileser** (1115–1077 BCE), Assyria turned into an empire that included significant parts of

Syria. This empire had many strong and effective rulers. By 630 BCE, the Assyrian Empire included many territories: western Persia, eastern Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.

Palestine under Assyrian Rule (841–612 BCE)

Assyria started campaigning to expand its empire in the **ninth century BCE**. The Assyrians were able to control Hatti and Amurru; then they marched against Syria. An impressive coalition of Levantine states—Damascus, Hamath, Israel, and various Phoenician city-states—confronted the Assyrian forces of king **Shamaneser III (858–824 BCE) at the battle of Qarqar in 853 BCE**. Although the coalition was defeated in this battle, the Assyrians were unable to advance further due to the fierce resistance of the coalition forces. In 841 BCE, Shalmaneser returned and was able to capture Damascus, and from there marched south into Palestine, capturing Samaria, the capital of the city-state of Israel. The Assyrian forces then marched through Palestine, controlling all its regions: Phoenicia, Ammon, Moab, Judea, Edom, Ashqelon, and Gaza.

As Assyria began expanding its authority over Palestine, it started a policy of subordinating these states and managing them as vassals. Their economies were integrated into the international trade of the Assyrian Empire. In 733 BCE, the Assyrian king **Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE)** annexed Damascus as a province. He also had a strong grip and a direct control of the Jezreel. Rulers and states who were compliant with Assyria's interest were allowed to survive intact as clients of the empire. Those who resisted faced systematic destruction followed by deportation of the population. The deportees were settled in Assyrian cities or other parts of the empire. Several hundred thousand people were transported across the extent of the empire. These large-scale deportations caused the collapse of indigenous regional infrastructures. Vassal states were able to maintain their social infrastructures. In 731 BCE Samaria, as an Assyrian vassal, was given control over the fertile lands of the vast Jezreel Valley. This autonomous status lasted for less than a decade and ended in 722 BCE, when **Sargon II (727–705 BCE)**, king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, seized the city, destroyed its infrastructure, and deported its population to Syria and Assyria. Different groups of people were brought to Samaria from other parts of the empire. Samaria then became a new Assyrian province, governed by an Assyrian officer.⁸²

The next Assyrian target was the southern highlands. Lachish dominated the region and controlled its olive industry. In 701 BCE the Assyrians launched their attack on Lachish. The city was destroyed and burned, and the entire population was deported. The coastal towns were annexed, and the olive industry was reorganized.

82. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 179–184.

The Assyrians named the whole southern region Judea, and made Jerusalem its capital. Jerusalem played a major role in the new reorganization of this region. It supported Assyrian policies and became an Assyrian vassal. By the mid-seventh century Jerusalem had grown to a city of 25,000 people, becoming the political and economic center of the south.

Assurbanipal, who ruled between 668 and 627 BCE, was the last great Assyrian king. In 626 BCE, a Chaldean prince seized control of Babylon and established the **Chaldean (Neo-Babylonian)** dynasty. In 612 BCE, the coalition forces of the Neo-Babylonians and the Medians swept into Assyrian heartland, taking town after town and finally capturing Nineveh. By 610 BCE the Assyrian throne and government had ceased to exist.

After the fall of the Assyrian capital Nineveh in 612 BCE, Egypt marched into southern Palestine and occupied Judea in 609 BCE. In 605 BCE, The Babylonian king **Nebuchadnezzar** defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, and four years later defeated them again at Gaza.

Palestine under Babylonian Rule (626–539 BCE)

In 612 BCE the Assyrian capital at Nineveh was captured and then burned by the coalition forces of the Medes and the Babylonians. The imperial government of Assyria survived for a short time in Haran. However, the Babylonians succeeded in taking Haran and then marched against the Egyptians in the south. In 605 BCE Nebuchadnezzar's forces defeated Pharaoh Neco at the battle of Carchemish on the Syria-Anatolia border. With this decisive victory, Syria and Palestine became open for the Babylonians, and over the following few years they asserted their claim as Assyria's successors.

In 597 BCE Jerusalem surrendered to the Babylonians and became a vassal state, like all other Syrian and Palestinian cities. However, the Egyptians continued to pressure the state of southern Palestine to resist Babylonian rule. In 588 BCE, Jerusalem allied itself with Egypt and revolted against Babylon to regain its independence. This action prompted the Babylonians to march their army toward the city, which was placed under siege until it fell in 586 BCE.

Babylon followed Assyria's policy toward the defeated countries. This policy was based on population relocation, resettlement, and reconstruction. The rulers and the upper classes were deported to regions in the heart of the empire, along with the skilled laborers. Rebels and potential troublemakers were severely punished or killed. Large-scale population resettlement was a long-term solution for potential rebellions. The resettlement of new people in the great cities of the empire and in the villages and towns of foreign territories assured their allegiance to the empire. They served as a counterbalance against any local opposition to the government. This population

resettlement program was backed by extensive political propaganda. Conquering a new territory was presented as liberating its people from former oppressive rulers. Deportation was presented as a reward for populations who rebelled against their leaders. The deportees received land and enjoyed a prosperous life in their new cities. They were also given support and protection against the indigenous population, who viewed them as intruders. The ultimate goal of this policy was to create an imperial citizenry that was faithful and dependent on the empire. This Babylonian policy was applied to Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar after its defeat in 586 BCE. The city suffered a lot of destruction by the victorious army, but was not completely destroyed. **Deportation of the population was carried out according to the above-stated policy. The king and the leaders of the city were exiled to Babylon along with the elites and skilled laborers. It is worth noting that, for the most part, the “people of the land” (am-hares) were allowed to stay. Some were deported to other parts of the empire. People from other regions were resettled in Palestine’s southern highlands, much like what happened in Samaria around 722 BCE. Cities were not completely destroyed, nor were entire populations deported.**⁸³

According to data collected during intensive surveys and excavations, at least 75 percent of the population of the southern hills remained on the land, continuing their normal agricultural life as before. The city of Jerusalem was affected the most during the conflict. Bethel and Gibeon, north of Jerusalem, continued to be inhabited, as well as the area south of Jerusalem around Bethlehem. **Misshape**, near modern Ramallah, was not destroyed; in fact, it became the capital of Judea. The population that remained in the country did not just consist of the poor villagers—it also included artisans, scribes, and priests.⁸⁴

After the defeat of Jerusalem, the Babylonians installed **Gedaliah**, the grandson of King Josiah’s secretary in **Mizpah**, as governor. They also distributed the lands of the deportees to the poorest and most exploited sector of the population. In 582 BCE officers of the old army assassinated Gedaliah, but their coup failed.

In Babylon, the exiles lived in the capital city and in the nearby countryside. They established new lives for themselves and became well integrated into Babylonian society. They were allowed to meet freely, buy land, and establish businesses. Many became prosperous and respected merchants.⁸⁵

In the autumn of 539 BCE, the Persian army defeated the Babylonians at **Opis** on the River Tigris. A month later, Cyrus entered Babylon and was enthroned as the representative of the god Marduk. The conquest of Babylon by the Persians resulted in the inheritance of the territories of Greater Syria, which included Palestine.

83. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 188.

84. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 306–307.

85. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 80–81.

The Origins of the Persian Empire

Thousands of years ago, Central Asia was the origin of waves of nomadic migration into Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. The earliest of the peoples who migrated were the **Dravidians**, who established themselves on a broad arc of territory that extended from the Indus River in what is today Pakistan through Iran, Anatolia, and perhaps all the way to Italy. The **Etruscans**, the rivals of Rome, probably were part of this wave.

The next major wave of migration was the nomadic people who are known as the **Indo-Europeans**, which occurred around four thousand years ago. The Indo-Europeans are known as the peoples who domesticated the horse. This accomplishment enabled them to move rapidly over vast distances and gave them overwhelming military superiority over sedentary peoples. Mounted on their horses or using carts pulled by horses, they were able to spread over much of Asia and Europe beginning about 2000 BCE.⁸⁶

The horse played an important role in the life of the Indo-Europeans. It was their **“magical animal”** or totem. One of the great nomadic groups who invaded Europe, the Goths, took their name from their word for horses; another group, ancestors of Persians, used personal names derived from their word for horses. **The horse** was one of **three developments** that enabled the Indo-Europeans to shape world history. The second of these innovations was **the wheeled chariot**, which came into use sometime around 1800 BCE. The third was the bow, the weapon that would dominate warfare for nearly three thousand years. Its later adaptation, **the crossbow**, was regarded as such a lethal weapon that when it was introduced into Europe in the twelfth century CE, the church banned its use for warfare among Christians.⁸⁷

The Indo-Europeans who migrated in 800 BCE to the territories south of the Caspian Sea along the **Elbruz Mountain** chain became known as the **Persians**. It is believed that they migrated from what is now northern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, an area that became known as **Aryana Vaejah** (the homeland of the Aryans). As they reached the northern part of what today is Iraq, they were forced to move east by the Assyrians. One group, known as the **Medes**, settled in what is now northern Iran, while other tribes moved further south to the hinterlands of the Persian Gulf, an area that the Greeks called **Persis** and that they themselves called **Persia**. The new immigrants settled in the low valleys and along the rivers, where they could farm and herd animals, and over time they were assimilated with the tribes who occupied the northern part of the country.

86. William R. Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, From Persia to the Islamic Republic, From Cyrus to Khamenei* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2011), 2.

87. Polk, *Understanding Iran*, 3.

The **kingdom of Elam** was the dominant power in western Iran from the second millennium BCE until the mid-first millennium, when the Medes and the Persians established their states. **Khuzistan** and **Fars** were the main Elamite settlements, and the cities of **Anshan** and **Susa** were the centers of Elamite civilization. As Susa was on the eastern edge of Babylonian plains, its history was intertwined with that of its Mesopotamian neighbors. The Elamite kings held the title “King of Anshan and Susa.” Competition between Elam and Assyria dominated the political and economic scenes for control of the trade routes through the **Zagros Mountains**; however, there was a rich network of cultural ties, including close links between the Assyrian and Elamite royal families of the seventh century BCE. Although the Assyrians were the main dominant military power in the region, they never were able to control Elam completely. The Assyrians carried out multiple military campaigns against Elam, the most serious of them in 646 BCE, in which the forces of **Ashurbanipal** sacked Susa.⁸⁸

The **Medes** dominated northwest Iran. The Assyrians carried out multiple military campaigns against them, aiming to control the commercial routes and capture horses. By the end of the eighth century, many areas of Media, especially along the Great Khorasan Road, were incorporated in the Assyrian Empire. The Median city-lords in the territories controlled by Assyria were bound to the Assyrian king by loyalty oaths.⁸⁹

The Medes played a major role in the fall of the Assyrian Empire. The Median and Babylonian forces sacked the city of Nineveh in 612 BCE. The final battle between this coalition and the Assyrians took place in 609 BCE at Haran in northwestern Mesopotamia, where the Babylonian-Median coalition forces destroyed the remnant of the Assyrian army.

The **Persian kingdom** in Anshan was ruled by Cyrus I, the grandfather of Cyrus the Great. In 550 BCE, as the young king of Persia, **Cyrus II** conquered the Medes and expanded his kingdom to include Media. This victory was the beginning of a successful military campaign aimed at establishing the **Achaemenid Empire**, which controlled all of Mesopotamia. Their territory extended to the borders of Turkey (Anatolia) and Greece; they defeated the Babylonians and inherited the territories of Greater Syria and Palestine. **Cyrus is credited with returning the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem in 538 BCE.**

In 530 BCE **Cambyses** succeeded Cyrus the Great, inheriting a far larger empire than any that had previously existed. The most important achievement of Cambyses was his invasion of Egypt in 525 BCE, followed by the capture of Libya in the west and the kingdom of Kush in the south.⁹⁰ In 521 BCE, **Darius I** succeeded Cambyses,

88. Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BC* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 21–24.

89. Waters, *Ancient Persia*, 31–33.

90. Waters, *Ancient Persia*, 54–55.

gaining the support of many influential officials in Persia, especially in the northern territories. During the reign of Darius I, the Persian Empire expanded further to the east, incorporating the **Indus River Valley** region (modern-day Pakistan and part of India), and incorporating a large area in **Eastern Europe** to the west. His forces crossed the narrow strait between the northern tip of the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea, sailing from the Black Sea to the Danube; his general Megabazus subjugated Thrace (southeastern Europe) and part of Macedonia. **At its territorial height, the Persian Empire stretched from the Himalayas (Central Asia) to the Sahara (Africa), and from the Indus River Valley (the Indian subcontinent) to the Danube River (southeastern Europe).**⁹¹

Darius died in 486 BCE and was succeeded by his son **Xerxes I**, who took upon himself the responsibility of retribution against Athens, but first he had to deal with a revolt in Egypt which had begun before Darius's death, and another in Babylon. Both revolts were crushed in 486 BCE. Xerxes then began a long campaign against Greece that was ultimately unsuccessful. He returned to Persia after assigning **Mardonius** to continue the military campaign in Greece. In the summer of 479 BCE, Athens was sacked for a second time. Between 479 and the early 460s BCE, the Athenians won several battles against the Persians.

In late July or early August 465 BCE, Xerxes was assassinated. He was succeeded by his son **Artaxerxes I**, who ruled for forty-one years. During his reign, Artaxerxes contended with a rebellion in Egypt. The rebels were supported by the Athenians. Persia was involved in several wars with the Greeks in the Aegean region and Anatolia. The relationship between Greece and Persia during Artaxerxes' reign consisted of more than military conflicts; between wars it was dominated by a diplomatic relationship involving treaties and cultural exchanges, especially between Persia and Athens.

Following the death of Artaxerxes in 424 BCE, his son Xerxes II ruled for just forty-five days. Between 424 and 331 BCE, several Persian kings ruled the empire: Darius II, Artaxerxes II, Artaxerxes III, Artaxerxes IV, and Darius III. During this period, the Persians continue to rule over vast territories. Unrest and rebellions continued from time to time; however, they were kept under control.

Palestine under Macedonian Rule (336–323 BCE)

In the late sixth and early fifth century BCE, Macedon was a Persian vassal. Macedonians were not Greek; however, the ruling family and elites were Hellenized, sharing cultural and political ties with their Greek city-state neighbors. Macedon was not a city-state, but a kingdom with extensive natural resources and manpower.

91. Waters, *Ancient Persia*, 82.

In the mid-fourth century, the Macedonian king Philip II (359–336 BCE) expanded his power in southeastern Europe after he built a strong army. Between the 350s and 340s he extended his influence into Greece, which was a collection of warring city-states. In 338 BCE, Philip II defeated Athens and the other Greek cities at the battle of **Chaeronia**. In 336 BCE, Philip II started his military campaign in Ionia. A force of ten thousand men crossed the **Hellespont** toward **Abydos**, which became the staging area for the Macedonian army.

In the summer of 336 BCE, when Darius III was king of Persia, the twenty-year-old **Alexander III**—who became known as **Alexander the Great**—succeeded his father Philip and became king of Macedon. While Philip was on his military campaign, Alexander stayed in Macedon, being tutored by the philosopher **Aristotle** and groomed for kingship. Between 336 and 334 BCE, Alexander consolidated his power in Thrace and Greece; in the spring of 334 BCE he led an army numbering between thirty thousand and forty thousand men and confronted Darius III at the **Granicus River** in northwestern Anatolia, ultimately defeating the Persians. This victory opened Asia Minor to the Macedonians. The garrison commander of Sardis, **Mithrenes**, voluntarily surrendered the city to the Macedonians. Alexander, who needed the Persian imperial bureaucracy to maintain a successful conquest, left Mithrenes in charge of the city. His progress through the rest of western Asia Minor followed the same pattern: those cities that gave themselves up willingly were “liberated” from Persian rule and subjected to Macedonian rule with no significant changes in their civic affairs.⁹²

Alexander faced Darius again in the autumn of 333 BCE and won another victory in the battle of **Issus** (in Anatolia), which opened the way to Phoenicia, giving the Macedonians access to the Persians’ main naval facilities. From Issus, Alexander marched south into Syria and Palestine. During the winter of 333–332 BCE, he captured **Damascus**, which was a critical center, as it was the place where many prominent Persian families had gathered, including Darius’ wife, mother, and several children.

Several important Phoenician cities, including Byblos and Sidon, surrendered without a fight; however, Tyre resisted for more than a year. As Alexander captured the Phoenician cities, he controlled the Persian fleet not only in Phoenicia, but also in Cyprus, Rhodes, and other important bases along the southern coast of Anatolia, which meant the end of Persian naval superiority.

Gaza, in southern Palestine, was considered the gate to Egypt; the city halted Alexander for two months. Historical records state that the inhabitants of Gaza continued fighting, street by street, even after the Persian garrison surrendered.⁹³

92. Waters, *Ancient Persia*, 199–206.

93. Waters, *Ancient Persia* 207–209.

In November of 332 BCE Alexander reached Egypt, and the Persian satrap (governor) **Mazaces** surrendered the satrapy of Egypt to Alexander. At Memphis, the Egyptians crowned him as their pharaoh with the traditional double crown of the pharaohs. Then he spent a whole year organizing the country, during which he founded the city of Alexandria.

The defeat of the Persians in the battle of Issus shocked the Jews of Jerusalem, who had been loyal vassals of Persia. According to the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius, the high priest refused at first to submit to Alexander. The Macedonians promised that the Jews would continue to be governed according to their own law.

Alexander faced a revolt in Samaria against the governor he appointed. The revolt was crushed and the rebels were punished swiftly. Alexander's march through Samaria toward Mesopotamia set the stage for the last decisive battle against Darius on October 31, 331 BCE. Defeated, Darius fled the field and withdrew to **Ecbatana** in the northern Zagros Mountains, intending to form another army from the upper satrapies.⁹⁴

Darius' decision to withdraw to the north left the way open for Alexander to march on Babylon, Susa, Pasargadae, and Persepolis. **In October of 331 BCE, Alexander was hailed as "King of the World" in Babylon.** Alexander paid respect to the Babylonian god Marduk and his temple. The Persian governor of the city and province of Babylon, **Mazaeus**, was confirmed as a governor in conjunction with a Macedonian troop commander. **In December of 331 BCE, Alexander was similarly received by Susa.**⁹⁵

In the first few months of 330 BCE, Alexander faced a difficult road from Susa to Persepolis, but **both Persepolis and Pasargadae surrendered in mid-January of 330 BCE.** The treasuries of both cities were transferred to Susa. Alexander then visited Cyrus' tomb to pay his respect to the empire's founder. He thereafter turned his forces north toward Ecbatana in pursuit of Darius III.

In the midsummer of 330 BCE, Alexander continued his drive for the eastern provinces to control all of the Persian Empire and beyond, reaching India in 326 BCE. Only a mutiny by his army stopped him from going further east. He died in Babylon of a fever in 323 BCE. In building his empire, Alexander influenced the history of Europe, Africa, and Asia as he introduced Hellenism to the Middle East and opened the world of that time to trade and social interaction.

The Macedonians combined Syria and Palestine into one province with Samaria as its capital. Alexander continued the old imperial policies of deporting people to secure his provincial capital against rebellion. He deported a portion of Samaria's population to other parts of the empire and resettled Macedonians in the city. He

94. Waters, *Ancient Persia* 209–211.

95. Waters, *Ancient Persia* 211–212.

brought teachers, architects, and craftsmen to Palestine. The Greek language, art, and philosophy were used to create citizens loyal to their new rulers. Hellenism had been penetrating the Near East for decades before the triumph of Alexander. The coastal cities of northern Palestine (Phoenicia) had been affected by the Hellenistic culture through trade.

Palestine under Seleucid Rule (323–255 BCE)

After the death of Alexander, fighting broke out among the leading generals for control of the empire. For the next two decades, the lands conquered by Alexander witnessed many battles between the generals who succeeded him. Palestine was continuously invaded by armies on the march from Asia Minor or Syria to Egypt. During these years Jerusalem was conquered no less than six times.⁹⁶ Ultimately, the empire was divided into four kingdoms: the **Ptolemaic** Kingdom in Egypt, ruled by Ptolemy I; the **Cassander** Kingdom in Macedonia, ruled by Cassander; the Kingdom of **Lysimachus** (a coalition of Greek cities, including Athens), ruled by Lysimachus; and the **Seleucid** Empire, ruled by Seleucus I Nicator.

The Seleucids inherited a larger portion of Alexander's empire; their lands extended from Anatolia in the west to the borders of India in the east. They held most of the Achaemenid Empire except for Egypt, southern Syria, and parts of Asia Minor. The part of Alexander's empire that the Seleucids controlled was extremely wealthy due to the trade routes that ran through it and the natural resources it was endowed with.

The Seleucids adopted the basis of the Achaemenid system of administration, but they founded new cities and rebuilt some of the old ones under new names. These were managed along the lines of the Greek *polis*, with its assembly of peoples, its council, and its officials appointed annually. Seleucus built **two capitals: Seleucia (now Baghdad) on the Tigris in Mesopotamia, and Antioch, on the Orontes in Syria.** Greek colonies were founded as far east as Bactria (Afghanistan), and the Greek culture spread throughout all of Iran. Greek became the official language, but it did not replace Aramaic, **which had been the official language of the Achaemenid Empire;** both languages were used in official transactions. Greek was the language of the upper classes, and appeared to replace the Aramaic at that level. Hellenization took place; however, it was not forced on the Persians. At the same time, Persianization of some Greek territories took place due to the intermingling and intermarriage of the two peoples.⁹⁷

The vast Seleucid Empire was made up of various Iranians and non-Iranians. As a result, it was extremely difficult for the Seleucids to keep the eastern part of their

96. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 103–104.

97. Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 40.

empire united. By the middle of the third century BCE, the Seleucids had lost control over Bactria and Parthia. Andragoras, the satrap of Parthia, declared his independence in 245 BCE, and Diodotus, satrap of Bactria, declared Bactria's independence in 255 BCE.

Palestine under the Parthian Empire (160 BCE–216 CE)

Shortly after the Bactrian Greeks declared their independence, the Parni tribe, a group of **Scythian Dahae** nomads who lived in the region between the Caspian and Aral Seas under the leadership of Arsaces, defeated the local Seleucid forces and took control of Parthia. About the same time, Arsaces' brother, **Tiridates (Tirdad)**, was able to take control of another region, **Hyrkana (Gorgan)**. A new capital named **Arshak** (now known as **Ashkhabad**, the capital of Turkmenistan) was built for the new kingdom. The new kingdom, which became known as the Arsacid Kingdom or the Parthian Empire, expanded gradually in the second century BCE to include the entirety of Achaemenid Persia.⁹⁸

The ruler who established the Parthian Empire as a great power was **Mithridates (Mehrddad)**, who conquered Media, Babylon, and Seleucia between 160 and 140 BCE. He then built a new capital, **Ctesiphon**, very close to Seleucia, east of the Tigris River (south of what is now Baghdad). He was compared to Cyrus the Great by Iranian historians; hence they gave him the Achaemenid title "King of Kings." During this period, the Parthian Empire extended further east to include the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom.

The Parthian government was a decentralized feudal system in which power was distributed among many lords. The empire was composed of a collection of eighteen semi-autonomous kingdoms. These kingdoms paid tributes and taxes to the center and contributed military forces whenever there was an external war. Although there were always armed men both at the center and the vassal states, there was no central army ready at all times; forces were called up from across the empire in times of war. In their wars, the Parthians depended on light cavalry—mounted archers who were known for their mobility and maneuvering abilities. The early Islamic historians described the Parthians as **Muluk al-Tawa'if**, the "Kings among the Tribes."

Within the empire there were sixty autonomous Greek settlements. The Parthians allowed the different cultures to strive and to work together rather than against one another. In other words, the political structure was built on the principle of unity based on diversity. Mithridates I established a Parthian senate, a council composed of members of the royal family and a group of advisers from different regions of the

98. Katouzian, *The Persians*, 41.

country. Mithridates also created a constitution that laid down the foundation of constitutional monarchy.⁹⁹

Between 140 and 53 BCE, Parthia faced many challenges from the west and north from the Seleucids, the Romans, and the Armenians, as well as nomadic invasions from the east, especially from the Scythians. During this period, several kings ruled the country. Among the most effective of these was **Mithridates II**, who took over the realm in 123 BCE; he was compared to Darius I. **King Orodes II**, who took office around 58 BCE, was very effective; during his reign, Marcus Licinius Crassus, the Roman governor of Syria, marched with a vast force toward Parthia. In 53 BCE, the Iranian general **Sorena** (Suren) broke Crassus' army in the battle of **Carrhae (Haran)**, capturing ten thousand Roman soldiers and killing and wounding twenty thousand more, including Crassus himself.¹⁰⁰

The battle of Carrhae was one of the most humiliating defeats that the Roman army had ever suffered. It was the first time that Roman and Parthian armies had met each other on the battlefield, and it was a perfect demonstration of two different military machines of the ancient world.

The next Roman invasion took place in 37 BCE, when Mark Antony marched against the Parthians with one of the largest armies ever to be assembled. As winter was approaching, Mark Antony decided to end this expedition and to return to Syria. He went back in the spring of 34 BCE; however, this second campaign against Parthia was of minimal value; it only served to save face for Mark Antony. When Octavian came to power in 30 BCE, he followed a policy of diplomacy with the Parthians that enabled him to retrieve the eagle standards of the legions that had been lost at Carrhae. This friendly relationship allowed the Parthians to expand their empire in the east.

War erupted again in 58 BCE during the reign of Nero, ending in a treaty whereby Rome and Parthia agreed to establish an independent Arsacid dynasty in Armenia as a buffer state. The treaty gave the Parthians the right to select future kings of Armenia subject to Roman approval.

The peaceful relationship between Rome and Parthia lasted a relatively long time, until the reign of Trajan, who found a pretext for war when the Parthian emperor, Vologases III, deposed the king of Armenia and appointed a new king without getting Rome's approval. He marched as far as the shore of the Persian Gulf. His war ended in 116 CE, when he got ill. The conflicts continued with subsequent Roman emperors until 216 CE.

The wars between Rome and Parthia make for an engaging story, but like any good story, these wars also offer great lessons to learn from. Neither Rome or Parthia was able to prevail over the other for any length of time, regardless of what devices they used or what strategy they applied. Seeking profit and protecting the interest

99. Katouzian, *The Persians*, 44.

100. Katouzian, *The Persians*, 41–43

of the ruling elites was the motivation for war on both sides; when all attempts by either side to reach a decisive victory failed, they resorted to diplomacy to protect their interests. The interests of ordinary people were never the determining factor in their decision-making. As in most imperial countries, the two ancient superpowers of Rome and Parthia maintained steep social inequality, which led to unrest and instability. “This is why it could be said that for all their power, politics and wealth, it was glaring inequalities in these societies which ultimately destabilized Rome’s and Parthia’s vast empires and hastened their demise.”¹⁰¹

Palestine under Roman Rule

Rome and the Italian peninsula were ruled by the Etruscans, who originated somewhere north of the Black Sea and settled in the northern part of the Italian peninsula. It is believed that the city of Rome gained its independence at the end of the sixth century BCE.

At the beginning, Rome was a society of agriculturists ruled by a hereditary elite of “patrician” families. Rome benefited from its strategic location on the last crossing on the Tiber River before the sea, which allowed the city to control the trade routes. During the early stage of the history of Rome, the city resembled the Greek city-states, and was known as the **Republic**; however, Rome at that time, unlike Athens, was not a democratic republic. The Senate was controlled by elite families who used their political control to enhance their social and economic position at the expense of the peasants. The Senate in this system appointed a consul to be the head of the state.

Rome expanded its control over all of Italy and beyond through military means. The greatest challenge Rome faced in its expansion wars was that of the city of **Carthage**, the powerful Phoenician city in what is now Tunisia, in North Africa. The fight between the two cities, known as the Punic Wars, was a long one. At one point the Carthaginian general Hannibal crossed the Alps from the north and invaded Italy. At the end, in 146 BCE, Rome won the war and destroyed the city of Carthage. Although the peasants (“plebeians”) bore the brunt of the fighting, they did not control the army and did not benefit from the victories; the elites controlled most of the conquered territories. Over time the peasants’ situation worsened, which led to a sort of mutiny and refusal to join the army. This form of struggle between the two classes resulted in the plebeians gaining some seats in the Senate. These were held by their leaders, but the poor masses gained almost nothing.

The wars produced a new source of wealth for the rich through the exploitation of the captives who were enslaved. The big landowners who could buy slaves cheaply used them to cultivate the land rather than employing the landless peasants. The

101. Graham, *Rome and Parthia*, 223–224.

slave population grew massively, and by the first century BCE there were two million slaves, compared with the free population of 3.25 million. Slave labor led to further impoverishment of the free laborers. The poor peasants could not provide their families with the main necessities of life, and many of their children ended up in the slave markets. The resulting class polarization led to a new wave of civil unrest which was much bloodier than the previous one. This period also witnessed several slave revolts, the most significant being the revolt of **Spartacus** in 73 BCE. This was the background against which Julius Caesar marched his army toward Rome in 49 BCE to put an end to the republic era and to establish a dictatorship leading to a new era: that of the **Roman Empire**.¹⁰²

The era of the empire is characterized by the dominance of the emperor over the Senate. The Senate became dependent on the emperors to maintain stability and to control the poor masses. The civil wars over social issues were replaced by civil wars between generals. **Augustus** became the first emperor in 31 BCE. The members of the wealthy class accepted monarchy as the only way to reestablish political stability. Augustus provided the rich the stability that protected their interests, and at the same time presented himself as the friend of the poor by providing them with cheap or even free grain, paid for with a small fraction of the taxes collected from the conquered countries. After Augustus' reign, the rich on several occasions conspired against emperors, and when they succeeded, they selected a new emperor rather than re-establishing the republic.

The prosperity of the empire that has been claimed by historians was the prosperity of the rich in Rome, the other Roman cities, or the rich Roman communities in conquered territories. This prosperity manifested itself in rebuilding the cities on a lavish scale with temples, theaters, stadia and amphitheaters, gymnasias and baths, markets, aqueducts and fountains, and palaces and administrative buildings. All this, however, was achieved at the expense of the colonies, where the Roman administration established a brutal system of oppression. The farmers in the colonies were subjected to an intolerable tax system savagely enforced by Roman soldiers. The emperors relied on a strong professional army, made up mainly of mercenaries. The poor in Rome were pacified by the cheap food provided by the emperors.¹⁰³

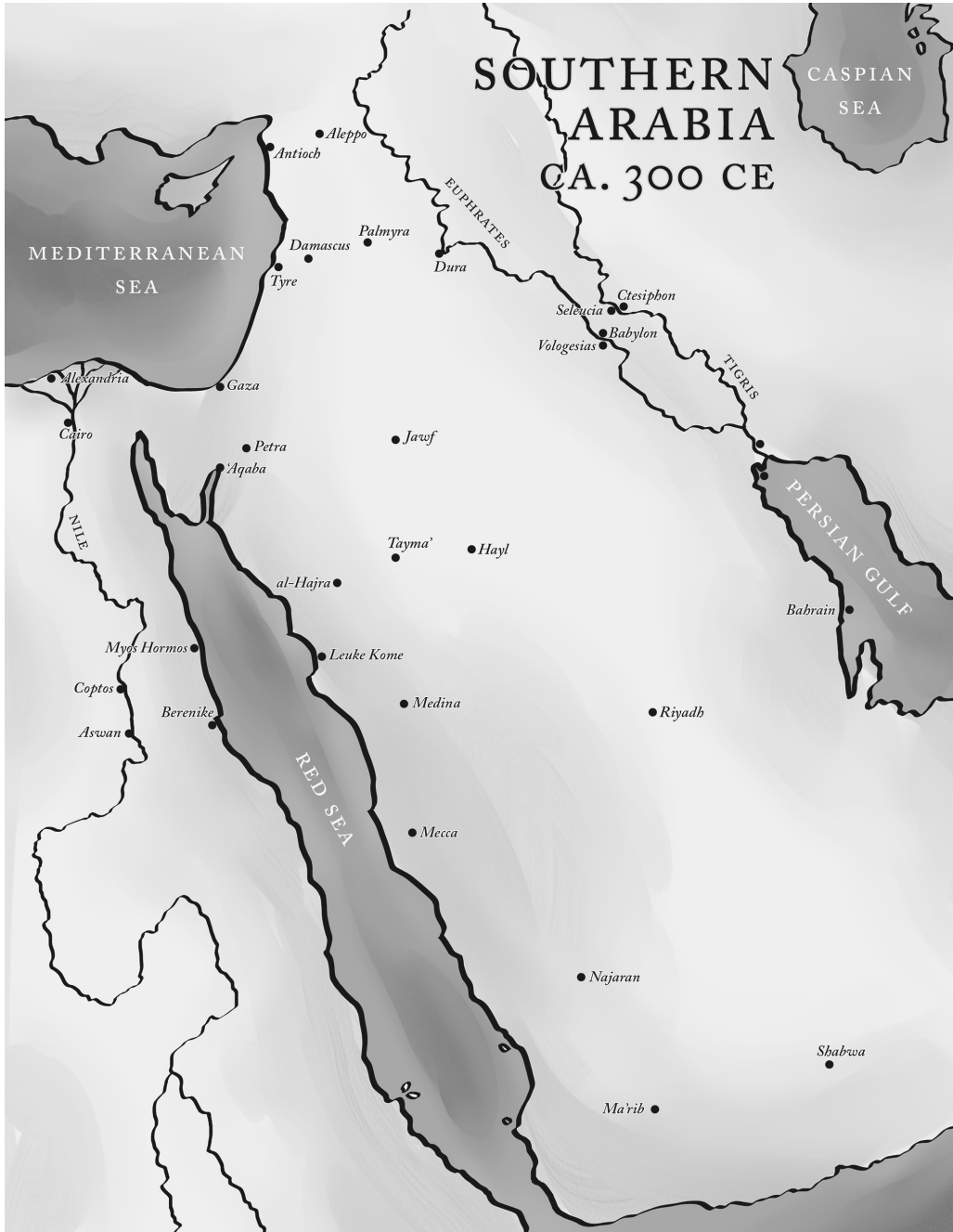
The contribution of the Romans to civilization was limited to constructing buildings for the rich and the administrators, and paving roads for the purpose of moving Roman armies rapidly. The Roman Empire added little to humanity; it was not characterized by innovation in the same way as early Mesopotamia and Egypt or Greece. The Romans were originally a barbarian nation who adopted Hellenistic culture. They became wholehearted Hellenists. They abandoned their crude culture and followed

102. Chris Harman, *A People's History of the World: From the Stone Age to the New Millennium* (London, UK: Verso, 1999), 71–80.

103. Harman, *A People's History of the World*, 71.

the Greek one. However, they continued to be Romans, despite the brilliant Hellenistic literature they produced. They continued to convey themselves as a warlike, powerful nation; their legend of the twin sons of the god of war, Romulus and Remus, remained the symbol of Rome. The conquered nations, **including the Palestinians**, associated the Romans with savage oppression, crucifixion, and gladiatorial combat.¹⁰⁴

104. Hyam Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance*, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1973), 48.



The History of Ancient Arabia

Editor's note: This account of Arabian history is important to include for context of the development of Islam. It forms another part of the history of the Middle East that is unconnected to religion. An understanding of the context in which Islam developed and its relation to the civilizations of the Levant and the Mediterranean is necessary to fully understand part II of Dr. Kanaan's history.

The land of Arabia consists of the Arabian Peninsula together with its northern extension, the Syrian Desert. It amounts to almost two and a half million square kilometers, slightly larger than India or Europe. It is mostly composed of a block of ancient rocks, referred to as the Arabian shield, with an accumulation of younger sedimentary rocks, mainly in the eastern part. Its climate is characterized by very long, very hot summers, receiving on average less than twenty centimeters of rainfall, except for the southwest part (modern Yemen), which is blessed by monsoon rains.

Arabia is divided into four principal geographical regions:

- The western highlands, which run the length of the Red Sea and reach as high as 3,600 meters in the south.
- The vast sandy and stony interior, **the Rub'-al-Khali** (Empty Quarter) in the south, the **Nafud** and **Dahna** deserts in the center, and the **Hisma**, **Hamad**, and **Syrian deserts** in the north.
- The southwest, which is characterized by diversified geography, including high mountains, beautiful coastal plains, and immense valleys.
- The eastern coastlands of the Persian-Arab Gulf, characterized by a harsh, hot, and humid climate.

Historically, Greater Syria covered a far larger area than present-day Syria. **It included the territory of modern Lebanon, the territory of Turkey south of the Taurus Mountains (the plains of Urfa and Mardin in northern Mesopotamia), part of modern Iraq (Al-Jazeera, between the Euphrates and the Tigris), Palestine, and the modern part of Jordan (the Decapolis with the cities of Philadelphia, Gerasa, Pella, Gadara, Dion, and Raphana).** This vast area, bordered by the Taurus, the Mediterranean, the Tigris, and the Arabian desert, can be divided into a sequence of landscapes. Moving from west to east, leaving the Mediterranean behind, the average annual rainfall declines. The moist maritime climate evolves gradually into a dry continental one which result in gradual changes in the soil and water resources. Distance from the sea is not the only factor which determines the changes in the average annual rainfall; other factors, especially topography, play a role. The mountain ranges in the Levant which extend in a north-south direction (their height ranges from 1,300 to 3,000 meters) act as barriers for the moist air coming from the sea and moving eastward. These barriers created four distinct landscapes: The **first** is the Mediterranean coastal lowland with the mountain massifs behind it. The **second** is the arable fields of the old farmland directly behind the mountains, with precipitation of more than forty centimeters per year. The **third** is the more recent farming area on the edge of the steppe, with usually less than forty centimeters of annual precipitation. The **fourth** is the arid steppe and the desert with usually less than twenty-five centimeters of precipitation.¹⁰⁵

The division of the landscape into four parallel regions is based on the average annual rainfall. If we consider other factors, such as the topography of the land, then Greater Syria can be divided into seven large landscapes: The Mediterranean west; the farmland of the north Syrian plateau around the big cities of Aleppo, Hama, and Homs, with trees and crop culture; the mountain regions and irrigation oases of central Syria around Damascus; the volcanic highlands of Hauran in southern Syria, with its fertile basalt soil; the vast plains of northeastern Syria; the arid steppes of the east and southeast, which are interrupted by the Euphrates and its tributaries, the Nahr al-Balih and Nahr al-Khabur; and the desert steppes of the eastern part of Syria, where Palmyra is located. This last is the driest of the seven large landscapes.¹⁰⁶

The Euphrates separates the flat **al-Jazeera**, the upper Mesopotamian “island” between the Tigris and the Euphrates, from the desert steppe plateau of the Shamiya, which is known as the **Badiya of Bilad al-Sham**. This is divided into two unequal halves by the massif of the Palmyra Chains and the chalky heights of inner Syria, which run from southwest to northeast. To the north of the mountain chains lies pastoral land, and to the south lies a vast plain. In the midst of the desert steppes, at the foot of the Palmyra Chains, lies the oasis of Tadmur, at 450 meters above sea level

105. Michael Sommer, *Palmyra: A History* (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), 15.

106. Sommer, *Palmyra*, 16.

on the southern edge of the Cretaceous heights. Southwest of the oasis, the Palmyra ranges rise to the west of Damascus and meet the **Qalamun Mountains**. The oasis is located in a basin surrounded by the mountain massifs in the west and north and by the slightly high plateau in the south and east. The center of the basin forms a plain of about 150 square kilometers; the foundation is made of impermeable salt-enriched clay. This is why the rainwater collects at the deepest point, forming several salty lakes, the largest being **Lake Sebha el-Muh**, located south of Palmyra.¹⁰⁷

Under the influence of the Mediterranean climate, there are two distinct seasons: **a hot and very dry summer** with day temperatures of thirty-five to forty degrees Celsius, but much cooler nights of fifteen to twenty degrees Celsius, and **a cooler and moister winter**. Winter rainfall varies from year to year. If the winter has abundant precipitation, then the steppe vegetation will grow richer. However, neither now nor in antiquity has agriculture alone been sufficient to sustain the inhabitants of the area. Usually, annual precipitation below twenty centimeters is too low for rainfed farming to be of great value.

The Bronze Age (3200–1300 BCE)

Eastern Arabia

During the Bronze Age (3200–1300 BCE) the Middle East was dominated by two great centers of power, Mesopotamia and Egypt. The eastern shores of Arabia and the islands lying close by benefited from their proximity to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and Iran. **Dilmun** (the area including modern Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the adjacent coast of Saudi Arabia) was an important trade station; its ships were bringing timber from foreign lands to Mesopotamia, and their mines provided copper to the Akkadian Empire. Numerous excavations have shown that East Arabia enjoyed great economic wealth in the period from 2599 to 1750 BCE. The creation myth of **Enki and Ninhursag** in Mesopotamian literature links Dilmun to the origin of the world: In this region, the gods designated Ziusudra, the Sumerian Noah, to live for eternity after the flood had destroyed mankind.¹⁰⁸

The economy of East Arabia declined after 1750 BCE as a result of several factors, including the collapse of Hammurabi's kingdom and the severe decline of the civilization of the Indus Valley. In addition, Cyprus and Anatolia became the new sources of copper for the Middle East.

107. Sommer, *Palmyra*, 17.

108. Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London, UK: Routledge, 2001), 13.

Northern and Central Arabia

In the third millennium BCE, Syria did not play a major political role in the Middle East. It was on the periphery of two empires: the **Empire of Akkad** (2334–2154 BCE) and the **Egyptian Old Kingdom** (2551–2155 BCE). Compared to the two primary powers, Babylonia and Egypt, Syria's population and settlement density were far lower, and its agricultural production was less intensive. In the second millennium, a third power, **the Hittites** (from Anatolia—now Turkey), who were influential from 1600–1180 BCE, began efforts to establish an empire. In spite of its lack of political and military power, Syria had a critical economic position: it was an important source of stone and timber, raw materials which Mesopotamia and Egypt needed to build their temples and palaces. In addition, Syria was a hub for the trade in metal ores coming from Asia Minor and from the island of Cyprus.¹⁰⁹

As detailed earlier in this book, at the end of the Bronze Age and around 1200 BCE, prolonged drought and other factors led to a serious economic and political collapse affecting the entire Middle East, especially the Aegean region, Anatolia, and the northern Levant, resulting in the collapse of Mediterranean trade and an interruption in the flow of raw materials to Egypt and Mesopotamia. The narrow coastal strip of the Levant was resilient, however, and cities such as **Arados (Arwad)**, **Byblos**, **Sidon**, **Tyre**, **Dion (al-Husn)**, **Ashkelon**, and **Gaza** recovered quickly and enjoyed great prosperity. The **Phoenicians**, who began their sea trade adventures and exploration in about 1300 BCE, reached the peak of their trading about 1000 BCE. The Phoenician merchants taught the entire Mediterranean, especially the Greeks, about navigation and colonization, as well as literature, religion, and art.

The Greeks further expanded geographical knowledge and navigation, creating unlimited possibilities to expand the sea trade routes. At the end of the sixth century BCE, expensive goods such as pearls, jewels, ivory, spices, and silk were being transported from the west coast of the Indian subcontinent to the Mediterranean region by sea. This method of transportation became possible as a result of the advancement of geographical knowledge concerning the monsoon winds. In the late third century BCE, Greek mathematician **Eratosthenes of Cyrene** (modern-day Shahat in Libya) not only proved the spherical shape of Earth, but also calculated its circumference, and was able to create a new world map on a mathematical basis. Such achievements enabled sailors and merchants to cross the Indian Ocean. Toward the end of the second century BCE, the sea route became the preferred mode of transportation of goods from the East. Ships could sail from the Red Sea around the Arabian Peninsula and then straight on to India in just two months, in the late summer, before the monsoon. They could return in December, when the monsoon blew from the east.¹¹⁰ This trade enriched all of northern Arabia.

109. Sommer, *Palmyra*, 30.

110. Sommer, *Palmyra*, 40–41.

The Iron Age (1300–330 BCE)

Eastern Arabia

The spread of iron at the expense of bronze and the emergence of consonantal alphabets, which competed with the cumbersome writing systems of Egypt (hieroglyphics) and Mesopotamia (the cuneiform invented by the Sumerians), both had a great effect on the political and economic power in the Middle East. Iron, unlike copper, was abundant everywhere on the globe, and so mining was not controlled by ruling elites. And the consonantal alphabets did not require lengthy training, so literacy became less dependent on the state. The new scripts greatly benefited merchants, who could make deals and contracts with greater ease. As detailed earlier in this book, during the Iron Age, Egypt started to lose its strong grip over Syria-Palestine, which led to the emergence of several independent city-states in the region. The tenth century BCE witnessed the rise of the Aramaean city-state of Damascus, as well as the state of Israel in the central hills of Palestine, the coastal Phoenician cities in the north, and the Philistines in the south.

During this period, Dilmun (the area including modern Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the adjacent coast of Saudi Arabia) lost the independence and prosperity that it had enjoyed when the Sumerians were the dominant power in the region, and became nothing but a distant province of whatever power ruled Mesopotamia. The first such rulers were the **Kassites**, who held southern Mesopotamia between 1595 and 1158 BCE. The **Assyrians**, who defeated the Kassites, became the new rulers of Dilmun. The next rulers were the **Babylonians**, who defeated the Assyrians and captured their capital, Nineveh, in 609 BCE. Babylonian records refer to Dilmun as a trade station, and to the administrator of Dilmun as the safeguard of the trade between East Arabia and Babylonia. On the island of **Ikaros** (modern **Failaka**, off the coast of Kuwait) a large slab of stone has been discovered engraved with the words “palace of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.” The rule of the **Persians** lasted for two centuries (550–334 BCE). Their rule was remembered by their subjects as a time of tolerance and peace.¹¹¹

Southern Arabia

The mountainous terrain of South Arabia prevented the formation of a single political entity during the Iron Age. Political power was fragmented among several groups. The **Sabaeans** were the most influential; their territory was initially limited to Ma'rib, but over time it expanded to include the territories of the tribes of Kaminahu, Nashshan, and Awsan. This union took place in the tenth century BCE.

111. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 15–19.

Ma'rib, the capital of the Sabaeans, was the meeting place of the trade routes connecting the frankincense lands with the Mediterranean ports. The city lay some 1,200 meters above the sea, protected by three citadels, and was the home of the temple of the god **Almaqah**. The Sabaeans had mastered the techniques of quarrying large blocks of stone. Their skilled masons, using simple chisels, shaped and smoothed the stones, which helped the architects to create grand and beautiful monuments. The great dam of Ma'rib (**Sadd Ma'rib**), and the magnificent temples at Ma'rib and other locations, reveal the ingenuity and advanced technical accomplishments of these builders. The 750-meter-long dam was a miracle of engineering. Its curved barrage wall, stretching across the floodbed of **Wadi Dhana**, held back the water that accumulated during the rainy season. Its gates opened into raised canals connected with an intricate network of irrigation channels that watered a vast area of around seventy-two square kilometers. The dam produced a green revolution that transformed the arid heartland of the Sabaean kingdom into richly productive agricultural land. As agriculture was no longer dependent on the amount of rainfall, it became the main source of wealth and prosperity. The great majority of the population was involved in agriculture; only a few were involved in aromatics.¹¹²

The Sabaeans were the early operators in the trade of frankincense and myrrh, important aromatic substances used by numerous cultures in ritual and medicinal contexts. Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions indicate the establishment of a commercial relationship between these two powers and the Sabaeans going back to the tenth century BCE. In the sixth century BCE, the Sabaeans controlled most of the incense-producing lands. After 400 BCE, Sabaean power declined as other tribes established their own independent kingdoms. Although myrrh grew over a wide area of southern Arabia, the Hadhramaut area was the only source of frankincense in all Arabia from the fourth to first centuries BCE.

Northern and Central Arabia

During the Iron Age, Assyria was the most prominent power in the region. The Assyrians carried out multiple military campaigns against the city-states of Syria-Palestine between the tenth and eighth centuries BCE. An Assyrian inscription dated 853 BCE described the campaign of the Assyrian king **Shalmaneser III**, against a coalition of the Syrian and Palestinian leaders. This inscription mentions the participation of the "**Gindibu Arabs**" in this coalition with a thousand camels. The records of the Assyrian king **Tiglath-Pileser III** indicate that the northern Arabian tribes were playing a major role in the trade between South Arabia and the Mediterranean.¹¹³

112. Jane Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans* (London, UK; I.B. Tauris, 2001), 22.

113. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 59–60.

Other inscriptions indicate that **Sargon II of Neo-Assyria** (721–705 BCE) had integrated the nomad Arabs into his border security system; they provided a reserve of military manpower which played an important role in maintaining peace and security. The Persian kings followed the same policy of seeking help from the Arab tribes in their military campaigns. In the seventh century BCE, **Sennacherib** (704–681 BCE), and **Assurbanipal** (668–627 BCE) carried out punitive raids against the **Qedarite Arabs**. **Nabonidus**, the Babylonian king (552–543 BCE) carried out several military expeditions against the northern Arabian oasis towns of Tayma, Dedan, Fadak, Khaybar, Yadi, and Yathrib.¹¹⁴

The Greco-Roman / Parthian Period (330 BCE–240 CE)

Eastern Arabia

When **Alexander, the Macedonian king**, crossed the Hellespont in 334 BCE with a large force of fifty thousand soldiers, he managed to defeat the Persians and to rule a vast empire that extended east to include India. After Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 BCE, his generals were engaged in wars among themselves, which ended in 281 BCE with the establishment of three dynasties: the **Antigonid** dynasty in Macedonia, the **Seleucids** in Asia Minor and the Middle East, and the **Ptolomies** in Egypt.

Although Alexander died before he was able to extend his rule into Arabia, he did dispatch three intelligence-gathering missions which focused on the Gulf region. Alexander intended to colonize the coast of the Gulf and the adjacent islands, as he thought that this region would become as prosperous as Phoenicia. His successors, the Seleucids, also were interested in Eastern Arabia. They stationed a garrison on the island of **Ikaros**. Alexander and his successors were interested in the trade of luxury products such as Arabian aromatics and goods from India. During this period, East Arabia enjoyed economic wealth as a result of an increase in trade through the Gulf and the contacts with South Arabia and the Nabataeans. Greek historians reported the presence of a prosperous trade station, **Gerrha** (an ancient city in modern-day Bahrain), which was inhabited by Chaldaeans exiled from Babylon. According to these records, the Gerrhaeans, who gathered frankincense and all the other sweet-smelling spices that Arabia produces, exported these products by ships anchored at the mouth of the Euphrates and then sent them by land to Egypt and Syria.¹¹⁵

Following the Seleucids' victory over the Ptolomies in 200 BCE, the Gerrhaeans began trading with the Nabataeans. According to Pliny, the Arabs of Gerrha used

114. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 61–62.

115. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 23–25.

to go to Gabba, a journey of twenty days, and then to Syria-Palestine; as well as to **Characene** (in southern Babylonia; also called Meshan—now Kuwait) and the Parthian kingdoms.¹¹⁶

The early part of the second century BCE witnessed the decline of the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucids were squeezed between the Parthians from northeast Iran and the Romans from the West. By 140 BCE the Parthians were able to control Babylonia, and in 63 BCE the Romans invaded Syria and ousted the Seleucids. As the Seleucids' power declined, so did Gerrha's fortunes.

In the first century CE, several Arab tribes settled in northeast Arabia. The Tanukh, an Arab tribal confederation, left Tihama and Najd and settled in the north at the border between Arabia and Mesopotamia. The tribes of Abd al-Qays and Banu Ulays also emigrated to northeast Arabia. These movements were attributed to the breaching of the Ma'rib dam in Yemen around 145 BCE.¹¹⁷

Southern Arabia

Greco-Roman sources describe the political scene of South Arabia during this period as being dominated by four major peoples: the **Minaeans**, whose capital city was **Qarnaw (Karna)**; the **Sabaeans**, whose capital was **Ma'rib**; the **Qatabanians**, whose capital was **Timna**; and the **Hadramites**, whose capital was **Shabwa**. These capital cities were all located on the fringes of **the desert of Sayhad** (modern **Ramlat al-Sab'atayn**), along the land trade route that was utilized by the caravans carrying aromatics to Egypt, Gaza, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Tyre.¹¹⁸

From the early fourth century BCE, the **Minaeans** established themselves as a thriving economic power. Unlike the other three major kingdoms, they did not have great political ambitions; their rulers fought no wars and minted no coins, but instead concentrated on commerce. Though their territory was small, they traded far and wide.¹¹⁹ They were able to control the trade route from their own territory through **Yathrib**, and as far as the oasis of **Dedan**, where they had a trading colony. Minaean inscriptions in Wadi Rum, the Jawf oasis, Gaza, Egypt, and the Aegean island of Delos indicate that Minaean merchants traveled all the way to these regions. However, while some Minaean traders operated further than Dedan, others utilized Nabataean caravans to carry their loads of frankincense and myrrh to their final destinations in Palestine, Egypt, and other parts of the Mediterranean.¹²⁰

116. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 25.

117. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 26.

118. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 40–41.

119. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 41.

120. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom*, 23–26.

In 26 BCE, the Roman emperor **Augustus**, who defeated Cleopatra, dispatched the commander **Aelius Gallus** to South Arabia, aiming at controlling the trade coming from India to the Middle East through South Arabia. His army, which was composed of two Roman legions plus auxiliary troops, a thousand Nabataean camel riders, and five hundred Judaeen archers, failed to capture Ma'rib, and was forced to retreat after only one week of a siege of the city, due to the illness and exhaustion of his soldiers.¹²¹ This failure prompted the Romans to establish a maritime route linking the Mediterranean world to Arabia and India. Since the time of Alexander, frequent attempts had been made to sail from Egypt to India, with mixed success. This time, according to the historian Strabo, Gallus was successful.

The establishment of the maritime link was a turning point in the history of South Arabia. It meant that the future of South Arabia lay in ports, not in caravan cities. Hadramaut, a kingdom in parts of what is now eastern Yemen, western Oman, and southern Arabia, realized this and established harbors at **Qana** (next to modern **Bir Ali**) and **Samhar** (modern **Khor Rori** in south Oman). The imports were loaded on boats going to Egypt, along with all the frankincense which was brought to Qana from the interior by camel. These events severely weakened the kingdom of Saba and provoked a major dynastic change.¹²² Around the same time, Arabian colonists from South Arabia established a settlement in Ethiopia, where they laid the foundation of the Abyssinian kingdom and civilization and helped shape Ethiopian culture.¹²³

By the mid-first century CE, a new kingdom had appeared on the scene of South Arabia: the **Kingdom of Himyar**. The capital of this new kingdom was **Zafar**, located in the fertile southern highlands. Another important city of this kingdom was the port of **Muza** (modern **Mocha**) at the northern end of the straits of **Bab al-Mandab**, where Arabia almost touches Africa. The Sabaeen kingdom was obliged to seek a coalition with Himyar, forming the united monarchy of **Saba and Dhu Raydan**.¹²⁴

In the second century CE, the fortunes of the Sabaeans revived, and they were able to resist the domination of the Himyarites. During this period, which lasted about a century and a half, the temple of Almaqah at Ma'rib once again became an important religious center. A new city, **San'a**, was founded and became a second capital, hosting the magnificent **palace of Ghumdan**. The period of Sabaeen prosperity ended in the third century CE, when the kingdom lost its independence. The Minaean and the Qataban dynasties also met the same fate. Only two powers were left in South Arabia—**Himyar and Hadramaut**—but finally, at the end of the third

121. Ann C. Gunter, ed., *Caravan Kingdoms: Yemen and the Ancient Incense Trade* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Museum, 2005), 11.

122. Gunter, *Caravan Kingdoms*, 11.

123. Philip K. Hitti, *The History of the Arabs* (London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 1937; revised tenth edition 2002), 56.

124. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 47.

century CE, Himyar conquered Hadramaut and became the only dominant power in the region. **King Shammar Yuhar'ish** of Himyar adopted the title of “**King of Saba and of Dhu Raydan and Hadramaut and Yamanat,**” reflecting the fact that the entirety of South Arabia had become a unified state.¹²⁵

The Himyarites monopolized trade between India, East Africa, and the Middle East. The products of these regions were carried by boats to the ports of South Arabia and then were carried by camel northward from Ma'rib through Mecca to Syria and Egypt. The Himyarites also were involved in the maritime route up the Red Sea to the canal connecting with one of the eastern arms of the Nile or through the southern part of the Red Sea to **Wadi al-Hamamat** (a major mining region east of the Nile Valley) and then across the Egyptian desert to **Thebes** and **Memphis**. This monopoly was challenged by the Byzantines, who started to adventure into the sea routes to obtain Indian and East African products directly. The entry of Roman shipping into the Indian Ocean contributed to the breakup of the Arabian monopoly and would be an important cause of the decline of South Arabian trade.¹²⁶

Northern Arabia

The writings of the Greek historians Strabo and Pliny are the main sources of the history of the Arabs of the north. They divided Arabia into **Felix Arabia** (the Arabian Peninsula) and **Deserta Arabia** (the Syrian Desert). The inscriptions of the Arab tribes themselves also provided significant historical records which were written either in north Arabian dialect or the Aramaic alphabet. In the **deserts of Harra and Hisma**, some twenty thousand graffiti written in a north Arabian dialect were found. The oases most frequently mentioned are **Tayma, Dedan, Lihyan, and Duma**. Dedan was a trading station connected with the trade caravans originating from South Arabia, and **Lihyan** was involved in trade between the Persian/Arab Gulf and Egypt. **Duma (Dumat al-Jandal** or modern **al-Jawf**), which lies at the southern end of **Wadi Sirhan**, was the seat of the confederation of **Qedar**.

The tribal confederation of northwest Arabia was known as the **Thamud**. They were mentioned in records of **Sargon II of Assyria (721–705 BCE)** as being defeated by him; the survivors settled in Samaria. The Greek and Roman records mention some groups of the Thamud enrolling in the Roman army. The Thamud is mentioned in the Quran as being destroyed by an earthquake for having rejected the Prophet Salih.

125. Hoyland, *Arabia and The Arabs*, 46–47.

126. Hitti, *The History of The Arabs*, 58–60.

The Byzantine / Sassanian Period (240–630 CE)

The Sassanians came to power in Iran in 224 CE, after they defeated the Parthians, and retained their dominance until the mid-seventh century CE. Their territory included modern-day Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, eastern Syria and Turkey, part of the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf. As soon as **Ardashir**, the first Sassanian ruler, established his control over Persia, he marched to Oman, Bahrain, and Yamama. The Sassanians maintained complete control of the coastal cities in order to secure traffic through the Gulf, and indirect control of the interior through alliances with the Arab tribes who occupied the mountains and the deserts. Historical records described a military campaign carried out by **Shapur II** (309–379 CE) against the tribes of Tamim, Bakr ibn Wa'il, Abd al-Qays, and Yamama, who raided southern Iran. During the reign of **Khosro I** (531–579 CE), the Sassanians tightened their grip on East Arabia and established direct control over this region.¹²⁷

Southern Arabia

The kings of Himyar, the new masters of all South Arabia, extended their influence over the Arab tribes in the north. An inscription dated to the year 470 CE enumerates several military campaigns carried out around 360 CE—against **Yarbin** in east Arabia, **Jaww** (modern **Yamama**) in northeast Arabia, and **Kharj** in central Arabia, clashing with the tribes of **Murad**, **Iyad**, **Ma'add**, and **Abd al-Qays**. Another inscription describes an expedition of **Abikarib As'ad** in the north, during which he placed **Hujr al-Kindi** over the tribe of Ma'add. Around the same time Byzantium tried to establish relationships with the Arab tribes of the north, such as the Kinda and the Ma'add. The Himyar's client-kings in the north played an important role in protecting the trade routes of South Arabia with east Arabia and Iraq. The chiefs of Kinda had their base at **Qaryat al-Faw**, 280 kilometers northeast of Najran. The tribes of Qahtan and Madhhij were also around the same route.¹²⁸

Around 300 CE, **King Shammar of Himyar** established diplomatic relationships with Persia, Byzantium, and Ethiopia. Shammar sent an envoy to al-Azd, and from there proceeded to Ctesiphon and Seleucia, the two royal cities of Persia. The Byzantine emperor Constantius (337–361 CE) sent ambassadors accompanied by the missionary **Theophilus** to the king of Himyar, seeking permission to build churches in his kingdom. Theophilus succeeded in building one church at Adan (Aden) and two churches in Najran.¹²⁹

127. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 27–32.

128. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 49–50.

129. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 50–51.

The relationship between Himyar and both Byzantium and Ethiopia was not a friendly one, being characterized by hostility and wars. Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) invaded South Arabia in 340 CE and occupied the country until 378 CE. This was not the first time Abyssinia attacked Yemen; it happened twice in the second and third centuries, enabling Abyssinia to establish temporary authority over parts of South Arabia.¹³⁰

Judaism was introduced to North Arabia following the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus of Rome in 70 CE. Most of the Jews of Arabia were Judaized Arabs (converts) rather than exiled Jews from Palestine. They carried Arab names and maintained Arabian culture. Judaism became widespread in South Arabia after 300 CE. Serious confrontations between the South Arabian converts of the two monotheistic religions, Christianity and Judaism, took place in the early sixth century CE when a priest named **Azkir** was executed for active proselytization in Najran. Another incident took place shortly afterward, when Roman merchants were executed as they were crossing the lands of the Himyarites to India. **Emperor Justin** asked the **Negus of Abyssinia** to invade Yemen. The Negus sent seventy thousand men across the Red Sea in 523 CE under the command of **Abraha**.

The Abyssinians, who ruled over South Arabia for fifty years between 525 and 575 CE, built an impressive Christian shrine in San'a in order to draw the Arab masses away from al-Ka'bah, the sacred house of Mecca. Their motivation was more economic than religious; besides hosting the sacred sanctuary, Mecca was the commercial center of Arabia. Caravans traveling between South Arabia and Syria provided the Meccans with great wealth. Having failed to sway the Arabs with their shrine, the Abyssinians marched north toward Mecca with a large army in order to destroy the Ka'bah. This expedition took place in 570 CE, the year Prophet Muhammad was born. The Abyssinian army was destroyed by smallpox, called "**the small pebbles**" in the Quran.¹³¹ The national movement to free Yemen from Abyssinian rule was led by **Sayf ibn dhi-Yazan**, a descendent of the old Himyar royal line, who asked for help from **Kisra Anusharwan**, the Sassanid emperor. In 575 CE, Persian forces freed Yemen from the hated African rule.¹³²

In the year 542–543 CE, during the reign of the Abyssinians, a serious event was reported: the final breaching of the dam of Ma'rib, which resulted in a great flood. This breach in the time of the Abyssinians had been preceded by another in 450 CE, as well as smaller breaches prior to the Common Era, but the dam had always been repaired. This catastrophe is mentioned in the Arab history records as being connected with the migration of the **Banu Ghassan to the Hawran region in Syria, and**

130. Hitti *The History of the Arabs*, 60.

131. Hitti *The History of the Arabs*, 64.

132. Hitti *The History of the Arabs*, 64–66.

the migration of the Banu Lakhm to the Hira region. Arab historians attribute the decline of South Arabian trade to the bursting of the dam. But as mentioned above, the success of the Byzantines in breaking up the South Arabian monopoly on trade was also a major factor in the economic decline of Yemen.¹³³

The Migration of Arab Tribes from Yemen

The Sabaeans dominated South Arabia for most of the first millennium between the eighth and the first centuries BCE. Their most impressive achievement was the construction of the great dam of Ma'rib. Sabaean control of the trade between China, India, and East Africa on one side and the Near East on the other brought even greater wealth and prosperity. This magnificent period of their history came to an end in the first century BCE when Rome broke their monopoly on trade.

According to the Arab historians, the **Kahlan tribes** who were overpowered by Himyar moved out of the highlands toward the desert region around Ma'rib. In the fifth century CE, after the rupture of the dam, the Kahlan tribes emigrated northward through Arabia, branching into five main groups—**Azd, Hamadan, Lakhm, Tayy, and Kinda**—and settled in different locations in central, eastern, and northern Arabia. Some of these tribes moved further north and settled in Mesopotamia and Syria.¹³⁴

The **Azd** tribe branched into four groups, each led by one of the sons of **Amr bin Muzaqiba**, the chief of the tribe. **Imran bin Amr** and the bulk of the tribe moved east and settled in **Oman** and southern Persia (**Karman and Shiraz**). Some members of this branch moved back from Oman into Yemen; others continued their migration further west all the way to **Tihama** on the Red Sea and became known after Islam as **Azd Oman**. **Jafna bin Amr** and his family moved west, stopping first in Najran, then moving again north and spending some time in Hijaz. They then moved further north and finally settled in Syria, where they became known as the **Ghassanids**. **Thalabah Bin Amr** moved to Hijaz and settled in **Yathrib**. Of his seed are the tribes of **Aws and Khazraj**. **Haritha bin Amr** led a branch of Azd to Hijaz to the region of **Mar al-Zahran** and later settled in **Mecca**. This tribe is known as the **Khuza'a**.

The **Hamadan** branched into several groups; some remained in Ma'rib, while others moved to Hadramaut. The **Lakhm** moved northward and settled in southern and western Mesopotamia, Rafah, Golan, Hauran, and northern Egypt. The **Tayy** branch migrated to the northern Arabian mountain ranges of **Jabal Aja** and **Jabal Salma**, which collectively became known as **Jabal Tayy**. In the late sixth century CE,

133. Hitti *The History of the Arabs*, 64–65.

134. Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh, Maktaba Dar-Us-Salam, 2008), 22.

a branch migrated to Syria and became allied with the Ghassanids. The **Kinda** settled in central Arabia in the **Najd** area; their capital was **Qaryat al-Faw**.

The Arab tribes who migrated from South Arabia and settled in different locations of the Arab Peninsula are known as the Qahtanian Arabs. The Arab tribes who originated in the central regions of the Arabian Peninsula (Hijaz and Nejd), are called the **Adnanians**; among them are the **Hawazin**, the **Ghatafan**, the **Thaqif**, and the **Quraysh**.¹³⁵

The Arab Tribes in Greater Syria and Mesopotamia

Around the fringes of the Syrian Desert are several Arab groups mentioned by Greco-Roman writers: the **Idumaeans** of southern Palestine, the **Itureans** around Mount Lebanon, the **Emesenes** of the Orontes Valley, the **Abgarids** of **Edessa**. The most prominent Arab groups who became key players in Middle East political affairs were the **Nabataeans** and the **Palmyrenes**. They drew their strength mainly from commerce; they were involved in the trade routes of the region, controlling to a great degree the flow of products coming from the south toward Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia; they also played a significant role in the trade routes of the East. The **Ghassanids** and the **Lakhmids**, who immigrated from South Arabia and settled in Syria and Iraq, played a major role in the wars between Rome and Persia.

Arab civilization had a long history in the Near East and the Mediterranean. The Arabs had centuries of presence as a distinctive identity and culture in Greater Syria and Mesopotamia before Islam. The Arabs of pre-Islam had a profound effect on Rome, as the Arab Islamic civilization later did on the rest of the world. Rome's early client-states—Emesa, Chalcis, Nabataea, Palmyra, Edessa, the Lakhm, the Tanukh, the Salih (in Hijaz/al-Hijr), and the Ghassan—are an essential part of this history.

Emesa (Homs)

The Emesenes settled in a large area of the **Orontes Valley** (in Iraq near the al-Asi River). This area extends south toward **Yabrud** near Damascus and into the **Baq'a Valley** as far as Heliopolis (modern **Baalbek**), and north toward the central Orontes Basin (the **Ghab**) around **Apamaea**. It extends west toward the Mediterranean around the city of **Antaradus** (modern **Tartus**), and east into the desert as far as **Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi**. The kingdom of **Emesa** comprised the Homs Basin of the middle Orontes region, which besides Emesa included the ancient towns of **Lodicaea** and **Libanum** (modern **Tel Nebi Mend**) to the south, and **Arethusa (Al-Rastan)**.

135. Meraj Mohiuddin, *Revelation: The Story of Muhammad, Peace and Blessings Be upon Him* (Scottsdale, AZ: Whiteboard Press, 2015), 43–46, 68–70.

The Emesenes were a nomadic Arab tribe who emerged in the first century BCE. The first mention of this tribe was during the Seleucid period in the mid-second century BCE, when the upstart Seleucid ruler **Alexander Balas** entrusted his son to the care of the sheikh of the Emesene tribe. When Pompey incorporated the Seleucid state into the Roman Empire in 64 BCE, the Emesenes became vassals to the Romans. Their capital was the town of Arethusa, located on the Orontes north of Emesa. Being the first client-state of Rome on the desert fringes, this new kingdom was assigned the mission of controlling the desert tribes and protecting the trade routes. Having such an important role in trade was of great advantage to the Emesenes; managing the trade caravans was far more profitable than raiding them. As they became wealthier, they transformed their tribal nomadic life into a fully sedentary community and were able to build a new capital that would carry their name, Emesa. By the fourth century CE, the city of Emesa was at the same level as well-established older cities like Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, and Damascus.¹³⁶

Emesa, like the other client-kingdoms of Rome, participated in Rome's wars by sending military forces to the battlefields. Emesa lost its independence and became incorporated directly into the empire about 75 CE. After this, the scions of the Emesene dynasty no longer ruled as kings, but remained as hereditary high priests of the temple of the Emesene **sun god**, "**Baal** of the Emesenes."¹³⁷

The principality of **Chalcis** in the Baq'a Valley has been closely associated with Emesa. Chalcis is located at the modern town of **Anjar**, to the south of **Baalbek**. Inscriptions at both Baalbek and Palmyra indicate very close relations between Emesa and Palmyra during the early first century CE.

Edessa

The western boundaries of the kingdom of Edessa extended to Mambij, west of the Euphrates, while its eastern boundaries extended east as far as the mountains of Iranian Azerbaijan. Its capital, the city of **Edessa**, was located at the point where the Anatolian foothills meet the plains of what is known as **Al-Jazeera** (now known as **Urfa**, in southeastern Turkey). **Harran**, its rival city, was located in the plains just south of Edessa. The city of **Nisibis**, which was part of the kingdom, was located to the southeast of Edessa. These were the most important cities east of the Euphrates on the ancient road linking Syria and Mesopotamia. They were closely linked with Palmyra in the west and with Ur in southeast Mesopotamia.

Edessa was one of several military colonies founded by the Seleucids in 303 BCE. With the decline of the Seleucids in the second century, it became the seat of an Arab dynasty allied with the Parthians around 132 BCE. These people were referred to as

136. Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 34.

137. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 37.

the **Abgarids** (the name Abgar was probably a title rather than the name of a king). Edessa's independence ended when Roman emperor Trajan annexed the kingdom. The last king was **Abgar X**, who rebelled against Rome and was defeated by Philip the Arab in 248 CE. Edessa became a vassal of the Sassanians in 293 CE.¹³⁸

The Nabataeans

The precise origin of the Nabataeans is unclear; however, all scholars agree that they were nomad Arabs who came from Arabia and settled in the land of the Edomites. The question has been which part of Arabia they came from. It is believed by the majority of scholars that they came from the northwest of Arabia, in today's Hijaz region, for they share several deities with the ancient people there. It is possible that they were originally from the southwest of Arabia—today's Yemen—like many of the Arab tribes who migrated to northern Arabia.

The Nabataeans are related to the **Thamuds and the Lihyanites**, inhabitants of northern Arabia. Their personal names as well as the names of their gods were Arabic, and they spoke Arabic. At the time of the Nabataeans there were no Arabic letters, so Aramaic was the only language they could use on their monuments and coins. The Nabataean script gradually differentiated itself from the Aramaic, and by about the middle of the first century BCE they had their own script. This script developed in the third century CE into the script of the North Arabic tongue, **the Arabic of the Quran** and of the present day.

Greek and Roman historians describe the Nabataeans as “sensible, ambitious, orderly, democratic people absorbed in trade and agriculture.” The members kept a state of peace with one another. The king was so democratic that he often consulted with prominent members of the community, even calling for popular assembly. The Nabataeans were influential in Palestine-Syria as well as North Arabia; it is believed that **Omri, the king who established Jewish Samaria, was a Nabataean**. The remains of cups, saucers, dishes, jugs, and bowls attest to the superior skills of their craftsmen.

The Nabataean religion was similar to the religion in other parts of Palestine-Syria. At the head of the pantheon of gods stood **Dushara** (Dhu-al-Shara, Dusares), a sun deity. The ruins of a shrine at **Khirbat al-Tannur**, southeast of the Dead Sea, have preserved a simple box-like shrine resembling the Ka'bah of Mecca. Associated with Dushara was the moon goddess **Allat**, chief goddess of Arabia. Among other gods and goddesses were **Hubal, Manaht, and al-Uzza**. The Aramaean goddess **Atargatis** was represented at Khirbat al-Tannur as the goddess of grain, foliage, fruits, and fish.¹³⁹

Exactly when the Nabataeans first infiltrated the land of **Edom (or Seir)**, as it was

138. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 89.

139. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 84–85.

called in ancient times; now southern Jordan) is uncertain. Edom was mentioned in the inscriptions of Pharaoh Ramesses II in the thirteenth century BCE. Assyrian records mention that **“the kings of Ammon, Moab, Ashkelon, Judea, Gaza, and King Qosmalak of Edom”** together paid a large tribute to King Tiglath-Pileser III. During Assyrian rule, the Edomites enjoyed prosperity, as they profited from the passage of the caravans through their land, in addition to mining and smelting copper in Wadi Araba. In 612 BCE, the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians and inherited their empire. In 587/586 BCE, King **Nebuchadnezzar** destroyed Jerusalem and exiled the king and leaders of Judea to Babylon. The Edomites who had supported the Babylonians in the war against Judea were accused by the Judeans of committing treachery. Apparently, the Edomites expanded their kingdom into the Judean Negev.

In 552 BCE, **Nabonidus**, the Babylonian king, invaded Edom. This invasion forced the Edomites to abandon their settlements and to move to the land west of Wadi Araba. After this, the Macedonians referred to the Edomites as the **Idumaeans**. Under Hasmonaean rule, the Idumaeans were forced to convert to Judaism as the price for remaining autonomous. Nearly a century later, an Idumaeen, **Herod the Great**, became the king of Judaea.¹⁴⁰

Soon after Nabonidus' incursions, the Nabataeans moved into Edom, wandering through the territory with their camels and sheep with no authority to challenge them. Eventually they settled in a naturally fortified rocky territory with one approach; this later became their capital city, **Petra**. The city was a mountain fortress located on an arid plateau three thousand feet high, surrounded by rock. Outside the circuit of the rock, most of the territory is desert. Petra was known for its springs, which provided the inhabitants with all the water they needed for domestic use and agriculture.

The Nabataeans' nomadic life had placed them in contact with many Arab tribes, whether nomads like themselves or settled farming communities like the Arabs of South Arabia and Yemen, from whom they learned water technology and the art of trade. By the late fourth century BCE, they had become ingenious hydraulic engineers, able to design and construct the most advanced water systems, making them very productive farmers. In Petra, this experience allowed them to develop highly efficient cisterns and to extract subterranean water, which enabled them to convert some of the surrounding desert into rich agricultural land.

The Nabataeans found that their control of water facilitated their freedom of movement. Secrecy was necessary to guard this freedom. They developed a cistern system consisting of channels directing water to large, deep spaces dug in large rocks. These cisterns were lined with stucco and had a narrow mouth that made them easy to cover and hide. The Nabataeans' mastery of the desert enabled them to maintain

140. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom*, 34–37.

their independence even when threatened by strong enemies such as the Assyrians, Persians, and Macedonians. None of those powers was able to enslave them.¹⁴¹

By then they were also masters of trade. Petra was a key city on the caravan route between South Arabia and the Mediterranean. It linked spice-producing South Arabia with the consuming and marketing centers in the north. It controlled the routes to Gaza in the west, Busra and Damascus in the north, Aila on the Red Sea, and the Persian/Arabian Gulf across the desert. Myrrh, spices, and frankincense from South Arabia; rich silk fabrics from Damascus and Gaza; henna from Ashkelon; glassware and purple dye from Sidon and Tyre; and pearls from the Persian/Arabian Gulf constituted the principal commodities. The products of Nabataea were gold, silver, and sesame oil. The Nabataeans also extracted asphalt and minerals from the eastern shores of the Dead Sea, in exchange for which they imported raw silk from China. The Nabataeans were extremely successful in providing protection to the trade routes. They accumulated great wealth from trade profits as well as from the taxes imposed on goods in transit. By the fourth century BCE they had gained complete control over the incense route from northern Hijaz through Edom and into the Judean Negev toward the Mediterranean coast. They also occupied a stretch of the Red Sea coast and some offshore islands. By the second century BCE, their kingdom had become one of the major players in the Mediterranean world, controlling a wide area from northern Arabia in the south to Syria in the north, from Sinai and the Negev in the west to Wadi Sirhan and al-Jawf in the east.¹⁴²

The Greek historian **Diodorus** was the first to write about the Nabataeans. His writing in the first century BCE was based on information that went back three hundred years earlier. His source was one of Alexander the Great's officers, **Hieronymus**, who had firsthand experience of them.

Some of them raise camels, others sheep, pasturing them in the desert . . . They themselves use as food flesh and milk and those of the plants that grow from the ground that are suitable for this purpose.

Whenever a strong force of enemies comes near, they take refuge in the desert, using this as a fortress, for it lacks water and cannot be crossed by others, but to them alone, since they have prepared subterranean reservoirs.¹⁴³

Since the third millennium BCE, the Egyptians had been interested in frankincense and myrrh, using them in their temples as an essential part of religious rituals. The pharaohs sent expeditions to Nubia and Uganda to bring back these valuable

141. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom*, 17.

142. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom*, 16–17.

143. Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* book XIX, chapter 94 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1954), 89–90.

products. Akkadian, Sumerian and Hittite records from the second millennium BCE mention the use of the frankincense and myrrh in their temples. In those early days, these products came from Africa through Ethiopia and Somalia. In the first millennium, the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Phoenicians also started to use these aromatics. During this period, Southern Arabia became known as the producer of the finest quality frankincense and myrrh in the known world. The best frankincense comes from the *Boswellia sacra* tree, and the best myrrh from *Commiphora murrha*; both plants were abundant in Yemen. The gum resin of both trees is obtained by making fifteen-centimeter incisions in the trunks of the trees. The sap usually takes ten days to three weeks to harden.¹⁴⁴

From the early fourth century BCE, the **Minaeans** controlled the trade route from their own territory, through **Yathrib**, and as far as the oasis of **Dedan** (now **al-Khurayba** in Hejiz), a trading colony located in the territory inhabited by the Nabataeans. From Dedan, the Nabataeans' camel caravans carried the incense into today's southern Jordan, then westward into the Negev or north toward Petra and Damascus. To reach Gaza, the main port for export to Europe, they had to cross the Negev. They used hidden gullies and wadis to protect their valuable goods. At strategic points they established forts and cisterns to supply their caravans with food and water. At the last open stretch of the route, a large military camp was established.¹⁴⁵

About 312 BCE the Nabataeans were strong enough to resist two expeditions against them by **Antigonus**, one of the generals of Alexander the Great. The first expedition consisted of four thousand foot soldiers and six hundred horsemen. The Macedonians attacked Petra by night while the Nabataean men were away at a regular national trade fair. In the absence of the protectors, they killed many defenseless people, took prisoners, and withdrew from the city with large amounts of frankincense and myrrh and five hundred talents of silver. As soon as the Nabataeans learned of this attack, they pursued the attackers. After thirty-six kilometers the Greeks made camp, confident that they were safe from pursuers. The eight thousand-strong Nabataeans slaughtered all the foot soldiers and most of the horsemen; only fifty managed to escape. Antigonus responded to this massacre by sending four thousand horsemen under the command of his son **Demetrius**. On the first day, the Greek force could not achieve any progress against the Nabataean defenses, so at nightfall they withdrew. The next day as the Greeks approached the rock, the Nabataeans sent a message to Demetrius:

We have chosen a life in the desert . . . causing you no harm at all. We therefore beg both you and your father not to harm us but, after accepting our gifts, to withdraw your army and from now on to regard

144. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom*, 19.

145. Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom*, 23–26.

the Nabataeans as your friends. Even if you want to, you cannot stay here for many days since you lack water and all other necessities.

The Nabataeans then sent an embassy, upon Demetrius' request, that included wise men and valuable gifts. During this episode the Nabataeans demonstrated military skills and impressive diplomacy. They convinced their enemy that they were the masters of the desert who controlled the water and other necessities needed to survive in the desert. Finally they negotiated a peaceful settlement, offering rich gifts to sweeten their enemy's bitter humiliation. During the rule of the Ptolomies and the Seleucids over Syria, they were able to maintain their autonomy and protect their economic benefits of the trade business by making large payments to these great powers.

In 63 BCE, Syria was captured by the Romans, and hence Petra became client-state of Rome. The Romans elected at that time to grant the Nabataeans autonomy as long as they acknowledged the authority of the empire, and as long as they were willing to provide military assistance when needed. In 47 BCE Julius Caesar requested help from the Nabataeans for the Alexandrian war. In 67 CE, the Nabataean king sent a thousand horses and five thousand men to assist Titus in his attack on Jerusalem.¹⁴⁶

The first known Nabataean king was **Harithath** (169 BCE), a contemporary of the founder of the Maccabean dynasty (see page **XX**). The two kings established an alliance against the Seleucids. During the reign of **Harith II** (110–96 BCE) this alliance ended; in 96 BCE, the Nabataeans helped Gaza during the siege that was imposed on the city by the Maccabean Alexander Jannaeus. **Harith III** (87–62 BCE) was the real founder of the Nabataeans' power; he defeated the Maccabeans repeatedly and laid siege to Jerusalem. In 85 BCE he extended his territory further north as far as Damascus in response to an invitation from that city, which was threatened by the Itureans from northern Palestine. After rescuing Damascus and the rich plain around it, Harith III declared himself **the king of Coele-Syria**. Harith III was the first to strike Nabataean coinage, he brought Syrian-Greek artisan to his capital to carve the beautiful front of **al-Khaznah (the treasury)** in the rock for him. He brought his kingdom within the full orbit of Hellenistic civilization. Petra then began to develop as a typical Hellenistic city, with beautiful main streets and several religious and public buildings, including a theater.¹⁴⁷

Under the long and prosperous rule of **Harith IV** (9 BCE–40 CE) the kingdom reached its height. During his reign, the kingdom included southern Palestine and Transjordan, southeastern Syria, and northern Arabia. The Syrian part was separated from the Transjordanian part by the Decapolis territory.¹⁴⁸ The two Nabataean parts

146. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 67–68.

147. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 377–378.

148. The ten cities of the Decapolis included Damascus, Canatha (Qanawat), Hippos (al-Husn), Dion, Raphana (Abela), Gadara in Jordan, Pella, Scythopolis (Beisan), Gerasa (Jericho), and Philadelphia (in Amman).

were connected together by **Wadi al-Sirhan**, a desert rift on the eastern frontier of Transjordan. This rift was utilized as a great highway extending from the heart of Arabia to Syria, bypassing the Decapolis. It is believed that the Nabataeans extracted subterranean springs and built watchtowers, fortresses, and police posts along this route and along the **Wadi al-Arabah** route connecting Petra and the Jordan Valley with the Gulf of Aqabah. The Wadi al-Arabah route branched off at the Dead Sea westward into Palestine and eastward into Transjordan.¹⁴⁹

In 105 CE the **Emperor Trajan** put an end to Nabataean autonomy, and in 106 their territory became part of the Roman province of Arabia, with Busra as its capital. **King Rabbil II** (71–105 CE) was the last of the Nabataean kings. From that time forward the east-to-west trade route shifted north to Palmyra, and the south-to-north route moved east.

Palmyra

The oasis of **Tadmur**—or **Palmyra**, as it was called by the Greeks—was located in the middle of the Syrian Desert, which is different from the great desert of the Arabian Peninsula. It can be described as **desert steppe**, as it is not free of vegetation, and does not form a barrier that is difficult to cross. It had a few oases of rich springs that provided enough water for farming and sedentary life, the most important of these being **al-Qaryatayn**, southeast of Homs, and **Tadmur, or Palmyra**.

Urban development of ancient Palmyra was dependent on two factors: its favorable position at the crossing point between the Palmyra Chains and the inner Syrian Heights, and the presence of the oasis, which is fed by the **Efqa** spring, with its palm gardens. Both factors made Palmyra a bottleneck of the east–west long-distance trade in premodern times: whoever wanted to cross the Syrian Desert practically had to go through Palmyra. The water of the Efqa spring was never drinkable; it is hot and sulfuric, so the inhabitants were getting drinking water from cisterns or other water springs.¹⁵⁰

The first evidence of human presence in Palmyra goes back to the middle of **Paleolithic Age**, some fifty thousand years ago. The lakes, which were not yet salty, offered fresh water, and the surrounding mountain ranges, which were covered in forests during the Stone Age, gave protection with their caves. In the pre-pottery **Neolithic Age** (7600–6000 BCE), people settled in the Palmyra basin. At the beginning of the **Chalcolithic Age** (5000–4000 BCE), people built funnel-shaped folds out of stone walls—the so-called desert kites in which they rounded up herds of goitered gazelles and other animals. The existence of a settlement in Tadmur is documented in records found at **Karum Kanis**, a trading station in **Cappadocia**, referring to trades

149. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 380.

150. Sommer, *Palmyra: A History*, 18–19.

with the oasis; another document mentions the delivery of silver from Tadmur. These documents date to around the early second millennium BCE. In records of **Mari** from the eighteenth century BCE, there is mention of two Tadmureans traveling to Assur, carrying a letter from the king of Qatna to the Assyrian king Shamashi-Adad. Around five hundred years later, the name Tadmur is recorded in the annals of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE); he referred to Tadmur as the country of Amurru (west of the Euphrates).¹⁵¹

Around 1000 BCE, the inhabitants of inner-land Syria were referred to as the **Arameans**, and the land was known as **Aram**. The Assyrian king wrote in his annals: “**I have battled the Arameans of Tadmur.**” The language in Greater Syria was Aramaic, which also served as the official language of the Persian Empire. The Greek language replaced Aramaic as the international and diplomatic language during the Macedonian era (Alexander the Great and his successors, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids), as well as during the Roman era. However, Aramaic continued to be the language spoken by the inhabitants of Syria. It was also adopted by the Arab tribes who infiltrated Syria and settled in Petra and Palmyra.¹⁵²

The Palmyrans were Arameans, with some Arab elements, who continued to speak Aramaic. When the East was divided in the fourth century BCE after the death of Alexander the Great, the Seleucids and Ptolemies clashed frequently. At the Battle of **Raphia**, the Seleucid king Antiochus VI had the support of the Arab sheikh **Zabadibelos**, who was probably Palmyran, at the head of ten thousand Arabs.¹⁵³

In the first century BCE, Palmyra was an important player in trade activities in the Middle East. Its position in the heart of the Syrian Desert between the two empires, the Roman and the Parthian, at the crossing of the north-to-south and east-to-west routes, contributed to its fame and wealth. The Palmyrenes were able to provide security and safety for the passing caravans. Their mounted archers guided and protected the merchants in return for heavy duties on each article of merchandise passing through their gates. Palmyra was then a buffer state enjoying a friendly relationship with the two great empires. The Palmyrenes were merchants who managed to move goods from east to west via the Persian/Arabian Gulf. Their good relationship with the Parthians allowed them to have trading posts on the Euphrates, at **Vologesias**, **Ctesiphon**, **Seleucia**, **Spasinou**, **Charax** and **Phorath** (all Parthian cities).¹⁵⁴

Palmyra’s location and role in the control of the trade routes prompted **Mark Antony** to carry out a raid against the settlement in 41 BCE. The Palmyrenes vacated their city and fled with their valuables across the Euphrates. As Rome took

151. Sommer, *Palmyra: A History*, 20–21.

152. Paul Veyne, *Palmyra: An Irreplaceable Treasure*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 28–29.

153. Yasmin Zahran, *Zenobia: Between Reality and Legend* (London, UK: Stacey International, rev. ed. 2010), 161–162.

154. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 162.

complete control of Syria in the first century CE, Palmyra had no choice but to acknowledge the sovereignty of Rome, and became a vassal of the dominating empire. During the reign of **Tiberius**, the governor of Syria in 7–19 CE, Palmyra was integrated into the province of Syria, and the settlement of Tadmur became known as Palmyra, the Palm Oasis. From then onward, a Roman garrison was stationed in Palmyra. Despite its annexation by Rome, it retained its autonomy and enjoyed a greater degree of independence than any other provincial city.¹⁵⁵

The city of Palmyra

Palmyra's rich spring provided its inhabitants and merchants with necessary drinking water. The Palmyrenes also managed to catch water for their agriculture by building a half-kilometer-long dam between two hills. Gradually its mud huts were replaced by limestone houses; and the streets became lined with colonnades, similar to those of the prosperous Greco-Roman cities. An agora—a rectangle surrounded by a Corinthian portico on all four sides—was built in the second century. A colonnaded street about 1,200 meters long ran from east to west. The colonnade consisted of 375 or more columns, each fifty-five feet high, most of them of rosy limestone, and few of granite speckled with blue imported from Egypt. The city also had a standard Roman model theater which was built around 200 CE. A tetrapylon stood at the center of the city, off the main north colonnade, as did a richly decorated Nymphaeum with a semicircular water basin. The Palmyran **temple of Bel**, which stood on a raised terrace, was built of stone with bronze Ionic capitals and fluted columns. It comprised a large court two hundred meters long and an arched banquet hall. It is comparable to the temples of Elba and Ugarit, which are a thousand years older. In front of the temple, a monumental arch was erected, which opened to the grand colonnade. The **temple of the lord of heaven, Ba'alsamin**, rivaled the temple of Bel. Both temples were dedicated to the trinity of **Aglibol**, **Malak-bel** (the angel of Bel), and **Ba'alsamin** (the good and compassionate). Palmyran inscriptions mention twenty-two gods, of whom the two chief deities were Bel and Ba'alsamin. The temple of Allat, located outside the walls of Palmyra, resembled the Ba'alsamin temple.

During the rule of its greatest king, Odainat, the court of Palmyra was open to remarkable men of all creeds. **Longinus** the philosopher, who was the former head of the Academy of Athens, sought refuge there after the sack of Athens by the Goths in 267 CE. Christian theologians were welcomed at the Palmyran court at a time when Christians were persecuted by Rome.

155. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 162–163.

Palmyran commerce

Palmyra flourished under Rome in the second and third centuries CE, during which time most of the public buildings were erected. The wealth of Palmyra reached its peak in the third century CE after it inherited Petra's commerce, which declined after Petra's annexation by Trajan. Palmyra retained a business relationship with the Nabataeans, many of whom served in the Palmyran army in the second century. Almost all the commerce of the Orient and Far East was brought through the Persian/Arabian Gulf. Roman roads built for military purposes benefited Palmyran commerce. Egypt traded with the Far East through Palmyran caravans. These caravans started as tribal or family enterprises, with the desert chieftains becoming caravan merchants, and the caravan merchants soon becoming sea merchants. The caravans connected the centers that imported products from regions further east, and imported goods from India and China through the shipping business. Horses for the caravan archers were bred in the mountains zone northwest of Palmyra; the breeding of camels took place in the desert, where the merchant families lived.¹⁵⁶

Besides carrying goods in its caravans, Palmyra traded in salt from the rich salt mines near the city and helped import Asiatic slaves into the Roman Empire. It also traded in purple cloths manufactured in Neapolis and Lydda, henna, salted fish from Lake Tiberias in Palestine, medicinal items, kitchen spices, ornaments, and home decorations. In addition, it traded in Chinese silk which was colored and mixed with other textiles in the workshops of Beirut and Tyre. Jewelry was an important item of trade; Palmyra had an experienced guild of smiths who worked in gold and silver.

Palmyra and Rome

Palmyra played a major role in the defense of the Roman Empire. Its exceptional position and its strong, experienced archers allowed Palmyra to control the desert between Emesa (Homs) and the Euphrates. It provided Rome with infrastructure that enabled the Roman military machine to work effectively against Persia. Palmyra provided archers, heavy cavalry, and supplies, and was the base of practically all Roman military operations. The Romans recognized the great value of Palmyra and its role in their military enterprises. **In 129 CE, Hadrian** visited the oasis and gave Palmyra the title **Hadriana**; he declared it a free city, allowing it to set and collect its own taxes. Financial control was no longer in the hands of the provincial governor of Antioch, but held by a curator appointed by the emperor, and the city was given dispensation from furnishing lodging for troops. **In 212 CE, during the reign of Septimus Severus**, Palmyra's status shifted to that of a colony, which meant that it was the

¹⁵⁶. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 167–169.

equal of other cities of the Roman “metropolis,” and the Palmyrenes became Roman citizens.¹⁵⁷ Septimus Severus, a Phoenician-Canaanite, allied himself with and favored Arab princes, particularly those of Palmyra. The **Severans** that followed him adopted the same policy. Under the Severans, Palmyra enjoyed great prosperity and reached the height of its power. Palmyra was not the only beneficiary of this policy; other Syrian cities also received great benefits and protection from the Severans.¹⁵⁸

In 245 CE, Emperor Septimus Severus appointed **Odainat**, a prominent Arab sheikh, to the Senate and named him chief of Tadmur, thus making Palmyra a hereditary principality. In 257 CE, **Emperor Valerian made Odainat governor of Syria-Phoenicia, of which Palmyra was part.** In 260 CE the Sassanid army under **Shapur I** inflicted a shameful defeat over the Roman forces near Edessa and captured Valerian. Odainat rushed to rescue Valerian with a sizable army of Syrians and Arabs. He defeated the Persians on the banks of the Euphrates, but was unable to free Valerian, as Shapur fled in haste with the imprisoned emperor. Odainat captured Shapur’s family, his concubines, and many of his soldiers, along with his treasure. He then pursued Shapur all the way to his capital, **Ctesiphon**, and laid siege to the city. This siege was suspended when Odainat returned to Syria and put an end to opposition against the new emperor **Gallienus** (Valerian’s son).

Gallienus rewarded Odainat by making him **vice-emperor** over the eastern part of the empire, which implied jurisdiction over the whole Orient and Asia Minor, including all the provinces of Asia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt. Palmyra then became the capital of the Orient, and was transformed from a caravan town to the capital of an Arab principality. Under Odainat’s rule, Palmyra was one of the largest towns of the empire, with some 150,000 inhabitants. In size it was comparable to Antioch and Alexandria.¹⁵⁹

Odainat continued his campaign against the Sassanids in 264 CE, although he was forced suspend it to defend his territory against the Goths. After defeating the Goth incursion, he headed back to Ctesiphon in 266 CE, stopping at Emesa to let his army rest for a few days.¹⁶⁰ Here, in a plot initiated by Gallienus, he was assassinated along with his son Herodian by a spiteful cousin, **Maeonius**, who was promised rule over Palmyra in return. Maeonius declared himself king before the army; however, the loyalists killed him. Immediately Odainat’s ambitious and beautiful widow, **Zenobia**, had **Wahab-allat**, his younger son, declared king with all his father’s titles; she assumed the regency as queen.

At first, Gallienus refused to recognize the rights of Wahab-allat to his father’s post as the **vice-emperor** over the eastern part of the empire, for he claimed that the powers given to Odainat were personal and not hereditary. The Palmyrenes

157. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 165.

158. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 132.

159. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 112–117.

160. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 124–128.

defeated the Roman forces sent to challenge Wahab-allat, after which the Romans accepted Zenobia's domination over Syria and Mesopotamia. Zenobia, however, sought complete control of the entire empire that her husband had held.

In 268 CE, Gallienus was succeeded by **Claudius**, who was the head of the Roman forces in the Danube. During Claudius's two-year reign, Zenobia reconquered the Orient. The Palmyrenes occupied Antioch the year Claudius came to the throne. **Zabadas**, the chief commander of the Palmyran army, swept through Palestine, Jordan, and all of Syria, defeating the **Tanukh** Arab militia who sided with the Romans. The next target was Egypt; Zenobia marched with an army of seventy thousand and freed Egypt from the Romans. It was an easy mission, almost a voluntary submission, owing to the discontent of the Egyptians, who were eager to get rid of the Romans' exploitation. Egypt was of great value to Palmyra; the trade with the East (India and China) had suffered greatly since the Sassanids had come to power. The conquest of Egypt saved Palmyra's commerce by opening the commercial routes that Egypt had with Abyssinia, Arabia, Syria, and India, either through Petra or via the Red Sea. Controlling Egypt meant controlling trade between India and the Mediterranean.¹⁶¹

An agreement was reached between Zenobia and Claudius whereby Rome would accept the dominion of Zenobia/Wahab-allat over the Orient while Palmyra recognized nominal Roman sovereignty. Zenobia ordered the mint of Antioch to strike coins in the names of both Wahab-allat and Claudius. This agreement lasted for the two years of Claudius's reign. When his successor **Aurelian** ascended to the throne, Zenobia honored the agreement she had with Claudius and kept his portrait on the coins.

However, Aurelian started a military campaign against Palmyra as soon as the Senate approved his appointment as the new emperor. In 272 CE, he marched to Byzantium with two armies—one under the command of Probus, his most able general, in charge of the conquest of Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, and southern Syria, and the other under his own command aiming for Asia Minor, northern Syria, and Palmyra. Aurelian had at his disposal twelve legions and auxiliaries—a total of two hundred thousand soldiers. The Romans overcame fierce resistance all the way to Palmyra, and despite huge losses, managed to emerge victorious, thanks to their Arab and Armenian allies. Aurelius emptied the city of its rich fabrics and precious ornaments. A Roman governor was appointed and a small garrison was stationed in the city. The people of Palmyra were not punished harshly, but they had to pay large fine. On his return back to Rome in late 272 CE, Aurelius heard of a fresh uprising in Palmyra that had resulted in the murder of his governor. He rushed back and recaptured the city. Finally, Palmyra was destroyed and its inhabitants were put to the sword.

The fate of Zenobia after the defeat of the Palmyrenes by Aurelius is not clear. Several versions of history exist. The Arab historical tradition, as mentioned by

¹⁶¹ Zahran, *Zenobia*, 74–75.

al-Tabari and followed by the major Arab historians, attributed Zenobia's defeat to her enemies, the federation of the Tanukh, through tricks and treachery. When her enemies stormed the city, she tried to escape through a secret tunnel, but came face to face with Amr ibn Adi, who blocked the door. When Zenobia recognized him, she committed suicide by sucking a poisoned ring, saying the famous phrase that became an Arab proverb: "By my hand I die, not yours, Amr."¹⁶² This version goes well with Zenobia's character. She admired Cleopatra, who preferred to die rather to surrender. The Roman version, however, claims that Zenobia died after a prolonged hunger strike.

The Tanukh

The immigration of Arab tribes from the Arab peninsula to Iraq dates to the beginnings of ancient Sumer, in 5000 to 6000 BCE. The fertile lands of neighboring Iraq were attractive to the nomads of Arabia. One of the earliest reliable references is given in an inscription of the Assyrian king **Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE)**: "As for Shamsi, queen of the Arabs, at Mount Saqurri I defeated 9,400 of her people. Her entire camp: a thousand people, thirty thousand camels, twenty thousand cattle . . . five thousand bags of all kinds of spices . . . Pedestals of her gods, arms and staffs of her goddess, and her property I seized."¹⁶³ It was the Assyrians' policy to control the infiltration of the Arab tribes into Iraq and to curb their raids on caravan traffic. **Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE)**, who fought the Arabs in Iraq, gathered the merchants who were trading in Assyria and settled them in the Sawad (the location of Hira and Anbar).¹⁶⁴

Arab infiltration into Iraq in the middle of the first century BCE was centered on **Hatra**, one of the first Arab settlements along the desert fringes of the Fertile Crescent. This city was destroyed by the Sassanian king Shapur I in 241 CE, and the Tanukh built the city of **Hira** on its ruins. The Tanukh are a loosely connected tribal grouping who started their migration from Yemen northward in the early third century CE. Eventually they settled in two places: southern Mesopotamia and northern Syria.¹⁶⁵

According to the inscriptions of **Umm al-Jimal** in Jordan and **Namara** in Syria, the Tanukh settled in the area around Hira with the Arabs of Ma'ad. **Malik ibn Fahm** (195–215 CE), the chief of the Tanukh, became the first king of the Arabs in Iraq. Malik was succeeded by his son **Jadhima al-Abrash ibn Malik** (215–268 CE), who claimed descent from **Amr ibn Amir** of the Azd, the ancestor of the Ghassanids.

162. Zahran, *Zenobia*, 46–47.

163. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 59–60.

164. Yasmin Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira: Sons of the Water of Heaven* (London, UK: Stacey International, 2009), 20.

165. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 22–23.

In 228 CE, the Sassanid king **Ardashir** recognized the kingdom of Tanukh and endorsed the lordship of Jadhima over the Arab tribes in the Persian territory.¹⁶⁶

The Syrian branch of the Tanukh settled around Aleppo, allying themselves with the Romans; they played a significant role in the war against Palmyra. After the destruction of Palmyra by Aurelius, the Tanukh stepped into the vacuum as Rome's main shield against Persia. The Tanukh confederation in Syria remained firm allies of the Romans throughout the later third and early fourth centuries CE.¹⁶⁷

During the fourth and the fifth centuries CE, the Syrian branch of the Tanukh settled in **Qinnesrin (Chalcis)** south of Aleppo. However, a large element of the tribe remained nomadic. In the fourth century CE, the Tanukh remained loyal to the Romans and formed a significant component of the empire's desert defense system, much as the Palmyrenes had done in the third century.

In 363 CE, the Roman emperor **Julian** withdraw several privileges from the Arab allies when they refused to convert from Monophysitism to Orthodox Christianity (that is, they did not recognize that Jesus had a human nature as well as a divine one). This decision by Julian was a costly mistake for the Romans. Julian was assassinated by an Arab auxiliary. Julian's successor, Emperor **Valens**, committed another mistake by ending Rome's treaty with the Tanukh upon the death of their king, **al-Hawari**, the grandson of Imru'-al-Qays, who left no heir. The real reasons were religious, for Valens was a heterodox Christian.

Al-Hawari's widow, the extraordinary **Queen Mawiyya**, took over the leadership of the confederation upon her husband's death. She deserted the Tanukh-settled area around Aleppo, withdrew into the desert, and started a guerrilla war against the Romans. She made the desert her base instead of the settled positions around Aleppo. The Arabs of North Arabia and Syria joined her revolt. The Romans, who were dependent on the Arabs for their desert defense, found themselves fighting a desert war against their former clients. Mawiyya's forces were able to defeat the Romans not only in desert warfare, but in the towns as well, as Mawiyya was able to arouse the sympathies of the Monophysite townspeople. The Arab forces proved themselves masters of both Roman battle techniques and their own traditional fighting methods. The combination of their strong discipline and the swift maneuverability of their cavalry proved deadly and gained them decisive victory. Faced with the mounting threat of the Goths in the west, Valens had no choice but to ask for peace. Having fought the war on her own terms, Mawiyya was able to dictate her terms for peace. She was able to choose her own bishop, a Monophysite Arab. Such an appointment was a major step toward the establishment of the independent Arab Church. She also gained back allied status for the Tanukh, with all the privileges that had been revoked by Julian and Valens.¹⁶⁸

166. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 23.

167. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 97.

168. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 99–100.

In accordance with the peace agreement between Mawiyya and the Romans, the Arab auxiliaries participated in the war against the Goths. On their own ground, the Arabs were unbeatable, but fighting in unfamiliar territory, they did not do well. Valens himself was killed at the battle of **Adrianople** in 378 CE; the Goths defeated the Romans and pushed them back to the walls of Constantinople. The Arab fighters defended the city and saved it from the Goths. The new **Emperor Theodosius** blamed the Arabs for the outcome of the war, however, and retaliated by withdrawing their allied privileges. A second Tanukh revolt erupted in 383 CE; however, this time they did not get support from the other Arab tribes, so the Romans were able to put down the revolt quickly.¹⁶⁹

The Lakhmids

In Iraq, the death of the Tanukh king Jadhima signified the end of the rule of the tribe of Tanukh and the beginning of the rule of the tribe of Lakhm. The new ruler **Amr ibn Adi** (268–288 CE), the son of Adi ibn Nasr ibn Rabi'a of Lakhm, was Jadhima's nephew. He is considered the founder of the Lakhmid kingdom. Amr transformed Hira from a ruin to a thriving capital city. The Lakhmids collaborated with the forces of Aurelius against Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra. This alliance with the Romans was difficult to maintain, however, as the lands of the Lakhmid were in Persian territory, so the Lakhmid kingdom fell within the Sassanian sphere of influence and became a vassal of Persia.

Amr was succeeded by his son, **Imru'-al-Qays**, the first Lakhmid to adopt Christianity, which had been introduced to Persia by Roman prisoners of war. His tomb was found in Namara, a Roman fort for the defense of the province of Arabia; most likely he had changed alliance from the Persians to the Romans as a result of his Christian faith. It is also possible that he worked as an agent for both powers, for both his father and great-uncle had been allies of the Romans.¹⁷⁰

The **Namara inscription**, written in the Nabataean Aramaic alphabet, is the most ancient example of North Arabic script and shows the emergence of the Arabic writing. It calls **Imru'-al-Qays "King of all the Arabs"** who subjugated the tribes of Asad and Nizar, defeated the Madhij, and subjugated the Ma'add, the powerful tribes in the desert of Syria and Iraq. The inscription also states that his conquest reached the walls of Najran in South Arabia and that his rule extended to Najd and Hijaz, and from Hira to Bilad al-Sham.¹⁷¹

According to Arab Muslim historians, there were twenty-two rulers of Lakhm, sixteen of whom were Lakhmid. These kings who ruled Hira were nominally under

169. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 100.

170. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 26.

171. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 26–27.

Persian sovereignty but were de facto independent rulers, allied with the Persians and paying them no tribute. They ruled according to tribal custom, and their strength came from tribal power. Several tribes submitted to them. The Lakhmid kingdom extended over a large area west of the Euphrates and a large part of Iraq. Their jurisdiction reached as far as the Sassanid capital, Ctesiphon. Around 531 CE, Kisra Anushirwan appointed **Mundhir Ma'al-Sama** to rule over Bahrain, Oman, and Yamama as far as Ta'if.

The Lakhmids received no subsidies from Persia as the Ghassanids did from the Romans. Their wealth was derived from their location on the trade route between India, China, and South Arabia. In addition, they received revenue from other sources: taxes levied on friendly tribes; land tax in their territory, the Sawa, which was extremely fertile; commercial activity in Arabia, where their caravans were loaded with luxury goods to be sold in the Hijaz and then restocked with luxury goods to be sold in Hira; and spoils from raids against rich towns in Syria or against disobedient Arab tribes.¹⁷²

The city of Hira

Hira, the capital city of the kingdom of Lakhm, was a unique metropolis. It served the Persian Empire on three levels. First, it protected the frontier with the Romans. Second, it protected the Persian territories from the Arab tribes who attempted to raid the rich towns of Iraq. Third, it supported the Persians in their wars with the Romans in Syria and Asia Minor, far from their frontier.

Hira was the Arabic cultural center where Arabic writing developed from the Nabataean dialect of Aramaic. There are two great alphabetic traditions from which all alphabets are derived: **Northwest Semitic or Phoenician**, from which the Greek alphabet is descended, and **Arabian**. The Arabian group is divided into two branches, the **southern** and the **northern**. The South Arabic group are the languages used by the four principal peoples of the region. The scripts of this group continued in use until the early Islamic period. The North Arabic group of languages is represented by some forty thousand inscriptions found in and around the oasis towns of northwest Arabia, the sandy desert of the **Hisma**, the basalt desert of **Harra**, and the highlands of central Arabia. The North Arabic languages are close to one another, and are considered the ancestor of classical Arabic, which is usually referred as Old Arabic. This language was widely spoken throughout the region of north and central Arabia and among Arabian diaspora in Mesopotamia and Syria,

¹⁷² Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 38–39.

but was not written; texts written in Old Arabic are very rare. The Nabataean version of the Arabic script was widespread.¹⁷³

In the early fourth century CE, three learned men from the tribe of Tayy met in the town of **Boqa**, near Hira, and built the orthography of North Arabic on the Nabataean alphabet. The Namara inscription illustrates the transfer of the Nabataean alphabet to North Arabic and the joining of the letters; it was further developed in the fifth century CE, adopted by the people of Anbar, and then passed to the Hijaz. In Hira, at the Lakhmid court, **Hammad ibn Zayd** was the first to write the Arabic script. The Quraysh, the tribe from whom the Prophet Muhammad descended, learned to write the script of Hira from two of its members.¹⁷⁴

The development of writing made Hira the intellectual center of Arabia and the forum for poetry. The poet played an important and essential role in pre-Islamic society, as he was, most often, the chief of the clan and the sage who possessed great vision and wisdom. The royal court of Hira was the forum for poets: of the seven poets whose odes were hung on the walls of the Ka'bah, five were associated with Hira and three were habitués of its court. Hira had its own poets, of whom the most famous was Adi ibn Zayd.¹⁷⁵

Hira's location at the crossroads between the two civilizations, the Persian and the Greek, enabled the city to become a flourishing cultural center. It played an important role in transmitting Persian civilization and culture to the Arabs. It also transmitted Greek science, philosophy, and architecture acquired from Roman prisoners of war, among whom there were many scholars and educated cultured men.¹⁷⁶

Hira was an important commercial center. It was the city of merchants who traded between Persia, Arabia, and Syria; their caravans carried merchandise from India and China, Oman and Bahrain. The caravans brought immense wealth to Hira. The city was also known for its silk, linen, and wool textiles embroidered with threads of gold and silver. The ceramics and jewelry industries flourished in Hira as well.

The majority of the population of the kingdom were pagan Arabs, including the royal family. Only two kings declared their Christianity: **Imru'-al-Qays**, the second king, and **Nu'man**, the last king in 593 CE; the fourteen intervening kings remained pagan for fear of the Persians' reaction. A small number of the population adopted the Mazdak cult, and Judaism and Zoroastrianism were adhered to by the small number of Jews and Persians. **Hira was the center of Nestorian Christianity (see page XX)**. The Persians persecuted the Monophysite creed of the Ghassanids and the Orthodox creed of Constantinople, but tolerated the Nestorians. The Nestorian

173. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 198–204.

174. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 65–66.

175. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 62.

176. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 61–63.

Church in Hira sent missionaries all over Arabia, especially to Najran and as far east as India and Central Asia.¹⁷⁷

The city of Hira was full of churches and monasteries. The churches had square open spaces like the temples of Assure and Babylon. The most famous church in Hira was the **Bagota**, considered one of the seven sanctuaries of worship for Arabs before Islam. Monasteries were built in and around Hira by women of the royal family.

Hira was famous for its royal palaces and the dwellings of the aristocracy. These palaces had strong walled enclosures with a main gate and spacious courtyards and dwelling quarters. The palaces served another function in time of war, for Hira was an open city without fortified walls; thus the palaces were considered forts where, in times of danger, cattle, horses, and camels were driven into the central court, the palace gate was shut, and the inhabitants could remain safe within the thick, strong walls. The legendary palaces of **Khawarnaq** and **al-Sadir** were built in the beginning of the fifth century CE. Khawarnaq remained inhabited after the fall of the Lakhmids, and was used by the Umayyad governors of **Kufa**. It was enlarged and reused by the Abbasids, remaining in use until the eighth century CE.¹⁷⁸

The Ghassanids

During the late fourth and the fifth centuries CE, the tribe of **Salih** settled in Jordan. There is also evidence for their presence in northern Syria. The best known Salihid king, Dawud, built the monastery of Dawud southeast of Aleppo, between Rasafa and Isriya. Like most of the Arab tribes who settled in Syria-Palestine, they came originally from Yemen. During the reign of the **Emperor Arcadius** (395–408 CE), they replaced the Tanukh as a favored ally of Rome. In 468 CE, Emperor Leo incorporated a large contingent from Salih in his war in North Africa against the Vandals. In this war the Roman army was defeated and the Salih contingent was almost wiped out. The end result of this disaster was significant weakening of the Salih, which prompted the Romans to seek a new ally capable of defending their frontier. The new ally that emerged was the Ghassan tribe.¹⁷⁹

The Ghassan were originally a nomadic tribe from South Arabia who, like several other Arab tribes from Yemen, moved northward around the end of the second century CE following a breach of the **dam of Ma'rib**. This migration was attributed to the decline of regional economic conditions as a result of the bursting of the dam. Most likely other factors contributed to the economic decline, including the loss of South Arabia's monopoly on the trade routes with the East when the Romans started their seafaring adventures. The Ghassan wandered in western Arabia as a nomadic

177. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 69.

178. Zahran, *The Lakhmids of Hira*, 70.

179. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 101.

tribe. They stopped first in **Najran**, whose inhabitants are related to the tribes of South Arabia. After Najran they stopped in **Mecca**, where the **Khuza'a**, part of the larger **Azd** group to which they belonged, remained. Their third station was **Yathrib** (Madina), the rich oasis in the Hijaz where two subdivisions of the group, **al-Aws** and **al-Khazraj**, stayed on as agriculturists. A sister Arab group, the **Kinda**, also moved out of South Arabia, settled in Inner Arabia, and founded the city of **al-Faw**. The Ghassan continued their migration further north, eventually arriving in the western desert of Syria and Jordan around the end of the fifth century CE.¹⁸⁰

On their arrival at their final destination in the north, they settled in the **Badiya of Bilad al-Sham**, the arid area in which the previous Arab federates, the Tanukh and the Salih of the fourth and fifth centuries, had settled. In this arid area, the Ghassan exercised the skills in water techniques they had brought with them from South Arabia, to which they added what they had learned and developed in Yathrib. Their territory extended **from the Euphrates to the Gulf of Aqabah**, and included former Nabataean and Palmyrene territories. Their knowledge and experience in water techniques enabled them to convert the arid land into rich agricultural settlements.

The founder of the Ghassan tribe was **Jafnah ibn Amr Muzaqiba**; the date and the number and names of his successors are uncertain. In 502–503 CE, **Emperor Anastasius** recognized the Ghassan under their chief **al-Harith I** as supreme over their rivals, the Salih. In about 528 CE, **Emperor Justinian** awarded the son of al-Harith I, **al-Harith II ibn Jabalah**, the title of “patricius” as well as supreme phylarch, or head, over all the other tribes. In Arabic sources he has the title *malik* or “king.” During the reign of Justinian, the Romans faced a serious challenge from Persia.

The rise of **Khusrau I Anushirwan** to power in Iran ended the period of relative peace between the two empires. Khusrau adopted a policy of confrontation, and the Persians made increasing use of their Lakhmid allies to strike at Rome’s eastern territories. In 531 CE, the Lakhm raided the Roman territories as far as Antioch. In a battle at **Callinicum**, the legendary Roman commander **Belisarius** was defeated. The Ghassan forces, under the command of their king, al-Harith II Ibn Jabalah, were of great value in these wars, and in 554 CE they defeated the Lakhmids at a battle near **Chalcis**, killing the Lakhmid king. Over the following years, the Ghassan consolidated their position amongst the Arab tribes and became the main force in the Near East. Upon the death of al-Harith in 569 CE, his son al-Mundhir succeeded him and reigned until 581/2 CE. During the reign of al-Harith and his son al-Mundhir, the kingdom of Ghassan was almost completely autonomous, controlling all the eastern parts of the provinces of Arabia and Syria. In addition, the Monophysite Syrian church became fully independent from the Orthodox Church.¹⁸¹

180. Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 2, part 1: *Toponymy, Monuments, Historical Geography, and Frontier Studies* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 2–3.

181. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 101–102.

The emperor **Justin II**, influenced by the Orthodox Church, ordered the Roman governor of Syria to have al-Mundhir killed. The message was intercepted by Ghassanid intelligence. In response to this conspiracy, al-Mundhir encouraged the Lakhmids to raid the Roman territory, proving that without Arab support, the Roman Near East was vulnerable. Justin II conceded to al-Mundhir and signed a treaty in 575 CE acknowledging the privileged status of the Ghassan. In 580 CE, Emperor **Tiberius II** invited al-Mundhir to Constantinople and personally placed a crown on his head. However Tiberius's support for the Ghassanids ended when the military campaign by Tiberius' lieutenant, Caesar Maurice, against the Sassanians (Persians) failed. Al-Mundhir was blamed for the failure of the invasion and was exiled to Sicily. His four sons revolted against Constantinople. In response to their revolt, Maurice called for negotiation with the eldest son Nu'man, but tricked him into going to Constantinople, where he was arrested and also exiled to Sicily. The Romans succeeded in putting a speedy end to the revolt, which led to a significant reduction of the Ghassans' power; however, the Ghassan king continued to carry the title of phylarch.

The Ghassan played a major role in the Romans' defense strategies. They defended their frontiers and fought their wars against the Sassanians and their clients the Lakhmids. In return, they enjoyed many privileges; they earned complete autonomy to the point of near independence. In 629 CE, **Emperor Heraclius**, in recognition of the Ghassanids' great effort in his campaign against the Sassanians, made the last Ghassan king, **Jabala ibn al-Ayham**, supreme over the other tribes. The Ghassan remained loyal to Heraclius to the bitter end, providing him with a large contingent in the final decisive battle against the Arab Muslim forces at the **Battle of Yarmouk** (see page XX).¹⁸²

The Ghassanids who settled in the Nabataean and Palmyran areas inherited the trade routes and became the new guides and protectors of the caravans of the north-south and east-west routes. In the sixth century CE, they were the masters of trade in the Middle East. Jabiyah, in the Golan, was the capital of Ghassan. The Ghassanids established several settlements besides Jabiyah that became great towns and cities. Rasafa was one of their most prosperous centers. The huge cisterns which contributed greatly to the wealth and prosperity of the city are attributed to the Ghassan. These cisterns were a great testimony to the skills of the Ghassan in all kinds of water projects. In addition, Rasafa was an important trade station, receiving many travelers. Bosra also was an important trade center, besides its religious fame as the residence of a famous monk and teacher, **Bahira**. The remains of various buildings in northern Syria, such as **Qasr al-hayr al-Gharbi at Dmayr** and **Qasr ibn Wardan**, represent clear evidence of the extent of wealth and prosperity of the Ghassan. The Ghassanid courts were the most important centers for Arabic poetry; the luxury of the courts

182. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 102–103.

and the patronage of poets, musicians, and artists during the rule of the Ghassanids in Syria formed an immediate model for the Umayyad courts in Damascus.¹⁸³

Arabia and Palestine in History

The influence of Arabia on Palestine—through trade, conflict, and migration—is undeniable. The land of Palestine was deeply affected by the power shifts that took place throughout the region over the ages. The Lakhmids and Ghassans played a pivotal role in the wars between the Muslims and the Romans and the Muslims and the Sassanid Persians.

The history of Arabia from this point onward, however, is inseparable from the history of Islam; thus, before continuing our historical account, it is necessary to give an overview of the religions of Palestine and the surrounding areas. This is the subject of part II of Dr. Kanaan's history.

183. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 104–105.

PART II

The Religions of Palestine

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Early Religious Beliefs in Palestine and the Emergence of Judaism

Religion in Palestine during the Bronze and Iron Ages

During the Bronze and Iron ages, people in Palestine and the rest of the Near East believed in the concept of the “**Divine Council**” or the “**assembly of gods.**” The divine was understood to be the power that controlled and governed the functions of natural and human orders. There is no archaeological evidence to support the concept of monotheism in Palestine during this period; however, people did believe in the concept of a God of gods. **As early as the Bronze Age they referred to El as the father of the gods and the creator of heaven and earth, and referred to Asherah or Astarte as the “queen of heaven” or the “mother of all living.”** Baal was El’s chief executive. **Each major region of Palestine had its own main god apart from El: Baal in Phoenicia, Yahweh in the central highlands, Baal and Yahweh in the southern highlands, Qaus and Yahweh in Edom, and Moloch and Chemosh in Moab.** The religious beliefs in the highland states of Palestine did not differ from those of other regions of Palestine or Greater Syria. The religion of Israel and Judea was no different from those of Ammon, Moab, or Edom. Also, it was no different from the religious beliefs in Phoenician cities or in Elba, Ugarit, Hama, or Damascus.

Palestinian religious beliefs shared concepts of both polytheistic and monotheistic ideas; that is, they were henotheistic. This was the case in other parts of the ancient world. People understood gods as the power that controlled their life and destiny. The divine nature of gods in human religious thinking implied the recognition of the spiritual dimension of human life. In the ancient world, people believed that law, justice, and human destiny were all in the gods’ hands. The Code of Hammurabi that was published by the royal court in Babylon (1755–1750 BCE) declared that the king, the obedient servant of the god Marduk, had established justice as God had demanded of him. The concept of the power of the king being based on appointment by

the divine is seen in all texts from the law of Sumer to the codification of Roman law. It can be seen in Egypt's texts as well as in the texts of Assyria and Persia.¹

The Influence of the Ugarit Kingdom

A large number of clay tablets written in what is known as the **Ugaritic script**, consisting of thirty cuneiform signs representing alphabetic characters, were found in Ugarit, in the northern Levant, in 1929. These texts, dating from the fifteenth to fourteenth centuries BCE, dealt with legal, commercial, and administrative affairs. Many of them were related to religion and mythology, which was very helpful in demonstrating the connection between the religious beliefs of Ugarit and those of the rest of Canaan. It is clear from the textual archives that a large number of deities were worshipped in Ugarit and throughout Canaan. The supreme god was **El**, the father of the gods and ruler of the divine pantheon. **Asherah**, who was the marine goddess, was the mother of all gods. El's divine executive was **Baal**, who represented the royal power and the authority of God. Baal's spouse was **Anat**, the goddess of war and of love. A large number of deities were worshipped by the Canaanites: **Shemesh**, the sun goddess; **Yarikh**, the moon god; **Yam**, the sea prince; **Dagan**, the god of grain; and **Mot**, the ruler of the underworld.²

The texts of Ugarit made it possible to reconstruct the Canaanite pantheon and provided poems, myths, and legends of the adventures of the gods and goddesses. Such legends and stories represent the literary heritage of Canaan—which Israel, as a sub-polity of Canaan, also shared. **Unsurprisingly, many of these myths found their way into biblical writings.**³ One such example is the myth related to Baal and the primeval serpent, **Lothan**. This myth is almost identical to Isaiah 27:1, which states: “On that day the Lord shall punish with His great strong sword Leviathan the primeval serpent, Leviathan, the tortuous serpent, He will slay the dragon in the sea.”

In the early religions of Palestine, there were four distinct levels, or classes, of gods and goddesses:

- **El, the creator of the world, who fathered the other gods with his spouse:** El possessed all of the powers that belong to gods. He was the ultimate and the cause of all existence.
- **Major administrative deities:** These gods were responsible for all the forces in the ancient world: the state, the army, justice, death, fertility, love, the weather, the sea, etc. They were honored through dedications, monuments, and temples.

1. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 174–178.

2. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 73–75.

3. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 75.

- **Middle management:** These were the gods of families and clans, subordinate to the great or “high gods” and related to specific places or smaller regions.
- **Impersonal gods:** These deities possessed magical forces of good and evil that supported or terrified people. They included demons, the forces of disease, the power of fertility, the guardians who gave power to the evil eye, the shadows of past dead, or the spirit of an ancestor.⁴

The Religion and Mythology of Mesopotamia

European scholars (historians, archeologists, and linguists) became interested in exploring archeological sites in Iran and Iraq in the eighteenth century. Their efforts increased significantly in the mid-nineteenth century, encouraged by their governments’ desire to expand their influence in these countries. The greatest of those scholars was **Henry Creswicke Rawlinson**, an English soldier, diplomat, and linguist. He was the first to crack the cuneiform code.⁵ The excavating expeditions carried out by several archeologists and linguists in the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in the discovery of more than thirty thousand tablets inscribed in the Sumerian language. Publication of some of this material began as early as 1893.⁶

George Smith, an apprentice to Rawlinson in the British Museum in London, was eager to study and translate tablets and fragments that he had labeled as mythological and mythical. In 1872, Smith discovered in one of the tablets an independent version of the flood story, including the wooden ark, that coincided with the biblical narrative right down to the selection of survivors of the flood through the intervention of a god. He concluded that most likely the Bible scribes had borrowed a narrative they had heard when they were held in captivity in Babylon. Smith presented his findings before a large, distinguished audience assembled in the offices of the Society of Biblical Archeology. Rawlinson, when interviewed, emphasized the great commonality between the flood myth translated by Smith and a version handed down by the Babylonian priest **Berosus** in the third century BCE.⁷

The flood story was part of **the epic of Gilgamesh**. Gilgamesh, the fifth king of the first dynasty of Uruk, is believed to have lived in the period from 2850 to 2700 BCE. After losing his friend and comrade **Enkidu** to death, Gilgamesh leaves Uruk on a mission to find a man called **Utanapishtim**, who was granted everlasting life by the gods after the **Great Deluge**. Gilgamesh’s goal is to find out the secret of immortality, as he has become terrified of death. When Gilgamesh finds him, Utanapishtim

4. Tubb, *Canaanites*, 173.

5. Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 1–6.

6. Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) 13–23.

7. William Ryan and Walter Pitman, *Noah’s Flood* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998) 27–29.

relates a tale that bears marked similarities to the biblical story of the flood: Being told by a god that a flood is planned to destroy mankind, he built a boat and took on board “the seed of every living creature.” A storm raged for seven nights and days; when it calmed, he sent out a dove to see if the floodwaters had subsided, but it returned, unable to find food. He tried again with a swallow, and finally a raven, which did not return. Then he and his wife disembarked and made a sacrifice to the gods, who endowed them with immortality.⁸

George Smith was involved in the excavation expeditions at the site of Nineveh in northern Iraq for several years, during which he came across nine or ten Assyrian tablets that he named “**The Story of the Creation and Fall.**” Smith published the narrative of the creation in his book *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*. The resemblance of this material to the Old Testament chapter of Genesis was unmistakable. In the tablets, the epic of **Enuma Elish** describes a time when nothing existed aside from the divine parents, **Apsu and Tiamat, and their son Mummu**. Apsu was the primeval sweet-water ocean, and Tiamat the saltwater ocean, while Mummu represented the mist rising from the bodies of water and hovering over them. These three types of water were mingled in one mass that contained all the elements needed to create the universe.⁹ The people of ancient Mesopotamia did not question how the primordial elements came into being.

Heaven was created of its own accord.

Earth was created of its own accord.

Heaven was an abyss, earth was an abyss.

All Mesopotamian creation stories were based on the existence of heaven and earth. In ancient Mesopotamia, the human race was created from clay, mixed with divine blood. Man was created to take over the gods’ work so the gods could rest. Personal well-being was tied to correct worship of the gods. If an individual sinned or a community neglected the proper rites, disorder, plague, earthquake, fire, or other evils could befall the entire community.¹⁰

During the fourth millennium BCE, early Mesopotamians regarded the supernatural forces that controlled their life as mysterious and impersonal. They believed that storms, rivers, lakes, marshes, mountains, sun, wind, and fire were beings, and so they worshipped all forces of nature. During the third millennium, as Mesopotamia entered the city-state period, these nature gods were transformed into city gods or heads of state. The Sumerian theologians assumed that a pantheon made of a group

8. George Smith, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis, Containing the Description of the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, the Times of the Patriarchs, and Nimrod: Babylonian Fables, and Legends of the Gods; from the Cuneiform Inscriptions* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co, 1876), 263–273.

9. Gerald J. Davis, *Gilgamesh: The New Translation* (Bridgeport, CT: Insignia Publishing, 2014) 57–60.

10. Davis, *Gilgamesh*, 61–65.

of living beings—humanlike in form but superhuman and immortal—were operating, directing, and supervising the universe. This pantheon controlled the cosmos in accordance with well-laid plans and laws. They functioned as an assembly with a king at their head; their mission was to protect their realm against external enemies and internal lawlessness.¹¹

An, the god of the sky, was the supreme ruler of the pantheon. All things on heaven and earth conformed to his will. **Enlil**, “Lord Wind,” became the leader of the pantheon around 2500 BCE. Enlil is known as “the father of the gods, the king of heaven and earth, the king of all the lands.” The Sumerian myths and hymns portray Enlil as the creator of the cosmos. **Enki** (called **Ea** in Akkadian) was the god of wisdom who organized the earth in accordance with the decisions of Enlil. **Ninmah** was the mother-goddess. She may originally have been **Ki** (mother-earth), who shared power with **An**, the sky god. In one of her myths, she plays an important role in the creation of man, and in another she starts a chain of divine births in **Dilmun**, the paradise of the gods, which leads up to the “forbidden fruit” motif. Sumerians cherished goodness and truth, law and order, justice and freedom, mercy and compassion. The gods empowered rulers to establish law and order, to protect the weak from the strong and the poor from the rich, and to wipe out evil and violence.

Zoroastrianism: The Start of Monotheism

The Persians were the nomadic people known as the **Indo-Europeans** who migrated to Persia from the region of Central Asia known now as the southern steppes of Russia. Their religion was based on the same principle as all ancient religions: the concept of a pantheon of gods. The Persian pantheon held three principal gods: Varuna, the god of the oath and lord of the waters; Mithra, the god of the covenant and lord of fire; and Ahura Mazda, the lord of wisdom.

Zoroaster (Zarathustra in Persian) was the prophet of the first revealed religion of the world, **Zoroastrianism**. Many historians believe that Zarathustra had lived between 1400 and 1000 BCE. He was probably born in what was then northwestern Persia, roughly where the boundaries of modern Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan meet today.¹² At the age of twenty, he left home and began a period of wandering inquiry about the nature of righteousness. From when he was twenty to when he was thirty, he lived in solitude on a mountain, searching for answers. At the age of thirty he met a glorious angel, **Vohu Mana**, on a riverbank. The angel asked him who he was and what the most important thing in his life was. Zarathustra replied that he wanted

11. Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

12. Paula R. Hartz, *Zoroastrianism* (New York: Infobase Publishing, third ed. pub. 2009), 26.

most of all to be righteous and pure and to gain wisdom. With that, the angel led him into the presence of Ahura Mazda, who was accompanied by six other angels. It was there and then that the prophet received his revelation.¹³

Mary Boyce, a leading scholar of Zoroastrianism at London University, states clearly the role of Zoroastrianism in shaping the teachings of Judaism and other monotheistic religions:

Zoroaster was thus the first to teach the doctrines of an individual judgment, heaven and hell, the future resurrection of the body, the general Last Judgment, and life everlasting for the reunited soul and body. These doctrines were to become familiar articles of faith to much of mankind, through borrowings by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; yet it is in Zoroastrianism itself that they have their fullest logical coherence, since Zoroaster insisted both on the goodness of the material creation, and hence of the physical body, and on the unwavering impartiality of divine justice. According to him, salvation for the individual depended on the sum of his thoughts, words and deeds, and there could be no intervention, whether compassionate or capricious, by any divine Being to alter this. With such a doctrine, belief in the Day of Judgment had its full awful significance, with each man having to bear the responsibility for the fate of his own soul, as well as sharing in responsibility for the fate of the world.¹⁴

R.C. Zaehner, former chair of Eastern religions at Oxford University, states:

From the moment the Jews first made contact with the Iranians they took over the typical Zoroastrian doctrine of an individual afterlife in which rewards are to be enjoyed and punishment endured. This Zoroastrian hope gained ever surer ground during the inter-testamentary period, and by the time of Christ it was upheld by the Pharisees, whose very name some scholars have interpreted as meaning “Persian”; that is, the sect most open to Persian influence.¹⁵

The basic principles of Zoroastrianism are as follows:

- **Ahura Mazda (Spenta Mainyu, which means holy spirit)** is the one eternally existing god and supreme creator of all that is good, including all beneficent divinities.

13. Hartz, *Zoroastrianism*, 32.

14. Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 29.

15. R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961), 58.

- **Ahriman (Angra Mainyu)**, which means the **hostile spirit** is also equally uncreated and eternal, and represents wickedness and cruelty and all that is bad.
- **Free will**—Ahura Mazda does not control every aspect of human life. At creation he gave humanity the gift of free will, which gave humans the choice to do the will of Ahura Mazda, to live according to the teachings of Zoroaster: **Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds**. Upon death, the individual soul is judged according to what it has done in this life. Each soul must depend on its own ethical achievements when judged. If the good are heavier than the bad, then the soul is judged worthy of paradise; otherwise, the soul is led to Hell.¹⁶

The battle between the perfect good and the spirit of evil will continue for several thousand years. At the end of this period, a savior will lead people successfully against the forces of evil and ignorance. When the forces of darkness and evil are annihilated in the last great battle, resurrection will occur, followed by the last judgment, in which all the righteous are separated from the wicked—both those who have lived until that time and those who have been judged already. At this point Ahriman (Angra Mainyu) and all traces of wickedness in the universe will be burned in Hell, and the world will be restored to its original perfect state.

The Emergence of Judaism

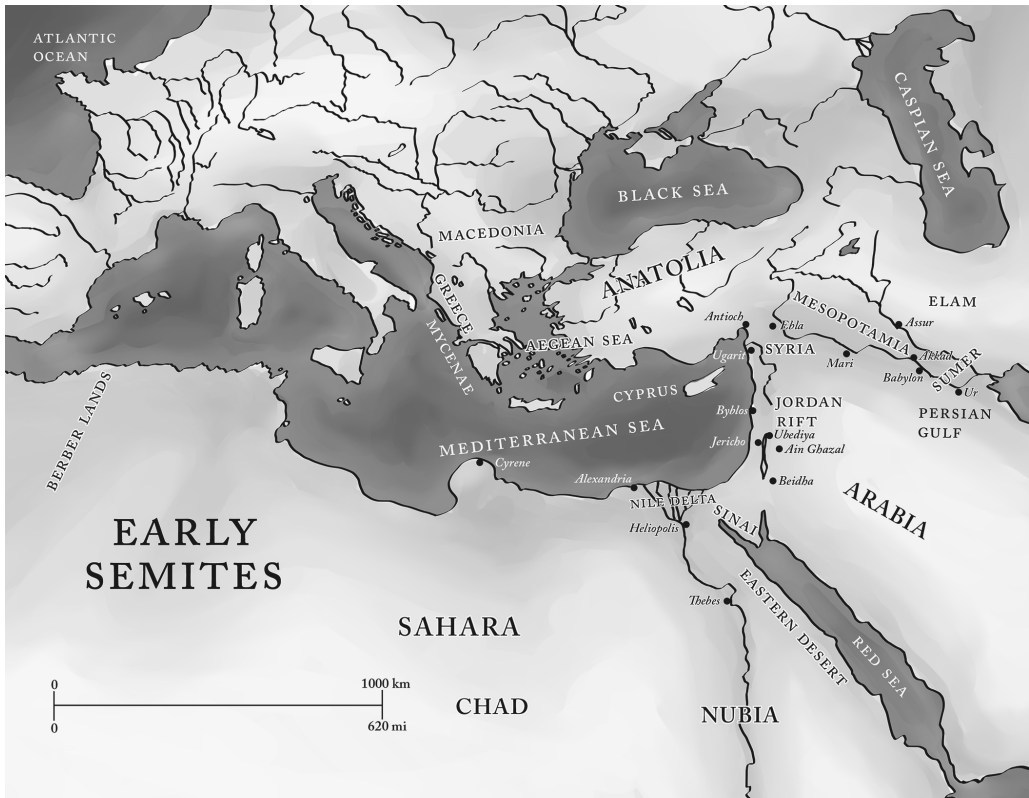
The Semites

The term “Semite” comes from the mythology of the Old Testament, which states that the Semites are the descendants of **Noah’s eldest son Shem**. “According to scientific usage . . . the term is a linguistic one; it applies to him who speaks or spoke a Semitic language. The Semitic languages are now recognized as a distinct family comprising Assyro-Babylonian (Akkadian), Canaanite (Phoenician), Aramaic, Hebrew, Arabic and Ethiopic.”¹⁷

During the nineteenth century CE, Western historians introduced the theory that the Semites originated in **Arabia**, migrating to the Fertile Crescent in the third millennium BCE in search of more fertile land. This theory was not based on any historical records or archeological finds; it arose from the belief of some scholars that the Semitic languages are closer to Arabic than to the old Akkadian and Babylonian texts of ancient Mesopotamia or the texts of Ugarit of Syria. Those scholars believed that around 3500 BCE, a Semitic migration from Arabia moved northeast and settled among the highly civilized Sumerian population of Mesopotamia, produc-

16. Hartz, *Zoroastrianism*, 12–13.

17. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 61.



ing the Akkadians (later known as the Babylonians). A millennium later, another wave brought the **Amorites**, who settled in the northern plains of Syria and then moved to Mesopotamia, and the **Canaanites**, who settled in the plains of Palestine. These historians also invented the story of a third wave of semi-nomads, the Aramaeans, who moved from Arabia into central and northern Syria between 1500 and 1200 BCE, supposedly founding the states of Aram, Ammon, Moab, and Edom in Syria and eastern Palestine.¹⁸

During the 1950s and 1960s, German scholars who had begun to recognize close similarities between verbs in the Akkadian language and in some of the languages of North Africa developed a new theory about the origin of the **Semitic languages**. This theory held that the Semitic languages that developed among the sedentary agriculturists of Syria-Palestine and then in the Mesopotamian heartland were closely related to a number of African languages: the Berber and Egyptian languages, as well as the Cushite language of the modern Sudan and the language of Chad south of the Sahara.

A third theory emerged in the 1970s, when texts from ancient **Elba** in Syria were discovered which showed that West Semitic had been the language spoken in all the regions of Syria and Palestine during the third millennium BCE. The West Semitic languages have a common vocabulary for words related to agriculture, horticulture, and sheep- and goat-herding. This vocabulary must have been utilized by people who were both sedentary and agricultural, not Bedouins. As Mesopotamia had a very short period of pre-Bronze Age settlements, Syria and Palestine most likely were the region of the earliest development of the Semitic languages. By the 1980s, the Semito-Hamitic (also known as Afro-Asiatic) theory had gained more support from archeologists and linguistic historians, and became the most prominent theory.¹⁹

The above-described migration-from-Arabia theory collapsed, as it lacked any support from historical texts or archaeological research. Greater Syria (Palestine-Syria) had been inhabited by an advanced population who had established hundreds of villages and towns since the beginning of the Neolithic Age.

The Concept of Monotheism

Judaism as a monotheistic religion evolved during the fifth century BCE. In 586–587 BCE, many of the citizens of the kingdom of Judea had been exiled to Babylon. Around 550 BCE, the Persian ruler **Cyrus II** launched a political campaign prior to his military advancement toward Babylon, promising that he would honor the gods, restore the temples, rebuild the ruined cities, and restore a universal peace. He pre-

18. Hitti, *History of Syria*, 64.

19. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 110–111.

sented himself as the one chosen by the gods to return the scattered people to their homelands and to restore their temples and religions. In 539 BCE, he issued a decree allowing the Palestinian exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. A number of groups and their families were transferred from Mesopotamia and resettled in southern Palestine. They established a new colony in and around Jerusalem.²⁰ The rest—possibly the majority—chose to remain in the cultural centers of the flourishing east.²¹

The exiles in Babylon were influenced by the culture and religious concepts of Persia, which were based on universal theology. They were exposed to **Zoroastrianism**, which was an expression of monotheism. The interaction between the exiles and their descendants on one hand and the center of high culture of Babylon on the other provided the foundation for **Judaism as monotheistic religion**. The exiles in Babylon were engaged in a remarkable religious reform that evolved into the monotheistic religion of Judaism.²²

During the Persian rule over Palestine (538–332 BCE), the inhabitants of Yehud were referred to as **Yehodim**. This is a religious description, not a geographic or ethnographic one, meaning the adherents of Yahweh. The term “Jews” was also used as a religious description of those people. “**Judaism**” refers to religious and philosophical traditions which embrace the classical world of monotheism. This term does not apply only to the Yahweh temple community of Jerusalem, but also includes all the communities associated with other Yahweh temples and cults. **It is a theological definition, not an ethnic one.** It includes all variant historical forms of the religion throughout Palestine and the shores of the Mediterranean: **the Shomronim of Samaria, the Samaritans, the Hellenistic Jews of Philo in Alexandria, the Elephantine colony, the Zadokites and Nazirites, the Essenes, the Saducees, and the Pharisees.**²³

The Persian kings adopted a policy of granting their subjects a certain level of autonomy. Palestine was divided into several districts. The southern highlands of Palestine, referred to in the Assyrians’ records as **Judea**, became known under Persian rule as the province of **Yehud**, which was limited to Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside.²⁴ The people of Yehud were managed by a dual system: politically by governors appointed by the Persian authority, and religiously by priests. Yehud was of great strategic value because of its location on the border of Egypt. Palestine remained in the hands of the Persians for two centuries until the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great of Macedonia in 332 BCE.²⁵

20. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 90–91.

21. Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (New York: Verso, 2010), 144.

22. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 100.

23. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 254–256.

24. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 257.

25. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 308–310.

Under Xerxes (r. 486–465 BCE), the Persians adopted a policy of centralized control over religious ideology by banning pluralist religious ideas.²⁶ This appears to have been the turning point toward exclusive monotheism in the Near East. This ideology was clearly stated in the Persian and Aramaic texts of Cyrus's era (590–529 BCE), which expounded on a single god who controls human life—**Ahura Mazda** in Persia; **Marduk** in Babylon; **Sin** in Haran; **Baal Shamem** in Greater Syria; and **Elohe Shamayim**, later called **Yahweh**, in Palestine.

The first group of exiles returned to Palestine under the leadership of **Sheshbazzar** (a member of the exiles' royal family) shortly after Cyrus defeated Babylon. A few of them actually stayed in Jerusalem; others settled in the countryside south of Jerusalem. Hardly any building work was done at this stage. The second group came after Darius's accession, under the leadership of **Zerubbabel**, who was appointed as the high commissioner of Yehud. He gathered all the returnees in Jerusalem to build a temple. They started with the altar, and when it was finished, they began to offer sacrifices. The building work was stalled due to the deterioration of the economy. Construction resumed in 520 BCE, and was completed in March 515 BCE. From the start, the temple was a disappointment for the returnees, as it was so modest and simple.²⁷

The returnees to Jerusalem from Babylon were a minority in Yehud. However, they were closely connected with the Persian administration. They were of high social, religious, and economic status, which gave them power far beyond their number. They were able to control the entire population of Yehud because they were in control of the temple. The main goal of these elites was to reunite the community around the new temple. **According to Thomas Thompson, the construction of the temple by the returnees in the fifth century was a great historical event that triggered and initiated the process of the formation of the Old Testament. He believes that the process of the Bible formation could possibly have started as early as 450 BCE (the Nehemiah and Ezra periods) or as late as the second century BCE (the Maccabean period).**²⁸ **Benedict de Spinoza stated in his *Theological-Political Treatise* that “the main books of the Bible were written and theologically engineered only after those who left Babylon arrived in Jerusalem, and even at a later time, during the Hellenistic period.”**²⁹ The community of authors was most likely large and diverse, and maintained constant contact with the centers in Babylon. It is obvious that the texts were repeatedly written and rewritten over a period of many generations, resulting in repeated accounts, the absence of narrative consistency, lapses in memory, changes in style, and significant numbers of contradictions.³⁰

26. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 295–300.

27. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 92–96.

28. Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, 293.

29. Sand, *The Invention of Israel*, 76.

30. Sand, *The Invention of Israel*, 81.

The Old Testament contains a large collection of stories that were circulating among the inhabitants of the entire Near East. The **creation stories** of the Old Testament are borrowed from the creation mythology of the Sumerians. The flood-and-ark epic was part of **the epic of Gilgamesh**, as mentioned above.

The returnees who had been born and raised in Babylon considered themselves superior to their neighbors in other parts of Palestine. According to **Israel Finkelstein**, this separatist ideology was behind the composition of the biblical narrative. The biblical scribes invented the ethnicity myth, claiming that the inhabitants of the central and south highlands were descendants of immigrants from Mesopotamia during the third millennium BCE, and from Egypt during the thirteenth century BCE.³¹ Both Mesopotamia and Egypt were considered the most prestigious cultural centers in the Near East. This story was also behind the separatist ideology that dominated the Old Testament: **“The Jewish people are the people chosen by God.”** It is also behind the violent nature of their religion. The authors of the biblical texts not only opposed the inhabitants of the land, but called for their complete eradication to make room for God’s chosen people. **God addressed Moses: “But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes” (Deuteronomy 20:16).**

The Bible describes the extermination of the local population of Palestine after the conquest of Jericho by Joshua: “They completely destroyed everything in the city with the sword, every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey” (Joshua 6:21). “So Joshua conquered the whole region, the hill country, the Negev, the Judean foothills, and the slopes, with all their kings, leaving no survivors. He completely destroyed every living being, as the lord, the God of Israel, had commanded” (Joshua 10:40). “And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the people of Israel took for their plunder. But every person they struck with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they did not leave any who breathed” (Joshua 11:14).

Judaism started in Jerusalem as an exclusive cult for the returnees (*golah*), and continued as such for a while. The cult members were prohibited from integrating with the simple rural people of the land, and from marrying into local pagan families. Those who married local women were ordered to divorce them, and those who had returned from Babylon were forced to import wives from Babylonia. These policies were behind the composition of such prohibitions in the Deuteronomy. Moses issued the following instructions:

When the Lord your God brings you to the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the

31. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 310–313.

Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numbered and mightier than you, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. (Deuteronomy 7:1–3)

The Samaritans

The definition of the Samaritans and Samaritanism contains three principal elements: First, their self-awareness as a religious sect; second, their use of the Samaritan Pentateuch; and third, their preference for Mount Gerizim (the south mountain of Nablus) as the proper place of worship.

The term “Samaritan” refers to a well-defined and self-conscious religious sect that uses a version of the Pentateuch called the Samaritan Pentateuch as its sacred text; they honor Mount Gerizim as the proper place of worship.³²

The Hasmonean period (168–123 BCE) can be identified as the beginning of the Samaritan religious sect. The sect emerged on the historical horizon during the middle of the second century BCE. The Samaritans believe themselves to represent the orthodox faith; they hold that Judaism is the deviant. This understanding is reflected in their self-designation: “**Shomrim**,” which means “**keepers of the Torah**.”³³

When Jesus conversed with a Samaritan woman at Sychar, near Shechem (modern-day Nablus) on various subjects, including Jewish-Samaritan relations, the woman was amazed that Jesus was even talking to her, and said: “Jews do not share [things] in common with Samaritans” (John 4:9). Later, the woman told Jesus: “Our ancestors worshiped at this mountain [Gerizim], but you [Jews] say that the place at which God must be worshipped is in Jerusalem” (John 4:20). The conversation between the Samaritan woman and Jesus reflects the strained relations between Samaritans and Jews in the early centuries of the Common Era. Both Samaritans and Jews advocated centralization (as demanded in the Torah [Deuteronomy 12])—the firmly held tenet that the God of Israel had to be worshipped only at one location—but differed strongly about where that worship was to be centered (Mount Gerizim vs. Mount Zion).³⁴

The Samaritans are the descendants of the inhabitants of the city-state of Israel, in the central hills of Palestine, founded by its leader (king) Omri in the early ninth

32. Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2002), 9.

33. Anderson and Giles, *The Keepers*, 11.

34. Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

century BCE. Its capital was Samaria. This state lost its independence in 733–732 BCE, when the Assyrian king **Tiglath-Pileser III** invaded Syria-Palestine and defeated the house of Omri. The Assyrian king **Shalmaneser V** captured Samaria in 722–721 BCE after a two-year siege. The new Assyrian king, **Sargon II**, who succeeded Shalmaneser in 720 BCE, implemented the Assyrian bidirectional deportation policy. During the reigns of Shalmaneser and Sargon, the deportation of Israel's inhabitants and the importation of foreign peoples resulted in demographic and religious transformation. The Assyrian royal inscriptions mention the arrival of state-sponsored immigrants in Samaria; however, the numbers of foreign imports did not appear to be high, and it seemed that the immigrants were gradually absorbed into the local population. Archeological findings demonstrated continuity in material culture in the city of Samaria and the Samaritan hill country, which indicates that neither the Assyrians themselves nor the immigrants they sponsored were sufficient in number to replace the Israelites.³⁵

The Samaritans, who prefer to call themselves Israelites (not Israelis), claim that they originated in the eleventh century BCE. According to the Samaritan book of Joshua (which is different from the biblical book): “Joshua assembled the tribes of Israel at Shechem for the reading of a new covenant.” It was at Shechem (now called Nablus) that the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, had affirmed their covenant after occupying the land of Canaan, making Shechem the original holy place of all Israel. The deviations from the pure Israelite religion began with Eli and Samuel, continued with David and Solomon, and were pursued with vigor by Ezra after the Babylonian exile. According to Samaritan tradition, Ezra corrupted the Torah with the addition of “fables, legends, and lies,” insisted on a temple in Jerusalem, and falsely claimed that the Samaritans were of Gentile descent. The Samaritans and the Jews agree that the eventual split between the two groups had at its core a division within the priesthood. The Samaritans claim an uninterrupted succession of priests and worship on Mount Gerizim, preserving the ancient tradition of the “House of Joseph.”³⁶

The Jewish interpretation of the origins of the Samaritan group is based on 2 Kings (17:25–26), which refers to the devastation of the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BCE. The Bible implies that the Samaritans descended from peoples who had been deported by the Assyrians from other parts of their vast empire. Among those who resettled in Samaria were people from **Cuthah**, the region surrounding an ancient city of the same name northeast of Babylon. This was one of the lands conquered by the Assyrians and subjected to the policy of forced migration. Eventually “**Cuthean**” became the Jews’ name for the Samaritans and thus a reminder of Jewish contempt for these genetically and religiously impure persons. The biblical story of

35. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 18–43.

36. Anderson and Giles, *The Keepers*, 10–13.

2 Kings 17 emphasizes that these “Cutheans,” deported by the Assyrians, adopted a form of the Israelite religion in part as an effort to ward off a plague of lions sent by God as punishment for ignoring Him. These “lion proselytes” were never to be trusted, and certainly were not honored with the name “Israelite,” because their syncretistic form of worship recognized a multiplicity of deities (2 Kings 17:33). In fact, however, Cutheans were simply the inhabitants of the north; they were not Samaritans. Sargon’s deportation of the indigenous Israelite population from Samaria primarily affected the aristocracy within the city. The groups brought into the region to replace the deportees remained a minority. **In the Bible, 2 Kings refers to this select few and not the general population, and certainly not a religious sect that had not yet attained a sense of self-awareness (i.e., the Samaritans).** The prophetic books (Isaiah through Malachi) contain indirect evidence that the schism between Jews and Samaritans had not taken place by the fifth century. These prophetic texts do not mention a group called the Samaritans.³⁷

The Assyrians were not consistent in their administrative policies in Samaria; while they deported some Israelites, they left many others in place, which explains why the region of Samaria made a swifter recovery after the Assyrian campaigns than Judea did after the Babylonian invasions in the sixth century BCE. Under Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians took a much more devastating approach to dealing with rebellions in Palestine. Excavations in Jerusalem indicate that the Babylonians did massive damage to the city’s fortifications and major buildings. The contrast with the relatively lenient treatment given to the city of Samaria is striking. The Assyrians were much more interested in directing the resources of their empire toward exploiting the possibilities for trade and commerce in the southern Levant than the Babylonians were.³⁸

In the mid to late fifth century BCE, **Nehemiah**, the governor of Persian Jerusalem under Artaxerxes I, not only was trying to build a physical wall, but also was creating an ethnic wall between Judea and Samaria. Such concentrated efforts by Nehemiah were repeatedly met with resistance from high-ranking members of his own elite, who advocated cooperation between the Judeans and the Samaritans. The tensions between Nehemiah, Sanballat (the governor of Samaria), and Tobiah (an Ammonite official) reveal that Yahwists in Judea, Samaria, and other regions were concerned about their own ethnic identities. Nehemiah’s campaign to create a more independent Yehud set an important precedent for later Judean rulers, especially the Maccabees. It is important to mention here that some of the Judeans disagreed with major components of Nehemiah’s national agenda. The fact that Nehemiah felt compelled to justify his harsh treatment of his opponents indicates that there were other viewpoints

37. Anderson and Giles, *The Keepers*, 14–18.

38. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 43–44.

that held sway within the community. This was also evidenced by the fact that there was no major breach between Samaria and Judea during this period.³⁹

During the Hellenistic period, both Samaria and Judea faced challenges and suffered from significant political and economic decline. In 331 BCE, Samaritans murdered the Macedonian-appointed prefect of Syria. Alexander's forces carried out a punitive campaign against the Samaritans. Alexander destroyed the town of Samaria and settled a colony of Macedonians at the site. In 296 BCE, Ptolemy I deported many captives from Jerusalem, Samaria, and Mount Gerizim to Egypt. However, during the same period, certain areas in Palestine witnessed growth and prosperity. The region of southern Samaria increased in population and material wealth, and around 200 BCE, Seleucid ruler Antiochus III accorded the Mount Gerizim temple the same privileges he accorded to the Jerusalem temple. The Samaritans at Mount Gerizim managed to expand the temple complex, and were able to build sections of a city wall on the southern edge of the site, in addition to towers, large domiciles, service buildings, courtyards, oil presses, storage jars, and various lamps. The Samaritan Yahwists during this period expanded to different regions of the Mediterranean. Two Samaritan inscriptions dating to the late third and early second century BCE were discovered on the Aegean island of Delos; in these inscriptions, there is a mention of "the Israelites in Delos who make offerings for the temple of Mount Gerizim."⁴⁰

The early Hellenistic period witnessed periodic cooperation among members of the Yahwistic elites of Samaria and Judea. Many Judeans emigrated northward to Samaria during this period. The Samaritan governor Sanballat persuaded Alexander the Great to assist the Samaritans in constructing their own temple. Now the two Yahwist sects were able to build their own temples, one on Mount Zion and the other on Mount Gerizim. A Judean priest from the elite priestly family of Jerusalem was appointed as the high priest of the temple of Mount Gerizim. The Samaritan and Judean Yahwists worked together to create a common collection of prestigious scriptures: the **Pentateuch**, or the five books of Moses, the authoritative set of stories and laws revealing God's will for Israel. It is not clear how such a process of scribal communications was achieved. Not much is known about the interactions between the political and religious leadership of the two provinces, but it is important to recognize the existence of one vital social and religious institution shared by the two: the **Aaronide priesthood**. The temple priesthoods at Mount Gerizim and Mount Zion both claimed a common priestly pedigree. Each sought to legitimize its sacerdotal leadership by tracing its origin to Moses's brother **Aaron**, the authoritative high priest of the Sinaitic period. Each tradition acknowledged that the priests serving at the other group's temple were also of an Aaronide pedigree. The fact that the Aaronide priesthood controlled both temples undoubtedly facilitated contacts

39. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 165–168.

40. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 169–171.

between the two communities. **In an age in which both Judea and Samaria were occupied by the same foreign regime and subject to its administrative, military, and economic policies, the Pentateuch provided each group with a larger social and religious identity.**⁴¹

The Deuteronomic laws of centralization mandated cultic unity, involving only one sacred site, and cultic purity throughout the entire land (Deuteronomy 12:1–13:1). Such regulations entailed the elimination of all non-Yahwistic sanctuaries and all rival Yahwistic sanctuaries to the central sanctuary. How did the Samaritans and the Judeans resolve this issue, and accept two sacred sites?

Textual and literary evidence . . . indicates that the Pentateuch shared by the Judeans and the Samaritans was ultimately a compromise document, a work that could (and did, and does) function as scripture for both communities. . . . The ambiguous phraseology in the centralization legislation in which the site of Yhwh's own choosing goes unnamed was a critical component of the Judean-Samaritan compromise. Such imprecise language could be (and was, and is) interpreted differently by each group. The lack of definition in this critical edict allowed for multiple readings and sustained the notion that both Samaritans and Judeans belonged to a larger people called Israel. Both societies were bound by the same authoritative scriptures, even if they understood some key texts in these common writings differently.⁴²

The mid- to late second century BCE witnessed a decline in the position of Samaria and a rise of the position of Judea. During the **Maccabee era** (167–37 BCE), Judea gradually came to dominate the southern Levant. The Maccabees (discussed later in this chapter) expanded their state into Samaria, Idumea, Galilee, Gilead, Perea, Moab, and beyond. In 111–110 BCE, the Maccabean high priest **John Hyrcanus** laid siege to Mount Gerizim and defeated the Samaritans, destroying their sanctuary. His forces also captured Shechem and reduced it to a village. The destruction of the Mount Gerizim temple ended the existence of the chief Yahwistic competitor to the Jerusalem sanctuary within the land and swung the pendulum entirely toward Judea. If Samaria had been the dominant power in relationship to Judea during the Neo-Babylonian and part of the Persian period, the opposite was now true. With a Maccabean leader in charge of Judea—which expanded to include all of Palestine—there was no longer any need to contemplate points of strategic cooperation with Samaria. For John Hyrcanus, exterminating the Mount Gerizim temple not only fulfilled the centralization mandate but also consolidated political, sacerdotal, and

41. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 190–193.

42. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 212.

economic power in Jerusalem. However, this achievement came at a significant cost. The military and religious victory of Hyrcanus resulted in tremendous Samaritan resentment and prompted their scribes to create a new edition of the Pentateuch that differed from the Jewish Pentateuch in a number of critical respects. By including Mount Gerizim in a revised version of the “**ten words**,” Samaritan scribes ensured that the recently destroyed central temple was indelibly and perpetually enshrined within the scriptures they held dear. In effect, the Samaritan scribes removed ambiguities and rendered explicit what they thought that the Pentateuch had meant in the first place. The Samaritan additions to the books of Moses distanced these texts from those of their Judean counterparts. **What differentiates the Samaritans from the Jews is not just their Samaritan Pentateuch, but also “the delimitation of the canon to the five books of Moses, the belief in the exalted status and uniqueness of Moses as a prophet (and the concomitant rejection of the prophets and the prophetic books in the Jewish Tanakh), the belief in the unity of God (monotheism, transcendence, constancy, eternity, power, justice, and mercy), the practice of their own calendar, and the belief in a day of divine vengeance and recompense.”**⁴³

The Old Testament and Early Jewish History

The Old Testament is a collection of legends, laws, poetry, philosophy, and history. It is the central scripture of Judaism and the first part of Christianity’s canon. It is also an essential reference of the teachings of Islam conveyed through the Quran, which includes the biblical stories of all the Jewish prophets. It consists of thirty-nine books that can be divided into three main sections:

- The **Torah** (the five books of Moses, or the Pentateuch), which includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- The **Prophets**, which is divided into two main groups: the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings) and the later prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).
- The **Writings**, which is a collection of homilies, poems, prayers, proverbs, and psalms.

For a relatively long period of time, Western historians considered the Bible to be a historical account, and used the Old Testament narrative as a reference for the history of the Near East. However, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed

43. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 215.

major archaeological advancements that led to reevaluation of this position. The historicity of the biblical narrative became the subject of debate for decades. This debate has intensified in recent years, especially since the early 1990s. Archaeology contributed greatly to this debate, as it utilized anthropology and ethnography in studying archaeological finds. However, some biblical archaeologists used archaeology to promote the biblical narrative as a real history in spite of the absence of actual support in archaeological finds. As an example, **Nelson Gluek**, the archaeologist who was involved in the excavation at **Tell el-Kheleifeh** at the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, interpreted the remains in this region as evidence of a huge copper-smelting industry in the days of King Solomon. This romantic image later proved to be a fantasy—a wishful illusion based on the biblical text rather than on actual archaeological evidence.

For centuries, readers of the Bible unquestioningly believed that the scriptures were both divine revelation and accurate history conveyed directly by God to a wide variety of sages, prophets, and priests. The Pentateuch—the five books of Moses, including the book of Deuteronomy—was supposed to have been set down in writing by Moses himself, even though Deuteronomy describes in great detail the precise time and circumstances of Moses' own death. This raised a troubling question: how could Moses describe his own death?

By the nineteenth century CE, biblical scholars had concluded that the Pentateuch was the product of several writers, noting that the book of Genesis contained two conflicting versions of the creation (1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25), two different genealogies of Adam's offspring (4:17–26 and 5:1–28), and two flood stories (6:5–9:17). Most scholars now believe that the Bible was composed, compiled, and edited by priests and scribes as late as the Hellenistic period (fourth to second centuries BCE).⁴⁴ Archaeology played a crucial role in the debate about the composition and reliability of the Bible. By the end of the twentieth century CE, archaeology had shown that the Bible was a fanciful collection of priestly literature, written with no historical basis at all. **Israel Finkelstein** concludes: “**The biblical stories should be regarded as a national mythology with no more historical basis than the Homeric saga of Odysseus's travels or Virgil's saga of Aeneas's founding of Rome.**”

A brief summary of Old Testament stories is presented below, followed by a summary of the archaeological finds related to these stories.

The Biblical Patriarchs

According to the Bible, **Abraham** originally came from **Ur** in southern Mesopotamia and resettled with his family in **Haran**, on one of the upper Euphrates tributaries in northern Syria. In Haran, God appeared to him and commanded: “**Go from your**

44. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 11–13.

country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing" (Genesis 12: 1–2). Abram (as he was then called) obeyed God, took his wife Sarai (as she was then called) and his nephew Lot, and departed for Palestine. He wandered with his flocks throughout the central hill country between Shechem, Bethel, and Hebron. During his travels, he built altars to God in several places.

God promised Abram and his descendants all the lands from "the River of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). God changed Abram's name to Abraham, to signify his role as the patriarch of many people, "For I have made you the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5). God also changed Sarai's name to Sarah.

During the wandering of Abraham's family in Palestine, the shepherds of Abraham quarreled with the shepherds of Lot, so they decided to partition the land. Abraham and his people remained in the western highlands, while Lot and his family settled in Sodom near the Dead Sea. The people of Sodom and the nearby city of Gomorrah proved to be wicked and treacherous, so God rained brimstone and fire on the sinful cities, destroying them. Lot then moved to the eastern hills and became the ancestor of the people of Moab and Ammon in Transjordan.

Abraham also became the father of several other ancient peoples. Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave, became Abraham's concubine, as Sarah could not produce children because of her advanced age. Hagar gave birth to a child named Ismael, who would in time become the ancestor of all the Arab people. God promised Abraham another child. His beloved wife Sarah miraculously gave birth to a son, Isaac. Abraham then was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old. God confronted Abraham with the ultimate test of faith by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac (or, according to Muslims, his son Ismael), and just as Abraham was about to carry out the order, God halted the sacrifice and rewarded him by renewing the covenant.

Isaac lived in the southern city of Beersheba. He married Rebecca, a young woman who was brought to him from his father's family in the north. Rebecca gave birth to twins: Esau, the elder, a mighty hunter, was Isaac's favorite; and Jacob, the younger, more sensitive and delicate, was Rebecca's favorite. Rebecca presented Jacob to her dying blind husband as being Esau after she disguised him with a cloak of rough goatskin, to grant him the birthright blessing due to the elder son. When Isaac discovered his mistake, it was too late to do anything but to promise his son Esau that he would become the father of the Edomites (Genesis 27:39); thus another nation was established. In time Esau took a wife from the family of his uncle Ismael (Genesis 28:9), the ancestor of the Arabs.

Jacob fled to the north, to the house of his uncle Laban in Haran. On his way north, God confirmed Jacob's inheritance: "I am the lord, the God of Abraham and the

God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants. . . . I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land.” (Genesis 28:13–16)

Jacob stayed with his uncle Laban in Haran. He married Laban’s two daughters, Leah and Rachel, and fathered eleven sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Joseph—with his two wives and their two maid-servants. God then commanded him to return to Palestine. On his way back, while crossing the river, he was forced to wrestle with a mysterious figure. Whether it was an angel or God, the mysterious figure changed Jacob’s name to **Israel** (“**He who struggled with God**”), “**for you have striven with God and men, and have prevailed**” (Genesis 32:28). Jacob then proceeded to Palestine and camped near Shechem. He built an altar at Bethel, in the same place where God had revealed himself to him on his way to Haran. Rachel died as she gave birth to Benjamin, the last of Jacob’s sons.

Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, was detested by his brothers. They sold him to a group of Ismaelite merchants going to Egypt with a caravan of camels. The brothers claimed to their father that a wild beast had attacked Joseph. In Egypt, Joseph rose quickly in wealth and status and was appointed as the pharaoh’s grand vizier. In this high position he reorganized the economy of Egypt by storing surplus food from good years for future bad years. When Palestine was hit by famine, Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt for food. When they met the grand vizier Joseph, they did not recognize him, but eventually he revealed his identity to them. Jacob and his children then moved to Egypt to live with Joseph. On his deathbed, Jacob blessed all his children, and gave Judah the royal birthright (Genesis 49:8–10). And after his death his body was taken back to Palestine to be buried in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

The Historicity of the Narrative of the Patriarchs

Many of the early biblical archaeologists were clerics or theologians. They had a strong belief that God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was a real promise given to real people, not imaginary creations of an anonymous ancient scribe’s pen. People like the French archaeologist **Ronald de Vaux** and the American archaeologist **William F. Albright** insisted that the picture in Genesis was historical. These biblical historians and archaeologists were convinced that new discoveries would confirm that the Patriarchs were historical figures. They believed that the Bible narrated the history of Israel in sequential order, from the Patriarchs to Egypt, to Exodus, to the wandering in the desert, to the conqueror of Canaan, to the period of judges, and to the establishment of the united monarchy.⁴⁵

45. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 34.

Albright argued that the collapse of the early Bronze Age urban culture in Palestine had been a sudden one resulting from an invasion of pastoral nomads from the desert in the northeast. He hypothesized that the invaders were the Amorites. He also dated the Abraham episode in Genesis to the **second millennium**. This “**Amorite Hypothesis**” did not last long, as excavations showed that the urban system had not collapsed suddenly, but declined over many decades as a result of economic, social, and climatic changes. As outlined in part I, the South Levant in the third millennium enjoyed favorable climate conditions that brought more than five hundred years of extraordinary prosperity to Palestine. During the second millennium, this prosperity started to decline as a result of devastating drought. So when the assumed Amorite migration westward from Mesopotamia toward Palestine was shown to be illusory, Albright and his colleagues tried to link the patriarchal narrative to the middle Bronze Age or the early Iron Age. Again this attempt failed to establish a convincing link.⁴⁶

During the 1970s, **John Van Seters** and **Thomas Thompson** suggested, in two detailed monographs, exilic or post-exilic dates for the entirety of the Patriarchal traditions, and argued against their affinity with any second-millennium BCE backgrounds. Their views became influential, and today most scholars indeed define the Patriarchal tradition as a late invention with no historical validity.⁴⁷

Most scholars believe that the patriarchal stories in Genesis are not related to the second millennium BCE, but are rather most likely related to the period of the compilation of the Bible in the seventh and eighth centuries BCE, based on the following points:

- The stories of the Patriarchs are packed with camels. It is well known that camels were not domesticated earlier than the first millennium. The camel caravan carrying “gum, balm, and myrrh” in the Joseph story would have been part of the Arabian trade that flourished during the Assyrian rule from the eighth to seventh centuries BCE.
- **Gerar** is mentioned in Genesis as a Philistine city. It has been identified with Tel Haror, northwest of Beersheba. Excavations in this region demonstrate that it was a small village in the early Iron Age.

46. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 34–36.

47. Amihai Mazar and Israel Finkelstein, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archeology and the History of Early Israel*. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) 58.

- The **Aramaeans**, who dominated the stories of Jacob’s life in the north with his uncle Laban, did not become an important political factor in the region until the early ninth century BCE.
- In the story of **Lot**, two daughters served their father wine until he became drunk; they lay with him and eventually gave birth to two sons: Moab and Ammon. These two kingdoms were established between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.
- In the story of **Esau**, Jacob promised his older son that he would become the father of Edom. Assyrian records indicate that there were no real kings and no state in Edom before the late eighth century BCE.
- **Ismael**, the scorned son of Abraham and Hagar, is described in Genesis as the ancestor of the Arab tribes who lived in the territories on the southern fringe of Judea. The Kedarites (descended from Ismael’s son Kedar) were mentioned in the Assyrian records of the late eighth century BCE. The Assyrian and Babylonian records of the eighth and sixth centuries BCE mention Ismael’s other sons: Adbeel, Nebaioth, and Tayma.

Taken in sum, the above incidents mentioned in the patriarchal stories in Genesis indicate that they were all composed around the same time, rather than being an actual historical account.⁴⁸

The Exodus

Jacob’s twelve sons and their descendants enjoyed a prosperous life under the protection of Joseph in the cities of the eastern Nile Delta. Over a period of four hundred years, they evolved into a great nation as God promised. **“They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so the land was filled with them”** (Exodus 1:7). But times changed and eventually a new pharaoh came to power **“who knew not Joseph.”** The new pharaoh enslaved them and forced them to build the royal cities of Pithom and Ramses. **“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied”** (Exodus 1:12). The Egyptians made the Hebrews’ life bitter as they were forced into hard labor **“with mortar and brick and in all kinds of work in the field”** (Exodus 1:14).

The Egyptians became alarmed by the explosion of the Hebrew population, so the pharaoh ordered that all male Hebrew infants be drowned in the Nile. A child from the tribe of Levi set adrift in a basket of bulrushes was found and adopted by one of

48. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 36–40.

the pharaoh's daughters. He was given the name Moses (meaning "to draw out of the water"), and was raised in the royal court. Years later, in adulthood, when he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. He then fled to the wilderness, to the land of Median, where he started a new life as a desert nomad.

From the flickering flames of a burning bush, the god of Israel revealed himself to Moses as the deliverer of the people of Israel. He revealed his name, YHWH, and charged Moses and Moses' brother Aaron with the task of returning to Egypt and demanding that the pharaoh free the Hebrews. The pharaoh, however, rejected Moses's demands and intensified the suffering of the Hebrew slaves. God then told Moses to tell the pharaoh that YHWH would inflict a series of terrible plagues on Egypt if he refused (Exodus 7:16). But the pharaoh did not relent, and Egypt suffered from ten plagues: the Nile turned to blood; frogs, then gnats, then flies swarmed throughout Egypt. Boils and sores erupted on the skin of the Egyptians' livestock. Hail rained down from the heavens, ruining the crops. Plagues of locusts and darkness then came upon Egypt. The final punishment, the tenth plague, was the death of all Egyptian firstborn, both human and animal.

Before the last punishment took place, God instructed Moses and Aaron to prepare for the Hebrew congregation a special sacrifice of lambs, whose blood was to be smeared on the doorpost of every Israelite dwelling so that the angel of death would pass over them on the night of the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn. When the pharaoh witnessed the death of the firstborn, including his own son, he relented and let the Hebrew slaves go. **"About 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children"** (Exodus 12:37) set out from the cities of the eastern delta toward the wilderness of Sinai. "God led the people round by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea" (Exodus 13:17–18). Later on, the pharaoh changed his mind and sent "six hundred picked chariots and all the chariots of Egypt" after the Hebrew people. The Red Sea parted to allow the fleeing Israelites to cross over to Sinai on dry land. And as soon as they had made the crossing, the towering waters drowned the pursuing Egyptians in an unforgettable miracle that was commemorated in the biblical Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–18).

Moses then guided his people through the wilderness. They faced extreme hardship, and suffered from thirst and hunger. They were expressing their dissatisfaction to the point of regretting departing from Egypt. Moses pled with God to help his people. God intervened, and helped calm and feed them; he rained bread from the skies, which the Israelites named "manna." God spoke to Moses, "I have listened to the complaints of the Israelites. Now tell them: at dusk you will eat meat and at dawn you will eat your fill of bread; and you will realize that I am God, your God" (Exodus 16:1).

Finally, they reached the mountain of God, where Moses had received his first revelation. God told Moses: "Climb higher up the mountain and wait there for me;

I'll give you tablets of stones, the teachings and commandments that I have written to instruct them" (Exodus 24:2). So Moses climbed to the summit to receive the laws under which the Israelites should forever live. Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights. And when God finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him two tablets of testimony, slabs of stone, written with the finger of God.

The people grew impatient after weeks of waiting for Moses to come down off the mountain, and they asked Aaron, "Make gods for us to lead us" (Exodus 32:1). So Aaron told them, "Take off the gold rings from the ears of your wives and sons and daughters and bring them to me." He took all the gold and cast it in the form of a calf to worship. When Moses came back and saw the calf and his people celebrating their new god, his anger flared. He threw down the tablets and smashed them to pieces and melted the calf down with fire (Exodus 32:12).

God then spoke to Moses: "Cut out two tablets of stone just like the originals and engrave on them the words that were on the original tablets you smashed." Moses cut two tablets of stone and climbed Mount Sinai. God said to Moses: "Now write down these words, for by these words I have made covenant with you and Israel." Moses was there with God forty days and forty nights. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. And when Moses came down the mountain, he conveyed to his people God's Ten Commandments and the legislation of worship, purity, and dietary laws (Exodus 34:34–35).

The Israelites camped at Paran and sent spies to collect intelligence on the people of Canaan (Numbers 13). Upon their return, they reported details of the strength of the Canaanites, which frightened the Israelites. They revolted against Moses, begging to return to Egypt. So God determined that this generation did not deserve to inherit the promised land and must remain wandering in the wilderness for another forty years.

The final chapter of the exodus story takes place in Transjordan. Moses revealed to his people the laws they were required to obey if they were to inherit Canaan. This law, known as the second law, is contained in the book of Deuteronomy (which means the "second law" in Greek). Finally, at the age of 120, Moses appointed Joshua, son of Nun, to lead the Israelites, and then ascended to the summit of Mount Nebo and died.

The Historical Context of the Exodus

The biblical narrative dates the Exodus event to the **thirteenth century BCE**, in the time of Pharaoh Ramesses II. There is no mention of these events in the Egyptian records, whether in inscriptions on the walls of temples, tomb inscriptions, or in papyri. And there is no evidence of the presence of Hebrews in Egypt as a distinct foreign ethnic group living in a distinct area of the eastern delta during this period.

The Bible implies that the children of Israel lived in the land of Goshen (Genesis 47:27). The delta region throughout the second millennium hosted migrant workers from many places, including Palestine.

It is an understatement to say that hundreds of thousands of slaves escaping from Egypt at the time of Ramesses II and crossing the desert toward Palestine was unlikely. In the thirteenth century BCE, Egypt was a dominant power controlling the entire region. The road that crossed the desert between the delta and Gaza was protected by a sophisticated system of forts, granaries, and wells. These road stations enabled the Egyptian army to cross the Sinai Peninsula efficiently when needed. A large group of slaves would have been stopped long before they could cross the desert.⁴⁹

According to the biblical narrative, the children of Israel wandered in Sinai for forty years. Extensive archaeological work in the entire peninsula, including Mount Sinai, has failed to yield any evidence of the existence of the wandering Israelites at the supposed time of the Exodus in the thirteenth century BCE (according to Numbers 33). **Kadesh Barnea** is mentioned as the place where the children of Israel camped for thirty-eight of the forty years of their wandering (Numbers 34). Archaeologists identified this site as being the oasis of **Ein el-Qudeirat** in eastern Sinai. Repeated excavations in this area failed to provide any evidence of fleeing refugees in the late Bronze Age. **Ezion Geber** is another place mentioned in the Bible as a camping site. Its location was identified by archaeologists as being at the tip of the Gulf of Aqaba between the towns of Eilat and Aqaba. Excavations in this location between 1938 and 1940 revealed no remains related to the late Bronze Age.⁵⁰

The Bible mentions the Canaanite king of Arad attacking the Israelites and taking some as captives. With the help of Yahweh, the children of Israel destroyed all the Canaanite cities (Numbers 21:1–3). However, twenty years of excavations at the site of Tel Arad east of Beersheba failed to reveal any remains related to the late Bronze Age.

Furthermore, the biblical account says the Amorite king of Hesbon tried to block the Israelites from crossing his territory on their way to Palestine (Numbers 21:21–250; Deuteronomy 2:24–35; Judges 11:19–21). Excavations at Tel Hesban south of Amman reveal no evidence of a late Bronze Age city in this region. It is also mentioned in the Bible that the children of Israel, as they crossed Transjordan, were confronted by Moab, Edom, and Ammon. It is known now that the plateau of Transjordan was sparsely inhabited in the late Bronze Age.⁵¹ As Amihai Mazar and Israel Finkelstein state in their book, *The Quest for the Historical Israel*:

The Exodus story, one of the most prominent traditions in Israelite common memory, cannot be accepted as a historical event and must be de-

49. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 60–61.

50. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 63.

51. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 64.

fined as a national saga. We cannot perceive a whole nation wandering through the desert for forty years under the leadership of Moses, as presented in the biblical tradition.⁵²

The Conquest of Canaan

According to the book of Deuteronomy, Moses did not enter the promised land. Before his death and burial on Mount Nebo, he delivered God's laws to his people and appointed Joshua as his successor to lead the Israelites.

God commanded Joshua to enter the promised land. Jericho was the first target, so Joshua marched around the high walls of the city for six days, and on the seventh day, the mighty walls tumbled down as the Israelites' war trumpets blasted.

The next target was the strategic city of Ai, near Bethel, located on the main roads leading to the hill country. Joshua tricked the enemy by setting an ambush on the western side while having his main force in the open field to the east of the city. When the Canaanite army stormed out of the city to engage the retreating Israelite attackers, the hidden ambush unit entered the city and set it ablaze. Joshua then reversed the retreat; he slaughtered all of the city's inhabitants and hanged the king from a tree (Joshua 8:1–29).

Following the victories in Jericho and Ai, the Gibeonites who inhabited four cities north of Jerusalem sent emissaries to Joshua pleading for mercy on the basis that they were foreigners and not the natives whom God ordered to be exterminated. Joshua agreed to make peace with them. But when he learned later that they were natives, Joshua punished them by declaring that they would always serve as "hewers of wood and drawers of waters" for the Israelites (Joshua 9:27).

The Canaanite kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon formed a coalition and marched their forces around Gibeon. Joshua surprised the coalition forces and God pummeled them with great stones from the heavens. The sun was setting, but Joshua asked God to keep the sun standing still until the coalition forces were destroyed and divine will was fulfilled. The sun then "stayed in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:13–14). The fleeing kings were finally captured and killed. Joshua's military campaign continued until all the cities in southern Palestine were destroyed.

The final chapter took place in the north. Joshua faced a coalition headed by Hazor in an open-field battle in Galilee that ended with the complete destruction of the Canaanite forces. Hazor then was set ablaze (Joshua 11:4–10).

52. Mazar and Finkelstein, *The Quest for the Historical Israel*, 60.

The Historical Context of the Conquest of Canaan

Excavations at the sites of Beth Shan and Megiddo disclosed evidence of strong Egyptian influence in Palestine during the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE.⁵³ The Egyptian records of the late Bronze Age provide us with full information about the status of Palestine during that period. Most of the information is provided by the **Tel el-Amarna letters** sent to Egypt by the rulers of the city-states in Palestine, who were vassals of Egypt. These letters reveal that Palestine was an Egyptian province controlled by an Egyptian administration. Palestinian cities such as Jerusalem, Shechem, Megiddo, Hazor, Beth Shan, Gaza, Lachish, and Jaffa were weak, and were not protected by fortifications. Many cities became deserted or shrank in size, and the total population did not exceed 100,000. Pharaoh Ramesses II, the strongest of the pharaohs, would not have overlooked or ignored an event like the invasion of Palestine by a group of refugees. It is also unlikely that the destruction of so many vassal cities by the invaders would have been left unmentioned in the extensive Egyptian records.

The city of Jericho was unfortified in the thirteenth century. There was no evidence of a settlement in the city at that time. Thus the story of the Israelite forces marching around the walled town, causing the collapse of Jericho's mighty walls by blowing war trumpets, must be an invention.⁵⁴

Archaeologists identified **Khirbet et-tell** as the location of **Ai**, northeast of Jerusalem. A French-trained Jewish Palestinian archaeologist, Judith Marquet-Krause, conducted extensive excavation work in this area between 1933 and 1935. She found no evidence of settlement at that location. Renewed excavations in the 1960s produced the same results.⁵⁵

Similarly, at **el-Jib** north of Jerusalem—identified by archaeologists as the site of **Gibeon**—no remains related to the late Bronze Age have been found. Excavations at the other three Gibeonite cities—Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jearim—revealed the same picture. The same is true in the cases of Arad and Hesbon, as mentioned previously.⁵⁶

The book of Joshua states that “**the land had rest from war**” (Joshua 11:23). It claims that all the Canaanites and the indigenous people were destroyed, and then the land was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel. However, the book of Joshua itself contradicts this claim, as it states that large territories remained to be conquered, including “all the regions of the Philistines” in the southern coastal plains, the Phoenician coast in the north, and the Beqa Valley in the northeast” (Joshua 13:1–6). The great

53. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 76–79.

54. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 81–82.

55. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 82.

56. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 82.

Canaanite cities of the coastal plains and the northern valleys, such as Megiddo, Beth Shan, Dor, and Gezer, are listed in the book of Judges as uncaptured. The book also mentions that the Ammonites and the Moabites remained hostile, as well as the desert-dwelling Medianites and Amalekites. Furthermore, the book of Judges is full of stories of the wars between the Israelites and their neighbors (the most colorful of these is the saga of Samson, who was betrayed by the Philistine temptress Delilah).

Since the 1960s it has become obvious that the conquest of Canaan was not a historical reality. Archaeologists have concluded that many of the sites mentioned in the conquest narrative were uninhabited during the presumed time of the conquest in the thirteenth century BCE. It is now accepted by all scholars that archaeology has ruled out the conquest of Canaan as a verifiable historical event.

The Golden Age of the United Kingdom of David and Solomon

The transition from the period of Judges to the time of the monarchy begins with a great military crisis, described in 1 Samuel 4–5. The Philistine armies defeated the Israelites in battle and captured the holy Ark of the Covenant. The Israelites, under the leadership of the prophet Samuel, recovered the Ark and brought it back to Kiryat Yearim, west of Jerusalem. Following this military confrontation with the Philistines, the elders of Israel assembled at Samuel's home and asked him to appoint a king for Israel (1 Samuel 8:10–18). God instructed Samuel to do as the people requested, and revealed to him his selection of **Saul**, son of Kish, to be the first king (1 Samuel 15:10–26). God also instructed Samuel to go to the family of Jesse from Bethlehem, **“for I have provided for myself a king among his sons”** (1 Samuel 16:1).

The Philistines waged another war against Israel, and the two armies faced each other in the valley of Elah in the Shephelah (lowlands) in the Judean desert. The giant warrior **Goliath** of the Philistines mocked the god of Israel, and challenged any Israelite warrior to engage in single combat with him. **David**, the youngest of Jesse's sons, took up the challenge. He shouted at Goliath: **“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord”** (1 Samuel 17:45). David then took a small stone from his shepherd's pouch and slung it with deadly aim at Goliath's forehead, killing him on the spot. The Philistines were routed. David, the new hero of Israel, befriended Saul's son Jonathan and married Michal, the daughter of the king. David was popularly acclaimed Israel's greatest hero—greater even than the king. The enthusiastic cries of his admirers, **“Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands!”** (1 Samuel 18:7) made King Saul jealous. It was only a matter of time before David would have to contest Saul's leadership and claim the throne of all Israel.

Escaping Saul's murderous fury, David became the leader of a band of fugitives and soldiers of fortune, with people in distress or deep in debt flocking to him. David

and his men roamed in the foothills of the Shephelah, and in the southern margins of the Judean hills—all regions located away from the center of power of Saul's kingdom to the north of Jerusalem. Tragically, Saul's sons were killed in battle with the Philistines far to the north at Mount Gilboa, and Saul took his own life. David proceeded quickly to the ancient city of Hebron in Judea, where the people of Judea declared him king. This was the beginning of the great Davidic state and lineage, the beginning of the glorious united monarchy.

Once David and his men had overpowered the remaining pockets of opposition among Saul's supporters, representatives of all the tribes duly convened in Hebron to declare David king over all of Israel. After reigning seven years in Hebron, David moved north to conquer the Jebusite stronghold of Jerusalem—until then claimed by none of the tribes of Israel—to make it his capital. He ordered that the Ark of the Covenant be brought up from Kiriath-Jearim.

David then received an astonishing, unconditional promise from God:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my steadfast love for him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever. (2 Samuel 7:8–16).

David then initiated sweeping wars of liberation and expansion. In a series of swift battles, he destroyed the power of the Philistines and defeated the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites in Transjordan, concluding his campaigns with the subjugation of the Arameans far to the north. Returning in triumph to Jerusalem,

David now ruled over a vast territory, far more extensive even than the tribal inheritances of Israel. But he did not find peace even in this time of glory. Dynastic conflicts—including the revolt of his son Absalom—led to great concern for the continuation of his dynasty. Just before David’s death, the priest Zadok anointed Solomon to be the next king of Israel.

Solomon, to whom God gave “wisdom and understanding beyond measure,” consolidated the Davidic dynasty and organized its empire, which now stretched from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt (1 Kings 4:24). His immense wealth came from a sophisticated system of taxation and forced labor required of each of the tribes of Israel, and from trading expeditions to exotic countries in the south. In recognition of his fame and wisdom, the fabled queen of Sheba visited him in Jerusalem and brought in a caravan of dazzling gifts.

Solomon’s greatest achievements were his building activities. In Jerusalem he constructed a magnificent, richly decorated temple to Yahweh, inaugurated it with great pomp, and built a beautiful palace nearby. He fortified Jerusalem as well as the important provincial cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, and maintained stables with forty thousand stalls of horses for his fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand cavalymen. He concluded a treaty with Hiram, king of Tyre, who dispatched cedars from Lebanon for the building of the temple in Jerusalem and became Solomon’s partner in overseas trading ventures. The Bible summarizes Solomon’s reputation: “**Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind**” (1 Kings 10:23–24).

The Historical Context of David and Solomon

Archaeological surveys in the southern highlands provide us with rich information about the unique character of Judea. Judea occupies the southern part of the highlands, extending southward from Jerusalem to the northern fringes of the Negev. It is characterized by its rugged terrain and difficult communications compared to the central highlands. It has always been isolated from the neighboring regions. It was also known to have unpredictable rainfall, which made it marginal agriculturally. Its development as an olive-producing area lagged behind the central hills by two to three centuries. Archaeological surveys reveal that it remained relatively empty of permanent population, quite isolated, and very marginal right up to and past the presumed time of David and Solomon, with no major urban centers and no pronounced hierarchy of hamlets, villages, and towns.⁵⁷

The biblical stories present a golden age of an ancient state of Israel with its capital in Jerusalem. This fabled kingdom, called the “united monarchy,” which was

57. Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 131–132.

supposedly established by **Saul**, reached its peak during the reign of King **David** and his son **Solomon**, who controlled a huge territory from the Nile to the Euphrates. It also talks about a temple built by Solomon as the center of the worship of Yahweh. However, the archaeological record does not support this narrative. The idea of the united monarchy must be considered a biblical legend, not a historical fact.

Conclusions Regarding the Historicity of Biblical Accounts

- Archaeologists have concluded that the assumed westward Amorite migration from Mesopotamia toward Palestine was fictional, and the tradition of the Patriarchs was an invention with no historical support.
- The Exodus story, one of the most prominent traditions in Israelite common memory, cannot be accepted as a historical event and must be defined as a national saga. Archaeologists have concluded that Joshua's conquest of Palestine was not a historical reality.
- The "united monarchy" is an imaginary state that never existed. There is no evidence of a unified political power that dominated Palestine, let alone an empire of the size the legends describe. There is no evidence for the existence of kings named Saul, David, or Solomon, nor do we have evidence for any temple at Jerusalem in this early period.
- The highlanders in both the central and southern hills came from people displaced from the lowlands. They were members of the Canaanites, the indigenous population of Palestine who were displaced from their towns and villages as a result of the drought.
- Judaism as a monotheistic religion evolved during the fifth century BCE. The Judean exiles in Babylon were exposed to Zoroastrianism, which was an expression of monotheism. The interaction between the exiles and their descendants on one hand, and the center of high culture of Babylon on the other, provided the foundation for Judaism as monotheistic religion.
- The main books of the Old Testament were written and theologically engineered only after those who left Babylon arrived in Jerusalem, and even at a later time, during the Hellenistic period.

The Jewish State in Jerusalem and the Rebellion against Rome

The Ptolemies and the Seleucids

In 301 BCE, Judea, Samaria, Phoenicia, and the entire coastal plain were captured by the forces of Ptolemy, an Egyptian general who had Egypt as his power base. The Ptolemies, one of the four powers that emerged after the breakup of the Macedonian empire, controlled Palestine for most of the third century BCE. They integrated Palestine's towns and cities into the Greek culture. Hellenism had been penetrating the Near East for many decades prior to Alexander's invasion of the region. Northern Palestine's coastal cities, which were part of the Mediterranean trade routes, were affected the most. Other cities located on the main inland trade routes, such as Gaza and Petra, were also influenced by the Greek culture. Jerusalem had little contact with the Greeks, as it was a poor city lacking the raw materials needed for the development of industry; it was also far from the trade routes.

The Ptolemies, like most of the previous imperial forces who ruled Palestine, did not interfere in the local affairs of the different Palestinian regions. They introduced an efficient administration that was flexible enough to treat each region of their kingdom according to its particular social, economic, or religious situation. They appointed their own governors and installed garrisons in the different cities, but left people to follow their own traditions. Some parts of Palestine were crown lands ruled directly by royal officials. In addition, Greek colonists established their own cities (*polis*) modeled after the democratic Greek republics in several towns such as Gaza, Shechem, Marissa, and Amman, which were self-governing. Greek soldiers, merchants, and entrepreneurs took advantage of the opportunities that opened to them in the east. At the same time, the local people were eager to learn the Greek language and were attracted to Greek culture.

The Hellenistic culture was secular, advocating the separation of the government from religion. Apparently, the people of Jerusalem initially opposed this secular concept; however, the city was gradually dragged into the Greek world, and by the end of the third century BCE, Jerusalem's citizens had begun to acquire Greek education and were giving their children Greek names.⁵⁸

During the reign of Ptolemy II (282–246 BCE), a Jerusalemite called **Joseph** was given the job of collecting the taxes of the whole province of Syria. For over twenty years he was one of the most powerful men in the country. Joseph was able to introduce the high finance of the Hellenes into Jerusalem, becoming **the first Jewish banker**. He belonged to the **Tobiad clan**, who would not submit to the exclusive cult of Jerusalem and were interested in establishing relationships with foreigners. The Tobiads became the pioneers of Hellenism in Jerusalem. Other segments of the population opposed Hellenism and remained determined to maintain the old laws and traditions. The **Oniads**, a well-established priestly family, led the camp opposing Hellenism and adhering to the old laws and traditions.

In 219 BCE, the Seleucid king **Antiochus III** started a military campaign to control the province of Syria. The war between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids lasted for several years, during which Jerusalem was subjected to a long, harsh siege. The war ended in 200 BCE with the surrender of Jerusalem to the Seleucid forces. The conservative faction in Jerusalem, under the leadership of the Oniad family, supported the Seleucids and helped them in their wars against the Ptolemies, hoping to gain control of Jerusalem.

The Seleucids followed the same policies as the Ptolemies in governing the Palestinian population. In 200 BCE, **Antiochus III** drew up a special charter, **the Charter of 200 BCE**, granting the inhabitants of Judea special rights, and made a special arrangement for the temple in Jerusalem to insure the purity of the shrine. He acknowledged the Torah as the law of the land and gave the Jewish priest **Simon II** great agency in Jerusalem's affairs. The Seleucids likewise established special arrangements for the Greek cities, the military colonies, and the crown lands.

The office of high priest of the temple in Jerusalem was hereditary, passed down in the same family since the beginning of the Persian rule of Palestine. However, the king had the right to confirm the appointment. This tradition continued during the rule of the Macedonians and the Ptolemies, and was also followed by the Seleucids. Simon, the high priest, played a major role in Jerusalem's politics. He acted as king and priest of Jerusalem.

The Seleucid kings were known for their encouragement of urban development, a policy that advanced the process of spreading Hellenism in Palestine. A group of men from Jerusalem organized themselves as "**the Antiochenes in Jerusalem**"; they wanted to be able to establish a Greek school (*gymnasium*), and to be separated from

58. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 104–106.

the authority of the high priest. The Antiochenes felt that to achieve their goals, they needed to replace the high priest **Onias III**, who was known to be “a zealot for the laws”—that is, the Jewish law, the Torah. So in 174 BCE they approached the new Seleucid king, Antiochos IV, asking him to depose Onias and appoint his brother **Jason**, who was receptive to their plans.⁵⁹

Jason, the new high priest, was not a “zealot for the laws” like his brother, and was not interested in following Jewish law. He was hoping that Jerusalem would become a *polis* (Greek city). He even went further by asking the king to revoke the Charter of 200 BCE that gave special rights to Judeans. Some priests, merchants, and craftsmen welcomed the changes and became involved in the *gymnasium* activities. They were hoping that a more open society in Jerusalem would bring prosperity and economic growth. In their mind, there was no advantage to the Jews being separated from their non-Jewish neighbors. Initially, the “Hellenizers” did not face significant opposition from the Jews in Jerusalem, and when King Antiochos visited Jerusalem in 173 BCE, Jason led the people in applauding the king through the streets in a torchlight ceremony for the occasion.⁶⁰

Jason, the high priest, was trying to maintain a difficult balance between the Jewish beliefs and Greek ideas. He adopted a centrist position between the traditionalist Jews and the Hellenizers. This position did not please the Antiochenes, who became impatient with his tactics. Disgruntled that the Hellenization process was not proceeding as fast as they wished, they sent a delegation to **King Antiochos IV** asking him to replace Jason with **Menelaos**, a priest who was willing to accelerate the Hellenization process. Antiochos IV acceded to their request; he removed Jason from his office and appointed **Menelaos**, who was not a member of the Oniad family, as the new high priest of Jerusalem. Jason left Jerusalem and took refuge across the Jordan with the Tobiad family.⁶¹

In 171–170 BCE, Antiochos IV was involved in a two-year war with the Ptolemies of Egypt, and was falsely reported to have been killed. Jason returned to Jerusalem and attempted a coup, forcing Menelaos and the Antiochenes out. When Antiochos IV returned from Egypt in 169 BCE, he immediately seized Jerusalem, looted the temple, eliminated Jason’s supporters, and reinstated Menelaos. He then built a new fortress called **Akra**, which overlooked the temple enclosure. **These actions were followed by issuing an edict revoking the Charter of 200 BCE and disallowing the practice of the Jewish faith, including the Sabbath rest, circumcision, and the observance of the purity laws.** As a result of this edict, the temple was dedicated to “Zeus Olympios, the God of Heaven” a title that could be applied to Yahweh or any other high god. This did not mean that the Jews were forced to worship the Greek deity; it

59. John D. Grainger *The Wars of The Maccabees* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen and Sword Books Ltd., 2012), 2.

60. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 111–112.

61. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 3–4.

simply meant that the temple was open for all religions, and both Jews and pagans could offer their sacrifices in the sacred shrine.⁶²

As Menelaos was reinstated as high priest, the Hellenizers once again gained full control of Jerusalem, which continue to develop as a Greek city. A new governor, **Apollonios**, was appointed; he was described as a revenue official interested in collecting more taxes. The transformation of the temple outraged the traditionalists, especially when the new administration decided to enforce the reformed religious practices on the general population outside the city. The most significant response against the new reforms came from the **Maccabee family**, who resided in the countryside. **Mattathias**, the head of the family, was an influential local priest whom the reformers wished to win to their side. He had not been involved in the conflict between the reformers and the Oniad family in the period between 174 and 167 BCE. However, when the Hellenizers began to impose their reforms in the countryside, Mattathias' anger erupted.

The Maccabean Revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty

The Hellenizers, under the leadership of Menelaos, started their campaign of enforcing the new reforms in Judea's countryside, after they had full control of Jerusalem. As part of this campaign, a royal enforcer came to **Modiin**, where Mattathias and his family resided, to oversee a regular sacrifice conducted at the altar according to the new regulations. A verbal exchange took place between **Mattathias** and the royal officer, who was not armed or protected by guards. The exchange ended with Mattathias and his sons murdering the officer and destroying the altar. This incident was the start of a revolt in which Mattathias, his sons, his followers, and a group called the **Hasidim** fled to the hills and waged a war against the Seleucids, the high priest, and the Hellenizers. They started what can only be described as a brutal terrorist campaign. They targeted the altars, destroying them and killing the worshippers. They also forced circumcision on Jewish boys who had not been circumcised before. People who did not accept their authority were driven out from their homes. By the time Mattathias died in 166 BCE, the Judean countryside was fully controlled by the rebels.⁶³

In 166 BCE, when Mattathias died, his son **Judah**, nicknamed **Maccabeus** "**Hammer-Headed**," succeeded him as the leader of the rebels. He followed the same policies and tactics, and strengthened his control over the countryside. He presented his movement as a **religious rebellion aimed at restoring the purity of the temple and adhering to the teaching of the Torah**, thus expanding his popular support among religious Jews. He also emphasized that **the revolt was an independence movement**

62. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 113.

63. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 10–11.

aimed at ending foreign oppression. His forces, the Maccabees, were not professional soldiers, but brave fighters highly motivated by their religious beliefs and patriotic feelings. Judah was an intelligent and inspirational commander of his guerrilla forces. This was clearly proven in the battlefield, where he faced professional Seleucid soldiers who had undergone extensive military training and were well equipped.

Antiochos IV sent a Seleucid force headed by the governor of Samaria to suppress the revolt and eliminate Judah and his forces. Judah and the rebels won an unexpected victory, enhancing his position within his army and strengthening the people's support for his movement.⁶⁴ A second Seleucid expedition against Judah also resulted in a victory for Judah and his forces; they killed many of the invaders, including the Seleucid leader.⁶⁵ These victories established Judah as a formidable commander with great talent and military sophistication, and demonstrated that the Maccabee army had developed a significant degree of skill and professionalism.

In 166 BCE, when these two battles took place, Antiochos IV was preparing his main army to march east to confront the Parthians. He made his son Antiochos V, who was nine at the time, joint king, and left him in Antioch under the protection and guidance of his loyal minister, **Lysias**, who was also charged with the responsibility of suppressing the revolt in Judea. Lysias appointed two commanders to head a new force to deal with the rebels. Judah again used strategy and an ambush attack to defeat the Seleucids. Despite these victories, however, the Maccabean army was still not capable of advancing to the lowlands. They were only able to carry out limited surprise attacks or plan ambushes.

In the summer of 164 BCE, Lysias planned a massive attack against Judah's forces; however, he had to suspend his plans and return to Antioch upon receiving news of the death of Antiochos IV. He had to secure the ten-year-old Antiochos V, who was still in Antioch. Judah took advantage of the situation and marched into Jerusalem, which was not fortified. However, he was not able to take Akra, the fort overlooking the temple. After celebrating his victory in taking Jerusalem, he intensified his guerrilla attacks south of Judea in the Idumaea region, in the Transjordan Plateau against Ammanitis and Galaaditis, and in northern Palestine in the Galilee area. These attacks were preemptive defensive moves and looting expeditions; in certain locations they were also punitive measures against Hellenizer Jews who were opposing the Maccabees. Judah's forces committed many crimes against Palestine's population, the worst being the massacre of **the Tobiads, a family of moderate Jewish Hellenizers who had built a Jewish temple in Transjordan not far from el-Amir in Iraq. Many other Jews were killed and their homes were destroyed.**

All Judah's raids failed to secure further territory beyond Judea. Taking over Jerusalem was meaningless as long as Akra was still in the hands of the Seleucids and

64. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 13.

65. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 16.

the Hellenizers. To secure Akra, Lysias returned to Palestine, marched toward Beth Zur from Idumaea, which was taken after a short siege, and then continued toward Jerusalem. His forces achieved a decisive victory against the Maccabees; however, he had to return to Antioch in July 162 BCE to face Philippos, the commander of the Seleucid forces in the east. As soon as he drove him out of Antioch, he faced another contestant, **Demetrios**, who was supported by the Romans. Demetrios succeeded in killing both Lysias and Antiochos V, and then claimed the throne.

Demetrios sent massive forces to Palestine under the command of **Bakchides**, who used a new route to reach the Judean plateau through the Jordan Valley east of Judea. Bakchides was an experienced commander familiar with the Maccabees' tactics, which allowed him to win a decisive victory, inflicting many casualties among them, including their leader, Judah, who was killed on the battlefield. Bakchides gained complete control of the province; his forces wiped out the Maccabees' supporters and ended the terrorist campaign that Mattathias had started. **Jonathan**, who succeeded his brother Judah as the Maccabees' new leader, settled down and stopped fighting.

Bakchides set a defensive program aimed at strengthening the Seleucids' grip on Judea by fortifying several cities to control all communication routes: **Beth Zur**, which controlled the approach from the south; **Beth-Horon**, at the upper end of the pass; **Bethel**, at the junction of several routes north of Jerusalem; **Ammaus**, at the entrance to the hills; and **Tekoa, Jericho, and Gezer** in the lowlands to the east and west. In addition, he strengthened Akra, and housed hostages collected from the main Jewish families there.⁶⁶

The death of Judah put an end to the first stage of the revolt, the guerrilla war. The Maccabees' successes in this war were credited to Judah's personality as a charismatic fighter and his ability to wage guerrilla warfare effectively, as well as the motivation of his brave, dedicated fighters. But the defeat of the Maccabees by Bakchides did not put an end to their movement; rather, it was the beginning of a new stage under the leadership of Judah's brothers, **Jonathan and Simon**, who adopted new strategies and tactics.

Jonathan forged a peace agreement with Bakchides in which he acknowledged Seleucid authority; however, he occasionally carried out attacks against his Jewish opponents using the same tactics of murder and beatings aimed at punishing the "sinners" and intimidating the general population. But when the Seleucids had to focus on larger threats, he saw his opportunity to carry out a purging campaign openly.

Between 154 and 140 BCE, the civil wars between the various Seleucid contenders for the throne gave the Maccabees the opportunity to gain autonomy and expand their authority over Judea. They mastered diplomacy and the art of negotiation to extract more concessions. They also established channels of communications with

66. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 49.

the Romans, who at the time did not have any plans to extend their empire beyond Greece; however, they had been keeping an eye on events in Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, as well as Persia, preparing themselves for the future. The Maccabees were occasionally involved in the Seleucid civil wars, at times sending troops to side with one faction or another. They also managed to expand their territory to include strategic Palestinian cities such as Beth Zur, Joppa, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, and succeeded in removing most of the fort garrisons. Their expeditions reached Galilee in the north and Transjordan in the east. During these years, they also continued their purging missions by eliminating or controlling the Jewish Hellenizers.

In 142 BCE, the Seleucid king **Tryphon**, who had taken the throne in 144 after overthrowing Demetrios, invited Jonathan to Ptolemais to discuss the relationship between the autonomous Maccabee state and the Seleucid Empire, and held the Maccabee leader captive there. Jonathan's brother Simon summoned a Jewish assembly in Jerusalem for the purpose of having himself elected as the temporary leader of the Maccabees while Jonathan was in captivity. In 141 BCE, Tryphon killed Jonathan, and Simon became the permanent leader. The people of Jerusalem later elected Simon as high priest. **The election of Simon as high priest by the people, instead of being appointed by the king, marked the start a new stage of the Maccabees' movement: the era of Judea's independence.**⁶⁷

Jonathan had played a major role in the establishment of the Maccabean state. **The Maccabean movement passed through three major stages.** During the first, the rebellion led by Judah, which was characterized by guerrilla warfare aimed at punishing "sinners," the rebels were able to defeat the Seleucid armies twice. However, the third confrontation between Judah and Bakchides ended up with a decisive victory for the Seleucids and the end of the revolution. Judah was dead, the Maccabees' supporters were wiped out, and the terrorist campaign that Mattathias had started was over. Garrisons were established in several fortified towns to ensure security in Judea.⁶⁸

The **second stage** of the Maccabean movement was established by **Jonathan, who is considered the founder of the Maccabean state.** Jonathan established a professional army and was able to win a few victories against the Seleucid forces, preventing them from invading Judaea and succeeding in removing most of the fort garrisons. He established himself as the king and high priest of Judaea. As he continued his purging policy, he managed to build a friendly relationship with the moderate Hellenizers. He succeeded in building an autonomous state by extracting concessions from successive Seleucid kings. The Seleucid king Demetrius, who was occupied with his wars against the Parthians and the civil war against Tryphon, recognized Judea's independence. After Jonathan's death, Simon expanded his territory by capturing Gezer, which had a strategic location at the west edge of the hills, overlooking the coastal

67. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 51–65.

68. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 67.

cities; at the same time, it was the gateway to the east. The next move was against Akra, which was purged after it fell to his forces. Simon refortified all the cities he captured, including Akra, and devoted his time to establishing a hereditary monarchy. He also devoted time and resources to erecting palaces whose design was similar to that of the Hellenistic cities. This was followed by sending envoys to all the states in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as to Rome. He then erected a stele, in the best Hellenistic style, on which he inscribed the Maccabees' achievements.⁶⁹

During the initial period of his rule, Simon was fortunate that Demetrios was engaged in his wars against the Parthians and Tryphon. When Demetrios was killed in the east, his brother, Antiochos VII, took over. Antiochos was an accomplished soldier and a clever politician. After he defeated Tryphon, he reorganized his army and began preparing to regain Seleucid control over Judea. A limited war erupted between Judea's forces and Antiochos's army; this ended with a peace agreement in which Simon acknowledged that his state was part of the Seleucid kingdom.

In February of 134 BCE, Simon's son **Hyrkanos** succeeded his father and was elected in Jerusalem as the high priest and the new leader of the Maccabees. His election to these posts marked the beginning of the **third stage of the Maccabees' movement**. Hyrkanos was the king of Judea as well as the high priest. Holding both positions gave him complete control over all state affairs. His first mission was to defend Judea against the forces of Antiochos VII, who marched to Palestine to put an end to the Maccabees' rule. Hyrkanos was prepared for a long siege, but it lasted almost a year, and at the end he had to acknowledge the authority of the Seleucid king over Judea as a vassal state, and was forced to pay a large tribute to the king. He also agreed to send troops to fight the king's enemies when needed. In fact, Hyrkanos participated in a Seleucid war against the Parthians in 131 BCE. The death of Antiochos VII in 129 BCE released Hyrkanos and Judea of their obligations, however, and Judea became an independent state once again.⁷⁰

In 129/128 BCE, this state was limited to the hills centered on Jerusalem and some neighboring lowlands. Between 128 and 122 BCE, Hyrkanos expanded his territory in two directions: to the east across the Jordan River, and south toward Idumaea. He first captured **Medaba**, a small city across the river, close to Mount Nebo on the old trade route. Most likely he targeted this site for potential trade revenue. He then targeted a smaller village, **Samoga**, northeast of Medaba, which, being located at the highest point between Medaba and Philadelphia (the site on which Amman, Jordan, was built), served as observation post. Hyrkanos avoided the Greek city of Philadelphia. The Nabataeans who dominated the lands east of Philadelphia and southward as far as Petra and the Gulf of Aqaba were strong, autonomous rulers who were too powerful for Hyrkanos to take on.

69. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 68–69.

70. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 75

During this period, between 128 and 122 BCE, Hyrkanos carried out similar military expeditions south of Judaea in Idumaea. The Idumaeen lands had been the route through which Judaea had been invaded several times, and the Idumaeans had assisted the invaders who were crossing their lands toward Jerusalem. Expanding Judaea's territory south of the fortified town of Ben Zur was important to Hyrkanos's defense strategy. He attacked and captured **Adora and Marisa in northern Idumaea**, aiming at setting a wider defensive line to protect Judea from further attacks. He also forced the Idumaeans to convert to Judaism.

The Shechem (Nablus) area was another route used by invaders to reach to Jerusalem. During the same period, Hyrkanos carried out a raid against the **Samaritans in Shechem and at Mount Gerizim**, the site of their temple. The purpose of the raid was apparently to destroy the Samaritans' temple, which was considered a competitor to Jerusalem's. Both Shechem and Gerizim were captured and the Samaritans' temple was destroyed, but the region was not annexed, as the Maccabees were unable to keep a strong garrison. Many Samaritans fled to Samaria (now Sabastia), the capital of the district. Hyrkanos limited his expedition in this area to just the destruction of the temple, which was considered a challenge to the Maccabean ideology. He avoided the Greek city of Samaria, the capital of the district, which would have required a strong force to capture. His aggression campaign against the Samaritans was similar to his predecessors' raid against the Tobiads and their temple in Iraq el-Amir.

The years between 121 and 113 BCE were a period of relative peace for the Seleucids, and Hyrkanos remained quiet. As the Seleucid civil wars erupted again around 113 BCE, Hyrkanos became active again. The Seleucids suffered greatly in their war against Parthia, and the civil wars also contributed to the decline of the kingdom's military power. The city of Samaria was the next target for Hyrkanos.

Samaria was a Greek city, with Jews and Samaritans among its inhabitants beside the Greek ones. As a justification for attacking the city, Hyrkanos accused the Samaritans of taking the side of the Samaritans against the Jewish inhabitants. The Judean army failed to capture the city at its first attack, so Hyrkanos subjected the city to a long siege. Two Seleucid factions tried unsuccessfully to save the city. Both Seleucid armies were ambushed by the Judean army, and they were forced to retreat. In the end, the city was sacked, the site was razed, and a stream was diverted to run over it. The surviving inhabitants were sold into slavery. Capturing Samaria allowed the Judean army to advance north toward Galilee.

Hellenism and the Maccabean Revolts

It is important to note that in the beginning, the Maccabee family had not opposed Antiochene efforts to bring Hellenism to Judea. However, when the Seleucids intro-

duced the new religious reforms which revoked the Charter of 200 BCE guaranteeing the purity of the temple in Jerusalem, Mattathias, the head of the family, had finally revolted. **The revolt was against polytheism, religious persecution, and foreign control, but not against Hellenism and Hellenistic culture.** As the Maccabees controlled Judea and established their **Hasmonean state**, they restored the purity of the old religion and removed the Hellenic influence. At the same time, they were open to the Greek culture, which influenced all aspects of life in the Hasmonean state. **The Hasmonean kingdom was the first monotheistic religious state in history; at the same time, it was Hellenistic.** This was an important factor in the spread of Judaism. Hellenism injected Judaism with the element of anti-tribal universalism which led the Hasmoneans to abandon an exclusive ideology, and also inspired them to move toward expanding their kingdom to include all of Palestine and to convert all Palestinians to Judaism. **Shlomo Sand describes the Hasmonean goals and strategy: “The Hasmonean theocracy used the sword to spread not only its territorial domain but also its religious following.”** They succeeded in expanding their kingdom to include the entirety of Palestine and achieved their goal of spreading Judaism among its inhabitants through forced conversion. Mattathias’ grandson, Jonathan, added the Greek name Hyrcanus to his Hebrew name. The great-grandson of Mattathias was called Judas Aristobulus, and his son was called Alexander Jannaeus. The royal courts of Judea resembled other Hellenistic courts in the region, as did the system of dynastic succession.⁷¹

The Fight for Control of Jerusalem

Not all the Jews shared the Hasmonean vision and policy of Hellenizing the country. Some admired what they did, but others opposed it. Initially Hyrcanos was on good terms with the **Pharisees**, who wanted to democratize Judaism, but a dispute erupted because Hyrcanos, as the high priest, had the power to interpret the law. The Pharisees attempted to establish their own political authority over the high priest by presenting themselves as the ones who had the authority to interpret the law. Hyrcanos did not yield to their claim, and crushed their revolt firmly. The **Saducees**, who came from the priestly and wealthier classes and supported the temple, were supportive of the Hasmoneans’ authority.

Upon Hyrcanos’s death, his oldest son, **Aristoboulos**, became the king and high priest. To consolidate his power, he imprisoned his mother and three of his brothers in the palace. He then assigned another of his brothers, **Antigonos**, who had shared

71. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 157.

with him the leadership of the military campaign against Samaria, to lead a new campaign in northern Palestine.

Aristoboulos died in 103 BCE, after one year in office. His brother Antigonos, who was still in northern Palestine, was assassinated around the same time. Their mother had died in prison prior to their deaths. Aristoboulos' widow, **Salome Alexandra**, released the brothers from prison, and then put **Alexander Iannai**, the next-eldest son of Hyrkanos, forward as the new king, and apparently married him.⁷²

The new king, Alexander Iannai, was unknown to Judeans in Jerusalem. His father Hyrkanos had sent him to Galilee to grow up in a sort of exile.⁷³ Having chosen the battlefield to gain the support of the Judeans and to prove his ability as a leader, he carried out multiple military expeditions against several cities that resulted in defeat and an alliance with Queen Kleopatra III of Egypt. Between 100 and 97 BCE, Alexander was able to recruit mercenaries and skilled military staff. In 97 BCE, he carried out a successful military campaign against Gaza which, after a yearlong siege, resulted in the destruction of the city and the annihilation of its inhabitants. In 94–93 BCE, with the help of a large number of Greek mercenaries from the Greek cities in Syria, Alexander carried out another military campaign in Transjordan. He expanded his territory around Medaba and annexed **Moab**. Then he advanced further north, capturing **Amathos** and several cities in **Gaulanitis** (currently Golan), including **Gadora** (not the one in the south), **Abila**, **Hippos**, and **Philoteria**.

Alexander did not follow his father's policy of forcing conquered territories to convert to Judaism. He also kept most of the cities he annexed intact; Gaza, however, was an exception. The change in the forced conversion policy was attributed to changes in internal political power in Jerusalem. During Alexander's reign, the Pharisees' influence declined, while the Sadducees became more influential. The struggle between the two camps became more obvious after the expansion of state boundaries and the increase in the power of the king. Opposition by the Pharisees increased and reached the level of revolt. During the Festival of Tabernacles in the temple, while Alexander was sacrificing at the altar, a crowd surrounded him and pelted him with fruit. This incident was followed by riots, which were suppressed by Alexander's mercenaries; they killed almost six thousand insurgents.⁷⁴

When Alexander returned to Jerusalem from Transjordan, he faced strong opposition that eventually aimed at deposing him. He applied brutal measures that led to full rebellion, then turned into a long civil war that lasted over six years, during which more than fifty thousand people were killed. At the end, in 87 BCE, his forces captured the leader of the rebels at **Bethoma** north of Samaria. Following his victory,

72. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 98.

73. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 94.

74. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 109.

he executed eight hundred men plus their families. More than eight thousand men fled into exile.

Around this time, the Nabataeans in the east rose to prominence, dominating large territories and threatening Damascus. In 84 BCE, the Seleucid ruler Antiochos XII attempted a new strategy for dealing with the Nabataeans. Rather than mounting an attack from Damascus, he brought his army to the coastal plain and, with the Judean king Alexander's permission, marched through Idumaea toward Petra. The Nabataeans allowed him to march on into the desert and then surrounded his forces with a larger army and defeated him. Antiochos was killed on the battlefield; what was left of his army took refuge in **Kana**, south of the Dead Sea, but they were blockaded there until most had died of starvation.⁷⁵ The Damascus city council then surrendered the city to the Nabataeans. In 82 BCE, the Nabataean king **Aretas III** invaded Judea and reached **Adida**, northeast of **Lod**. A humiliating peace treaty was forced on Alexander in punishment for having allowed Antiochos XIII to pass through Idumaea in his attempt to invade Nabataea.

During Alexander's reign, Judea expanded to include most of Palestine and a significant segment of the territories east of the Jordan River. Alexander's army lacked the skills and strength to achieve meaningful victory in open battle, however. His forces failed in any real active siege and resorted to long blockades that lasted a long time before capturing a small city. He was also fortunate that his victorious enemies did not follow up their victories, but withdrew as a result of their preoccupation with matters more urgent than capturing Jerusalem. **It became clear that at some point in the future, Judea was bound to crumble when confronted with a strong, efficient, and skillful enemy.**

Upon Alexander's death in 80 BCE, his wife **Salome Alexander** declared herself the head of the state of Judea. Their elder son, **Hyrkanos II**, became the **high priest**; his younger brother **Aristoboulos II** was left as a private citizen. In an attempt to heal internal divisions, Salome brought the Pharisees back to the political scene at the expense of their rivals, the Sadducees; unfortunately, this policy led to the divisions being exacerbated. The former advisers of Alexander were targeted by the Pharisees, and several of them were assassinated. Aristoboulos sided with his father's former staff and arranged to move many of them to forts in the countryside for their protection. The Pharisees' influence grew significantly in the administration of the state as they became the interpreters of the law. Salome adopted a plan to rebuild the army to strengthen her power and to protect the throne. She also transferred the state's treasury to three forts outside Jerusalem.

Between 72 and 70 BCE, the Armenian king **Tigranes** annexed Damascus, defeating the Nabataeans, and captured Ptolemais-Ake. He was prevented from cap-

75. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 121.

turing Judea when the Roman army invaded Armenia. The internal conflicts in Judea became more intense, as the Pharisees managed to gain almost complete control over state affairs. Salome became ill, and as she was dying, her son Aristoboulos prepared himself for a coup. He left Jerusalem to join the exiles, who were concentrated in twenty-two forts in the countryside, contacting them and recruiting troops. Upon Salome's death in 67 BCE, Hyrkanos assumed the title of king—**John Hyrkanos II**—and Aristoboulos declared war against his brother. The armies of the two brothers confronted each other on the plain near Jericho. Many of Hyrkanos' soldiers changed sides and joined Aristoboulos. Hyrkanos was defeated and forced to retreat to Jerusalem. He then bargained for his life and his possessions. Aristoboulos agreed to these terms, and declared himself "**Judah Aristoboulos II**," king of Judea.

The victory of Aristoboulos II over his brother Hyrkanos II did not put an end to the civil war. **Antipater, son of Antipas, from Idumaea, a man of great wealth and political acumen, brought about an alliance of Aristoboulos' internal opponents together with the Nabataean king Aretas III, and, eventually, Hyrkanos II himself. It was early in 65 BCE when the plot came together. Hyrkanos left Jerusalem secretly and went to Petra with Antipater. They negotiated with Aretas III, who agreed to bring his army to attack Aristoboulos II; in return, Hyrkanos agreed to cede to Aretas a large territory east and south of the Dead Sea.**⁷⁶

76. Grainger, *The Wars of the Maccabees*, 139.



Rome Captures Palestine-Syria

Aristoboulos was defeated by the Nabataeans and forced to escape to Jerusalem's temple, where he was besieged. As this was happening, the Roman army under the leadership of **Pompey** was conducting a campaign against Armenia. Both Hyrkanos and Aristoboulos asked the Romans for help; the Roman commander decided to support Aristoboulos and advanced to Jerusalem to rescue him. He threatened Aretas and forced the Nabataeans to withdraw their forces from around Jerusalem. Aristoboulos took the opportunity to attack the retreating forces of Aretas at **Papyron, near Jericho**, and managed to inflict heavy casualties, killing more than six thousand Nabataean soldiers. After his victory at Papyron, Aristoboulos continued to rule Judea for over a year without Roman interference.

Pompey, who had put an end to the Seleucid Empire, moved from Antioch to Damascus in the spring of 63 BCE. During his trip to Damascus, he made several decisions concerning the different cities he passed through, removing tyrants and accepting tributes. Three autonomous kingdoms were on his agenda awaiting decisions: **Iturea, Judea, and Nabataea**. He left Ptolemy, son of Mennaesus, to rule over Iturea. The Nabataeans were also left autonomous after they handed over a tribute. In regard to Judea, he requested that Aristoboulos and Hyrkanos appear in his court; both were brought to Damascus. A third delegation arrived from Jerusalem at the same time, claiming to represent the nation; this was the Pharisees' delegation, which requested the abolition of the monarchy and the restoration of the ancient rule of the priests. Pompey listened to the three delegations, as well as to Antipater. He postponed his decision until he could visit Judea in person.

Pompey marched toward Judea accompanied by all parties. On the way to Jerusalem, he requested that Aristoboulos surrender all the forts in the countryside, and Aristoboulos did so. As the Romans approached Jerusalem, Pompey asked Aristoboulos to surrender Jerusalem. Aristoboulos, who had left the march and gone to Jerusalem, came out from the city to meet Pompey, promising to surrender the city. The Roman legate **Aulus Gabinius** was sent to Jerusalem to take over the governorship. As Gabinius approached the city, he was denied entry by the soldiers. It was not clear whether the soldiers had done so on their own or were following instructions from Aristoboulos. Aristoboulos was arrested, and the Romans prepared to attack. The city was subjected to a three-month siege, during which the walls were battered until finally a large opening was made. The city was then assaulted, and a large number of the defenders—almost twelve thousand soldiers—were massacred.

Hyrkanos was reinstated as high priest, but not as king. The state was reduced to Judea, Galilee, parts of Idumaea, and parts of Transjordan. These territories were the areas inhabited by Jewish populations. The cities along the coast were made independent. The cities along the Jordan were joined together into what became known

as **Decapolis**, which included Skythopolis, Philadelphia, and Gerasa. Some sections of Transjordan in the south were added to Nabataea, and the ones in the north were added to Iturea.

Aristoboulos, his sons Alexander and Antigonos, his two daughters, and his father-in-law Absalom were taken off to Rome. During the journey, Alexander escaped and returned to Palestine, where he gathered a number of supporters. His purpose was to claim the throne and the post of high priest. By 58–57 BCE, he had amassed sufficient support to seize control of Jerusalem. The Roman governors did not prevent him from removing Hyrkanos; however, when he began rebuilding the city walls, they put a stop to it. In 57 BCE, Gabinius, who was familiar with the country, was appointed as governor. He recognized the potential threat of Alexander's increased power in Jerusalem; at the same time, Alexander realized that Gabinius was planning to control Judea and to limit his role to just that of high priest. This development prompted him to recruit an army of ten thousand men. War erupted between Alexander's army and Roman forces under the command of **Mark Antony**. Alexander was defeated and escaped to one of the forts. Alexander's mother—the wife of Aristoboulos—negotiated with Gabinius, offering her son's surrender in return for allowing her husband and her other children to be released and returned to Jerusalem.

Hyrkanos returned to Jerusalem as high priest with reduced authority, as Gabinius divided Judea into five regions, each with its own priest. Antipater's authority was also reduced, but he continued to govern. Aristoboulos, along with his son Antigonos, returned to Palestine. It is not clear whether Aristoboulos escaped or whether he was released as a result of the bargain his wife had made with Gabinius.

The return of Aristoboulos revived the Jewish resistance. Many Jews responded to Aristoboulos's call for renewing the war, recognizing that their king had succeeded in escaping from Rome rather than being pardoned by the Senate. A new Jewish army of eight thousand men was recruited, but this force was easily defeated by the well-trained and well-equipped Roman soldiers. Aristoboulos retreated to the fortress of **Machaerus** with a few men, and after a two-day siege he gave in and returned to Rome. His wife and daughters moved to Ashkelon, which had always been an independent city free of Judean control.

Gabinius was assigned to march to Egypt to suppress an uprising, and a contingent of Jewish soldiers led by Antipater accompanied the Roman legions into Egypt. Antipater cooperated with the Romans in hopes that he would be rewarded. While Gabinius was in Egypt, Alexander recruited more soldiers and started a new campaign targeting Romans in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. The surviving Romans took refuge on **Mount Gerizim**, where they were besieged. Upon his return from Egypt, Gabinius prepared his army for a decisive battle to crush this new uprising. At the same time, Antipater managed to convince many of the insurgents to go home. In the final battle at **Mount Tabor**, sixty kilometers north of Shechem, Alexander

was defeated and his army was destroyed; more than ten thousand insurgents died in the battle.

Gabinius reorganized the government in Jerusalem, allowing Antipater to play a major role in Judea's affairs. In 54 BCE, **Licinius Crassus** replaced Gabinius as governor of Syria and was assigned by Rome to attack Parthia. In preparation for the war, he went to Jerusalem and appropriated eight thousand talents from the temple to fund the campaign against Parthia, which failed in 53 BCE. Upon his return to Damascus, he faced a new rebellion in Judea led by one of Aristoboulos' senior officers. In Galilee, he defeated the insurgents, destroyed their army, executed their leader, and had thirty thousand captives sold into slavery.

Thus, during the period between 57 and 54 BCE, there were four uprisings in Judea. **John D. Grainger**, who has studied the historical records of this period—especially those narrated by Josephus—is critical of these records. He presents a scholarly analysis and conclusions in his book *The Wars of the Maccabees*:

Uniting [these uprisings] was the fact that they were all attempts to overthrow the settlement imposed by Pompey, and their increasing anti-Roman sentiment. The ferocity of the fighting steadily increased, each Jewish defeat leading to great casualties and to a greater effort. . . .

The repeated Jewish risings also developed a pattern by which any Roman setback or distraction—Egypt, Parthia, a defeat anywhere—would be seized on as a signal to attempt a new rising. . . . The purpose of the risings had been not just to rid Judea of the Romans, but it had been aimed at restoring full Judean independence.⁷⁷

The Roman civil war between Caesar and Pompey began in 49 BCE. During this conflict, Alexander's family moved from Ashkelon to Iturea under the protection of Ptolemy, the son of Mennaenus. Hyrkanos and Antipater were rewarded by Caesar; **Joppa and the Great Plain of Esdraelon** were returned to Hyrkanos, and **Antipater** was given the title of **procurator** of Judea. Antipater then appointed his son **Phasael** to govern Jerusalem, and **Herod**, his other son, to govern Galilee.

In 42 BCE, **Mark Antony** was put in charge of the eastern Roman provinces. While he was in Rome, the Parthian army invaded north Syria. Ptolemy was succeeded by his son **Lysanias**, who allied himself with the Parthians. **Antigonos**, who had been living in Iturea at Ptolemy's court since 49 BCE, also allied himself with the Parthians. The Parthian army marched south along two routes: the coast road and the interior route. They were welcomed in the Carmel area and **Ptolemais**. A

77. Grainger, *The Wars of The Maccabees*, 155.

detachment was sent to Judea. A great uprising in favor of Antigonos erupted in Jerusalem. Herod, Phasael, and Hyrkanos resisted the uprising and fought Antigonos' followers. The fighting caused many casualties on both sides, and control of the city passed back and forth between the two fighting groups. Hyrkanos and Phasael were captured by the Parthians. Herod managed to escape with the remainder of his forces and was able to reach the fortress of **Masada**. He left his family in Masada and fled to Nabataea. The Parthians plundered Jerusalem and advanced south toward Idumaea. Hyrkanos was mutilated and sent off in exile to Babylon. Phasael killed himself to avoid being tortured. **Antigonos was installed as king and high priest.**

Herod left Nabataea and went to Egypt and then to Rhodes, where he communicated with Antony in Rome. Antony, who needed local support in Syria against the Parthians, obtained a **decree from the Senate appointing Herod as king of the Jews** to bring him to an equal status to Antigonos, who had been appointed as king by the Parthians.

The Romans drove out the Parthians from north Syria; however, they were unable to take Jerusalem, which was controlled by Antigonos. They avoided subjecting the city to a siege, but kept a force in Judea. Herod had landed at Ptolemais, which had returned to Roman control in 49 BCE. He started recruiting to build an army, a mixture of Jews and mercenaries. Then he started a military campaign to capture Galilee. His next target was Joppa. His strategy was to isolate Jerusalem before attempting to assault the city. Over time he gained control of Samaria and Idumaea. Antigonos resorted to guerrilla attacks and ambushes to keep Herod away from Jerusalem.

In the spring of 37 BCE, the siege of Jerusalem started. The city was fortified, since Caesar had allowed Hyrkanos to rebuild the walls. Herod's forces and the Roman army forces together numbered between thirty thousand and fifty thousand men. It took a long time to isolate Jerusalem from the countryside by building a wall and digging a ditch around the city. As soon as this work was completed, the city was attacked and the walls were breached. As the attackers reached the temple, the defenders were massacred. Herod managed to prevent any looting of the temple. Antigonos was captured and handed over to Antony, who executed him.

Herod had married Mariamme, Alexander's daughter, just before the siege began. Aristoboulos, a younger brother of Mariamme, was appointed as high priest. The daughter of Antigonos was later married to Herod's son Antipater. Thus, the Hasmonean family was integrated into Herod's family in order to forestall any claim to the kingship.

Palestine under Roman Rule

The year 37 BCE marked the beginning of the Roman rule over Palestine. It was the beginning of the reign of **Herod the Great** as king over a large part of Palestine, in-

cluding Judea, Idumaea, Perea, and Galilee. During his reign as a client king, people in Herod's kingdom did not have to pay taxes directly to Rome. Herod's administration, rather than the Roman tax collectors, was responsible for collecting taxes from the kingdom's inhabitants. The Palestinians under his rule were spared the humiliations of the Roman soldiers, as the Roman armies were not allowed to enter the country to demand tribute and sell off defaulters into slavery. Herod was responsible for the protection of the empire's borders against any attack, and for keeping his kingdom in good order and loyal to Rome. He devoted great effort to keeping the kingdom an integral part of the Roman Empire by suppressing any tendency toward resistance in Judea's population. As a Jew, he encouraged nonpolitical manifestations of the Jewish traditions, such as the legal studies of the Pharisees, but suppressed any manifestations of Palestinian nationalism. He worked to make Jerusalem a Roman city by introducing "the Actian Games" in the Greco-Roman style, with chariot races, theatrical performances, athletic events, and gladiatorial contests. Several buildings were constructed in the city, including an impressive palace for himself.

During Herod's reign, Jerusalem became a distinguished Roman city, home to about 120,000 inhabitants. Pilgrims visited the city in massive numbers—between 300,000 and 500,000 every year, especially during major religious holidays.⁷⁸

Jerusalem's temple played a major and essential role in the Jewish life not just in Judea, but in the lives of Jews throughout the world. As one of the most important structures in Jerusalem, it drew Herod's attention. He provided the necessary funds to rebuild it and expand its platform. It included a spacious plaza where merchants and money-changers conducted their business. The money-changers' mission was to exchange foreign currency for shekels, which were the official currency of the temple. The money-changers were also in charge of collecting the temple tax. Pilgrims would use their new currency to buy offerings that they then passed to the priests who usually were roaming in the plaza.

When Herod died in 4 BCE, the Pharisees, who adhered to the strictest interpretation of the Bible, led an uprising in Jerusalem. Herod's older son **Arcelaus** promptly sent the troops into the temple's courts and brutally crushed the rebels, killing three thousand people. Arcelaus was then summoned with his brothers to Rome to meet Emperor Augustus. While they were away, **Varus**, the governor of Damascus, sent Roman troops to Jerusalem to crush any protests. The soldiers robbed Herod's palace and plundered the temple, carrying off a large amount of money.

Augustus split the kingdom among Herod's three sons: Arcelaus was appointed governor over Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea; Herod Antipas became the governor of Galilee and Perea; and Philip was given Gaulanitis (modern-day Golan). Arcelaus was not given the title of king; he was put on probation, and after ten years he was removed

78. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 30–31.

from his post. With this, Palestine was no longer an autonomous principedom; it became a Roman province administered by the Roman governor of Damascus.

Around the time of Herod's death, a serious uprising erupted in Galilee, led by a magnetic revolutionary preacher known as **Judas the Galilean**. He was **the son of Hezekiah**, who had led a revolt in 48 BCE and had been captured and beheaded by Herod. Judas the Galilean founded a new movement: the "**Zealot party**." The historian Josephus called this the "**fourth philosophy**" (to differentiate it from the other three "philosophies"; i.e., the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes). "**Zeal implied a strict adherence to the Torah and the Law, a refusal to serve any foreign master—to serve any human master at all—and an uncompromising devotion to the sovereignty of God.**"⁷⁹ Such ideas had existed among the population of Palestine long before Judas the Galilean, but Judas was the first revolutionary to fuse the ideology of zealotry and armed resistance into a single revolutionary force, making resistance to foreign rule a religious duty.

In the time after Herod's death, Judas and his small army of zealots raided the city of **Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee**, stole weapons from the armory, and launched a guerrilla war throughout Galilee against the Romans and the wealthy Jewish aristocrats who were collaborating with Rome. Their movement had many sympathizers in Sepphoris and in Galilee. **Varus**, the governor of Damascus, crushed the rebellion and burned Sepphoris down.⁸⁰ But Judas escaped and continued to organize resistance for several years. The Zealot movement grew in size and ferocity throughout the following decade.

In 6 CE, when Judea became a Roman province after Arcelaus was banished, **Quirinius**, the prefect of Syria, and **Coponius**, the new procurator, conducted a census to register people and their properties to secure more taxes. Several taxes were imposed: land tax, income tax, a poll tax, a water tax, city taxes, taxes on meat and salt, a road tax, boundary taxes, a market tax, and customs duties. Jews also had to pay taxes for the maintenance of the temple; these were collected by the tax collectors. This oppression encouraged recruitment by the rebels.

After the census was completed, the procurator put in place the infamous system of tax farming, in which tax collection was handed over to private contractors. Those who failed to pay were sold into slavery. Tax collection was not the only hardship inflicted on the Palestinians; they also suffered from the practices of predatory businessmen who came from Rome to enhance their wealth by advancing loans to those who were unable to pay their taxes, charging them up to 50 percent interest and selling them into slavery when they failed to pay. The same unscrupulous characters were also cornering the wheat market and then selling it in areas of shortage at in-

79. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 40.

80. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 41–43.

flated prices. In order to enforce these rules, Roman troops were stationed in several locations in the country ready to inflict all forms of punishment on the farmers.⁸¹

The atrocities and savage practices of the Romans did not stop at the economic measures mentioned above, but extended to other aspects of their life, especially religious practices. The Romans exercised a policy of complete control over the Jewish religious establishment. When Pompey captured Jerusalem, the Roman soldiers entered the part of the temple where only priests were allowed. Then Pompey himself entered the Holy of Holies, that most sacred place, where only the high priest could go once a year on the Day of Atonement. In 39 CE, **Emperor Caligula** issued a decree ordering that a statue of himself be set up in the temple and worshipped as a god. The high priest became a Roman employee appointed and controlled by the Roman procurator. Even the vestments of the high priest, which were used in the New Year and the Day of Atonement, were kept in the hands of the Romans, to be made available to the high priest only for the day of the ceremonies.

The Palestinian Resistance

The Romans subjected the Palestinian population to the most brutal kind of occupation. They imposed a costly tax system on the peasantry, depriving them from enjoying the fruits of their hard work and driving them to the worst state of poverty. Palestinians generally became landless, and often went underwater in debt and ended up in the slave market. The Romans interfered in all aspect of Palestinian life, including culture, traditions, and religion.

The Arrival of Pontius Pilate

The monotheistic religion of **Judaism** replaced polytheism in Palestine around the fifth century BCE and became the religion of the majority of Palestinians in the first century BCE. The Hasmoneans had transformed Judaism from a cult religion into a universal one that dominated all aspects of life in Palestine and beyond. During their rule they encouraged proselytization in the neighboring countries around the Mediterranean. Judaism became prevalent in Egypt, North Africa, and Spain. The Jewish community in Alexandria numbered about 500,000, and there were many Jews in the Carthaginian empire. In Babylonia there was a large and prosperous Jewish community that played a major role in spreading Judaism in the neighboring countries, especially Persia. As mentioned above, during Herod's reign over Judea, large numbers of pilgrims visited Jerusalem every year.

81. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 27–46.

Palestine witnessed multiple uprisings and revolts against the savage oppression of the Roman occupation. The Zealot uprising in Galilee under the leadership of Judas the Galilean between 4 BCE and 6 CE was not the only resistance activity against the Romans; Palestine witnessed many revolts during the first two centuries of Roman rule. Most of the time, the rebel leader claimed to be the Messiah.

Between 6 CE and 26 CE, four governors ruled Judea. In the year 26 CE, **Pontius Pilate** arrived in Jerusalem as the fifth governor. Pilate was one of the longest-serving governors in Judea; he stayed in his office until 36 CE. Philo of Alexandria, the great Jewish philosopher, summarized his character: “**He was cruel and hard-hearted . . . During his reign, men were often sent to death untried.**”⁸²

The main functions of a Roman governor were to ensure an uninterrupted flow of tax revenues to Rome and to maintain a functional relationship with the high priest. Gratus, the governor who preceded Pilate, had appointed five different priests in his time. Pilate had only one high priest to deal with: **Joseph Caiaphas**. Caiaphas had a close relationship with Pilate, which allowed him to stay in office for eighteen years.

82. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 45.

JERUSALEM DURING THE FIRST REVOLT 66 CE



The Revolt of 67–70 CE

When Pilate was dismissed by Emperor Tiberius in 36 CE, Palestine was assigned, temporarily, to the oversight of the governor of Syria. Caligula, who succeeded Tiberius as emperor, appointed **Agrippa I**, the grandson of Herod the Great, to rule Palestine. Agrippa I had been raised in Rome in the imperial family. This new king respected the Jewish customs and was able to balance between protecting Rome's interests and the Jews' religious autonomy, as his grandfather had.

Agrippa I died in 44 CE; his son Julius Marcus Agrippa (Agrippa II), was seventeen at that time. Claudius, the Roman emperor who succeeded Caligula, felt that Agrippa II was not well prepared to assume the mantle of leadership, so he kept him in Rome. When Agrippa's uncle, Herod of Chalcis, died in 48 CE, his small kingdom halfway between Beyrut and Damascus was assigned to the young Agrippa. This appointment carried with it the important right of superintending the temple in Jerusalem and appointing the high priest.

The governors appointed by Rome were responsible for appointing procurators, whose role was to maintain law and order in the country and collect taxes. As procurators were unsure of how long their tenure would last, they worked hard to plunder and collect more wealth. Rome tolerated their corruption as long as it did not provoke rebellion.

As mentioned earlier, the first century of Roman rule over Palestine witnessed several uprisings against the repressive policies and practices of the Romans. **“As injustices multiplied, so did protests, at first nonviolent, then violent. As protests grew stronger, so did repression. As repression reached its peak under the procurator Gessius Florus in 64–66 CE, the population finally resorted to total renunciation of Roman rule and violent revolt.”**⁸³

Although Agrippa II and the Judean nobles tried to calm the situation in Jerusalem, promising to take matters to the emperor in Rome, the angry masses were inclined to escalate their protest into a full-blown revolution. King Agrippa abandoned Jerusalem and moved back to Caesarea, and the extremists took over forthwith. A group of lower-class priests seized control of the temple, joined by Zealot groups, especially members of the **Sicarii**.⁸⁴ They set fire to the public archives, which included the ledgers of the debt collectors and money lenders, property deeds, and public records, and won the Antonia Fortress, burning it down and slaughtering the garrison.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, a group of Sicarii attacked and captured the Masada fortress located at the southwestern corner of the Dead Sea which held arms for ten thousand

83. James J. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome, AD 66–135: A Military Analysis* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 2010), 58.

84. The Sicarii, or “dagger men”) were a splinter group of Zealots who opposed the Roman occupation by carrying out secret assassinations.

85. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 61–64.

men and vast stores of food and other supplies. They returned to Jerusalem with their plunder, but Zealot leader **Eleazar ben Simon**, sensing a threat, captured their leaders and sent them back to Masada.

Meanwhile, the Greeks in Caesarea slaughtered their city's Jewish community, presumably with Florus's encouragement. Twenty thousand men, women, and children were killed within an hour. The Greeks massacred Jews throughout Palestine and Syria. In Ashkelon, 2,500 Jews were killed, and as many at Ptolemais (Akka). Thousands more were murdered at Tyre, Hippos, Gadara, and in the surrounding villages. Florus's calculated refusal to restrain the Caesarean Greeks from launching a pogrom triggered a bloodbath. The Jews attacked Greek towns and villages in revenge, killing large numbers of their inhabitants. The Jewish rebels were also able to capture several fortresses, including Cypros near Jericho and Machaerus on the cliffs east of the Dead Sea.⁸⁶

Unable to control the situation, Florus requested assistance from Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria. Cestius assembled a large force composed of 32,000 soldiers from Antioch and other regions. They landed at Ptolemais on the coast near present day Haifa, marched into Galilee, and commenced a deliberate campaign of terror. Many people were slaughtered, and their homes were looted and burned. The Roman forces managed to control Galilee and the coastal cities within a relatively short period with minimal losses, but suffered considerable losses of troops, equipment, and supplies as they moved inland. Cestius' assault on Jerusalem ended in a rout at Beth-Horon, with huge losses of men and cavalry. The rebels captured the siege weaponry and heavy artillery, including stone-throwing catapults and large quick-firing mechanical bows. They also captured the eagle standard of the Twelfth Legion. The remnants of Cestius's forces withdrew back into Syria.⁸⁷ With his retreat, many of the most eminent Jews left Jerusalem and fled to Antioch, as they believed that the country would face a new destructive war. Others took refuge in Agrippa II's territory.

The Rebel Government in Jerusalem

The great victory of the rebels over the Roman expedition at Beth-Horon was seen by the Palestinian population as a divine victory that brought back the memory of the Maccabees' victory against the Seleucids at the same site. The rebel commanders envisioned themselves as the spiritual heirs of Judah Maccabee. The oppressed masses who started the revolt were extremely encouraged. However, the top-level members of the priestly bureaucracy were the primary beneficiaries, as they formed a war council to prepare for the next confrontation with the Romans. Although they have

86. Desmond Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor: Josephus, Masada, and the Fall of Judea* (Boston: DaCapo Press, 2009), 51–52.

87. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 55–56.

since been discredited as Roman collaborators, they were accepted as the leaders of the new state. High priest Ananus and the Sanhedrin (a legislative assembly of elders) maintained considerable influence in the new governing authority, and were able to prevent **Eleazar ben Simon**, who had played an important part in defeating Cestius, from becoming the overall leader. Ordinary people in Jerusalem did not realize that the rich aristocrats who took charge of the city were planning, by taking over the country, to negotiate a compromise peace with the Romans, as they had much to lose if the Zealots were ultimately to take control. The new government divided the country into five regions and selected ten generals to manage these regions. Most of the generals were of aristocratic origin, most notably **Ananus** and **Joseph ben Gorion**, who became joint governors of Jerusalem. Coins were minted: silver shekels and smaller denominations in bronze.⁸⁸

There had been a significant strain in the relationship between Jerusalem's Christian church and the Jewish establishment since James the Pillar had been executed in 62 CE (see page XX). Ananus, who sentenced James to death, was now fully in charge of Jerusalem. The Christian community of Jerusalem, under the leadership of Simeon, Jesus's cousin, decided to leave the city. Their departure meant the severance of any relationships with the Jewish community and the temple.

When Nero learned of his forces' defeat, he became very concerned that Rome's enemies, the Armenians and the Parthians, might exploit it. He wasted no time in preparing a massive force to crush the revolt. He appointed an experienced commander, **Flavius Vespasian**, to lead the new expedition. From 67 to 68 CE, Vespasian crushed the rebellions and systematically moved from one region of Palestine to another, burning and looting in a most vicious manner. Finally, he returned to Caesarea, where he gathered his forces in preparation for the final stage of the war: capturing Jerusalem. When news of Nero's death on June 9, 68 CE arrived, he decided to suspend military operations and await further developments.

The Year of the Four Emperors

In June 68 CE, the Roman army in Rome and other parts of the empire revolted against Nero. The Senate proclaimed him an outlaw, which meant that he would be executed "in the ancient fashion" (i.e., flogged to death). On June 9, 68 CE, Nero committed suicide. **Galba**, who was the provincial governor of Upper Germany, was then elected as the new emperor by the Senate. Galba's only asset was his noble lineage; he was known to be an impotent governor. As a new emperor he was not an effective or popular administrator; he made poor choices when he picked advisers and made bad decisions when he tried to solve the empire's financial affairs. Such actions caused

88. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 69–74.

him to lose the support of the Senate and prompted him to appoint a successor. He chose **Piso**, an unqualified candidate, to succeed him. **Otho**, a prominent member of his staff who had expected to be the successor, arranged for the assassination of both Galba and Piso on January 15, 69 CE.

After the assassinations of Galba and Piso, **Aulus Vitellius**, the provincial governor of Upper and Lower Germany, was declared to be the new emperor by his troops. His army advanced toward Italy and defeated Otho's army at Bedriacum, near Cremona. At the end of May, Vitellius, at the head of his victorious army, reached Cremona. His troops, who were made up of various ethnic German groups, treated Italy as if it were a conquered foreign land.

As soon as Vitellius had settled in Rome, he sent his representatives to the provincial governors to secure their allegiance. **Tiberius Alexander**, governor of Egypt, and **Mucinius**, governor of Antioch, withheld their support; both were in favor of having **Vespasian** as the new emperor. With their support, Vespasian would have fourteen legions—almost half the entire Roman army. Vespasian's supporters formed a council of war and established a plan wherein Mucinius would march with his army against Vitellius in Italy, while Titus would assume command of all Roman and allied troops in Palestine and continue the war, and Vespasian would establish himself in Egypt, which was the main grain supplier of Rome. Interestingly, the king of Parthia proclaimed that he “would not only refrain from exploiting the situation to his own advantage, but would commit forty thousand of his mounted archers to assist Vespasian.” While Mucinius's army was on its way toward Rome, the seven legions of the Danube destroyed Vitellius's troops at Cremona and advanced toward Rome. In December of 69 CE, Vespasian was declared the new emperor. His army, under the command of Mucinius, arrived in Rome on December 20, 69 CE. He took control of the capital in Vespasian's name, arrested Vitellius, and executed him. Thus, Vespasian became Rome's fourth emperor within a single year.⁸⁹

The Battle for Jerusalem

As mentioned above, following the defeat of Cestius and his retreat to Syria, a new governing body controlled by the rich aristocrats who always cooperated with the Romans had been established in Jerusalem. **Ananus ben Ananus**, the former high priest, was in charge of the new system. Most of the Zealots who started the rebellion were peasants whose fight for the freedom of their country was inspired by their religious belief. They were proud of their zeal for religion; this was why they were called the Zealots. They were excluded from the decision-making process by the elites. **Eleazar ben Simon**, the Zealot leader who had played a major role in the Beth-Horon battle

89. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts Against Rome*, 148–150.

against Cestius, was marginalized and contained by Ananus. However, he managed to retain complete control over the temple. Eventually the Zealots under his leadership were able to depose all the aristocrats from their traditional positions in the temple, including the position of the high priest, and a new high priest from the peasant class was appointed. Then **John of Gischala** came from Galilee, where he and his supporters had opposed the Roman-aligned governor Josephus and fled from an attack on the city by Vespasian's son Titus. When John of Gischala entered Jerusalem, he joined the Zealots and provided them with what they lacked: a clear vision and strategy. John was the one who helped develop a plan to take over Jerusalem. He started a real war against the old establishment and led the Zealot revolution.

In response, Ananus ben Ananus organized the elites' camp and started preparing for a war against the Zealots. He was able to form an army of six thousand fighters. He held public meetings in Jerusalem where he attacked the actions and policies of John of Gischala and his supporters, urging people to confront the Zealots and put an end to their control over the temple. He accused them of being a great threat to the safety of the city.

John of Gischala convinced the Zealots who controlled the temple that Ananus had persuaded his party to send an embassy to Vespasian inviting him to come and take possession of Jerusalem. Then he contacted the Idumaeans and persuaded them to march into Jerusalem and participate in the fight against the moderates who were planning to surrender the city to the Romans. More than twenty thousand Idumaeans joined the Zealots and launched an attack on the moderates gathering in the area around the temple, killing more than 8,500 of Ananus's supporters. The Idumaeans then rampaged through the city, looting houses and killing everybody they saw. Ananus was hunted down and killed.

It was clearly a class war that ended in favor of the Zealots. John of Gischala became the new ruler of Jerusalem. However, Eleazar ben Simon was unwilling to take orders from him, so the Zealots in Jerusalem split into two hostile factions, with Eleazar's faction controlling the inner courtyard of the temple while John's faction controlled the outer one. John of Gischala had the upper hand, and dominated the scene unchallenged from 68 CE until the spring of 69 CE.⁹⁰

A new Zealot faction under the leadership of **Simon bar Giora** evolved in the later part of 68 CE. Simon was born at **Gerasa** (now Jarash), on the east side of the Jordan River; his father was a Greek who had converted to Judaism. Simon was a Zealot who believed that the upper-class Jewish establishment had betrayed the nation and were collaborating with the Romans.

Simon had played a major role in the Beth-Horon battle against the Roman forces, and Ananus, who controlled Jerusalem after the withdrawal of Cestius, had expelled

90. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 123–136.

him from the city. After leaving Jerusalem, Simon had joined the Sicarii in Masada and participated in their raiding campaigns against nearby villages and communities. When Ananus was killed, Simon left Masada and went up into the hill country recruiting fighters and forming an army. As soon as he had gathered a sizable force, he expanded his activities south toward Idumaea. Simon bar Gioras took advantage of the suspension of the Romans' war campaign and expanded his territory in the south. He fortified the village of **Nain** and made it his headquarters, and stored food, supplies and equipment in nearby caves. He captured the fortress of **Herodium** and then mounted a surprise attack against Hebron, looting the city.

The Zealots of Jerusalem became alarmed and concerned about Simon's intentions. Their fighters ambushed Simon's troops and captured his wife, expecting him to surrender. On the contrary, however, it made him more vicious and daring. He marched toward Jerusalem, killing the people that he found, though he sent some back to the city alive after he cut off their hands, threatening to storm Jerusalem. The terrified Zealots then released his wife.

Life in Jerusalem under the rule of John of Gischala and his troops became unpleasant and even intolerable. Dissent erupted within John's own camp and among other segments of Jerusalem's population, especially among the Idumaeans. The deacons consulted with the remaining chief priests in the temple, who advised them to invite Simon bar Giora to enter Jerusalem, get rid of John of Gischala, and take over the city.

When Simon bar Giora received this request from Jerusalem in the spring of 69 CE, Vespasian had renewed his military campaign in response to Simon's gains in the south. He sent Roman forces through Samaria toward Jerusalem, taking complete control of Gophna and Acrabata, Simon's original power base. He also dispatched Cerialis, who led the Fifth Legion from Emmaus to clear the rebels from Idumaea, destroying Bethel and Ephraim, and then moved into Hebron. At this point Vespasian controlled all of Palestine except for Jerusalem, Herodium, Masada, and the fortress of Machaerus.

Simon and his forces were stationed outside Jerusalem's wall; he accepted the invitation and entered the city, welcomed by the crowds. John of Gischala retreated to the outer court of the temple. Eleazar ben Simon and his faction continued to occupy the inner court, while Simon bar Giora controlled the rest of the city.

Titus Takes Jerusalem

Vespasian remained in Alexandria for much of 70 CE. Titus, Vespasian's son, was sent to Palestine to finish the mission of crushing the rebels and capturing Jerusalem. Vespasian appointed Tiberius, the governor of Egypt, as Titus's second in command. (Tiberius, who came from a prominent Greek-speaking Jewish family in Egypt, had

denounced Judaism and become an apostate at an early age.) From Alexandria, Titus marched into Palestine through the desert, arriving at Gaza and continuing along the coastal plains toward Caesarea, with the Fifth, Tenth, Fifteenth, and Twelfth Legions under his command. In addition, he had the Syrian auxiliaries and substantial detachments provided by the regional client rulers. In all, the Roman army numbered between fifty thousand and sixty thousand men.

Josephus estimates Jerusalem's population at the time of the siege at 600,000. The Zealots' forces were estimated to comprise around twenty thousand well-armed troops. However, the three Zealot factions failed to unite and establish a single defense strategy. On the contrary, they were engaged in internal fights among themselves, as each of the leaders was hoping to establish a new monarchy with himself as king.

Jerusalem was the biggest and the most heavily fortified city that the Romans ever besieged. It is built on high ground (the Four Hills) bordered by deep ravines. On the east and south sides, the **Kedron Valley** separates the city from the Mount of Olives. On the west side, the **Hinnom Valley** separates the city from Mount Scopus. The Old Wall encircles the upper city in the north and the lower city in the southeast. **The temple**, which was located to the northeast, was enclosed by walls that were thicker and more elaborate than any other structure. **The fortress of the Antonia**, located north of the temple, was a highly fortified structure; it was Jerusalem's main fortress, dominating the temple and housing the city's garrison. Herod's Citadel, located on the northwest side since the Hasmonean times, was built on a fortified hill. Herod had built three towers: **Hippicus, Phaseal, and Mariamne**. The Hippicus Tower, looking over the Hinnom Valley and facing Mount Scopus, was thirteen meters wide at its base and forty meters high. The Phaseal Tower was twenty meters wide and twenty meters high. Herod's palace was located south of the citadel.

A second wall had been constructed during Herod's reign to include a new neighborhood that had sprung up adjacent to the Antonia Fortress, extending from the walls of the Antonia Fortress to the walls of Herod's complex. The city grew further, extending north of the temple and adding the north high ground, which became known as the fourth hill. King Agrippa I, who governed Judea between 41 and 44 CE, intended to construct a wall to include the expansion of the city. He built the foundations, but was stopped by the Roman emperor Claudius. After Cestius's defeat, the new authority of Jerusalem completed the wall to enhance the city's defenses. Nine towers were erected on what became known as the Third Wall, or Agrippa's Wall.

Titus marched from Caesarea through Samaria to Gophna, and after a long day's march he camped in the "**Valley of Thorns**" about five and a half kilometers from Jerusalem. As the Romans worked to establish base camps on the perimeter of the city at Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives, the rebels sent out sorties to harass them. In response, Titus leveled the ground from Mount Scopus to the wall in front of Herod's

palace and moved his troops to strongly fortified positions out of range of bowmen. From this point on, the defenders did not dare to make sorties outside the walls.

As mentioned earlier, Eleazar ben Simon controlled the inner court of the temple, while John of Gischala controlled the outer courts. Eleazar's group was well armed and had plenty of food. They occupied the high ground and were able to shoot down on John's supporters. A constant exchange of missiles between both sides dominated the scene. Simon bar Giora controlled the upper city and most of the lower city. John was attacked continually by Eleazar from above, and by Simon from below. During the skirmishes, John's men set fire to Simon's storehouses, and in return Simon's men retaliated by setting fire to John's supplies.

With the start of Passover on 1 May, Eleazar opened the gates and allowed everybody to enter the inner court. John took advantage of the situation and sent in some of his followers. Once inside they attacked Eleazar's men, who fled the scene. Eleazar himself was apparently killed, and John gained possession of the inner court and its stores.

Titus examined the fortifications of Jerusalem and concluded that the weakest side was Agrippa's Wall, the newest wall in the north. His plan was to smash through the first two walls and then through the Old Wall to reach the upper city and capture the Antonia Fortress and the temple. After breaching Agrippa's Wall in the north, he began to batter the second wall, breaking through it and allowing the Romans to storm the second wall only four days after the fall of the Agrippa's Wall. Hoping to capture Jerusalem intact, including the temple, Titus ordered that prisoners were not to be killed and houses were not to be torched. The Zealots interpreted this gesture as weakness, so they regrouped and attacked the Romans inside the New City, ambushing them in the streets and alleys. The Roman troops were forced to retreat, losing possession of the second wall. After three days, Titus repeated his assault and regained possession of the wall, then immediately demolished the northern section of the wall and placed garrisons in the remaining towers.⁹¹

After the Romans regained their control over the second wall, they spent four days in celebration, and then began building more ramps opposite the Antonia Fortress. This was a difficult job, as the fortress was protected by a huge deep ditch more than fifty feet deep. Titus's plan was to break into the upper city through the fortress. He was eager to capture Jerusalem intact, and was hoping to persuade the defenders to surrender. Titus constantly shouted up at the walls offering his terms to the defenders. This is a sample of his address:

The only places which don't belong to the Romans are not worth having, because they are either hot or too cold. Everywhere, Romans have had a monopoly of good luck, and God who gives sovereignty to

91. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 168–178.

nations has taken up his residence in Italy. It is a well-known law of nature, even among wild beasts as well as us men, that the strongest are always going to win and that being on top belongs to those who fight best. That is why your ancestors . . . gave in to the Romans—something they would never have done if they had thought that God was on their side. . . . Caesar is still ready to take you under his protection . . . but if he has to take the city by storm, then he will slaughter every single one of you for turning down his offer.⁹²

The Zealots on the Old Wall shouted back that they didn't mind dying, as it was better than slavery, and that while they stayed alive, they would do all the harm they could to the Romans. Since they were going to die soon, they did not care what happened to their city. Most of the Zealots were peasants from the countryside who had been brutalized by years of ill treatment. They saw no reason for making peace with the Romans, because it meant, at best, going back to their old misery, if not slavery or crucifixion.

They had the advantage of high ground, and made the most of it in defending the city. They tunneled under the Old Wall and destroyed the Romans' siege equipment, forcing Titus to adopt an alternative strategy. He decided to isolate the city from the outside world by building a wooden wall surrounding the New City, the Antonia Fortress, the temple, and the upper and lower cities. Such a wall would prevent supplies from reaching Jerusalem as well as preventing anybody from leaving. This method of siege had been used by Julius Caesar in Gaul a hundred years earlier.

The wall was erected in three days. It was nearly eight kilometers long, strengthened by thirteen forts, each of which was two hundred feet in circumference. The wall prevented any attempt to escape from the city. People starved as the food supplies diminished significantly. However, isolating the city did not affect the defenders, who did not care about the suffering of Jerusalem's inhabitants. They gave themselves the right to put their hands on all the food supplies in the city.

Over the three weeks that followed, the Romans finished new siege ramps. On July 5, the Romans captured the Antonia Fortress; rebuffed from entering the city by fierce resistance from the rebels, they razed the fortress and spent a fruitless month trying to breach the city walls. Finally, on August 8, Titus ordered his men to set the temple gates on fire in preparation for a large assault. He summoned a war council to discuss his plan to capture the temple. According to Josephus, Titus was interested in preserving the temple, and had repeatedly instructed his commanders to try their best to avoid torching or destroying it.

On August 10, Titus assembled his entire army, intending to attack from all sides with every single man available. Skirmishes erupted between the Zealots and a small

92. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 181.

detachment of Roman troops prior to the attack. One of the soldiers picked up a piece of burning wood, climbed on top of a comrade, and threw the brand through a window into the chambers of the Holy of Holies, setting the curtains on fire. The fire spread in a very short time, burning the shrine to the ground. The Christian historian **Sulpicius Severus**, who wrote in the late fourth century, insists that Titus gave orders to torch the shrine, dismissing Josephus's account of the Roman general's attempt to save the Holy of Holies. As the flames were spreading, the legionaries overran the entire compound, destroying the other buildings in the temple complex. The treasure chambers, which contained an immense quantity of gold and silver coins, were burned after being plundered by the soldiers.⁹³

A large number of the Zealots who were in the temple broke their way through the Romans, moving from the inner court into the outer court and then from there into the city. In the lower city, the soldiers wasted no time in chasing the Zealots and driving them out, plundering and burning the entire city. In the upper city, the Zealots continued to fight, inflicting many casualties. The upper city was a formidable fortress by itself: its walls were massive and well constructed, and it was also protected by a very steep ascent. The Zealots recovered Herod's palace from the Roman troops, occupied the citadel and its three towers, and manned the ramparts. Titus realized that the upper city could only be captured by a full-scale siege operation, so he gave orders to build ramps equipped with rams and towers. After eighteen days, the ramps were ready for the assault, which began on September 8.

The Zealots continued to defend the upper city for the entire month before the final assault, shooting down the troops who were preparing for the assault. When the rams brought down part of the wall with several of its towers, some of the defenders fled to the citadel and others escaped to the sewers. Simon and John made a costly mistake, abandoning the citadel's towers and escaping to the sewers in an attempt to flee to the desert. The towers were extremely fortified; they were of massive solid construction and made of very large stone blocks. John of Gischala, who was hiding in the sewer, crawled out and surrendered. Simon bar Giora, who was hiding in a cave, was arrested when he ventured out looking for supplies.⁹⁴

The 66–70 CE war is an important period in the history of the Palestinian resistance against a brutal and oppressive regime. It was a magnificent manifestation of heroic courage of freedom fighters who confronted an all-powerful empire, motivated and inspired by their religious beliefs. It was the most difficult and costly war that the Romans ever had. The Zealots had a strong belief in their ability to win that war, and when their final defenses collapsed, they made the choice to keep fighting to the end. The outcome of the war would have been different if they had remained united.

93. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 208–222.

94. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 223, 234.

Jerusalem under Roman Control

Now the Romans were in full control of Jerusalem. Titus's soldiers had smashed the elegant mansions of the upper city and brought down Herod's palace. Only the three towers of Phasaelus, Hippicus, and Mariamne were left intact, along with a small stretch of the western wall to protect the camp of the Tenth Legion, which now occupied the site of Herod's palace. The rest of the walls were leveled to the ground. All Jewish land was confiscated and became the property of the emperor; however, they left the former owners in actual possession of the land, to cultivate it and share in its harvest. The temple tax continued to be paid by all male adult Jews, but the funds were now donated to the Temple of Jupiter in Rome. The Jews of Judea who survived the revolt were not rounded up and exiled, as some have inferred. However, as much as a third of the population was killed during the war. Tacitus, the Roman historian, reported an estimate of the number of casualties at 600,000, which is believed to be exaggerated. Thousands were sold into slavery and large numbers were crucified or sent to arenas all over the Roman Empire to die in gladiatorial combat or be fed to wild animals. Titus kept seven hundred of the tallest and best-looking young men as prisoners for his triumphal parade in Rome. Syrian and Greek civilians were brought to live in Jerusalem, in addition to Roman soldiers and their families.⁹⁵

The destruction of the temple precipitated a major spiritual trauma, as the Jews had always believed that the temple was where Yahweh resided. This outcome of the war had a devastating effect on their life and their religious and ritual practices. During the siege, the distinguished Pharisee rabbi **Yohanan ben Zaikai** was smuggled out of the city in a coffin. At the end of the war Yohanan requested permission from Vespasian to establish a school where Jews could study and pray. An academy was then established in Yavneh (Jamnia), where the rabbis known as the Tannaim created the Mishnah (the collection of the oral law). The Mishnah became a symbolic new Jerusalem where Jews could experience the divine presence, or "**Shekhinah**," when they gathered to study the Torah. The rabbis also stressed that charity and compassion could now replace the old animal sacrifices. They taught their fellow Jews to experience God in their neighbor. Offenses against a fellow human being became equivalent to a denial of God himself; whoever destroyed a single human life would be punished as though he had destroyed the whole world.⁹⁶ As such, the rabbis in Jamnia transformed Judaism from a temple cult centered on animal sacrifice to a religious civil code that concentrated on rules and regulations.⁹⁷ It is vital to emphasize, at this point, that the transformation of Judaism did not mean that messianic

95. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 181; Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 154.

96. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 155–157.

97. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 175.

aspirations were abolished or the resentment of Roman authority was extinguished. The next sixty years witnessed more uprisings and ended up in a full-scale revolt.

Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada

Capturing Jerusalem put an end to the revolt; however, three isolated fortresses remained in the hands of the Zealots: **Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada**. Capturing these fortresses was the immediate priority for Lucilius Bassus, the new governor of Judea. **Herodium**, located eleven kilometers south of Bethlehem, was an easy target, and it surrendered in 71 CE after a short siege.

Machaerus, located east of the Dead Sea in Perea, was regarded as the most formidable fortress in the entire country after Jerusalem. It was built on a huge rock surrounded by ravines stretching as far as the Dead Sea. Bassus's plan was to fill the small ravine on the east side and build an assault ramp on top. During the siege preparations, the defenders were sending sorties to attack the soldiers. Their leader was captured by the Romans and was subjected to severe torture. The Zealots offered to evacuate the fortress if they were allowed to leave in safety with their leader. The offer was accepted by Bassus; however, after they left, he followed them to their new refuge at the Forest of Jardes in the Jordan Valley. The Zealots, numbering around three thousand, were surrounded and eventually killed.

In 73 CE, Lucius Flavius Silva succeeded Bassus. Silva assembled a force of ten thousand and marched to **Masada** in the extreme south of Palestine, west of the Dead Sea. Masada was also an impregnable fortress garrisoned by six hundred Zealots under the command of charismatic leader **Eleazar ben Yair**, who was the grandson of Judas the Galilean. Masada was built on top of a great honey-colored rock, surrounded by deep ravines unclimbable by any living creature. Herod had fortified the entire summit, which measured three-quarters of a mile in circumference. The wall was eighteen feet high and twelve feet wide, strengthened by thirty-seven tall towers.

Silva started the siege in March of 73 CE. After he established his camp on a rock northwest of the fortress, he ordered his troops to build a wall around the hill to prevent the defenders from escaping. Next the Romans began building a ramp over three hundred feet high on the west side, erecting it atop a platform of timber and stones. When the ramp was completed, wooden siege towers ninety feet tall were brought to the platform. The Romans' ram battered the wall ceaselessly until a large breach in the wall was opened. The Romans were surprised when they faced a second wall made of timber packed with earth that was built behind the stone one. The ram failed to penetrate the second wall, so Silva ordered his men to throw lighted torches at the timber beams, setting them on fire and destroying the wall. The Romans prepared themselves for the final assault the following day.

That night, Eleazar ben Yair, who realized that there was no possible means of escape, gave a speech urging his followers to kill themselves and their families. This is some of what he said:

We made up our minds long ago that we would never serve the Romans or anyone else other than God. We were the first [Jews] to revolt and we are the last still fighting them. . . .

Life, not death, is man's real misfortune. For death gives freedom to our souls and lets them return to their own pure and natural home, where they will be immune from every calamity. . . . No doubt, the soul may achieve a good deal even when confined inside a body, since it can use it as an instrument, moving it invisibly and enabling it to do things beyond the capacity of any mortal nature. However, only when freed from the weight that pulls it down to earth and allowed to go back to its rightful setting can the soul regain all its divinely bestowed energy and unhampered powers, becoming no less invisible to human eyes than God himself. . . .

Ghastly will be the fate of young men who fall into their hands. . . . Let us die unenslaved by our enemies and leave this life with our wives and children, free men to the last. This is what our Law commands, this is what our families deserve. God has ordained we should do it, while the Romans want the exact opposite and for none of us to die before being captured.⁹⁸

On April 15, 73 CE, the Zealots killed their families after embracing them. Ten comrades were chosen to put the rest to death. When the ten had completed their job, they drew lots with each other until only a single Zealot remained. After inspecting all the bodies to make sure that no one else was left alive, he set the palace on fire and then drove his own sword through his heart.⁹⁹

The Bar Kokhba Revolt: 132–135 CE

Vespasian died in 79 CE and was succeeded by his son Titus, who died in 81 CE and was succeeded by Domitian, Vespasian's younger son. Domitian ruled from 81 to 96 CE and was succeeded by Trajan, who ruled until 117 CE. Hadrian succeeded Trajan in 118 CE.

Trajan spent the first two years of his reign settling the German frontier, then between 101 and 106 CE was engaged in multiple military expeditions which included

98. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 252–255.

99. Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 255.

Romania and Nabataea. After Petra was captured, Nabataea was made part of the new Roman province of Arabia.

As recounted in book I of this history, the conflict between Rome and Parthia extended back to Pompey's time and even before, in the 60s BCE. Trajan embarked on an Alexander the Great-style campaign to expand the Roman Empire further east. The Parthian king Osroes I, who was engaged in an internal battle with his rival Vologases III, deposed the Armenian king and replaced him with his nephew. The Romans had gained the right to name the Armenian king as part of the settlement of the war between the two empires during Nero's reign. Trajan used this incident as a pretext for his mass invasion of Parthia. Although Trajan was able to annex Armenia, Assyria and Mesopotamia, the war was very costly. Osroes, the Parthian king, remained undefeated as he retreated east and continued to harass the invaders and attack Roman supply lines.

When **General Publius Aelius Hadrianus** became Emperor Hadrian in 118 CE, he decided not to continue Trajan's military adventures. His exit strategy was to install Parthaspates as king over Mesopotamia, creating a client state that would become the protector of the Roman Syrian territory. This client state was the first country to endorse Christianity as the official religion of a state in the second century CE. The client kings of Armenia followed the same path and adopted Christianity.¹⁰⁰

Hadrian's ambition was to consolidate the empire and reconstruct its cities. His major construction project was rebuilding Jerusalem and turning it into a modern metropolis. A major part of his project was the construction of a temple for Jupiter at the site of Yahweh's Temple. Most likely he was uninformed about the religious mood in Jerusalem. It is also possible that he believed that his plan would be welcomed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. **Peter Schafer**, who wrote a book about the Bar Kokhba revolt, believes that there may have been Hellenized Jews who would have sided with the Romans, much as was the case during the Maccabee/Hasmonean revolt in the second century BCE.¹⁰¹

Hadrian's plan to reconstruct Jerusalem terrified the Jewish people, as it meant the end of their hopes of rebuilding their temple. Palestine had been in a state of endemic unrest since becoming colonized by the Romans. The Romans subjected the Palestinians to the most oppressive regime in the history of mankind. When oppression and humiliation escalated to a critical threshold, the Palestinian masses had rebelled, motivated and inspired by their religious beliefs. Hadrian's plans to erect a temple to Jupiter on the ruins of Jerusalem's temple triggered a new uprising: **The Bar Kokhba revolt**.

In 132 CE, the Palestinians, under the leadership of **Simon bar Kokhba**, rose up against Roman rule. **Rabbi Akiva**, the president of the rabbinical academy at Yavneh,

100. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 201.

101. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 203.

declared that Simon bar Kokhba was the Messiah. The rebels believed that they were carrying out the apocalyptic war that had been predicted by Daniel and Zechariah.

The rebels, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, captured approximately fifty fortresses and 985 towns and villages. They constructed a network of communication tunnels and concealed redoubts. They raided Roman workshops and obtained arms and stored them. **“The establishment of the network of tunnels and underground redoubts is somewhat comparable to the Viet Cong tunnels of the 1960s and the Hezbollah system of summer 2006. This preparation would have taken the good part of a decade.”**¹⁰²

Tineius Rufus, the governor of Judea, attempted to put down the revolt with local forces under his command. As soon as the Tenth Legion left Jerusalem to fight the rebels in the countryside, Bar Kokhba’s soldiers occupied the city. Rufus’s military campaign against the rebels failed, even after he received military assistance from the legate of Syria. The rebels controlled the entire countryside and utilized their subterranean system effectively.

The turning point of the war came when Hadrian assigned the mission to Julius Severus, providing him with a large army. The equivalent of twelve Roman legions were sent to Palestine from Egypt, Britain, Syria, and other areas. The Romans experienced great difficulties when they tried to subdue the Judean hills. It appears that the Twelfth Legion was annihilated by the rebels. The Roman soldiers were accustomed to fighting full-scale battles, but Simon had a different method of confronting the Roman army: he conducted a guerrilla-style war. Severus modified his military strategy accordingly. Intercepting the rebels or depriving them of food and supplies was an effective way to capture their outposts. Over time, he succeeded in destroying hundreds of villages and killing hundreds of thousands of rebels and their families. The Romans resorted to severe brutality to win the war. The final battle took place in Bethar, situated south of Jerusalem. It was a vital military stronghold because of its strategic location on a mountain ridge. The Romans besieged the fortress, and when the walls fell, everyone in Bethar was killed.

After the war, Hadrian transformed Jerusalem into a Hellenic city called Aelia Capitolina, with palaces, gymnasiums, circuses, bathhouses, and monuments in addition to the Temple of Jupiter built on the ruins of Yahweh’s Temple. He did not build the city walls, but erected a series of monumental arches. Jews and Christians were expelled from the city. Many Jews were sold into slavery, and a number of prominent sages, including Rabbi Akiva, were martyred. Religious Jews were severely persecuted until Hadrian’s death in 138 CE, leading many to assimilate.

The Bar Kokhba revolt, the third and last of the Jewish uprisings against Rome, is considered a turning point in Jewish history. **Christian and Jewish scholars are**

102. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 205.

in agreement that this revolt marked the final dissociation between Jerusalem's church and the Jews, because the Christians had already found their Messiah, Jesus, while the Jews were at that time rallying behind Bar Kokhba, who seemed to be the real thing.¹⁰³ The Bar Kokhba revolt also marks the point at which the Jewish people lost their political independence; they would not regain it until the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

103. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 209.

The Birth and Rise of Christianity

After Pilate arrived in Jerusalem as the fifth governor in the year 26 CE, a new generation of preachers, prophets, bandits, and messiahs appeared throughout Palestine, gathering disciples, preaching liberation from Rome, and promising the coming of the Kingdom of God.

- In 28 CE, a preacher named John began baptizing people in the water of the Jordan River. **John the Baptizer** was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, the governor of Galilee, and then was executed.
- Two years later, a carpenter from Nazareth named **Jesus** made a trip to Jerusalem with his disciples, where he assaulted the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers. He was also captured and sentenced to death by Pilate. The message of Jesus of Nazareth, the messiah who influenced the entire world after being crucified, will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.
- In 36 CE, a messiah known as the **Samaritan** gathered a group of followers atop Mount Gerizim; he, too, was captured by Pilate and was executed. Pilate and the high priest of Jerusalem, Caiaphas, were dismissed after the execution of the Samaritan.
- In 44 CE, a prophet named **Theudas** crowned himself messiah, and brought his followers to the Jordan River promising to part the river and cross toward Judea to establish God's kingdom. The Romans captured Theudas and executed him.
- In 46 CE, two sons of Judas the Galilean, **Jacob and Simon**, launched a revolutionary movement against Rome; both were crucified by the Romans.
- In 48 CE, riots erupted in the temple as a result of humiliating and exasperating acts by Roman soldiers against the pilgrims, including the tearing of a Torah scroll.

- In 52 CE a group of bandits led by **Eleazar, son of Dinaeus**, arose in the countryside against the Romans. The Roman governor Felix, working with the high priest Jonathan (one of Ananus's sons), captured the bandit chief Eleazar and sent him to Rome, where he was crucified.
- In 56 CE, a zealot group called the **Sicarii** (“**dagger men**”) assassinated the high priest Jonathan during the feast of Passover.
- A mysterious Jewish sorcerer called **the Egyptian** declared himself King of the Jews. Although his movement was crushed by the Roman troops, the Egyptian himself escaped.
- Between 64 CE and 66 CE anger, resentment, and messianic zeal were building throughout the land due to the savage practices of the Roman administration, which had led to extreme devastation of Palestinian life in Jerusalem and the countryside. A group of lower-class priests led by a temple captain called **Eleazar** seized control of the temple. The Sicarii, under their leader **Menahem**, immediately rallied behind Eleazar. The rebels killed the high priest and set fire to the public archives, which included the ledgers of the debt collectors and money lenders, the property deeds, and the public records. This was the start of the 66–70 CE revolt.

The Messiah

The title “messiah” in the Old Testament means “anointed.” This title was given to the Jewish king and the Jewish high priest, who were both anointed with oil at their inauguration ceremony. Later on, especially during the Roman rule, it acquired a new meaning: the deliverer, a descendant of the house of David, who would rescue the Jews from the cruel and humiliating power of Rome. It was also believed that there would be a precursor to the messiah: the prophet Elijah, who had never died. The prophet Malachi (ca. 400 BCE) foretold: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5). The true messiah, then, would be anointed by a true prophet. The return of Elijah would signify the return of God to his people, for ever since Malachi, the Jews had been without a prophet. These beliefs about the messiah and Elijah the prophet were widespread, especially among the Pharisees. Other doctrines related to the concept of deliverance evolved. Some believed that this deliverance would come at the hands of God himself without the intervention of a messiah figure; others believed that God would send an angel to accomplish the deliverance as told in the book of Enoch. The prophecies of the scripture about the Last Days were extremely vague.¹⁰⁴

104. Reza Aslan, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Random House, 2013), 75–77.

The idea of a messiah in Judaism was based on the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joel, and Zechariah. In each of these books, the title messiah carried different meanings: according to Daniel and Jeremiah, he appeared to be a prophet; according to Isaiah a liberator; and according to Zechariah a king.

Jesus of Nazareth

John the Baptist came from a priestly family. Instead of joining the priestly line of his father Zechariah, however, he rejected his family obligation to the temple and moved to the wilderness, traveling through Judea and Perea preaching a simple message: “**The end is near. The Kingdom of God is at hand.**” His words spread rapidly throughout Palestine, and people came to him seeking the path to salvation. They traveled through the Judean wilderness to hear him preach at the shore of the Jordan River. He took them one by one to the eastern shore and submerged them in the living water, and then the baptized crossed back to the western bank of the river, repentant, redeemed, and ready to receive the Kingdom of God. John was offering this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and purification of the body. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, John’s baptism was meant to be an initiation rite, a means to enter his order.

Jesus of Nazareth, as a teenager, left his tiny village in Galilee and traveled to Judea to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. Jesus then was an unknown peasant and worker. Not everyone who was baptized by John became his disciple; most of the baptized returned to their homes. But Jesus stayed and became a member of John’s inner circle. He remained in Judea, preaching his master’s words, until Herod Antipas, the governor of Galilee and Perea, had John captured and imprisoned. Jesus then returned to Galilee, and began preaching about the Kingdom of God that was to come. He continued John’s mission, but his message was more revolutionary and far more radical. Two of John’s disciples, Andrew and Philip, joined Jesus and became his first disciples.¹⁰⁵

Galilee had been hotbed of revolutionary activity for centuries, long before the Roman invasion. The region benefited from its rugged topography and mountainous terrain. The Galileans always resisted foreign rule. They were different from the inhabitants of Judea and other parts of Palestine in their culture and lifestyle. They were pastoral people easily recognized by their own customs and accent. The elite in Judea referred to them as “**the people of the land.**” This term meant many things, including that they were dependent on subsistence farming, uneducated, and did not abide by the law, especially in regard to making the obligatory tithes and offerings to the temple.

105. Aslan, *Zealot*, 80–89.

Although they felt a meaningful connection to the temple in Jerusalem, where God resided, they were very critical of the lavish lifestyle of the Judean priesthood, their exploitation of the peasantry, and their shameful collaboration with Rome.¹⁰⁶

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Roman response to the Palestinian resistance during the decade that followed Herod's death (4 BCE) was devastating to all of Palestine, especially Galilee: villages were burned, cities were razed, and populations enslaved. From 10 CE until 36 CE, when Herod Antipas was deposed by the emperor Caligula, Galilee witnessed a period of relative tranquility. During this period, Herod Antipas built two new Greek cities: Sepphoris and Tiberias. Around 10 CE, he established his capital at Sepphoris, and later on he moved to his new capital, Tiberias, on the coast of the Sea of Galilee, when it was completed. Although the construction of the two cities provided job opportunities, it added a significant burden to the economy. Taxes were raised, land prices doubled, and debt soared. The gap between the rich and the poor widened. Galilee gradually became a lot like Judea: urbanized and Hellenized. The new cities were almost wholly inhabited by Roman merchants, Greeks, and wealthy Judean settlers.

When Jesus returned to Galilee, he chose **Capernaum**, a small seaside village of fifteen hundred people, as his home. It was the ideal place for him to launch his ministry. The majority of Capernaum residents were poor farmers and fishermen who had been left behind by the new Galilean economy. Jesus's message was a direct challenge to the wealthy and the powerful. It was simple: **"The Lord God had seen the suffering of the poor and the dispossessed; he had heard their cries and anguish. And he was finally going to do something about it."**¹⁰⁷ Jesus was able to gather a large group of Galileans, mostly fishermen, to be his disciples. Among this large group there was an inner core of twelve who left their homes and families behind and traveled with him from town to town, village to village. The twelve included the brothers **James** and **John**, the sons of **Zebedee**; **Philip**, who had been one of John the Baptist's disciples; **Andrew**, who had also been with John the Baptist; **Peter**; **Matthew**; **Jude**, the son of James; **James**, the son of Alphaeus; **Thomas**; **Bartholomew**; **Simon**; and **Judas Iscariot**.

The twelve disciples of Jesus became his "ambassadors" (apostles) whom he sent to the neighboring towns and villages to preach on their own, without supervision. Jesus then began visiting Capernaum's synagogue to preach to the people of his village. The crowds at the synagogue were astonished by his charismatic authority as he began to proclaim, **"Repent! The kingdom of heaven is near!"** He was challenging the guardians of the temple of Jerusalem and their authority as God's representatives. Jesus succeeded in establishing a firmly built movement with a widespread group of followers. Large crowds began to travel to Capernaum from nearby villages to listen

106. Aslan, *Zealot*, 91–92.

107. Aslan, *Zealot*, 96.

to the charismatic preacher. The status of his ministry completely changed when the crowds experienced Jesus's healing power and witnessed his miracles. His fame could no longer be confined to Capernaum; the news of his message and wondrous deeds spread throughout all of Galilee. More crowds gathered around him from every town and village of northern Palestine.

Jesus spoke all the time about the establishment of the **Kingdom of God**. His concept of this kingdom was very clear. It meant simply that God was the sole sovereign, the one and only king, over all the world. **"Everything in heaven and earth belongs to God."** It was not a celestial kingdom, but a real kingdom to be established on earth at the present time. Jesus's belief regarding the Kingdom of God was shared by all resistance movements in Palestine. This concept was not different from John the Baptist's view of the Kingdom of God. However, Jesus's interpretation was clearer, as he was calling for the complete reversal of the current political, religious, and economic systems. **"Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are hungry, for you shall be fed. Blessed are you who mourn, for you shall soon be laughing"** (Luke 6:20–21). It was a promise of impending deliverance from subservience and foreign rule. It spoke of a radically new world wherein the meek would inherit the earth, the hungry would be fed, and the poor would be made rich. In the Kingdom of God, wealth would be redistributed and debts cancelled.¹⁰⁸

Jesus's words were clear: The Kingdom of God was about to be established on earth. God's rule could not be established without the destruction of the present order, and without the annihilation of the present leaders. "The Kingdom of God is at hand" meant the end of the Roman Empire. It was simply a call to revolution. There is no evidence that Jesus advocated violent actions, but he was certainly no pacifist. He understood that God's sovereignty could not be established except through force. He warned his disciples: "If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). It was well known at the time that crucifixion was the punishment for sedition. Jesus recognized that the new world order he envisioned was so radical and revolutionary that would face a brutal response from Rome: arrest and execution. Jesus intentionally was hiding the truth about the Kingdom of God from all but his disciples: "The secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you to know; but to others, everything is said in parables so that they may see and not perceive, they may hear and not understand" (Mark 4:11–12).¹⁰⁹

In the two years that followed Jesus's return to Galilee, he not only carried on John's message, but expanded it into a movement for national liberation from the oppression of imperial Roman rule. Jesus and his disciples intentionally and wisely restricted their activities to northern Galilee, Phoenicia, and Gaulanitis. They also

108. Aslan, *Zealot*, 116–119.

109. Aslan, *Zealot*, 119–126.

avoided the royal cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias. Jesus preached to the poorer population in these territories, condemning the Roman governor, Herod Antipas (the Fox) and the hypocrite priests who would be displaced in the Kingdom of God that was to come.

At the end of these two years of preaching and organizing his movement, Jesus and his disciples began their slow journey toward Judea and Jerusalem. Along the outskirts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do the people say I am?” The disciples responded: “Some say you are John the Baptist; others say Elijah; still others say you are Jeremiah or one of the other prophets risen from the dead.” Then Jesus stopped and turned to his disciples. “But who do you say I am?” Peter answers for the rest: “You are the Messiah” (Matthew 16:13–16; Mark 8:27–29; Luke 9:18–20).

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter and the brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee, to Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in Palestine, which was close to Caesarea Philippi. There, he was miraculously transformed before their eyes. According to Mark: “His clothes became dazzling white, like snow . . . and suddenly Elijah and Moses appeared on the mountain. A cloud consumed the mountain, and a voice from within echoed the words: ‘This is my son, the Beloved. Listen to him.’ Then a divine voice from the sky confirmed: Jesus of Nazareth is the anointed Messiah, the king of the Jews” (Matthew 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36).

The journey to Caesarea Philippi and the events that took place in this region, especially on Mount Hermon, did not happen by accident. It was the crowning ceremony of Jesus as king of Jews in preparation for the journey to Jerusalem. Following the coronation, Jesus began his tour toward the capital, Jerusalem. It was his inauguration tour to claim the throne and to end the Roman rule. His liberation movement, which had witnessed explosive growth in the two years since he returned to Galilee, had reached its peak. His followers were expecting bold action from him.¹¹⁰

Jesus never made a statement about his messianic identity. In the book of Mark, the miraculous moment on the mountaintop ends without comments from Jesus; however, in the book of Mathew, Jesus addresses his disciples: he identifies John the Baptist as Elijah reborn, thereby clearly claiming for himself, as the successor to John/Elijah, the mantle of the Messiah (Matthew 16:20).

Jesus clearly understood his mission: he believed that the time for the fulfillment of the prophecies had come, the Roman rule would end, and the unworthy among the Jews would perish. He did not refer to himself as the Messiah or the “Son of God”; but repeatedly called himself the “Son of Man.”

The term “Son of Man” was mentioned in the book of Daniel, which was written during the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 BCE), who

110. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 125–129.

claimed to be a god. In Daniel’s book, the prophet had a vision where he saw four monstrous beasts representing four great kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Medea, and the Greek kingdom of Antiochus. The four beasts were let loose to plunder the earth. In the midst of death and destruction, Daniel saw God sitting upon a throne made of flames and passing judgment on the beasts, killing and burning some with fire and taking authority away from the rest. Then Daniel saw “a human form, a son of man arriving in a whirl of clouds. He came to [God] and was presented to him. He was given the power to rule—all the glory of royalty. Everyone—race, color, and creed—had to serve him. His rule would be forever, never ending. His kingly rule would never be replaced” (Daniel 7:1–14). Most scholars believe that the primary source for Jesus’s interpretation of the phrase “Son of Man” came from the book of Daniel.¹¹¹

Jesus recognized the danger of his message in calling for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. He consciously was trying to avoid the fate of the other revolutionaries who claimed the title of Messiah. Thus Jesus refrained from declaring himself as the Messiah, and opted to use the ambiguous “Son of Man.” Jesus’s concealment of his messianic aspirations, and his commands to his disciples to keep his identity and mission to themselves, were behind what became known in the Gospels as the “messianic secret.”

Jesus was not a guerrilla leader. He did not prepare his followers for a real war; he did not train them militarily. He believed in the miraculous nature of the coming salvation. Because the fight against Rome would be won by miraculous means, he made no military preparations. With these beliefs in mind, he started his journey from Mount Hermon to Jerusalem, passing through Galilee, then through Perea, until he reached Jericho. Here he was joined by a vast crowd, and they proceeded into Jerusalem to claim the throne. Mark describes this mass march as a royal procession.

It was around 30 CE when Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding a donkey in deliberate fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah, surrounded by the crowds shouting “Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the Kingdom of God.” The crowds were spreading cloaks on the roads for Jesus to ride over. They scattered palm fronds before him, while others carried palm branches and waved them in the air. The entire celebration was meticulously orchestrated by Jesus and his followers in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy (Zechariah 9:9):¹¹²

**Rejoice Greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Cry out, daughter of Jerusalem;
Behold, your king is coming to you;
Righteous and victorious is he;
Humble and riding upon an ass.**

111. Aslan, *Zealot*, 138–141.

112. Aslan, *Zealot*, 73–74; Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 130–132.

Jesus's message to Jerusalem's inhabitants was clear: The long-awaited Messiah, the king of the Jews, had come.

The following day Jesus and his disciples entered the temple's public courtyard, the Court of the Gentiles, and began their cleansing mission. In a rage, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and drove out the vendors. He then released the sheep and cattle that were waiting to be sold for sacrifice. He opened the cages of the doves and pigeons and set them free.

Jesus had almost complete control of the temple for the following week. During the day he was preaching to the masses of Jerusalem's inhabitants and the pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. He addressed the crowds: "**Does not scripture say: My house will be called a house of prayer. You have turned it into a robber's den.**" (Mark 2:15–18). "**You see those great buildings; not a single stone will be left on another, everything will be destroyed**" (Mark 13:1–2). In the evenings, Jesus and his disciples went to the Mount of Olives, on the east side of Jerusalem. Apparently, he was following Zechariah's prophecy stating that a miracle would take place on the Mount of Olives. After preparing himself by several nights of meditation and prayers, he was convinced that "the day of the lord" was close at hand. He then called his disciples to celebrate the imminent overthrow of Roman power. This celebration was the feast that became known as the Last Supper. After the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples camped at the Mount of Olives. He was convinced that this was the night on which God would appear in glory and overthrow the foreign invaders of the Holy Land. Jesus was quite sure of his interpretation of the prophecy stated in Zechariah 14:4–5:

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against these nations. His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives . . . and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley . . . and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints . . . and the Lord shall be king over all the earth.

On that night when Jesus was expecting the miracle to take place, he took his disciples to "**the garden of Gethsemane**" located at the foot of the Mount of Olives (the valley) where he could watch the miracle and not be overwhelmed by it. Here he told his disciples to watch and pray. He was expecting an awesome miracle and the appearance of the glory of God. Jesus must have felt, however, that this occurrence would depend to a great extent on his worthiness and that of his disciples; he had been preparing for this moment for years, preaching and calling people to repentance. As the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Kingdom of God depends on the Jews' worthiness

and cooperation, it is no wonder that he kept repeating the messianic slogan, “**Watch and pray.**”¹¹³

Jesus was an apocalypticist who believed that God would produce the miracle, if and when the people repented and redeemed themselves. He worked hard over a period of three years to build a national movement made of large masses of believers who repented in preparation for God’s miracle to happen. Jesus’s movement was completely different from that of the zealots, who were committed to a program of long guerrilla war. It was also different from those of the other messianic groups who were relying on God completely to make the change and produce the miracle.

The miraculous appearance of the Lord God on the Mount of Olives did not occur that night. Instead, the Roman troops, reinforced by the temple’s police, arrived at the garden of Gethsemane. How did the troops know where to find Jesus? The high priest did not want to arrest Jesus in the temple, as he was concerned about the possible reaction of the masses who supported him. The high priest and the Roman troops clearly knew where to find him. There are many versions of the story of the acts of Judas Iscariot, the most popular one being that Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. The Roman troops arrested Jesus and then proceeded on their way with their prisoner while the disciples fled.

After Jesus was arrested, he was brought under cover of darkness to the courtyard of the high priest. Most likely Jesus was questioned only by the high priest Caiaphas and Ananus, the priest’s father-in-law. The high priest asked him directly whether he was the Messiah. Jesus’s answer varies in all four Gospels, but it always includes a declaration of himself as the Son of Man. It appears that Jesus was not charged with blasphemy. According to the Torah, anyone who is condemned for blasphemy shall be put to death: “The congregation shall stone him to death” (Leviticus 24:16). The high priest made the charge of sedition against Jesus when he handed him over to Pilate.

In the morning of the following day, Jesus was escorted to the Antonia Fortress to appear before Pontius Pilate, where Caiaphas made the charge of sedition against Jesus. According to the book of Luke, the high priest presented Jesus to Pilate, saying: “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar.”¹¹⁴

Pilate was not one for trials. In his reign as governor of Jerusalem, he had sent thousands upon thousands to the cross with no trials. The personal relationship between Pilate and Caiaphas expedited the process. No trial was held. Jesus’s crime was recorded in Pilate’s logbook, and then Jesus was led out of the Antonia Fortress and taken to the courtyard, where he was tortured. Like all those condemned to crucifixion, he was forced to carry the crossbeam himself to the Golgotha hill outside

113. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 139–149.

114. Maccoby, *Revolution in Judea*, 156–157.

Jerusalem's walls for all citizens and pilgrims to witness his suffering as a reminder of the fate of those who would defy the rule of Rome. The crossbeam was then attached to a post. Jesus's wrists and ankles were nailed to the cross with iron spikes. In a few short hours Jesus's lungs collapsed and he stopped breathing.¹¹⁵

Jesus died in the year 30 CE, in the late afternoon, just few hours before the Jewish Passover evening meal. **Joseph of Arimathea**, a respected member of the Sanhedrin, got permission from Pilate to bury Jesus's body. That same night, Joseph and friends carried the body and buried it temporarily in a nearby cave, as there was no time for the full and proper Jewish burial procedure. They wrapped the body in a linen cloth and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb, and blocked the entrance with a stone. The women of Jesus's family had plans to wash the body and anoint it with oil and spices after Passover and the Sabbath had passed (Mark 16:1).¹¹⁶

According to John, the women who came on Sunday morning to perform the proper washing and anointing procedure found an empty tomb. They ran and told Peter: "**They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.**" Peter and another disciple came and verified the fact that the tomb was empty (John 20:1–10). Other versions of the empty tomb story are mentioned in the other Gospels.

Following the discovery of the empty tomb, Jesus appeared to the disciples. According to John, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb on Sunday morning. Later that evening he appeared to the rest of the disciples in Jerusalem. Other versions of Jesus's appearance are mentioned in the other Gospels. The other main version is the one describing his appearance in Galilee.

The appearance of Jesus after his crucifixion, death, and burial is how Christianity started. Christian scholars, both Protestants and Catholic, believe that the only possible explanation for the empty tomb is that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he emerged from the tomb fully and miraculously restored to health. The disciples were in great despair over Jesus's death, having lost all hope that he could be the Messiah. They were not expecting him to rise from the dead. The resurrection suddenly transformed them from hopelessness to dynamic faith.¹¹⁷

The Gospels

Christian scholars and historians faced a difficult challenge when they attempted to explore and document the history of Jesus's life and mission, as well as the events

115. Aslan, *Zealot*, 158–159.

116. James D. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 74–75.

117. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 69.

that led to his crucifixion and resurrection. Those who witnessed these events left no written narratives. For many years the only available sources were the verbal ones which circulated among people and disseminated over the years. The first written sources were the four Gospels of the New Testament. These Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses, but by anonymous, highly educated, Greek-speaking Christians of a later generation, probably after Jesus's disciples had all died. **They are named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John after two of Jesus's disciples, Matthew and John, and two close companions of other apostles: Mark, who was Peter's secretary, and Luke, who was the traveling companion of Paul.**

Jesus died around 30 CE. The **Gospel of Mark was written around 65–70 CE in Rome; Matthew was written about twenty years later, around 85–90 CE, in Damascus; Luke was written around the same time in the Greek city of Antioch; and John was written in Ephesus after 100 CE.** The apostle Paul was the first Christian author; his writings—the seven letters (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon) dating to the early 50s CE—are the earliest surviving Christian texts. The book of Acts covers the period from the death of Jesus to Paul's journey to Rome (30–60 CE), and mainly focuses on Paul, who brought the Christian message to Rome. It is believed that this book was written by Luke between the 90s CE and the beginning of the second century CE.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels, as they are alike. The Gospel of Mark was written first; Matthew and Luke copied Mark, but they contain additional passages and sayings of Jesus. It is believed that they had other sources, which became known as the Q source (The word for "source" in German is *Quelle*). Matthew and Luke have stories not found in the other Gospels; obviously they got them from other sources, which scholars called the M and L sources. Two other valuable Gospels were found at a later time: the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Peter.¹¹⁸

Scholars who have studied these Gospels conclude that they have numerous discrepancies, contradictions, and historical problems.

These books do not contain the words of someone who was sitting at Jesus's feet taking notes. . . . They are intended to tell the "good news" of Jesus (the word gospel means "good news"). That is, their authors had a vested interest both in what they were telling and how they were telling it. They wanted to preach Jesus. . . . Does this mean that the Gospels are useless as historical sources? No, it means that we need to have rigorous historical methods to help us . . . know what Jesus really said and did.¹¹⁹

118. Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), 95.

119. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 92–93.

Jesus was a Palestinian Jew, and like most Jews in Palestine he believed that there was one true God, the creator of heaven and earth. He was an apocalyptic who believed that God would intervene very soon to end pain and suffering by overthrowing the forces of evil to establish His kingdom, where there would be no misery or injustice. Jesus believed that the situation on earth had reached its peak of injustice, with the forces of evil in full control. He predicted that God would send a savior from heaven to destroy the wicked kingdom of this age and to establish the Kingdom of God, and those who entered the kingdom would have a utopian eternal life. This would be the Judgment Day, on which all people would be brought back to life to face judgment—either punishment or reward. Jesus believed that the Judgment Day was coming soon. He believed in the prophecies of the Bible that emphasized the role of the Messiah in leading the way for the new kingdom. Christian scholars and historians believe that Jesus thought of himself as the Messiah, the king in the new kingdom.

During his life, Jesus raised hopes and great expectations among his disciples, as they believed that he was the Messiah. His crucifixion came as a crushing disappointment, as they realized that they were wrong. However, this situation changed completely when they came to believe that he had been raised from the dead. They saw this miracle as a confirmation of him being the Messiah. Were it not for the belief by Jesus's disciples that he had risen from the dead, he would be known today only as another failed Jewish messiah, like the other rebels who claimed that they were messiahs. The disciples believed that Jesus was raised into an immortal body and exalted to heaven, where he would live and reign with God Almighty.¹²⁰

The debate over the divine nature of Jesus was the most important issue among Jesus's followers following resurrection. During Jesus's life, the disciples never thought of him as God; their thoughts never went further than the possibility that he was the messiah. According to the earliest Christian belief, **“Christ is said to have been exalted to heaven at his resurrection and to have been made the Son of God at that stage of his existence. In this view, Jesus was not the Son of God who was sent from heaven to earth; he was the human who was exalted at the end of his earthly life to become the Son of God and was made, then and there, into a divine being.”**¹²¹ Raymond Brown, a Roman Catholic priest who wrote several books about this subject, concluded that **the earliest Christians originally held that God had exalted Jesus to a divine status at his resurrection.**¹²² In his books, Brown reviews how later Christians developed their views in regard to the divinity of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus became the Son of God at his baptism by John the Baptizer; Matthew and Luke indicate that Jesus became the Son of God when he

120. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 174.

121. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 218.

122. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 218 and 236.

was born; and John presents Jesus as the Son of God from before creation. The word “Christ” is from *christo*, the word for messiah in Greek, which also indicates divinity. Christology (understanding of Christ) has evolved over time since the vision of Jesus by the disciples.

The Gospel of Mark begins by describing the baptism ministry of John the Baptist: After being baptized, when he comes out of the water, Jesus sees the heavens split open, the spirit of God descends upon him as a dove, and a voice from heaven says, “**You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased**” (Mark 1:9–11).

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was born of Mary, who became pregnant despite being a virgin; it was God who made her pregnant. In this telling, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, who is engaged to be married but has not yet gone through the ceremony or had any physical contact with her espoused, Joseph. Gabriel tells her that she is specially favored by God and will conceive and bear a son. She is taken aback—she has never had sex: how can she conceive? The angel tells her in graphic terms: “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the one who is born will be called holy, the Son of God**” (Luke 1:35).

Paul believes that Jesus Christ is a preexisting divine being. He refers to him as **God’s chief angel**. The New Testament scholar Charles Gieschen defines the Jewish notion of an angel as “**a spirit or heavenly being who mediates between the human and divine realms.**”¹²³ The concept of Jesus Christ being the God’s chief angel is the beginning of **Incarnation Christology**, which stands in sharp contrast to **Exaltation Christology**, which holds that the human Jesus was exalted to the divine status after crucifixion. If Jesus Christ was the chief angel who performed God’s work on earth, then he was the figure who appeared to Hagar, Abraham, and Moses, who sometimes actually was called God in the Hebrew Bible. **If this is in fact the case, then he is a preexistent divine being who chose to come in the likeness of human flesh, who, because he humbled himself to the point of death, was elevated to an even higher status than he had before and was made the Lord of all. Paul clearly thought that Christ was God in a certain sense, but does not think that he was the Father; he was the angel of the Lord who was eventually exalted to be equal with God and worthy of all of God’s honor and worship (Romans 9:5).**

In John’s Gospel, Jesus is equal with God the Father—before coming to the world, while in the world, and after he leaves the world:

In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God . . . And the **Word** became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the unique one before the Father, full of grace and

123. Charles Gieschen, *Anthropomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Koninklojke Brill NV, 1998), 318.

truth (John 1:1, 14; later, in verse 17, this Word made flesh is named “Jesus Christ”).

Jesus said: “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Jesus said: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

It is very difficult to determine when Christians started to think of Jesus as a preexisting divine being. Most scholars believe that this view was in place before Paul’s letters. Eventually Incarnation Christology replaced Exaltation Christology. Although Incarnation Christology dominated the Christian tradition, a significant issue surfaced: If Christ really was God, and God the Father was God, how could Christians claim that there was just one God? And if the Holy Spirit is also God, aren’t there three Gods? If so, aren’t Christians polytheists instead of monotheists? To solve this issue, and to answer this question, most theologians say: “Jesus was God; he was not God the Father; yet there was only one God.”¹²⁴

The Jerusalem Church and the Nazarenes

After Jesus’s crucifixion, his disciples remained in Jerusalem and continued to preach their message. In Jerusalem they had the chance to talk to the Jewish pilgrims who visited the temple from all regions of the Roman Empire. They gave their possessions away and lived a communal life. “Their message was wholly focused around their expectations that the Kingdom of God had drawn near, as proclaimed by John the Baptist and Jesus, and that very soon God would intervene in human history to bring about his righteous rule of peace and justice among all nations.”¹²⁵

Jesus’s original disciples and followers, led by James, Peter and John, continued to live as Jews, but as a new Jewish sect. They founded what became known as **Jerusalem Church**, the mother church. James, Jesus’s brother, was elected as the leader of the church by the council of seventy elders that had been established by Jesus himself, and by the eleven disciples. John and Peter were elected as James’s left- and right-hand advisers. They continued to observe the Torah and worship in the temple at Jerusalem or in their local synagogues. They practiced circumcision and followed the religious dietary rules. They were not different in their beliefs from other Jewish sects, except that **they believed in the resurrection of Jesus, and that Jesus was still the promised Messiah. They believed that Jesus, by a miracle of God, had been brought back to life after his death on the cross, and would soon come back to**

124. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 282.

125. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 25.

complete his mission of overthrowing the Romans and setting up the Kingdom of God. In the meantime, both Jews and non-Jews were urged to repent of their sins, turn to God, and follow Jesus's teachings.¹²⁶ Jesus's adherents preached their message to the Jews of Jerusalem, as well as to the Jewish pilgrims. Their movement spread to other cities in Palestine: Lyda, Joppa, Caesarea, and Galilee. They sent emissaries to Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece, and Rome to spread Jesus's message. Members of the church were not known as Christians at that time; they were called **Nazarenes**.

The followers of Jerusalem Church were persecuted following the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane; the disciples fled and became fugitives. The high priest's police went after Jesus's followers. Many were arrested and tortured, and some were executed. The first member of Jesus's movement executed after Jesus was **Stephen**, who had come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage and had been converted to the Jesus movement. The book of Acts describes his arrest, his trial by the Sanhedrin assembly, and his execution by stoning. According to Luke, he was a man full of grace and power; his speech and wisdom were so powerful that few could stand against him. Stephen referred to Jesus as "the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

Peter was also arrested and tried by the Sanhedrin, but Gamaliel, the leader of the Pharisees' party, defended him and managed to persuade the assembly to grant him clemency. **James** was also arrested and tried before the Sanhedrin, and was executed in 62 CE. He was thrown from the corner of the temple enclosure into the Kidron Valley, where he was stoned and beaten to death with a club.¹²⁷

The New Religion: Christianity

Scholars refer to the Nazarenes as the original apostolic Christians who came before Paul. However, the Nazarenes saw themselves as a Jewish sect with a completely different and distinct belief about Jesus, which was in sharp contrast to Judaism. This belief was also in sharp contrast to Paul's version of the new faith. **The Christianity that was developed as a new thriving religion in the fourth century CE was based on "the ecstatic and visionary experiences of Paul."**¹²⁸

Paul was a devout Jew when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem in the year 30 CE. Following Jesus's crucifixion, he was part of the temple establishment that persecuted Jesus's followers. In the year 37 CE, **Paul, who was known as Saul then**, was traveling to Damascus to arrest Jesus's followers and to bring them to Jerusalem for trials. Acts 9: 1–31 has the following account:

126. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 25.

127. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 37–38.

128. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 24.

While Paul was still on the road and nearing Damascus, suddenly a light flashed from the sky all around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Tell me, Lord, who you are.”

The voice answered, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you have to do.” Meanwhile the men who were traveling with him stood speechless; they heard the voice and could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. He was blind for three days, and took no food or drink.

In Damascus he was visited by **Ananias**, who cured his blindness, converted him to Jesus’s movement by baptism, and informed him of his mission to preach the gospel message of salvation to the Gentiles.

After Paul’s initial apparition of Jesus in 37 CE, he became connected with Jesus throughout his entire life through extraordinary revelations that no other human in history had received. He believed that God had selected him before his birth for a special mission. “Though Jesus had directly chosen the twelve apostles, and in that order of things Paul came after them, God’s choosing him before birth would actually make Paul the *first* apostle.”¹²⁹ Jesus did not disclose God’s plan to the twelve apostles. That came later, when God chose to reveal his son, the heavenly glorified Christ, to Paul and to Paul alone. Paul made such a statement in Galatians:

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia. (Galatians 1:15–17)

Immediately after he received his initial vision of Christ, Paul traveled to Arabia to Mount Sinai, where God had delivered the revelation of the Torah to Moses. It is believed that Paul stayed in Arabia for three years in isolation, praying and meditating. In **2 Corinthians 12**, he mentions an ecstatic experience in which he was taken up into the third, or highest, level of heaven. This privileged experience, gazing upon the glory of God as well as Jesus Christ in his glorified state, surpassed that which any human being had ever received.¹³⁰ Moses alone had been allowed to ascend to Mount

129. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 91.

130. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 92–95.

Sinai and communicate directly with God (Exodus 24:15–18); Elijah had been taken up to heaven in a fiery heavenly chariot (2 King 2:11–12).

Three years later, Paul traveled to Jerusalem to meet James and Peter (Galatians 1:18). Paul's goal was to get their approval that he alone would be entrusted with the mission to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7–8). He believed that when God sent Jesus to the world, he had a two-stage plan: the first stage was sending Jesus directly to the Jews to fulfill his promise to send the Messiah; the second stage was sending Paul to the Gentiles, as an extension of Jesus, to finish up the main task of the Messiah.

Paul was the one who established the doctrine of salvation through the divine sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This was the basis of Christianity. The main elements of Paul's theological vision are as follows:

- Salvation (forgiveness of sins) is achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, God's divine Son, based on his sacrificial death on the cross;
- Receiving the Holy Spirit and the gift of eternal life is guaranteed by faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead;
- The belief in the return of Jesus to establish a heavenly glorified reign.¹³¹

Paul's theological vision was clear when he declared that **only belief in the Messiah could put a person into a right standing before God, because the Messiah had died for the sins of others, and God, in order to show that this death did indeed bring atonement, had raised him from the dead.** Paul's greatest contribution to Christianity was his view that salvation in Christ applied to all people, Jew and Gentile alike; a Gentile did not have to become a Jew in order to gain salvation through the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

During Paul's visit to Jerusalem around 40 CE, a lengthy debate took place between the leaders of the Jerusalem Church and Paul regarding whether the Gentile converts must be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. According to the author of the book of Acts, at the end of the debate, Peter made a speech, arguing that conversion to Judaism was not necessary: **"God made no difference between them and us; for he purified their hearts by faith. Then why do you now provoke God by laying on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? No, we believe that it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, and so are they."**

The final word came from James:

My judgment therefore is that we should impose no irksome restriction on those of the Gentiles who are turning to God, but instruct

¹³¹. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 24.

them by letter to abstain from things polluted by contact with idols, from fornication, from anything that has been strangulated, and from blood. (Acts 15:19–20)

The Council of Jerusalem gave Paul the freedom to work with Gentiles without having to impose the demands of the Torah on the converts. He succeeded in getting James to accept the Gentile converts as full members of the Church rather than giving them special status at the periphery of the movement. Paul was satisfied with the results of his visit to Jerusalem, as his mission to preach to the Gentiles had been endorsed by the Jerusalem leadership. Reaching such a compromise with James and Peter was a very important achievement, as he was trying hard not to break with the Jerusalem Church.

After the Council of Jerusalem, Paul returned to Antioch and presented himself as being on equal status with James. He stated to his followers that the Council acknowledged the following:

I had been entrusted with the Gospel for Gentiles as surely as Peter had been entrusted with the Gospel for Jews. For God, whose action made Peter an apostle to the Jews, also made me an apostle to the Gentiles.

Recognizing then the favor thus bestowed upon me, those reputed pillars of our society, James, Cephas “Peter,” and John, accepted Barnabas and myself as partners, and shook hands upon it, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles while they went to the Jews. All that they asked was that we should keep their poor in mind, which was the very thing I made it my business to do. (Galatians 2: 6–10)

The relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem Church leaders was described by most historians as being tense. A serious dispute occurred between Paul and Peter in Antioch shortly after Paul returned from Jerusalem. Paul describes his quarrel with Peter in Galatians:

But when Cephas “Peter” came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. For until certain persons came from James, he was taking his meals with Gentile Christians; but when they came, he drew back and began to hold aloof, because he was afraid of the advocates of circumcision. (Galatians 2:11)

The tension between the two sides intensified in the mid to late 50s CE, as Paul was preaching that the Torah had now been superseded by the new Torah of Christ.

Around 57 CE he was summoned to Jerusalem to address this issue. The charges during this second visit were more serious; however, he decided to meet with the Jerusalem Church leaders, as he was trying to avoid any break with the Nazarenes. **Why did Paul work so hard to avoid a break with Jerusalem leadership? Why did he not establish his own church, since his views were radically different from those of James and Peter?** Paul had many followers and founded many Gentile communities of Christians all over the Roman world. Yet he felt that being connected to Judaism was essential for his movement. Jesus was a Jew, and his mission had been to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. Paul himself believed that he was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of delivering God's message to the Gentiles. He was also hoping for the transformation of Judaism into his vision of Christianity.

The author of Acts describes the meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem Church leaders:

Paul paid a visit to James; we were with him, and all the elders attended. He greeted them and then described in detail all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they gave praise to God. Then they said to Paul: You see, brother, how many thousands of converts we have among the Jews, all of them staunch upholders of the Law. Now they have been given information about you: it is said that you teach all the Jews in the Gentile world to turn their back on Moses' Laws. . . . You must therefore do as we tell you. We have four men here who are under a vow: take them with you and go through the ritual of purification with them, paying their expenses, after which they may shave their heads. Then everyone will know that you are a practicing Jew. (Acts 21:18–26)

While he was in the temple, Paul was confronted by a large Jewish crowd who tried to kill him. The Roman police rescued him from the crowd by arresting him. During interrogation, and as the Roman soldiers were ready to torture him, he announced to the commanding officer that he was a Roman citizen, which put an end to his trouble with the Romans. However, he was turned over to the Sanhedrin on the account that the incident was a Jewish religious quarrel. Paul managed to rescue himself from the high priest by addressing the council, stating that he had been a Pharisee all his life. He was acquitted and discharged.

The high priest took Paul's case to the governor in Caesarea, accusing him of being a ringleader of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:1–9). **Felix**, the Roman governor, decided to keep an eye on Paul rather than handing him over to the high priest, because of Paul's Roman citizenship. Paul stayed in Caesarea for two years until the end of Felix's term as a governor. When the new governor, **Festus**, took office, the high priest renewed

the charges against Paul, who requested he be tried in Rome before Caesar, because he was a Roman citizen. Paul was then brought before the Jewish king, Herod Agrippa II, who granted his request and sent him to Rome.¹³²

It is not clear what Paul did in Rome. He apparently was acquitted in 63 CE. During the following four years he made several trips to different cities around the Mediterranean, including Spain, preaching his gospel. He also visited France and England. In 67 CE he was arrested and brought back to Rome. It is believed that Paul was executed on June 29, 67 CE, during the reign of Nero. Peter, who was in Rome at that time, was also executed. Most likely both apostles were among the many Christians who were killed by Nero following the fire that broke out in Rome in the summer of 64 CE.

Paul's Theological Vision

During the 50s CE, two movements of Christianity existed side by side: the apostolic Christianity that was developed by Jesus's disciples under the leadership of James, Peter, and John; and the form of Christianity that was developed by Paul. There was rivalry between the two emerging forms of Christianity during this period, each of which made Jesus their reference point. Neither form was identified as Christianity at that time. The word "Christianity" never appeared anywhere in the New Testament, and the word "Christian" never appeared in any of Paul's writings.

The death of James in 62 CE, and the brutal destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE (see page XX), expedited the process of the defeat of apostolic Christianity. The production and final editing of the New Testament in the early second century CE gave Paul's form of Christianity great boost, and finally, the adoption of this form of Christianity by the Roman emperors brought an end to the apostolic form, which then was labeled as heresy.¹³³

Jesus will always be the center of Christianity, but the "Jesus" who most influenced history was the "Jesus Christ" of Paul, not the historical figure of Jesus. . . . Paul became the most influential defining figure for later Christianity, even beyond the historical Jesus. . . . Paul transformed Jesus himself, with his message of a messianic kingdom of justice and peace on earth, to the symbol of a religion of other-worldly salvation in a heavenly world. . . . All of us, whether Christian or not, whether wittingly or unwittingly, are heirs of Paul, since the

132. Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987), 156–171.

133. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 24, 29.

parameters of Christ and his heavenly kingdom created by Paul were what shaped Christian civilization.¹³⁴

In his letters, Paul presents the major elements of his vision of the new faith. These included the following tenets:

- **Resurrection** is a primary and essential component of the Christian faith: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4) “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:14)” This statement summarizes Paul’s belief that resurrection is the foundation of Christianity. Crucifixion invalidated Jesus’s claim of being the Messiah. According to the Old Testament, a crucified individual is cursed: “Anyone hung on a tree, that is crucified, is under God’s curse” (Deuteronomy 21:23). Resurrection, where Jesus was transformed into a spiritual body, meant that the cross would no longer be a curse, but a symbol of victory.
- **Salvation:** Salvation hinges on Jesus’s resurrection from the dead. The resurrected Christ dwells in a spiritual body as a life-giving spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17–18). Paul believed that Jesus’s physical body returned to the dust, and like a change of old clothing, had nothing to do with the new spiritual body Jesus received. Paul emphatically declared, “**All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,**” and that humans can be “saved” only by grace through faith in Christ, not by their good deeds (Romans 3:21–24). Paul’s doctrine of “justification by grace through faith” has been considered the heart and center of his gospel message. To be justified means to be forgiven of one’s sins. Grace means unmerited favor. Without the grace and forgiveness of God, no human being could stand before the Creator at the Day of Judgment.
- Paul believed that Jesus was glorified when he became the firstborn Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through the resurrection of the dead (Romans 1:4). God, as creator, inaugurated a process through which he reproduced himself—literally bringing to birth a “God-Family.” Jesus, now transformed into the heavenly glorified Christ/Messiah, is the firstborn brother of an expanded group of divine offspring.
- The destiny of this cosmic heavenly family is to rule over the entire universe. The Kingdom of God would have nothing to do with the righteous reign of a

134. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 21.

human messiah on earth. The group of divinized, glorified spirit-beings would then participate, with Christ, in the judgment of the world, even ruling over the angels (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

- **“Mystical Union with Christ”**: Paul completely transformed the practice and understanding of baptism and the Eucharist to his Greek-speaking Gentile converts. Baptism brought about a mystical union with what Paul called the “spiritual body” of Christ, and was the act through which one received the impregnating Holy Spirit. Three of the New Testament Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) record Jesus’s Last Supper, in which he tells his disciples over bread and wine: “this is my blood,” (Mark 14:22–25; Matthew 26:26–29; Luke 22:15–20) and in the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of “eating my flesh” and “drinking my blood.” (John 6:52–56). These writers based their accounts of Jesus’s final meal on Paul’s letters almost word for word (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).
- Paul was quite sure that he and his followers would live to see the return of Christ from heaven. Right up until the end of his life he expected to live to see the great event, the visible appearance of the heavenly Christ in the clouds of heaven to usher in the events of the final judgment.
- Paul maintained that the Torah that was given to Moses on Mount Sinai had now been replaced and superseded by **the new Torah of Christ** (Galatians 3:23–26). Paul emphasized that there was no comparison between the Torah of Moses, which promised prosperity, well-being, and peace, and the Torah of Christ, which promised spiritual glory to those destined to be part of the new cosmic heavenly family of God-glorified children. Paul declared, “**Christ is the end of the Torah**” (Romans 10:4). This concept is in complete opposition to the leaders of the Jerusalem Church, who believed that Jesus had come to fulfill the Law of Moses and even expand it. Where the Law commanded: “Thou shall not kill,” Jesus added: “If you are angry with your brother or sister you are liable to the same judgment” (Matthew 5:22). And where the Law states, “Thou shall not commit adultery,” Jesus extended it to include “everyone who looks at a woman with lust” (Matthew 5:28).
- Paul believed that his call to be an apostle was a singular and extraordinary event (1 Corinthians 15:9–10). Unlike the other apostles, who had been chosen by Jesus at the beginning of his preaching in Galilee, he had been set apart and called before he was even born (Galatians 1:15). Paul believed that **he was commissioned by God to go to the entire world** (Romans 15:8–9). He believed that his specific role as an “apostle to the Gentiles” had been prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 49:1–6).

Paul believed that Jesus had replaced the Torah as God's primary revelation to the world. The death and resurrection of Jesus had opened a new phase in salvation history. He believed that Gentiles could enter Christianity without the need to observe the dietary laws, or to practice circumcision, because those were the marks of the old covenant, which had now been superseded. All who lived "in Christ" were now sons of God and children of Abraham, whatever their ethnic origin.

Paul's teachings were the basis of the new religion: Christianity. These teachings were the beginning of the transition from the temple to the divine man. Instead of the old rituals of pilgrimage and purification, the new Christian rites of passage would be conversion, initiation, and identification with the man Jesus, who had achieved a divine status when he was raised by God from the dead. Paul taught Christians that salvation comes through Jesus; he would rescue them not from chaos but from the demonic powers of sin and death.¹³⁵

The split between the Nazarenes' apostolic Christianity and the Christianity that was developed by Paul began in the 50s CE. Rivalry and competition existed between the two emerging forms of Christianity, each making Jesus their reference point. The events of 66–70 CE and 132–135 CE expedited the defeat of the apostolic form of Christianity.

Unlike the Jews, Christians were not attached to Jerusalem. They viewed Jerusalem as the Guilty City that had rejected Christ. Not many Christians came to Palestine as pilgrims during the second and third centuries CE, as they believed that devotion to shrines and holy mountains was characteristic of paganism and Judaism, both of which they rejected. However, Christians were interested in visiting the sites connected with Jesus outside the city, such as the summit of the Mount of Olives, where Jesus ascended to heaven; the Garden of Gethsemane, where he had prayed in agony before his arrest, and the Jordan River, where he had been baptized by John the Baptist. They also valued two caves: the first was in Bethlehem, the site of the birth of Jesus; and the second was on the Mount of Olives, where the risen Christ was said to have appeared to the apostle John.¹³⁶

Christianity emerged as a version of Judaism. But Christianity had no special reason to become dominant if it stayed as one Jewish sect among many. It became more attractive when Paul succeeded in convincing the Jerusalem Church leaders, James, Peter, and John, to accept Gentiles into the new religion without requiring them to observe strict dietary rules or endure circumcision. **In Christianity there is no separate class of "God Fearers," and there is no belief in a "Chosen People."** Christianity also became more attractive when it emphasized the concept of salvation through the

135. Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 146–147.

136. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 172.

resurrected Jesus. The concept of resurrection and Jesus's birth by a virgin mother echoed the beliefs of Greek and Egyptian religions.¹³⁷

Jesus's movement was dependent on the Palestinian peasants and the oppressed poor class. It challenged the Roman Empire and the rich Jewish collaborators. The Jerusalem Church followers continued to be an oppressed class. The disciples called themselves the **Evionim** (the poor): they gave their possessions away and lived a communal life. Outside Palestine, Christianity targeted a wide spectrum of people besides the poor. Its leaders preached to city dwellers—small traders, craftspeople, clerks and minor officials. They also reached out to the wealthier class. Paul attracted many members of the upper class; they financed his activities and provided the early Christians with meeting places.

The New Testament was compiled in the second and third centuries CE. The Gospels contain many contradictions, as they were compiled over a relatively long period of time. Such contradictions helped Christianity to appeal to a broad range of people outside Palestine. The apocalyptic vision that advocated the destruction of the empire, the weakening of the rich and the rising of the poor, changed in later writings. **The revolutionary message was diluted: the rich merchant could be assured that the "eye of the needle" was as wide as a gate in Jerusalem so that he could get through; a rich Roman woman could be attracted to Paul's teachings that emphasized that women and men are equal, even though at the same time they assured the rich husband that his wife had to serve him. Christianity did not oppose slavery in principle: Paul wrote that a slave should stay with his master, even if they were "brothers in Christ."**¹³⁸

Christian preachers concentrated their efforts in administrative centers and along trade routes. This was an important factor in the spread of Christianity to areas outside the empire such as Armenia, Persian Mesopotamia, Ethiopia, southern Arabia, and southern India. Initially the first apostles preached on their own without supervision or control, and their local communities supported them and provided for their needs. When the number of preachers increased, the Christian Church became more bureaucratic. At this point the bishops began to determine what correct doctrine was and who was entitled to preach it.¹³⁹ Over time the church developed a strong bureaucratic administrative structure. During emergencies the Christian clergy provided the community with food and supplies; they also looked after the burial of the dead.

Most of the time the imperial authorities were tolerant of Christian institutions; however, Christians were intermittently persecuted, as when they were accused of

137. Chris Harman, *A People's History of the World: From the Stone Age to the New Millennium* (London, UK: Verso, 1999), 92–93.

138. Harman, *A People's History of the World*, 95.

139. Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church: The Penguin History of the Church, vol. 1* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1993), 46.

burning Rome during Nero's reign. Some of the emperors, like Alexander Severus and Philip, were favorable to the church.

By the late third century CE, the Christian church had become a strong and influential institution among large segments of the empire's population. **Constantine**, who became emperor after he defeated his rival Maxtinius, attributed his victory to the god of the Christians. **Realizing the power of the church and its potential as a source of stability for his empire, Constantine in 313 CE declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. This was a turning point in the history of Christianity.**

Although Constantine did not promote Christianity at the expense of other faiths, he established a huge building program in Rome under which shrines were constructed at the tombs of the Christian martyrs. New basilicas started to appear alongside the pagan temples, but were confined to marginal areas as the central sites were already occupied by pagan buildings. Constantinople, the new imperial capital, was a different case: it became a wholly Christian city where the cross was displayed centrally and the statues of Christian heroes occupied the squares.¹⁴⁰

Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea (d. 339 CE), was a strong supporter of Constantine and played a major role in the establishment of Jerusalem as a Christian city. He initially emphasized that **"believers should not look for God in a corner of the earth, nor in mountains, nor in temples, but they should worship and adore Him at home."** He believed that the fate of the Temple of Jerusalem was clear proof that God wanted people to follow the spiritual religion preached by Jesus, which did not depend on temples or holy places. Constantine gave Makarios, Jerusalem's bishop, permission to demolish the Temple of Aphrodite and to unearth the Tomb of Christ, which the temple had been built over. Constantine ordered the construction of a basilica beside the *Cardo Maximus*, the main street of Aelia Capitolina (the city built by Hadrian on the ruins of Jerusalem in 130 CE), some yards away from the supposed site of Golgotha. While this construction project proceeded swiftly, the demolition of the Aphrodite Temple was more complex. It took two years to unearth the rock tomb, which immediately was declared to be the sepulchre of Christ. Eusebius, who was skeptical, did not question the authenticity of the tomb. The find stunned the Christians, and even Eusebius described it as "contrary to all expectations." The mass of rock surrounding the tomb was retained and a circular space about thirty-eight yards in diameter was cleared. Here a round shrine which would be called the Anastasis (resurrection) was built. The workers who unearthed the tomb also discovered what they identified as the rocky hillock of Golgotha where Jesus had been crucified. The remainder of this rock is today almost entirely encased in the Golgotha chapel of Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre. "[Christians]

140. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 174–175.

had proudly proclaimed that theirs was a purely spiritual faith that was not dependent upon shrines and holy places. Their startling response to the discovery of the tomb shows that beliefs regarding sacred geography are deeply rooted in the human psyche.”¹⁴¹ Even Eusebius, who opposed the notion of sacred space, was touched by the discovery of the tomb. For him, the discovery of the tomb reproduced the miracle of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. There was nothing holy in Hadrian’s city of Aelia—in his mind, the name Jerusalem applied only to the tomb and to Constantine’s new buildings; the rest of Aelia was as profane and guilty as ever. Eusebius called the Constantinian complex New Jerusalem, because it had been built up against the old Jewish city which was cursed by Christ. Before the Golgotha excavation, there had been no Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem; once the tomb was discovered, pilgrims started to come from all corners of the empire.

Constantine’s mother **Helena** visited Jerusalem in 327 CE. She was escorted by Eusebius, who suggested to her the location of two new churches at the sites of two caves related to Jesus: the cave in Bethlehem at Christ’s birthplace and the cave on the Mount of Olives. Two basilicas were built in these locations: the Nativity Church in Bethlehem and the Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives. In September 335 CE, Constantine’s Basilica was completed. A great celebration marked this momentous occasion. Bishops of all the dioceses in the eastern provinces attended the dedication ceremony of the church. Although the new Jerusalem was a small enclave in a pagan city, the ceremony was a declaration of the triumph of Christianity. **The new Jerusalem became a Christian city, ending the Jews’ hopes of rebuilding their temple.**

Christology

In the pagan world, it was possible for divine beings to temporarily become human, and for humans to become divine. Although the scripture in Judaism was based on the oneness of God, it also allowed for the existence of divine beings besides God, and made it possible for humans to be divine. Starting with the Ten Commandments, it states: “You shall have no other gods before me”; it does not say, “You shall believe that there is only one God.” This standpoint is described as henotheism, not monotheism. In contrast, the book of Isaiah was monotheistic when it emphasized, “I alone am God, there is no other.” The Jewish texts also speak of the great angels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, who are above humans, though far below God. Angels in ancient Judaism were God’s messengers who mediated His will on earth. In some of the texts there was a figure known as the “Angel of the Lord,” who was identified as God himself, and sometimes appeared as a human. In Genesis, God appeared to Abraham

141. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 183.

and Hagar. “The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of a bush” (Exodus 3:2). Other Jewish texts speak about humans who become angels. Enoch, who was 365 years old, passed from this earth without dying: “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him” (Genesis 5:24). Moses received the law directly from God, as he alone ascended Mount Sinai to communicate with God (Exodus 19–20).

In Proverbs 8, there is a reference to a distinct feature of God called Wisdom that is portrayed as the first thing God created (8:22–23, 25). Once Wisdom was created, God created the heavens and the earth (8:27–28, 30–31). In the Hebrew Bible, God created all things by speaking a “word”: “And God said, let there be light, and there was light.” Creation happened by means of God uttering his Logos. The Logos comes from God, and since it is God’s Logos, in a sense it is God. But once he emitted it, it stood apart from God as a distinct entity.

Christology literally means the understanding of Christ. The second and third centuries witnessed heated debate about the nature of Jesus Christ. Some of Jesus’s followers thought he was a human but was not divine; others thought he was divine but not a human; others thought he was two different beings, one human and one divine; yet others believed that he was human and divine at one and the same time. This debate intensified after Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Before his crucifixion, Jesus’s followers believed that he was a great teacher, a charismatic preacher. They thought of him as a man, born like other humans, raised like other humans, no different from others except being wiser, more righteous, and more spiritual, but not God. That all changed with the belief in the resurrection; his followers began to believe that he was exalted to heaven at his resurrection, and was made the Son of God at that stage of his existence. According to this belief, **“Jesus was not the Son of God who was sent from heaven to earth; he was the human who was exalted at the end of his earthly life to become the Son of God and was made, there and then, into a divine being.”**¹⁴² This view became known as **Exaltation Christology**.

Exaltation Christology was a first step toward a higher-level Christology. In reviewing Paul’s writings and the Gospel of John, the progression toward Incarnation Christology is apparent: a divine being comes from heaven to take on human flesh temporarily before returning to his original divine status. Incarnation Christology states that Jesus Christ was a preexisting divine being who became human before returning to God in heaven. Paul, in Galatians 4:14, identifies Christ as God’s chief angel. In the Gospel of John, Jesus said: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30); and when Philip said to Jesus: “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied,” Jesus

142. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 218.

said to him: “I have lived with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (Galatians 14:8–9)

Throughout the second and third centuries, Incarnation Christology developed further:

Justin Martyr is considered the first true intellectual and scholar in the church. Originally from Palestine, he moved to Rome in the middle of the second century around 140 CE. Justin in his writings stated that Christ was a preexistent divine being: “the first begotten of God.” He saw Jesus Christ as the angel of the Lord who appeared in the Old Testament and spoke with Moses in Sinai. Christ was also one of the three angels who appeared to Abraham. For Justin, Christ was not only the angel of the Lord, but also was the Word (Logos) of God who became human. He emphasized that Christ is a separate being from God, but at the same time fully God; God is worshiped first, the Son second, and the prophetic Spirit third.¹⁴³

Callistus, one of the bishops of Rome (from 217–222 CE) shared the view of the modalists, who held that “God exists in different *modes* of being, as the Father, and as the Son, and as the Spirit. All three are God, but there is only one God, because the three are not distinct from one another but are all the same thing, in different modes of existence.”¹⁴⁴

Hippolytus and Tertullian developed the idea of the *divine economy* . . . in which there are three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are three distinct beings, but they are completely unified in will and purpose. . . . [According to Hippolytus], “**The Father indeed is One, but there are Two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit. . . . It is the Father who commands, and the Son who obeys, and the Holy Spirit who gives understanding. The Father who is above all, and the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all.**” Hippolytus introduced the term “triad”; Tertullian called it the Trinity.¹⁴⁵

The great Christian theologian **Origen** of Alexandria expressed his views in his book *On First Principles* around 229 CE. In his book *How Jesus Became God*, Ehrman summarizes Origen’s position: “Christ is to be understood as God’s Wisdom, which existed always with God the Father (since God always had wisdom), without beginning. Christ is also God’s Word, since he is the one who communicates to the world

143. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 330–334.

144. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 309.

145. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 313–314.

all that is involved with God's Wisdom. For Origen, Christ was not only a preexisting divine being; he was always with God the Father, and since he is God's own Wisdom and Word, he was himself God by nature, and always has been. He was the one through whom God created all things."¹⁴⁶

Arius, the charismatic presbyter of Alexandria, was born around 260 CE. In 318 CE Arius presented his position in regard to his understanding of Christ. He understood the Wisdom of God to be the same as the Word of God and the Son of God. For Arius, Christ the preexistent divine being had been with God at the beginning of creation, but he had not always existed. He had come into existence at some point in the remote past before the Creation.

Originally, God had existed alone, and the Son of God came into existence only later. He was, after all, **begotten** by God. . . . God the Father had not always been the Father; instead, he became the Father only when he begot his Son. . . . Only God is **without beginning**. This means that Christ—the Word (Logos) of God—is not fully God in the way that God is. He was created in God's own image by God himself; and so Christ bears the title God, but he is not the **true** God. Only God himself is. Christ's divine nature was derived from the Father . . . he is the creation of God. In short, Christ was a second-tier God, subordinate to God and inferior to God in every respect. . . . It is the Father who is above all things, even the Son, by an infinite degree.¹⁴⁷

Arius was opposed by **Alexander**, the bishop of Alexandria, and by Alexander's young assistant **Athanasius**. Athanasius argued that the Logos was God in the same way as God the Father. He shared the same nature as God the Father, and had been neither begotten nor created. Athanasius saw the incarnation of the Logos as an absolutely unparalleled event in world history; Jesus was the one and only revelation of God.¹⁴⁸

Eusebius was one of the leading Christian intellectuals of his generation. He was a great supporter of Arius. He disagreed with Athanasius's understanding of Jesus the incarnate Logos. He believed that the incarnation of Jesus was neither unique nor unprecedented. God had revealed himself in a human form to Abraham, and to Moses. God's revelation of himself to humanity was an ongoing process. Eusebius believed that Jesus was the savior, but his principal task was to be the revelation of God to the world; one of Jesus's chief objectives was to remind Christians of the spiritual nature of religion.¹⁴⁹

146. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 316.

147. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 340–341.

148. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 177.

149. Armstrong, *Jerusalem*, 176–177.

The Ecumenical Councils of the Church

The Council of Nicaea (325 CE)

Constantine, like all Roman emperors, saw the political value of religion. He was counting on the political, social, and cultural potential of Christianity to be a significant factor in bringing stability and harmony to the Roman Empire. When he learned that an enormous controversy was creating rifts in the Christian community, he became concerned and upset. According to Eusebius, as written in his book *The Life of the Blessed Constantine*, Constantine sent a letter to Arius and Alexander in which he tried to get them resolve the theological issue. He emphasized the value of Christianity as a unifying force in his socially and culturally disunited empire. There is one God. God has one Son. There is one way of salvation. All creation is united with God, its creator; God is united with his Son; his Son is united with his people; and the salvation he brings makes his people united with God. Constantine's first concern was that all the provinces should be united in one consistent view. What did it really matter whether there was a time before which Christ existed? To resolve this issue, **an ecumenical council of church bishops convened in Nicea in June 325 CE, producing a creed stating that Christ is "from the substance of the Father"**:

We believe in one God, the Father, almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, who because of us humans and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming human, suffered and rose on the third day, ascended to the heavens, will come to judge the living and the dead; and [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁰

Twenty of the 318 bishops disagreed with the creed when it was finally formulated. Constantine managed to force seventeen of those twenty to sign off on the creed. In the end, only three did not sign off the creed: Arius himself and two bishops from his home country of Libya. Jesus, the apocalyptic preacher of rural Galilee, had now become fully God.

150. Ehrman, *When Jesus Became God*, 350.

The Council of Constantinople (381 CE)

The Nicæan Creed declared that Jesus was Lord, Savior, Son of God, the Wisdom of God, and the eternal preexistent Logos. Although the creed was adopted by 315 bishops out of the 318 who attended, there were still those who felt a sense of unease with this decision.

In 380 CE, during the emperor reign Theodosius I, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. About the time of Constantine's conversion, 5 percent of the empire's inhabitants were Christians; by the end of the century, 50 percent were Christians.

In 381 CE, the second ecumenical council convened in Constantinople. The council reaffirmed the faith of Nicæa against Arianism. Two other issues were addressed by the council. The first issue was the question of the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Son and to the Father: Was the Spirit co-eternal with the Father and the Son, or was it created by God? The council affirmed the position of the Cappadocian Fathers (from Cappadocia in central Asia Minor) in regard to the Holy Spirit: **The Holy Spirit was pre-existent and co-eternal, as part of the Father's instrument in creation. The Holy Spirit has the role of perfecting creation and of bringing it to completion. The three persons of the Trinity are unified but also distinct.**¹⁵¹

The second issue that the council addressed was how the divine Logos or Son actually became united with the humanity of Jesus in the incarnation. How did the two natures unite in one person? This issue was not settled in Constantinople. What was Christ's role in human salvation? And what was the Virgin Mary's role in the incarnation? These questions were addressed at the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE.

The Council of Ephesus (431 CE)

The role of the Virgin Mary in the incarnation was a major subject of debate among the church leaders, especially between Nestorius, the Antiochene theologian who became the archbishop of Constantinople in 428 CE, and Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria. In the early fifth century, the Virgin Mary became a significant part of Christian worship, especially among the general population of Greek-speaking Christians. Mary's virginity had captured the Christian imagination. She was a model of purity and had a special role in human salvation. She was given the title "**Theotokos**," which means "bearer of God." Nestorius had reservations about this title. He believed that the humanity of Christ should be duly acknowledged both in worship and theological debate. Cyril, however, objected to this position, accusing Nestorius of trying to

151. Stephen W. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils* (London, UK, and Peabody, MA: SPCK and Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), 64–71.

separate the two natures of Christ or even deny his divinity. Nestorius suggested that the divine and the human were together “in conjunction in Christ, rather than in union.” He spoke of unity in outward appearance; the two natures were united while also remaining distinct.

The council of Ephesus was held in the Church of Mary in June 431 CE with nearly two hundred bishops in attendance. Although John of Antioch was delayed because of flooding, Cyril decided to open the council. Nestorius refused to attend, insisting on waiting for John. In the absence of Nestorius and John, the council condemned Nestorius. When the Antiochene party fully assembled, they called their own council and condemned Cyril. Cyril succeeded in getting the recognition of the emperor in Constantinople, Theodosius II; this meant that Nestorius was defeated. Ultimately Nestorius was condemned and later exiled to Antioch.¹⁵²

The Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)

In the summer of 450 CE, Emperor Theodosius II died. Emperor Marcian, who succeeded him, called for an ecumenical council of the Church to deal with the ongoing Christological controversies. The council was held at Chalcedon, across the Bosphorus from Constantinople, in October 451 CE. The relation between the divine and the human in Christ had been the subject of intense debate in the Christian Church. The eternal Son, the “true God of true God” as claimed at Nicaea, had become incarnate as a real human being, Jesus of Nazareth. A clear definition was required to express this concept, and at the same time to preserve the concept of the unity of God, as Christianity after all was a monotheistic faith.

After intense discussion and mediation among Church leaders in Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople and Jerusalem, an agreement was reached and an acceptable definition of the relation between the divine and the human in Christ was formulated and adopted at Chalcedon:

Wherefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin; begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as touching the manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two

¹⁵². Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 81–92.

natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring into one Person and one substance, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as the Prophets from the beginning spoke concerning him, and our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us, and the Creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.¹⁵³

After Chalcedon, numerous factions emerged within the Christian world. There were those who were relatively content with the Christology of Chalcedon; those entrenched in a more Antiochene or Nestorian position, who became known as “Nestorians”; and those who became known as “Monophysites,” rejecting the “two-nature” language of Chalcedon and opting for the one-nature terminology of Cyril.

Nestorian Christianity

Nestorius was one of the most important figures of the fifth-century Church. He was likely born in Germanicia in Syria and spent his early years as a preacher in a monastery in Antioch. He studied under Theodore of Mopsuestia. In 428 CE he was appointed archbishop of Constantinople by Theodosius II. Nestorius was influenced by Theodore and other Antioch theologians who stressed the distinctiveness of the human and divine natures of Jesus. Nestorius had reservations about the title given to Mother Mary, “**Theotokos**,” which means “bearer of God.” He believed that the humanity of Christ should be acknowledged both in worship and theological debate. He suggested that the divine and human were together in ‘conjunction in Christ, rather than in union’. Cyril of Alexandria opposed such view. The Council of Ephesus in 431 CE condemned Nestorius. Emperor Theodosius supported Cyril, and removed Nestorius from his position as archbishop of Constantinople and exiled him to Antioch. Although he was condemned, Nestorianism survived in the East and became known as the “Assyrian Church of the East” and the “Nestorian Church of the East.”¹⁵⁴

Monophysitism

Monophysitism is the Christological position that Christ has only **one nature** in which his divinity and humanity are united. The Ghassanids in Syria adopted Monophysitism and resisted all attempts to convert them to the Orthodox decree.

153. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 100.

154. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 100.

Under al-Harith II they reinvigorated Monophysitism in Syria and helped in spreading its teachings with their emphasis on the single nature of Christ and its simple version of Christianity. **The Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE** adopted a balanced statement regarding the complex relationship between Christ's divinity and his humanity, bringing together elements from both the Alexandrian and the Antiochene approaches, and adding significantly deeper insights into the person of Christ.¹⁵⁵

Following the Council of Chalcedon, numerous factions emerged within the Christian world. The conflict between these various factions became stronger and more intense. The Monophysite camp grew stronger as Severus, the patriarch of Antioch, adopted the same position as the Church of Alexandria. The division between the **Monophysites**, the **Nestorians**, and the churches that accepted the Chalcedon Creed (which became known as **Orthodox** Christianity) became starker, and eventually the Syrian Church achieved complete independence from Constantinople. Around 1,200 churches were built in northern Syria. Several Monophysite bishops were ordained, including the famous **Jacob Baradaeus**, who in turn ordained eighty-nine bishops and 100,000 priests. **Ghassan missionary activity covered all of Arabia and extended across the Red Sea into Ethiopia.**¹⁵⁶

The Two Councils of Constantinople (553 and 680)

Following the Council of Chalcedon, the conflicts between the various factions became stronger and more intense, especially between the Monophysite and the Nestorian factions. The Monophysite camp grew stronger as Severus, the patriarch of Antioch, adopted the same position of the Church of Alexandria. The split between the Monophysites, Nestorians, and the churches that accepted the Chalcedon Creed became clearer. This last group was called "Melkites" (emperor's men) by the Monophysites. There are still Melkite Christians in the Middle East today, particularly in Palestine. The Egyptian Copts and the churches of Ethiopia, Syria, and Armenia are still officially Monophysites.

In 527 CE, Justinian became emperor. During his reign, Christianity became wealthier and more influential. Many building projects took place in major cities, including the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the Basilica of St. John at Ephesus, the monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai desert, Nea Church in Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Justinian limited the freedom of Jews, Samaritans, heretics, and pagans across the empire. He was also intolerant of the Monophysites.

155. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 101.

156. Ball, *Rome in the East*, 105.

In 553 CE Justinian called for the second council of Constantinople. This council began on May 553 CE, and was attended by about 165 bishops. The council affirmed the Chalcedon Creed; however, the controversy continued.

During the next century there were significant political changes in the Eastern Empire. The Persians attacked Jerusalem in 614 CE, taking from the Church of Resurrection what Christians believed to be the cross on which Christ had been crucified. Jerusalem fell to Arab Muslims in 638 CE.

A new debate emerged in the new century: if Christ had two natures, as Chalcedon had claimed, did he have only one energy? The word “energy,” which had been used by Aristotle to mean function, operation, action, or activity, became very important in Christian theology. Surprisingly, both Nestorians and Monophysites accepted the concept of one energy. The concept that Christ had “one energy” focused on the idea that it was the divine life itself, the energy of God or the divine Logos, that actually energized the humanity in Christ.

In 638 CE, Emperor Heraclius issued a document known as the Ekthesis (statement), which affirmed “one will” rather using the term “one energy.” The idea of “one will” was more powerful than that of “one energy.”

In 680 CE, Emperor Constantine IV called for the third council of Constantinople, which began on November 7, 680 CE and continued until September 16, 681. It was attended by 174 bishops. The council reaffirmed the decisions, Christology, and creeds of the five preceding councils, especially that of Chalcedon. It reaffirmed the two natures in the person of Christ and maintained that this pointed to two energies and to two wills. Even after the two councils of Constantinople, however, the controversy continued.

The Second Council of Nicaea (787 CE)

The second council of Nicaea was convened in 787 CE to deal with the controversy over the making and the use of icons. Images of Christ, Mary, and the saints had become so popular in Christian worship that there were those who considered their excessive use to be idolatrous. Both Judaism and Islam prohibited the use of images in worship. In the first part of the eighth century, Emperor Leo III began a campaign against images. In 726 CE he issued an edict forbidding their use. John of Damascus (660–750 CE) and Theodore of Constantinople (759–826 CE) were the main champions who advocated the value of using icons. Icons were seen by these bishops as a manifestation of God’s action in creating human beings and Jesus Christ in his own image. The second Council of Nicaea affirmed the use and legitimacy of icons.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 129.

Christology: Summary and Conclusion

During Jesus' own ministry, the people who followed him saw him as an extraordinary human being closely related to God, and even as a revelation of God himself. After the crucifixion and resurrection, Christians used different titles and expressions to describe Jesus Christ: Lord, Savior, Son of God, Son of Man, and Christ. They went even further and used words and concepts such as Wisdom, Word, and pre-existence to convey that he was involved in God's ultimate purposes. The nature of Jesus—that is, his divinity and humanity—was the central issue in the debate that took place in the seven ecumenical councils. The line of thinking about Christ and the Trinity that emerged from the seven councils remained in place and has continued to influence Christian theology in both the East and the West ever since. The basic idea that Jesus Christ was truly divine and truly human has not been challenged since then. The concept of human salvation was connected with the concept of the divinity of Jesus Christ, as only God can save.¹⁵⁸

Although the Council of Chalcedon (451) attempted to incorporate both the Antiochene and Alexandrian positions, and spoke of Jesus Christ as “truly divine and truly human,” it failed to bring all the churches together. Chalcedon's language brought far more division and disagreement than unity. The eastern Orthodox churches accepted the seven ecumenical councils, while other Christian churches in Palestine-Syria, Egypt, and the East rejected the Council of Chalcedon and continued to follow the concept of the one nature of Jesus, becoming known as the non-Chalcedonian churches. The term “non-Chalcedonian” also included the Nestorian Christians of the East, also called the Assyrian Church of the East.

The schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the eastern Orthodox churches started in 1054 and was augmented during the Crusades in 1204, when Constantinople was sacked by the Crusaders. The disagreements and tension between East and West are political rather than theological. Several attempts have been made through the years to reach common ground between the different churches, especially during the twentieth century, but they have achieved little success. Such attempts resulted in statements which stressed the continued belief in God as the Trinity, the incarnation, Church, ministry and sacraments, and common life of the Church.

Since the European Enlightenment, theologians and philosophers have questioned the relevance of the language of traditional Christology, asking whether it is time to use new language to formulate the Christian belief in Jesus. For many Christians in the Western world, the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was “truly divine and truly human” makes little, if any, sense. The period of the Enlightenment brought

158. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 145–146.

radical changes to the cultures and philosophical mindset of the people of the period in regard to the Church's thinking concerning Jesus.

In the nineteenth century, the German theologian Friedrich Scheiermacher was one of the first to find serious difficulty with the Christology of Chalcedon. He claimed that the language of nature and substance as stated at Chalcedon did not make logical sense. During the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, further questions regarding who Jesus was historically were raised by some biblical scholars and theologians who focused on Jesus the good man or teacher of morals. The concentration on Jesus' humanity, especially in Protestant Christianity, resulted in separating the humanity from the divinity and pushing divinity out of the picture completely. The views of these scholars do not necessary represent official Church beliefs, but some Christian theologians have rejected the councils altogether or view them as essentially documents of their own time.¹⁵⁹

159. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human*, 145–158.

Judaism after the Roman Conquest

The Question of Exile

In 70 CE, the Romans succeeded in suppressing the Jerusalem's revolt. The temple was destroyed, along with most of Jerusalem's buildings. The fighters were executed, and many of the community leaders were captured and sold as slaves. Some of Jerusalem's inhabitants were deported from the city, but the Romans definitely did not deport the entire population of Judea from the country. Nowhere in the Roman historical records is there any mention of deportation of Judea's population.¹⁶⁰

The historic records, as well as extensive research conducted by historians over many centuries, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, prove that the Romans did not deport the entire Palestinian population who believed in Judaism after recapturing Jerusalem in 70 CE. It is true that Titus's soldiers plundered Jerusalem after they destroyed the temple; it is true that thousands of Palestinians lost their lives in that war; it is true that the Romans crucified the captive rebels; it is true that many Jewish Palestinians were enslaved; it is true that Jerusalem and its inhabitants were subjected to the worst merciless rules. However, the Romans did not deport the Palestinian Jews.

Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz published his book *History of the Jews* in 1853. He describes the fall of the Second Temple and compares the event with the destruction of the First Temple:

It would indeed be difficult to describe the suffering of those who were taken captive in the war . . . Youths under the age of sixteen and most of the female captives were sold into slavery at an incredibly low price, for the market was glutted. . . .

¹⁶⁰. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 131.

All these calamities came with such crushing force on the remaining Jews that they felt utterly at a loss as to what they should do.¹⁶¹

Then he describes the fate of the rebels of the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 CE):

Thus all the warriors were destroyed, all the towns and villages laid waste, and the land literally converted into a desert. The prisoners, mostly women and children, were dragged by the thousands to the slave markets of Hebron and Gaza, where they were sold . . . Many fugitives, however, fled to Arabia, whence that country obtained its Jewish population, which played so important a part in its history.¹⁶²

It is clear that Graetz does not speak of exiling the entire population of Judea. The Russian Jewish historian Simon Dubnow (1860–1941), makes no mention of deportation either. Dubnow, in his book *The History of the World*, does not create the image of the Jewish people going into exile after the destruction of the temple, and it is clear in his writings that the Jewish people were not forcibly uprooted from their country.¹⁶³ Joseph Klausner, professor of history at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in his five-volume book *The History of the Second Temple*, describes the events of the Zealots' revolt, praises the fighters' courage and the tragic end of the siege of Masada, and closes with the following words:

Thus ended the great uprising and the most glorious war for liberty in antiquity. The fall of the Second Temple was complete. No self-rule, not even internal autonomy worthy of the name, remained in Judea. Enslavement, corpses, ruins—such were the sights wherein the second destruction was revealed in all its horror.¹⁶⁴

Klausner did not add expulsion to his description of the destruction of the temple, as it would have contradicted the fact that sixty years later another mass uprising (Bar Kokhba) broke out within the Judean population that had not been exiled.

The Roman historian Cassius Dio and Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea and the author of *Ecclesiastical History*, wrote about the brutal suppression of the Bar Kokhba uprising, but clearly stated that Judean masses were not exiled in 135 CE. The name of Judea was changed to Provincia Palestina, but in the second century CE it remained

161. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 137.

162. Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1891–98), 321–322.

163. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 138.

164. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 142.

predominantly populated by Judeans and Samaritans, and continued to flourish after the end of the revolt.¹⁶⁵

So what was the origin of the great story about the exiling of the Jewish people following the destruction of the temple? Chaim Milikowsky, a scholar at Bar-Ilan University, has found evidence in numerous contemporary rabbinical sources that the term *galut* (exile) was used in the second and third centuries CE to indicate political subjugation rather than deportation. Israel Jacob Yuval, a historian at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, suggests that the concept of exile came late and was based on the Christian belief that the Jews were exiled in punishment for their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. Other Christian authors suggest that the presence of Jews outside Jerusalem was a punishment and proof of their sins. With the triumph of Christianity in the early fourth century CE, Jewish believers began to adopt the concept of exile as a divine punishment.¹⁶⁶

The concept of exile was essential to defining the concept of salvation in Judaism. Exile means that the existing suffering will continue until the coming of the true Messiah. Salvation will come when Messiah comes; and only then will the masses return to Jerusalem and the dead be resurrected. The devotees of the Old Testament rejected the Christian salvation concept: “Jesus brought salvation with his sacrifice when he was crucified.” The Jews did not seek to return to Jerusalem; the few who did so were denounced as false messiahs. A number of rabbinical prohibitions forbade trying to hasten salvation by migrating to Palestine.¹⁶⁷

The claim that the story of the Jews being dispersed throughout the world originated with the original Jerusalem deportees was essential for the concept of the exile and salvation, as well as for the concept of the “chosen people.” This concept is a continuation of the old tale about the origin of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being migrants to Palestine from Mesopotamia.

It is clear to all historians that there was no deportation of the Palestinian Jews from Palestine after the revolts of 67–70 CE and 132–135 CE. This fact raises an important question: what was the fate of the inhabitants? Over the centuries following the revolts, the population demographics of Palestine had changed; Jewish believers declined over time and became a minority. Zionist historians Yitzhak Baer and Ben-Zion Dinur invented a new exile theory, “exile without expulsion,” attributing this decline to an exile in the seventh century CE and assigning it to the Muslims who conquered the Romans six centuries after the Palestinian revolts against Rome. They claimed that the invasion of the country by the Arabs in the seventh century CE resulted in a seizure of Jewish-owned lands and the influx of a large Muslim population from Arabia, which changed the country’s demographic character. Emperor Hadrian’s decrees in the second cen-

165. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 132.

166. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 133–134.

167. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 135.

ture CE had expropriated lands, but the arrival of the Muslims accelerated the process and led to the emigration of the Jews and the creation of a new national majority in the country. Until that time, the Jews had constituted the majority of the population. “The arrival of the new settler-conquerors altered the country’s cultural morphology and put an end to the presence of the Jewish people in Palestine.”¹⁶⁸

This new concept of exile does not have any historical support. The army that conquered the region between 638 and 643 CE was a relatively small force, estimated at 46,000 troops, and the bulk was sent on to other fronts on the borders of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁶⁹ Only a small number of troops were stationed in Palestine and brought their families along; they probably seized land. This small number could hardly have made a serious change in the population of the country.

In 324 CE, the province of Palestine became a Christian protectorate, and a large part of the population became Christian. Many Jews converted to Christianity; however, the conversion did not eliminate the Jewish presence in the country. Palestine continued to have a diverse population made up of Christians, Jewish believers, Samaritans, and pagan peasantry.

Ben-Zion Dinur, in his book *Israel in Exile*, states that the Prophet Mohammad stressed in a famous letter to the army commanders: “Every person, whether a Jew or Christian, who becomes a Muslim is one of the Believers, with the same rights and duties. Anyone who clings to his Judaism or Christianity is not to be converted and must pay the poll tax incumbent upon every adult, male or female, free or bond.”¹⁷⁰

The Jews, who had suffered harsh persecution under the Byzantine Empire, welcomed the new conquerors. Jewish and Muslim records reported that some Jewish fugitives, who had escaped the oppression of the Byzantine Empire returned with the victorious Arab forces. Under Islam, Jews were allowed to enter Jerusalem.¹⁷¹

It is believed by many researchers that a large percentage of the Palestine population converted to Islam. The similarity between Islam and the other two monotheistic religions encouraged Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan believers to convert to Islam. Muslims did not have to pay taxes, while the other monotheisms were paying poll taxes. It is believed that relief from taxes was an encouraging factor behind the Islamization of significant segments of the Palestinian population.

Abraham Polak, the founder of the department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University, wrote an essay about the origin of the Arabs of the land of Israel. Polak believed that the population of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean mingled with its neighbors, its captives, and its conquerors: Greeks, Persians, Arabs, Egyptians, and Crusaders. Polak assumed that there was a considerable

168. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 140.

169. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 180.

170. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 180.

171. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 181.

likelihood that Judeans did convert to Islam, meaning that there was a demographic continuity in the agrarian “people of the land.”¹⁷²

Israel Belkind, who settled in Palestine in 1882 as one of the first Zionists, believed in the close historical connection between the ancient inhabitants of Palestine and the Palestinian peasants of the nineteenth century. He wrote in his book *The Arabs in Eretz Israel*, “The historians are accustomed to say that after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews were scattered all over the world. But this . . . is a historical error.” The subsequent uprisings demonstrated that most of the Judeans had continued to live in their country for a long time. Belkind continues, “The land was abandoned by the upper strata, the scholars, the Torah men, to whom the religion came before the country; perhaps, too, so did many of the mobile urban people. But the tillers of the soil remained attached to their land.”¹⁷³

Ber Borchow, the leader of the Zionist left, wrote in his essay “On the Issue of Zion and the Territory”:

The local population in Palestine is racially more closely related to the Jews than to any other people, even among the Semitic ones. It is quite probable that the fellahin in Palestine are direct descendants of the Jewish and Canaanite rural population, with a slight admixture of Arab blood. For it is known that the Arabs, being proud conquerors, mingled very little with the populations in the countries they conquered. . . . All the tourists and travelers confirm that, except for Arabic language, it is impossible to distinguish between a Sephardic porter and an Arab laborer or Fellah . . . Hence, the racial difference between the diaspora Jews and the Palestinian fellahin is no more marked than between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.¹⁷⁴

Borchow founded the Poale Zion movement (Jewish Social Democratic Party), a Marxist Zionist movement, in the early twentieth century. David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s future prime minister, and Itzhak Ben-Zvi, Israel’s future president, joined this party. In 1918, when both were in New York, they wrote a book entitled *Eretz Israel in the Past and in the Present*. The second chapter of the book was composed by Ben-Gurion in full agreement with his coauthor, and dealt with the history and present situation of the fellahin (agricultural laborers) in Palestine:

The fellahin are not descendants of the Arab conquerors, who captured Eretz Israel and Syria in the seventh century CE. The Arab

172. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 182–183.

173. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 183–184.

174. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 184–185.

victors did not destroy the agricultural population they found in the country. They expelled only the alien Byzantine rulers, and did not touch the local population. Nor did the Arabs go in for settlement. Even in their former habitations, the Arabians did not engage in farming . . . They did not seek new lands on which to settle their peasantry, which hardly existed. Their whole interest in the new countries was political, religious and material: to rule, to propagate Islam and to collect taxes. . . .

To argue that after the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt Jews altogether ceased to cultivate the land of Eretz Israel is to demonstrate complete ignorance. . . . The Jewish farmer, like any other farmer, was not easily torn from his soil, which had been watered with his sweat and the sweat of his forebears. . . . Despite the repression and suffering, the rural population remained unchanged.¹⁷⁵

In 1929 Ben-Zvi published a new booklet about the same subject. In the new publication he confirmed and emphasized the same ideas about the origin of the Palestinian fellahin. He stressed the mass conversion to Islam in the seventh century CE. In his opinion, it was not only the system of taxation that led many Jews to adopt the conquerors' religion, but also the fear of being displaced from the soil. Ben-Zvi emphasized, "Obviously it would be mistaken to say that all the fellahin are descendants of the ancient Jews, but it can be said of most of them, or their core . . . The great majority of the fellahin do not descend from the Arab conquerors but before that, from the Jewish fellahin, who were the foundation of this country before its conquest by Islam."¹⁷⁶

The Arab uprising against the British mandate and the Zionist project in Palestine put an end to the Zionists thinkers' ideas. Subsequently, the widespread Palestinian revolt of 1936–1939 completely abolished the views of the Zionist historians and leaders that the Palestinian fellahin were the descendants of Palestine's ancient inhabitants. These ideas were replaced by new, baseless concepts that the rural Palestinians were Arabian immigrants who came in the nineteenth century CE to an almost empty country and continued to arrive in the twentieth century CE as the developing Zionist economy attracted thousands of non-Jewish laborers.

Shlomo Sand summarizes the Zionists' thinking following the 1936–1939 revolt of the Palestinian masses:

From now on, early Islam did not convert the Jews but simply dispossessed them. The imaginary exile in the seventh century CE came to

175. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 185–186.

176. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 188–189.

replace the baseless religious narrative about a mass expulsion after the fall of the Second Temple, as well as the thesis that the Palestinian *fel-lahin* were the descendants of the people of Judea. . . .

[The] mass conversion to Judaism that produced great Jewish communities around the Mediterranean left almost no trace in the national historiography . . . The honor of belonging to the deportees from Jerusalem fortified the spirit of the believers and reinforced their identity. . . .

Had the memory of the mass conversion to Judaism been preserved, it might have eroded the metanarrative about the biological unity of the Jewish people, whose genealogical roots were believed to trace back all the way to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—not to a heterogenous mosaic of human populations.”¹⁷⁷

To summarize, within the Common Era, some Jews were physically removed from Palestine at various points in history, while others remained in Palestine and carried on with their lives. Some Jews outside of Palestine—in Europe, for example—are indeed descendants of a diaspora; others, however, are descended from native Europeans who converted to Judaism. Furthermore, modern Palestinians can trace part of their lineage to Jews who never left.

Proselytism and Conversion

Historical records tell us that long before 70 CE there were Jewish believers all over the Roman Empire, as well as in the Parthian territory in the east, exceeding the number of Jewish inhabitants in Palestine. According to the American historian Salo Baron, there were eight million Jews in the first century CE. Arthur Rupp and Adolf von Harnack suggested the number to be around four million.

The origin of the Jewish community in Babylon was related to the exile of the Judean elites after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The origin of the Jewish communities in Egypt and the Mediterranean was related to the invasion of Persian territories by Alexander the Great. According to Josephus, “Following the conquest of Judea and Samaria by Ptolemy I, one of Alexander’s successors, many captives were taken to Egypt, where they became settled as respected citizens with equal rights. . . . There were not a few other Jews who, of their own accord, went to Egypt, as invited by the goodness of its soil, and by the liberty of Ptolemy.” During the Macedonian rule, the boundaries of the empire disintegrated

177. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 188–189.

and trade and ideas spread over the entire region, creating a new and open culture. There were Jewish believers in Cyrenaica, west of Egypt, which was also ruled by Ptolemy. Jewish believers also lived in Antioch; the Seleucid king Antiochus III settled two thousand families of Jewish mercenaries from Babylonia in Asia Minor.

In his book on the history of the Israeli people, Israeli historian Menahem Stern states the various factors behind the spread of Jewish believers outside Palestine. He includes deportation, political and religious pressures in Judea, economic opportunities in new countries, and a proselytizing movement that began in the early days of the Second Temple and reached its climax in the first century CE.

Definitely there were enslaved Judean captives who were transported to Egypt, North Africa, Asia Minor, and Syria; and there were certainly merchants, mercenaries, and scholars who emigrated from Judea and Babylon; however, the large number of Jewish believers outside Palestine in the first century CE cannot be accounted for by these factors alone. In almost all the narratives produced by the proto-Zionists and even Zionist historians, conversion is mentioned as one reason for the vast presence of Jewish believers throughout the ancient world before the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE.¹⁷⁸

It is assumed that Judaism has always been an exclusive religion that harbored an extreme reluctance to accept Gentiles. This conduct prevailed during the period between Ezra in the fifth century BCE and the Maccabean revolt in the second century BCE. During the Persian period, most biblical texts promoted the principle of an exclusive “sacred seed”; however, some of the texts, such as the Second Isaiah, the book of Ruth, the book of Jonah, and the apocryphal book of Judith, call on Judaism to accept Gentiles.

The Palestinian exiles in Babylon developed their religious ideas under the influence of Persian culture and religious concepts, which led to monotheism. Those who returned to Jerusalem when Cyrus ended their exile established an exclusive cult that was intolerant of the other inhabitants of the country. The majority of the Babylonian exiles—the founders of Judaism—remained in Babylon and made it their permanent home. The intellectuals established rabbinical schools that refined Judaism and continued to provide the returnees with the material and spiritual logistics that helped transform religious belief in Palestine toward monotheism. “The Babylonian Talmud created there was esteemed more highly than the Jerusalem Talmud, because it had emerged from a more elevated cultural context.”¹⁷⁹

The Hasmonean revolt of 167–160 BCE was the turning point in the history of monotheism. This revolt succeeded in establishing an autonomous religious regime, which emerged into an independent kingdom that ruled over most of Palestine. The Hasmonean kingdom was the first state that unquestionably deserved to be described

178. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 149–150.

179. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 144.

as monotheistic. At the same time, it was a Hellenistic one. What the Maccabees drove out of Judea was not Hellenism but polytheism. They did indeed rebel against unclean religious practices, and they were antagonistic toward idolatrous tendencies, but at the same time they adopted the Hellenistic culture. Hellenism was instrumental in injecting Judaism with anti-tribal universalism, which guided the Hasmoneans toward opening up the Jewish cult to all the inhabitants of Palestine. As such they abandoned the concept of exclusivity and adopted the policy of proselytism and propagating Judaism to neighboring regions. They converted the inhabitants of all of Palestine to Judaism, and they made it their mission to spread the new religion around the Mediterranean community. Jewish migrants began to leave Judea for all the centers of the Hellenistic world, spreading their Jewish faith to all people.

This was perhaps the first time in history that a clearly monotheistic religion combined with a political government: the sovereign became a priest. Like other single-deity religions that would hold power in the future, the Hasmonean theocracy used the sword to spread not only its territorial domain but also its religious following. And with the historical option of cultural Hellenization came the possibility of conversion to Judaism. The boundaries opened in both directions.¹⁸⁰

Forced Conversion Policy

When Yohanan Hyrcanus conquered Idumaea in 125 BCE, he Judaized its inhabitants by force. According to Josephus, **“Hyrcanus took also Dora and Marissa, cities of the Idumaea, and subdued all the Idumaeans, and permitted them to stay in the country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make the use of the laws of the Jews.”**

The Idumaeans probably were originally Phoenicians and Nabataeans; their territory was about half the size of Judea. The converted Jews of Idumaea intermarried with the Judeans, and some of them played important roles in the history of the Hasmonean kingdom. Herod the Great came from among them. The most extreme Zealots in the great revolt were of Idumaeans descent.

In 104–103 BCE, Hyrcanus’s son Judas Aristobulus annexed Galilee and forced its Iturean inhabitants to convert to Judaism. Judeans had probably lived in Galilee earlier; at that time, however, it was populated and governed by the Itureans, who were Phoenicians and tribal Arabs by origin. Many of the Itureans became devout Jews. John of Gischala and Simon bar Giora, the Zealot leaders in the great revolt, were descended from converts.

180. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 157.

Proselytization outside Palestine

Following the conquest of Judea and Samaria by Ptolemy, many captives were taken to Egypt, followed by waves of migrants who settled in Alexandria. The Alexandrian philosopher Philo Judaeus stated that the Jews in Egypt in the first century CE numbered one million.

Alexandria was one of the leading cultural centers of the Hellenistic world. The translation of the Babylonian Talmud to the Greek language started in Alexandria as early as the third century BCE. It is most likely that the entire Bible was translated over many years by a large group of scholars. The purpose of the translation was to spread monotheism among the Gentiles. The Hasmoneans sent missionaries to Alexandria for the same purpose. Proselytization was carried out through the proliferating synagogues, which were attractive houses of prayer that appealed to many Gentiles. The full conversion of many of the Gentiles accounted for the millions of Jews around the southeastern Mediterranean.

During Ptolemy's rule, a large number of Jews lived in Cyrenaica (current east Libya), west of Egypt. The Jewish community expanded over time in this region and was very influential. The years 115 to 117 CE witnessed serious unrest in Cyrenaica. The Jewish believers declared war against the gods of the pagans, uprooting their shrines and attacking the worshippers. This uprising, which was led by a messianic figure called Loukuas, apparently extended to Alexandria and Cyprus.¹⁸¹

The first mention of Judaism in Roman documents was in relationship to Jewish proselytizing activities. According to Valerius Maximus, Jews were deported to their places of origin in 139 BCE because they tried to convert Romans. The Roman historians Tacitus and Cassius Dio reported that in 19 CE, the emperor Tiberius exiled thousands of Jews and their followers to the island of Sardinia. In 49–50 CE, Claudius expelled Jews from Rome for their missionary activities. The polytheist Romans tolerated all beliefs, however, including Judaism and Christianity. The expulsion and deportation were not standard policy against Jewish or Christian preachers in general. Overall, Jews and Christians were allowed to spread their beliefs.

By the beginning of the first century CE, every Roman city had a large Jewish population ranging from 10 to 15 percent of the total population. Just before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, there were Jewish believers all over the Roman Empire. The Jews in each of the cities maintained an identity separate from the other inhabitants through their religious belief in one single God (monotheism), their dietary rules, circumcision, and their observance of the Sabbath. These customs and rules prevented them from assimilating with the rest of the population, so their communities survived around their synagogues. The concept of monotheism received more

181. Bloom, *The Jewish Revolts against Rome*, 193.

acceptance from the urban communities, compared to polytheist beliefs in many gods, each associated with a particular force of nature. Judaism became so attractive in the Greek and Roman cities that it was poised to become the universal religion of the urban masses of the empire. However, it faced two major obstacles: circumcision and dietary rules. To overcome this, a special category of believers emerged, the “God fearers” who attended synagogues. They were considered a separate class of Jews, as they were not prepared to undergo circumcision or abide by the dietary rules.¹⁸²

Damascus was a flourishing Hellenistic center second only to Alexandria, and conversion to Judaism there was even greater than in Egypt. Similar activity took place in Antioch. Josephus, in his book *The Wars of the Jews*, described the situation in Antioch: “[The Jews] multiplied to a great number and adorned their temple gloriously by fine ornaments, and with great magnificence, in the use of what had been given them. They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, after a sort, brought them to be a portion of their own body.”¹⁸³

The rulers of the kingdom of Adiabene converted to Judaism from Ashurism in the first century CE. Adiabene was located north of Mesopotamia, near what is known now as Kurdistan and Armenia. Queen Helena of Adiabene went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where she helped the Judeans to survive a severe drought, and she was buried in the holy city. A military unit from Adiabene took part in the defense of Jerusalem against the Romans in 70 CE.¹⁸⁴

The biblical book of Esther was composed in the late Persian period, probably after the conquest of Alexander the Great. It tells the story of the triumph of Mordecai and Esther over Haman in faraway Persia: “And many of the people of the land became Jews: for the fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Esther 8:17).

In short, there were Jewish believers all over the Roman Empire, as well as in the Parthian territory in the northeastern region of Persia, that exceeded the number of inhabitants of Palestine. Uriel Rapaport wrote in his 1965 doctoral thesis: “Given its great scale, the expansion of Judaism in the ancient world cannot be accounted for by natural increase, such as migration; proselytization and conversion was a major factor.”¹⁸⁵

In the third century CE, the number of Jews throughout the Mediterranean region declined gradually as a result of the rise of Christianity. As mentioned above, circumcision and strict dietary rules were considered obstacles for many people who were attracted to monotheistic religions. Many people preferred to become Christians than to follow these practices or be treated as a different class (i.e., “god fearers”). The Jewish uprising in Cyrenaica in 115–117 CE and the Bar Kokhba revolt in Judaea in 132–135 began to weaken the forces of Judaism, reducing the numbers of people

182. Harman, *A People's History of the World*, 88–92.

183. Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, tr. William Whiston, 1787.

184. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 165–166.

185. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 154.

wishing to join the religion. When Christianity became the state religion in the early fourth century, conversion to Judaism almost stopped completely.

Proselytism after the Fourth Century CE

Judaism in North and South Arabia

In the fourth century CE and beyond, Judaism continued its proselytization efforts in the lands that had not yet been exposed to monotheism. Arabia was one target of the Jewish missionaries. At an earlier stage, the Judean merchants had established close relationships with the Nabataeans, and Jews settled in Taima, Khaybar, and Yathrib. Arab tribes in the region of Yathrib—the Qaynuqa, the Quriza, and the Nadir—converted to Judaism. The Arab tribes of Khaybar and Taima also converted to Judaism. However, the triumph of Islam in the early seventh century CE put an end to the spread of Judaism in northern Arabia.

Prior to the rise of Islam, Judaism reached southern Arabia. The kingdom of Himyar adopted monotheism toward the end of the fourth century when, in 378 CE, its king Malik Karib Yuhamin converted to Judaism. Himyar was the name of a large local tribe that dominated the region that is now Yemen; its capital was the city of Zafar, and it was also known as “the kingdom of Saba.” The Himyarites ruled from the last quarter of the fourth century CE to the first quarter of the fifth century CE, between 120 and 150 years. In the middle of the fourth century CE, Constantine II sent a mission to the Himyarites to convert them to Christianity. About the same time, the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum became Christian.

Several Jewish historians who specialized in the history of the Jews in the Arab world published several books about the subject between the 1920s and the 1950s. However, the subject of Judaizing the Himyarites was abandoned by the education system in Israel, and today’s high school graduates know nothing about it.¹⁸⁶

During the reign of the Jewish Himyarite Surahb’il Yakkaf, a Christian missionary named Azqir was executed in Najran by the king. The conflict between the Ethiopians and the Himyarites continued over the next two centuries. The Ethiopians had the upper hand after the death of Surahb’il. In 525 CE, Christian armies crossed the Red Sea and defeated the Himyarites. In the 570s, the Persians controlled the region, which prevented the complete Christianization of the country. In the seventh century, however, many of the Jews and Christians converted to Islam.¹⁸⁷

186. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 199.

187. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 196–198.

The Falashas (Ethiopian Jews)

Ethiopian Jews represent a small percentage of the entire population of Ethiopia. A total of 55,000 Jews immigrated from that country to Israel between 1948 and 1991. The total population of Ethiopia was estimated by the United Nations at fifty million in 1991, while the total number of Jews in the country was less than thirty thousand. According to Ethiopian tradition, half of the population was Jewish before the country was converted to Christianity in the fourth century CE.¹⁸⁸ Most Western scholars believe that the Ethiopian Jews are a segment of the indigenous Agau population that converted to Judaism. How and when they were converted is a problem for which historical evidence is lacking. It has been argued that the Jews of Egypt (from the Jewish community in Elephantine, who existed in this location in the fifth century BCE) or the Jews of Yemen may have sent missionaries who converted these African tribes to Judaism. David Kessler states in his book *The Falashas* that the spread of Judaism in Ethiopia, Yemen, and India was undoubtedly the result of proselytism.¹⁸⁹

Judaism reached many countries, especially around the Mediterranean Sea, long before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. . . . It is estimated that in the days of Philo of Alexandria, in the first century BCE, there were one million Jews in each of Syria, Egypt, Babylonia and Asia Minor, and that the Diaspora outnumbered the Jews of Palestine by three to one.¹⁹⁰

The word “Falasha” means emigrant or exile. The Ethiopian Jews adopted this term to indicate that they were exiles from the Holy Land into which, when the Messiah arrived, they would be gathered. A study of the Falasha culture presents a new meaning of exile (*golah*) and the return to Palestine which is religio-spiritual and not historico-political.¹⁹¹

The Falashas’ faith is based on strict adherence to the teachings of the Torah, the five books of Moses. They do not follow the precepts of the Halachah, or oral law. The codification of the oral law, known as the Talmud, was not completed until about 500 CE, at a time when the Jews of Ethiopia were isolated from their co-religionists in the rest of the world. They had no knowledge of its contents; their position is different from that of the Samaritans, who positively rejected the Halachah and rabbinic authority as a matter of principle.¹⁹²

188. David F. Kessler, *The Falashas: A Short History of the Ethiopian Jews* (London: Routledge Press, 1996), 3.

189. Kessler, *The Falashas*, 18.

190. Kessler, *The Falashas*, 2–3.

191. Kessler, *The Falashas*, 4.

192. Kessler, *The Falashas*, 16–17.

The Jews of India

The Jewish community in India is concentrated into three groups: the Cochin Jews of the Malabar coast, the Bene Israel Jews of greater Bombay, and the Baghdadi Jews of India's port cities, especially Calcutta and Bombay. The origin of the Jews in these regions is not clear. There are legends in circulation about the origin of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

In Cochin the legends talk about the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE as the beginning of the Jewish presence on the Malabar coast. King Sthanu Ravi of Kollam granted a decree to Mar Sapir Iso, the founder of the Syrian Christian community in the city of Crananore, in 823 CE. Four Jews named Hassan, Ali, Isaac ben Michael, and Abraham witnessed the event. The king granted the Jews and Christians seventy-two royal privileges. Arabic travelers' diaries refer to Jewish merchants who reached Kerala as early as the mid-ninth century. A record left by a Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, that goes back to 1159–1173 refers to the Jewish community of Kerala. He describes the Jews of the twelfth century in Malabar: "All the cities and countries inhabited by these people contain only about one hundred Jews, who are of black colour as well as the other inhabitants. The Jews are good men, observers of the law and possess the Pentateuch, the Prophets and some little knowledge of the Thalmud and its decisions." The Jews of Cochin came as merchants who settled and preached Judaism.¹⁹³ The Jews of the other regions of India came as merchants over a period of several centuries. Through their contacts with local Indian population, they succeeded in spreading Judaism; however, the number of Indians who adopted the faith was limited.

Judaism in North Africa

After the uprising in Cyrenaica against Rome between 115 and 117 CE was put down, the proselytization process slowed down, but did not stop completely. Historians attribute the successful spread of Judaism in the Maghreb to the presence of Phoenicians who populated the coastline.

Although the rate of proselytization slowed down in the third and fourth centuries in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy, it was highly successful along the coast of Magreb. However, most of the Judaizers were of the "God-fearers" class. Ibn Khaldoun, the Muslim historian, lists the Judaized Berber tribes in North Africa: The Jerawa, who inhabited the highlands of Aures; the Nefouca, who lived near today's Tripoli; the Mediouna, who lived in modern-day western Algeria; and the Fendelaona, Behloulia, and Fazaz in today's Morocco. Proselytization in North Africa targeted the

193. Nathan Katz, *Who Are the Jews of India?* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 22–31.

Phoenicians as well as the Berbers. Most historians believe that the great majority of Magreb Jews are of Berber stock.

Dihya al-Kahina, the queen of the Aures, led the resistance against the advancing Muslim armies in 689 CE; however, five years later her forces were defeated and she was killed on the battlefield. Her sons converted to Islam and joined the Muslim army, which conquered all of North Africa, all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. Only Ceuti, a small city on the extreme western end of North Africa, remained in Roman hands. Julian, the governor of the city, was an ambitious officer who defended the besieged city, and after he failed to get support from the Visigoths, he made peace with the Muslims.



Khazaria

Khazaria was a large geographical area that occupied a strategic position between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (which was known as the Khazar Sea), where the great eastern powers of the period confronted each other. It acted as a buffer protecting Byzantium from the tribesmen of the northern steppes. Khazaria also played a vital role in blocking the Arab invasion of Eastern Europe in the seventh century CE.

The Khazars were a “Turkic” tribe who moved to what became known as Khazaria from the Asian steppes in the fifth century CE. They were described by the Arabic historian Ibn-Said al-Maghribi as having blue eyes, light skin, and reddish hair. They were under the control and protection of the Huns; when Huns’ empire collapsed, they fell under the control and protection of another power known as the West Turkish Empire or the Turkut Kingdom. With the collapse of the Turkut Kingdom in the middle of the seventh century CE, Khazaria became an independent kingdom, controlling a large territory that stretched from Kiev in the northwest to the Crimean Peninsula in the south, and from the upper Volga to present-day Georgia. During the first decades of the seventh century and prior to the rise of Islam, the Middle East was dominated by a triangle of powers: Byzantium, Persia, and Khazaria.¹⁹⁴ Khazaria preserved its political independence and economic interest through ever-shifting alliances with the powers surrounding them, as well as trade and marriage.

Persian records of the sixth century indicate that the Khazars invaded the Sassanid kingdom and got as far as Mosul in modern-day Iraq. In the early seventh century, during the reign of the Persian king Khosrau II, an alliance between Persia and Khazaria was established after the Persian king married the Khazar king’s daughter. This alliance allowed Persia to build fortifications in the passes of the Caucasus Mountains. Armenian and Byzantine records reveal that, in the seventh century, the Khazar kingdom formed an alliance with Byzantium. Justinian II married a Khazar princess, Theodora. In 732 CE, Emperor Leo III married the kagan’s daughter; their son became the emperor who was known as Leo the Khazar.

Arabic sources describe many battles between the Muslims and the Khazars. The last was in the 730s CE, when the Muslim commander Marwan II—who became the last Umayyid caliph—defeated the Khazars. In return for an end to the Muslim offense, the kagan (the Khazar king) agreed to convert to Islam. It was then agreed that the final boundary between Khazaria and the Muslim world would be the Caucasus Mountains.¹⁹⁵

The early Khazars were **shamanists** who worshiped spirits and the sky. The supreme ruler of the Khazars was a sacred religious figure. The kagan continued to be

194. Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage* (London, UK: Hutchinson, 1976), 1–11.

195. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 214–216.

the supreme ruler until the 830s when a new position was created: the “**bec**,” who handled secular state affairs in the kingdom, including all military expeditions.¹⁹⁶

The twin city of **Khazaran-Atil** was the capital, located in eastern Khazaria, on the lower Volga near the Caspian Sea. It was the most important trading center of the Khazar Empire. The eastern half of the city, known as Khazaran, was populated by many Muslim merchants and crafters, who originated from Khwarizm and eastern Iran. The western half of the city, Atil, was where the kagan and the bek lived. Sarkel was an important fortress located on the left bank of the Don River. Built in the 830s, it served as a defensive fortification.¹⁹⁷

Khazaria was a major center for trade, especially in the eighth and ninth centuries. The Khazars controlled several trade routes that connected Asia and Europe, and required traders to pay customs duties on merchandise transported by both land and water routes. Khazaria held fertile land, especially in the south; however, its prosperity was dependent on trade income and the tributes paid by the Bulgars, Magyars, Burtas, and other vassals.¹⁹⁸

Religious Influence in Khazaria

At the beginning of the eighth century the world was divided into two superpowers: Christianity and Islam. The Khazar Empire represented a third force. It relied on its military strength and its control over several vassal tribes to preserve its position. The kings of Khazaria, through their contacts with Byzantium and Muslims, realized that their outdated and primitive shamanism did not give them the spiritual and legal authority which the Muslim caliph and the Byzantine emperor enjoyed.¹⁹⁹ Conversion to either Christianity or Islam would have meant submission and the end of independence. Embracing the third monotheistic religion, Judaism, represented the ideal solution.

The Khazarian kagans were familiar with all three religions. Judaism had had roots in the country for many centuries. Archaeological evidence indicates that Jews have lived in the Balkans, in the Caucasus (including Georgia), along the northern shores of the Black Sea, and in other areas of Eastern Europe since Roman times. Jewish settlements and synagogues existed in Pannonia (modern-day Hungary) as early as the third century CE. Jews also lived in northern Bulgaria. In the premedieval period, thousands of Jews from Egypt, Judea, Syria, and Asia Minor migrated to the Hellenistic kingdom of Bosphorus.

The anti-Jewish policies of the Byzantine Empire forced many Jews to escape to safer territories, and Khazaria was an ideal refuge. Around 630–632 CE, the Byzantine

196. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 47–50.

197. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 20–30.

198. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 30.

199. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 40.

emperor Heraclius decreed that all Jews in his empire must convert to Christianity. A similar policy was adopted by Emperor Leo III around 722–723 CE. By the end of the ninth century, Byzantine laws decreed that Jews could not hold public office, intermarry with Christians, or own Christian slaves. Jews were not allowed to construct new synagogues, and if a Jew tried to convert a Christian, he would be killed and his property would be confiscated. Many Jews escaped from Byzantium and migrated to Khazaria.²⁰⁰

During the first half of the ninth century, King Bulan of Khazaria converted to Judaism. According to several medieval sources, a religious debate between an Arab mullah, a Christian priest, and a Jewish rabbi took place at Bulan's palace prior to his decision to adopt Judaism.²⁰¹ Many historians believe that the presence of the migrant Jews and their active proselytizing activities influenced the decision of the Khazars to convert to Judaism. However many historians believe that the Khazars kings adopted Judaism as a conscious political decision designed to help preserve the political independence of Khazaria from the Christian and Muslim empires surrounding them. Adopting Islam would have made them subjects of the caliph. Adopting Christianity would have subordinated themselves to the Eastern Empire.²⁰² Conversion to Judaism allowed them to remain independent.

Many medieval documents indicate that the Jews had great influence over Khazarian affairs. According to these sources, many of the Khazar people became Jewish. At the beginning, Judaism was restricted to Khazaria's royalty and nobility, but it started to spread widely in the second half of the ninth century. Many Jews immigrated from Byzantium after the Khazar royal family converted to Judaism. The refugees were of a superior culture, which led to a significant transformation of the Khazarians who adopted Judaism. The exiles brought with them arts and crafts, and new technology for agriculture and trade. They also introduced the Hebrew alphabet to Khazaria.

The Vikings in Khazaria

In the 830s, the Khazar kagan and bek asked the emperor of Byzantium Theophilus to assist them in building the Sarkel fortress. This project was one of many defensive moves to protect Khazaria from formidable newcomers from the north, whom the West called Vikings or Northmen and the East called the Rus or Varangians. The Rus originated from eastern Scandinavia, while the Vikings who raided Western Europe were Norwegians and Danes. After the Rus crossed the Baltic and the Gulf of

200. Kevin Alan Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc.), 117.

201. Brook, *The Jews of Khazaria*, 124.

202. Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, 219–220.

Finland, they sailed up the River Volhov into Lake Ilmen, south of Leningrad, where they built the city of **Novgorod** in northern Russia.

The Varangian-Rus had the traits of pirates, robbers, and merchants. They bartered furs, swords, and amber in exchange for gold, but their principal merchandise consisted of slaves. They were constantly raiding the Slavs and taking them as prisoners to be sold as slaves to the Khazars and the Bulgars. Between 830–930 CE, the plundering raids of the Rus were mainly directed against Byzantium, whereas their relations with the Khazars were essentially on a trading basis. The Khazars were able to control the trade routes and collected 10 percent tax on all cargoes passing through their country to Byzantium and to the Muslim lands. They also exerted some cultural influence on the Northmen.²⁰³

The Varangian-Rus activities expanded from their settlement of Novgorod to the entire Slavonic territory, including Kiev. At the beginning, the tribute from the Slavonic tribes was divided between the Khazars and the Varangians. In 862 CE, the Rus annexed the important town of Kiev on the Dnieper and made it their new capital, replacing Novgorod. This was an important and decisive event in Russian-Khazarian relations, although it happened without a war. The Khazars accepted this change in the town and province of Kiev. The influential Khazar-Jewish community continued to live in this region.²⁰⁴

Armed conflict between Byzantium and the Rus continued intermittently over the next two centuries. However, with the help of the church, a diplomatic and friendly relationship eventually developed and grew over time to reach the level of an alliance. At the beginning of the tenth century, Rus and other Nordic mercenaries served as the elite “Varangian Guard” of the Byzantine emperor. The treaties of 945 and 971 stated the willingness of Kiev rulers to provide Byzantium with troops on request. Trade between the two parties was expanded and regulated. Rus visitors were allowed to enter Constantinople and their fleets were allowed to sail through the Bosphorus.²⁰⁵

In 988 CE, Vladimir, Svyatoslav’s son, adopted the faith of the Greek Orthodox Church. A few years later, Greek Christianity became the official religion of the Rus people, and from 1037 onward the Russian church was governed by the patriarch of Constantinople. This event was a momentous triumph of Byzantine diplomacy, and a turning point in the history of the region. Vladimir’s decision was a political one, as the Russians at that time needed allies, and the Byzantine Empire was the most desirable ally in terms of power, culture, and trade.²⁰⁶

The Muslim lands in the southern half of Khazaria, near the Caspian Sea—Azerbaijan, Gilan, Shirwan, Tabaristan, and Jurjan—were tempting targets for the

203. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 65–68.

204. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 70–71.

205. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 80–81.

206. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 92–94.

Rus fleets, both for plunder and for conducting trade and commercial activities with the Muslims. The relationship between the Rus and the Khazars changed in the tenth century from intensive trading to hostility and war. Under the leadership of Svyatoslav, the Rus launched a vicious war campaign against Khazaria. In 965 CE, they destroyed Sarkel, and around 975–977 CE, attacked Atil. Some historians regard Svyatoslav’s victories in both battles as the end of Khazaria; most, however, including Toynbee, state that the Rus only succeeded in destroying the Khazar Steppe-empire in the second half of the tenth century.²⁰⁷

Following the Russian attack on Atil, the Khazar state became weaker. Their capital was rebuilt, and they managed to survive inside their shrunken frontiers until the middle of the twelfth or even the thirteenth century when their territory became part of the Mongol Empire. The Khazars continued to be mentioned in the Arabic and Russian records going back to the twelfth century. The Russians referred to Khazaria at the time as the “Jewish country” or the “Kingdom of the Red Jews.”²⁰⁸

It is accepted by most historians that the Khazars, after their defeat by the Rus in 965, lost their empire but retained their independence within narrower frontiers until the thirteenth century, when their lands became part of the Mongol Empire. According to the Jewish historian **Baron**, before and after the Mongol invasion, the Khazars sent many offshoots into the unsubdued Slavonic lands, helping to build up the great Jewish centers of Eastern Europe.

The first Jewish groups to move to Eastern Europe from Khazaria were the **Magyars** and the **Kabars**, who moved to what came to be known as **Hungary** in 896. In the tenth century, **Duke Taksony of Hungary** invited a second wave of Khazar emigrants to settle there. Around 962 CE, several Slavonic tribes formed an alliance under the leadership of their strongest tribes, the Polans, which became the nucleus of the Polish state. Jewish immigrants from Khazaria were welcomed in the new state as they were considered a valuable asset to the country’s economy. **In the fourteenth century, the two nations—the Polish and the Lithuanians—formed a united commonwealth. In the new state the Jews were granted the right to maintain their own synagogues, schools and courts; to hold property, and to engage in any trade or occupation they chose.** Over time the Jewish community in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth flourished; it is estimated that in the seventeenth century, the number of Jews in this kingdom grew to over 500,000. It is also estimated that, around that time, the total Jewish population of the world amounted to about one million, the majority of whom were Khazars, who had moved mainly to Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and the Balkans after the Mongol invasions.

Many historians, whether Austrian, Israeli, or Polish, have argued independently from each other that the mainstream of Jewish migrations did not flow from the

207. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 91.

208. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 96–104.

Mediterranean across France and Germany to the east and then back again; rather, it moved in a westerly direction from the Caucasus through the Ukraine into Poland and thence into Central Europe. The numerical ratio of the Khazar to the Semitic and other contributions is impossible to establish, but the cumulative evidence makes one inclined to agree with the consensus of Polish historians: “In early times, the main bulk originated from the Khazar country.” Of course, nobody can deny that Jews of different origin also contributed to the existing Jewish world community.

Proselytizing activities played a major role in spreading Judaism among many nations and people. It started as early as the second century BCE, and reached its peak between the fall of the Jewish state in Palestine and the rise of Christianity. Many upper-class families in Italy were converted, as well as the royal family which ruled the province of Adiabene. Philo of Alexandria speaks of numerous converts in Greece; Flavius Josephus relates that a large proportion of the population of Antioch was Judaized; St. Paul met with proselytes on his travels more or less everywhere from Athens to Asia Minor.

Maurice Fishberg, the early twentieth century anthropologist, said: “It is indeed the crucial point in anthropology of the Jews: are they of pure race, modified more or less by environmental influences, or are they a religious sect composed of racial elements acquired by proselytism and intermarriage during their migration in various parts of the world?” **History shows that Judaism is a religion that was developed in the Near East, adopted by the inhabitants of what is now Palestine, and over centuries became the religion of other people. Jews are not an ethnic group, but many people of different racial backgrounds who adopted Judaism.**

Judaism in Spain and the Inquisition

The beginning of the spread of Judaism in Spain goes back to the first century CE. Christian and Jewish missionaries were in almost every city around the Mediterranean. Paul was preaching to pagans and Jews in Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula. Jewish believers were in all these regions, and proselytism was successful, as monotheism was attractive to the citizens of the Roman Empire around the Mediterranean. As mentioned above, some historians estimated the number of Jewish believers outside Palestine at the beginning of the Common Era to be around eight million people. The records of the early Christian Church show that wherever a Christian missionary appeared, he found Jews already established.²⁰⁹

Spain (Hispania) was one of the most prosperous provinces of the Roman Empire. During the reign of Emperor Caracalla in 222 CE, Spain’s inhabitants were granted

209. Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 4.

citizenship, and participated in flourishing commerce. Spain was known for its rich soil and mild climate; in addition, it was rich in ores such as gold and silver. The Spanish cities had an infrastructure similar to that of the Roman cities: aqueducts, bridges, amphitheaters, temples, arches, and great administrative buildings.²¹⁰

Jewish life in Spain flourished during this era. “Archeological remains all along the Spanish coast attest to the density of Jewish settlement in this period. . . . Jews mixed freely among their neighbors and were generally regarded with favor.”²¹¹ They did not live as isolated individuals or families but as organized communities, that were cohesive and traditional, but at the same time remained connected with the surrounding society. The Jewish community had a substantial and influential presence, and some rabbis were held in high esteem by many Christians.

This favorable situation did not last for long. A historical ecclesiastical council convened in Elvira in the year 306 CE. The participants were concerned about the close relations between neighboring Christians and Jews. The council of Elvira issued instructions to the Christian community regarding this issue:

It seems appropriate to warn farmers not to permit that their fruits, which they receive from God as a gift of grace, be blessed by Jews so that our blessing should not appear as worthless and despised; if anyone continues to act in such a manner despite our prohibition, he will be driven away from the Church. . . .

If any of the priests or believers eats his meal with a Jew, we decide that he does not participate in the communion so that he atone.²¹²

After Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, the status of the Jews in Spain changed. The officials of the Spanish administration followed the hostile position of the Church.

In 409 CE, Spain was overrun by different German tribes: the Suevi, the Vandals, the Alani, and the Visigoths. The most powerful of these were the **Visigoths**, who established themselves as the rulers of Spain. They were a relatively small group of German-speaking warriors and herdsman, numbering about 200,000. They ruled over eight million Latin-speaking Catholics. The arrival of the German tribes changed Spanish society and brought lawlessness and continuous destruction of the economy, which resulted in the decline of the cities and the end of Spain’s prosperity. Toledo was the capital of the Visigoths. During their entire rule they never established an orderly dynastic system, which resulted in a state of continuous political turmoil.

210. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 4.

211. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 3–5.

212. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 5–6.

Initially the Jewish community under the Visigoth rule maintained their normal autonomous status that had been established in Roman times. The community leadership continued to play a strong role in regulating all aspects of life: it was empowered by tradition to supervise prices, wages, and the use of weights and measures. The synagogues continued to manage and support their schools, and organized welfare institutions that provided help for the needy. Under the Visigoths, the Jews were involved in government posts, including within the army or the garrisons; some continued to hold senatorial rank. Many Jews possessed extreme wealth.²¹³

A major event happened in 587 CE, when the Visigoth king Reccared I converted to Catholicism. This was the beginning of the persecution of the Jews. Immediately after his conversion, King Reccared convened the first Council of Toledo in order to regulate relations between Christians and Jews. He decreed that all slaves held by Jews should be handed over to Christian slaveholders. This measure guaranteed that Jews could no longer participate in agriculture. King Reccared also instituted the death penalty for any Jew found proselytizing. Jews were forbidden to intermarry or to hold public office.²¹⁴

In 613 CE, **King Sisebut** issued a decree at the third Toledo Council that called for the forced conversion of all Jews. Any Jew who refused baptism would be given one hundred lashes; if still resistant, they would be banished and deprived of all property. Some clerics, such as Isadore of Seville and Pope Gregory the Great, rejected these policies on the basis that forced conversions could not possibly produce genuine believers. King Sisebut's decree was permitted to stand against these clerics' opposition. As many as ninety thousand Jews were converted under the terms of Sisebut's decree, while uncounted thousands more were able to escape. Many Jews continued to practice their religion in secret.²¹⁵

The policy of intolerance was not limited to Spain. Roman emperor **Heraclius** decreed a forced conversion of his empire's Jews in 632 CE. Forced conversion was established in Merovingian France in 623 CE, and in Langobard, Italy in 661 CE.

The anti-Jewish laws of the Visigoths were repeated in the successive councils at Toledo, which indicates that such laws were implemented sporadically, and had to be enforced whenever a new persecutory king was crowned. In 680 CE, King Erwig issued twenty-eight laws confirming the previous decrees. In 694 CE, following the uprising of the Jewish population, all Jews were declared to be slaves; their properties and wealth were confiscated, and their children under the age of seven were turned over to Christian slave-masters to be raised as Catholics.²¹⁶

213. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 8–9.

214. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 12.

215. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 12.

216. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 14–15.

Summary

As the foregoing historical account shows, people of the Jewish faith have been oppressed since Roman times. It is important, however, to separate this history from the claims used to justify Jewish control of Palestine. In the broader historical context, there is a pattern of religion overlapping with politics, and religion being used as a tool by those seeking political power. Where, historically, this line was first crossed is difficult to say; it varies depending on the country, the religion, and the historian. For the purposes of this book, however, we will set aside the history of the Christian and Jewish religions at this point, around the seventh century CE. It was in this century that the third major religion of Palestine—Islam—emerged. This is the subject of the final part of part II. Part III of this history will focus on the political aspects of the religions of Palestine and how they came to influence the current situation in that land.

Islam: The Message and the Messenger

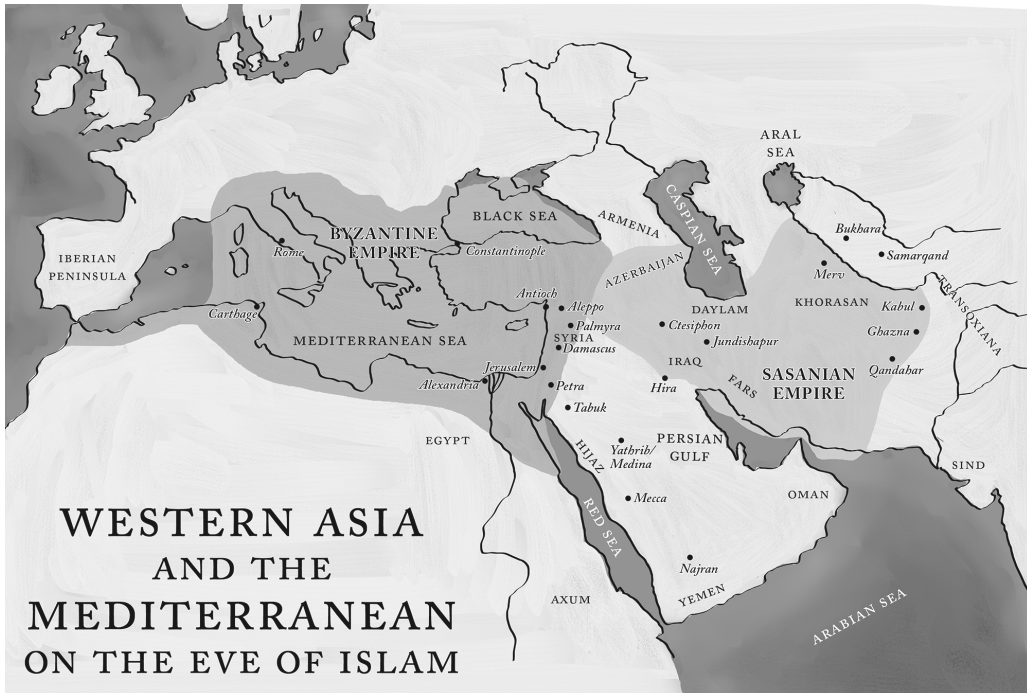
Editor's note:

The story of the Prophet and his message is an important one. Like the other religions surveyed here, Islam has had a profound impact on all facets of Palestine and its people. Dr. Kanaan wrote extensively on this and other subjects.

The following is a synopsis of Dr. Kanaan's writing on the topic. (His complete, unabridged history of Islam is available online and in PDF form. Those wishing to read Dr. Kanaan's full account in all detail should refer to the book's website at www.palestinehistorybook.com.) Even readers with an intimate knowledge of Islam, however, will find a great deal revealed in these pages, whereas the layman can obtain a better grasp of the achievements of the Prophet Muhammad and their historic implications.

Additionally, the language of the Quran has been presented here in English rather than its original Arabic. The sacred original words of the Arabic Quran are preserved in the unabridged history, along with the full text of Dr. Kanaan's writing on Islam.

The quotes from the Holy Quran given here are from the Arabic-English Quran translated by Talal Itani, published by ClearQuran (Dallas, Beirut).



Mecca: The Consecrated City

The biblical story of **Abraham** states that he migrated from Ur in Southern Mesopotamia to Haran, on one of the upper Euphrates tributaries, in northern Syria. In Haran, God appeared to him and commanded: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be blessing” (Genesis 12:1–2). This land was Palestine. The story places this event in the second millennium BCE.

The tale also states that Abraham’s wife **Sarah** gave Abraham her Egyptian slave, **Hagar**, to be his concubine, hoping that God might give him a child through her, as Sarah could not produce children because of her advanced age. Hagar gave birth to a child named **Ismael**. Abraham’s joy was great. As Sarah watched Hagar looking after her newborn son, her jealousy grew stronger every day, especially when she noticed that Abraham was showing great love to Hagar and Ismael.

The second chapter of this tale takes place far away from Palestine. Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ismael away. Abraham traveled with Hagar and Ismael from Hebron in south Palestine to a desolate valley in the Arabian Peninsula which came to be known as **Mecca**, a forty-day trip by camel. Abraham left Hagar and her son in that uninhabited place, with little food, mainly dates, and little water; and went back to Sarah in Palestine.

Hagar devoted herself to her young child. Soon however, her supply of food and water was exhausted. The two were soon very hungry and thirsty. She was in a valley between two hills: al-Safa and al-Marwah. She kept running between the two hills, exploring the area around her, hoping to find somebody to help. She ran between the two hills seven times. Meanwhile, the boy, Ismael, during this time was in the bottom of the valley between the two hills, rubbing the earth with his leg. Suddenly, water gushed forth between his feet. Hagar shouted, “God is Supreme,” and rushed back to her son. After giving her child enough to drink, she drank herself and thanked God for His grace. The water continued to gush forth, attracting birds. This drew the attention of the Jurhum, an Arabian tribe traveling north across the desert. Realizing that a spring must be in the area, they changed course, hoping to wash and drink. They then met Hagar and realized that the spring, Zamzam, belonged to her. She welcomed the tribe and invited them to encamp.

This was the beginning of settled life in the valley of Mecca. Ismael grew up among the Jurhum tribe, and when he became a young man, he married a Jurhum girl who gave him many sons and daughters. Abraham visited Hagar and Ismael every now and then. On one of his visits, Abraham saw in his dream that he was commanded to sacrifice his son, Ismael, who was in his teens at that time, for God’s sake. According to scripture, the following exchange occurred:

Then, when he was old enough to accompany him, he said, "O my son, I see in a dream that I am sacrificing you; see what you think." He said, "O Father, do as you are commanded; You will find me, Allah willing, one of the steadfast."

(Chapter 23, Surah 37: 102, Al Safat)

Abraham and Ismael went to a place that became known as **Mina**, prepared to obey God's orders. Satan tried to dissuade Abraham from sacrificing his son. Abraham's submission to God's will was firm, and he threw stones at Satan three times. Just when Abraham was about to cut his son's throat, an angel appeared and told him to stop.

Then, when they had submitted, and he to God, and he put his forehead down. We called out to him, "O, Abraham! You have fulfilled the vision." Thus We reward the doers of good. This was certainly an evident test. And We redeemed him with a great sacrifice. And We left with him for later generations. Peace to be upon Abraham. Thus We reward the doers of good. He was one of Our believing servants.

(Chapter 23, Surah 37: 103–111, Al Safat)

On another visit, Abraham told his son that God had ordered him to erect a house in that place to serve as a consecrated temple. Both father and son worked hard to lay the foundations and erect the building. As father and son completed the building, they prayed and asked God to accept their work and bless their deed.

God accepted the work done by Abraham and Ismael and answered their prayers. He made the building they erected a center of worship that people from all over the world would visit in pilgrimage. God told Abraham that it was his will that Mecca should be a consecrated city where fighting was forbidden. Its animals were to move about safely without fear of being hunted. It was forbidden to cut down its trees. People were to be secure and safe there. Such has been the status in Mecca ever since Abraham built that house, which was the first ever built there.

The pagan Arabs believed that this sanctuary, the **Ka'bah**, was built first by Adam, the first man. They also believed that Adam's original building was destroyed by the Great Flood, then rebuilt by Noah. They also believed that after Noah, it was forgotten for generations until Abraham rediscovered it while visiting Hagar and Ismael. The truth is that no one knows who built the Ka'bah, or when it was built. Most likely the discovery of **Zamzam** in the middle of the desert by the wandering Bedouin tribes of Arabia was the reason for the sanctity of the area. It is likely then, that the **Ka'bah** was erected in that valley not just

as a sacred place, but as a secure place to store the consecrated objects used in the rituals that had evolved around Zamzam.²¹⁷

Pre-Islam Religious Beliefs of Arabia

Before Islam, the Arabian Peninsula was dominated by paganism. Paganism does not have a definite meaning. The term was introduced by the monotheists to describe those who do not believe in the oneness of God. In pre-Islamic Arabia, many people believed in a single supreme god without rejecting the existence of other subordinate gods. The German scholar Max Müller termed this concept henotheism. The earliest evidence of henotheism in Arabia can be traced back to a tribe called the Amir who lived near modern-day Yemen in the second century BCE, and who worshipped a high god called dahu-Samawi, the lord of the heavens. By the sixth century CE, henotheism had become the standard belief of the vast majority of sedentary (non-nomadic) Arabs, who accepted **Allah** as their high god.²¹⁸

Allah was originally an ancient rain/sky deity who had been elevated to the role of the supreme god of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Being the high god in the Arab pantheon, Allah was difficult for ordinary people to reach. The most powerful among his intercessors, who were more easily accessed, were his three daughters **Allat** (the goddess), **al-Uzza** (the mighty), and **Manat** (fate). Arabs believed that God had married the jinn and had begotten angels as his daughters through that marriage.²¹⁹ These divine mediators were not only represented in the Ka'bah, but they had their own individual shrines: Allat in Ta'if; al-Uzza in Nakhlah; and Manat in Qudayd.

The Ka'bah was a small, roofless structure that housed the 360 gods of pre-Islamic Arabia, representing every god recognized in the Arabian Peninsula. The most famous ones were **Hubal**, the Syrian god of the moon; **al-Uzza**, the powerful goddess the Egyptians knew as Isis and the Greeks as Aphrodite; **al-Kutba**, the Nabataean God of writing and divination; **Jesus**, the incarnate god of the Christians, and his holy mother, **Mary**.

The original building of the Ka'bah was nine arms in height. At the beginning of the seventh century CE, the Quraysh tribe, who controlled Mecca and the Ka'bah, decided to rebuild it; the height was then increased to eighteen arms. When the Ka'bah was rebuilt about ninety years later by Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, he increased it to its present height, which is equal to the length of twenty-seven arms.

During the holy months, pilgrims from all over the peninsula would make their way to Mecca to visit their tribal deities. As they reached the Ka'bah, they would

217. Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origin and Evolution of Islam* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2005), 4.

218. Aslan, *No god but God*, 8.

219. Adil Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet* (Leicestershire, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1995), 54.

sing songs of worship and dance in front of the 360 gods; then the pilgrimage rituals began. Two of the rituals were performed in the Ka'bah: Jogging seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah, to the east of Ka'bah; and gathering as a group and jogging around the Ka'bah seven times. The origin of the first ritual goes back to the story of Hagar jogging between the two hills looking for help, when the spring Zamzam gushed forth between her son's feet. The origin of the second ritual, called tawaf (circumambulation), is a mystery. Pagan Arabs believed that this ritual was initiated by Abraham after he completed the construction of the Ka'bah.²²⁰ As the pilgrims jogged around the Ka'bah, they were following the course of the sun around the earth, and in this way they were putting themselves in harmony with the fundamental order of the cosmos. A black stone—a piece of basalt of meteoric origin—embedded in the eastern wall of the Ka'bah helped them to remain oriented and to count their seven circumambulations. The pagan Arabs believed that this stone had once fallen from the sky, linking heaven and earth.²²¹

Other duties of pilgrimage were done outside the boundaries of the Haram area in a circle of about a twenty-kilometer radius around Mecca. These rituals included visiting Mount **Arafat** (it was commonly held that no pilgrimage was valid unless the pilgrim was present at Arafat on the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the lunar year). This was followed by an all-night vigil on the plain beside the mountain, an area called **Muzdalifah**, the home of the thunder god. The final ritual was hurling pebbles at three pillars in the valley of **Mina**, symbolizing Abraham throwing stones at Satan. Finally, the pilgrims were to sacrifice their most valuable female camels.²²²

The monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism were present in pre-Islam Arabia, and influenced the religious beliefs of the Arabs. The pagan Arabs were familiar with **Judaism** and the Old Testament. They considered themselves descendants of Abraham. They believed that Abraham was the one who rebuilt the Ka'bah, and he was the one who created the pilgrimage rites that took place there. In the sixth century CE, Arabs associated their god, Allah, with the Jewish god Yahweh. Jews in Arabia, whether in Yemen or in the north, were converts. There were Jewish merchants, Jewish Bedouins, Jewish farmers, Jewish poets, and Jewish warriors through Arabia. Jewish men took Arab names; Jewish women wore Arab head-dresses. The primary language of the Jews of Arabia was the Arabic, not Aramaic. Judaism in Arabia was different from traditional Judaism. The Jews shared many of the same religious ideals as pagan Arabs.²²³

220. Aslan, *No god but God*, 4.

221. Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, from the "Eminent Lives" series (New York: Atlas Books, 2006), 33.

222. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 32–33.

223. Aslan, *No god but God*, 9.

Christianity surrounded Arabia from the northwest (Syria), the northeast (Mesopotamia), and the south (Abyssinia). Many Arab tribes had converted to Christianity, the largest of them being the Ghassanids in the north. The Byzantine emperors sent missionaries to spread Christianity among pagan Arabs. Christianity's presence in the Arabic peninsula influenced the pagan Arabs in many ways. The Arabs were familiar with the New Testament. An image of Jesus the incarnate god was placed in the Ka'bah along with a picture of his mother Mary.

Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion of the Persian Empire. In the tenth and eleventh centuries BCE, its prophet Zarathustra preached a unique monotheistic religion based on the god **Ahura Mazda**, "the Wise Lord." Although Zoroastrianism was a non-proselytizing religion, the Sassanian military presence in the Arabian Peninsula had resulted in a few tribal conversion to Zoroastrianism.

The presence of these three monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism—in Arabia had an effect among the people of Arabia, creating a breeding ground for new ideologies. **Hanifism**, a monotheistic movement that arose in Hijaz in the sixth century CE, was the most important of these ideologies, and would influence the future religious beliefs of the Arabs. Muslim historians recount the names of the most prominent *hanifs*; for example, ibn Hisham, in his biography of the Prophet Muhammad, names **Waraqa ibn Nawfal**, **Uthman ibn Huwairith**, **Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh**, and **Zayd ibn Amr**. These four men made a solemn pact to follow the religion of Abraham, whom they considered to be neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a pure monotheist—a *hanif*, which means in Arabic "to turn away [from idolatry]." The four *hanifs* who bonded together in strong friendship started to preach the new religion. In the end, two of them, Waraqa and Uthman, converted to Christianity. Ubayd Allah converted to Islam and was one of the Muslims who emigrated to Abyssinia. While in Abyssinia he embraced Christianity and died a Christian.²²⁴ Zayd continued preaching Hanifism and criticizing idolatrous worship. He tried to save every young girl who was to be buried alive by her father. Such activities angered his uncle, Omar ibn al-Khattab, who managed to banish him to an area outside Mecca. However, Zayd managed to escape and left Arabia to travel widely in Syria and Iraq. While he was traveling, an aged Christian priest told him that the time was ripe for the appearance of a new prophet in Arabia. Therefore he immediately decided to return to Mecca. Unfortunately, he was murdered on his way home.

The Hanifism movement flourished throughout the Hijaz, especially in major population centers such as Ta'if and Yathrib. It was a mature Arab monotheistic movement. The *hanifs* believed in one God, the creator, who did not need mediators between him and humans. They were committed to an absolute morality.

224. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 140.

Northern Arabia and the Rise of Mecca

During the sixth century CE, nomadic life (*badawah*) was the rule in northern Arabia. Settled life in the steppes was almost impossible due to the scarcity of resources. Nomads relied on herding sheep and goats and breeding horses and camels for their existence. Nomadic life was harsh, characterized by constant struggle, because there were too many people competing for too few resources. They were constantly wandering in search of water and grazing land for their cattle. They were always hungry, on the brink of starvation, which forced them to fight with other tribes for water, pastureland, and grazing rights. Consequently the *gazu* (acquisition raid) was essential to the *badawah* economy. In times of scarcity, tribesmen would invade the territory of their neighbors for the purpose of stealing camels, cattle, or other valuables; however, they avoided killing anybody. The *gazu* was not considered a crime or morally wrong; it was a rough way of redistributing wealth when there was not enough to satisfy the need to stay alive.

The tribe was the basic unit of social life in nomadic Arabia, and the tribal society was governed by a traditional tribal ethic. The nomads' survival was dependent on a strong sense of tribal solidarity based on the sharing of all available resources. **"The tribal ethic was founded on the principle that every member had an essential function in maintaining the stability of the tribe, which was only as strong as its weakest members. The tribal ethic was meant to maintain social egalitarianism so that regardless of one's position, every member could share in the social and economic rights and privileges that preserved the unity of the tribe."**²²⁵

During the sixth century the Bedouins invented a saddle that enabled camels to carry far heavier loads than before. Camels then replaced donkeys for transporting the merchants' luxury goods such as gold, precious stones, ivory, wood, spices, cotton, and silk from India; incense, ebony, ostrich feathers, gold, and ivory from east Africa; incense, myrrh, and other spices from Yemen; gum from Zufar; and pearls from the coast of Bahrain.²²⁶ Mecca, which was conveniently located in the center of Hijaz, became the trade station for the caravans traveling north to Syria. Settled life was possible in this location after the discovery of the spring of Zamzam.²²⁷

The head of the tribe, called the **sheikh**, was unanimously elected by the tribe. The sheikh was the most highly respected member of the community, and usually one of the oldest. He represented the ideals of *muruwah*: bravery, honor, hospitality, strength in battle, concern for justice, and dedication to the collective good of the tribe. All decisions related to the interest of the tribe were made by the sheikh after consultation with other prominent members of the tribe, such as the *qa'id* (war

225. Aslan, *No god but God*, 29.

226. Mohammad A. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 21.

227. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 28–29.

leader), the *kahin* (cultic official), and the *hakam* (arbitrator). The sheikh's main responsibility was to protect those who could not protect themselves: the poor and the weak, the young and the elderly, orphans and widows.

Maintaining law and peace in the tribe was the responsibility of the sheikh, who enforced the traditional **law of retribution**. This law was based on the concept of "an eye for an eye." It was the responsibility of the sheikh to maintain peace and stability in his community by ensuring the proper retribution for all crimes committed within the tribe. In cases where negotiation was required, a *hakam* would make a legal decision.

Crimes committed against other tribes were not considered crimes. Stealing, killing, or injuring another person was not considered morally wrong. However, if someone from one tribe harmed a member of another, the injured tribe, if strong enough, could demand retribution. In such cases, it was the responsibility of the sheikh to ensure that other tribes understood that any act of aggression against his people would be equally avenged. At the same time, it was his responsibility to negotiate a settlement if members of his tribe committed a crime.

A **sedentary (*hadarah*) lifestyle** was possible in northern Arabia in areas where water was sufficiently available to establish and maintain agriculture. There were a few such places; **Ta'if and Yathrib** were among them. A sedentary lifestyle also became possible when a tribe accumulated sufficient wealth through other means.²²⁸ This was possible in the north at the border with Syria, where the tribe of Gassan settled on the border of the Byzantine Empire and became clients of the Byzantines, defending Byzantium against Persia. It became also possible when a tribe accumulated enough wealth through trade, as happened in Mecca when it became a trade station.

Several factors were behind the establishment of sedentary life in mountainous, arid Mecca. The first and most important one was the discovery of an underground water source, the miraculous spring of Zamzam. Mecca's location in the center of Hijaz made it a trade station for the caravans traveling north to Syria, especially with the availability of plenty of drinking water. It was not just water that attracted the travelers to stop at Mecca; the sanctity of Zamzam and the mythology behind the discovery of the spring was even more important for them. These elements that nature had provided to the Bedouins laid down the foundation for the transformation from a *badawah* to a sedentary society. However, the human element—the vision of the leaders of the Quraysh—was behind the transformation of Mecca into the capital city of Arabia.

228. Mohammed A. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press, 1999), 18.

The Quraysh: The Custodians of Ka'bah

The Jurhum tribe was the first to settle in Mecca. In time, other tribes came and settled there. The Jurhum, who were considered the “maternal uncles of Ismael,” became the custodians of Ka'bah. As such, the Jurhum were the leaders of Mecca. They continued to hold this position for a long time, but eventually they abused their status, which resulted in the loss of the honor of the custody of Ka'bah to another tribe, **Khusa'ah**. The Jurhum did not surrender willingly. As they left Mecca, they collected all the treasures of Ka'bah and buried them in the well of Zamzam, then leveled the well and removed all traces of its position.²²⁹

The Khusa'ah tribe held the custodianship of the Ka'bah and the leadership of Mecca for a long time until the **Quraysh** tribe, under the leadership of **Qusayy ibn Kila'b**, took over. Qusayy was the fifth grandfather of the prophet Muhammad bin Abdulla'h. An intelligent, honorable young man of Quraysh, Qusayy married the daughter of Khusa'ah's chief, **Hulayl ibn Hubshiyah**. Hulayl recognized the qualities of leadership in Qusayy and was very fond of him. On his deathbed, Hulayl made it known that Qusayy was his choice as custodian of the Ka'bah and ruler of Mecca.

Upon settling disputes with other contestants, Qusayy asked all the clans of Quraysh to join him in his effort to organize the city. He earned the support and respect of all the clans of his tribe. He built a big hall next to the Ka'bah to serve as a meeting place for the Quraysh and called it **Dar al-Nadwah**. In this building, he gathered representatives of all clans for consultations. He also established the tradition of **Rifadah**, where he offered the pilgrims food when they arrived in the city. He gathered the Quraysh notables and set the rules of Rifadah: “The pilgrims, when they visit God's house, are God's guests. You must be hospitable to them. Let us then provide them with food and drinks in the days of pilgrimage until they have left our city to return to their homes and families.”

Qusayy was succeeded by a number of leaders among his offspring who continued the same traditions of looking after the tribe and taking care of pilgrims. **Hashim**, Qusayy's grandson, put hospitality to pilgrims on an unprecedented level. He provided all the funds needed for Rifadah from his own wealth, which came from trade. He was interested in offering his commercial expertise to all members of his tribe so that he could enhance the wealth of the entire community. He started **biannual commercial trips**: in the summer, a large commercial caravan went from Mecca to Syria, and a similar one went to Yemen in winter. Each caravan was a joint enterprise in which all Meccan people shared. It brought profit to the people and prosperity to the city.²³⁰

One of the most prominent successors of Hashim was his son Abd al-Muttalib, who continued the tradition of Rifadah. However, he faced the problem of a shortage

229. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 8.

230. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 11.

of water in Mecca. There were only few scattered wells, which hardly were sufficient for the need of its population. In his sleep he had a dream, where a voice was telling him to “dig the good one.” This dream was repeated for several nights. In his dream, Abd al-Muttalib asked the voice: What is the good, blessed one? For the first several nights, he did not get an answer. At last, one night he had the answer from the voice: “Dig Zamzam.” The following morning he started digging between al-Safa and al-Marwah. He continued to dig for three days before his shovel hit something metallic. When he removed the sand around the metallic object, he discovered two gold deer and other valuables including a large quantity of shields and swords. He recognized that these were the objects buried in Zamzam by the Jurhum when they had left Mecca. He continued digging, and soon he found the well. He shouted: “God is supreme. This is indeed Ismael’s well. This is Zamzam, the drinking water of pilgrims.” Abd al-Muttalib and his offspring dedicated the well for the benefit of the pilgrims and continued to provide them their needs of water.²³¹

Mecca, the Consecrated City, Becomes the Economic Center of Arabia

During the second half of the sixth century CE, Mecca became the most prosperous city in Arabia. The advancement of the city is attributed to the vision and wisdom of its leaders. The policies they established in governing the city, and the measures they adopted in dealing with the other tribes, enabled them to make Mecca the capital of Arabia. The first step in this direction was taken by Qusayy, who laid down the foundation of the institutions of government. The system of government which was established by Qusayy was based on a balanced distribution of responsibilities and functions. He adopted a policy of involving the heads of all clans in decision making. Dar al-Nadwah was the place where the representatives of all clans met to discuss all matters that concerned the community. It was a government by consensus. By the standards of the time, this was quite an advanced system of government, and it helped Mecca to undergo a significant transition from a semi-Bedouin town to a civilized city.²³²

The Quraysh established the **Haram**, a zone with a twenty-mile radius with the Ka’bah at its center, where all violence and hostilities were forbidden. The Ka’bah transformed the entire surrounding area into sacred ground, where fighting among tribes was prohibited and weapons were not allowed. The Quraysh made special agreements with Bedouin tribes, who promised not to attack the caravans during the season of the trade fairs; in return, these Bedouin confederates were compensated for the loss of income by being permitted to act as guides and protectors of

231. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 11–15.

232. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 50.

the merchants. The pilgrims who traveled to Mecca during the pilgrimage season enjoyed the peace and the security of the sacred ground.²³³

The Quraysh leaders were aware of the great value of Ka'bah as a spiritual center. They realized that combining trade and religion would advance the economy of their city. Guided by this principle, they reconstructed the architecture of the sanctuary so that it became a spiritual center for all Arab tribes. They collected the totems of the tribes and installed them in the Haram so that the tribesmen could only worship their patronal deities when they visited Mecca. Unlike the other sanctuaries in Arabia, the Ka'bah was unique, as it became a universal shrine. Every god in pre-Islamic Arabia resided there, which led to a deep spiritual attachment not only to the sanctuary, but also to the city of Mecca. The Quraysh created a lucrative trading zone in the city where pilgrims brought merchandise with them to trade. By linking the religious and economic life of the city, Qusayy and his descendants developed an innovative religio-economic system that relied on the control of Ka'bah.

During the pilgrimage season, Mecca hosted pilgrims, merchants, and commercial caravans. All caravans passing by the city encamped on the outskirts of the Meccan valley, where their loads were assessed by Mecca's officials, who then collected a modest fee (tax) on all commerce that took place in the valley. The caravan workers would then enter the city. They cleaned themselves at the well of Zamzam, then introduced themselves to the "Lord of the House" before starting the circumambulation rituals around the Ka'bah.²³⁴

Mecca during the sixth century was not just a trade station for the caravans traveling north, but was the financial center of Arabia. The two annual commercial trips to Syria in the summer and to Yemen in winter brought wealth to the community. All clans participated in these trips, whose caravans comprised several hundred camel loads of goods. Meccan merchants also traveled to many parts of Africa and Asia.

Side by side with the emergence of long-distance international trade, intertribal trade within Arabia began to emerge around the **seasonal *suqs* (marketplaces)**. The *suqs* established regular organized links between the sedentary communities of the peninsula. They also set the foundation for the rules of the secure zone around Mecca. The most important one was the prohibition on fighting and raiding for four months of the year (the ***ashhur haram*, or "forbidden months"**) which happened to be the months during which all of the *suqs* of Hijaz and more than half of the *suqs* in the peninsula were held.²³⁵ Bedouin tribes began to exchange goods with one another. Merchants brought their merchandise to the series of regular markets that were held each year in different parts of Arabia; they were arranged so that traders circled the peninsula in a clockwise direction. The first *suc* of the year was held in

233. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 31.

234. Aslan, *No god but God*, 22–27.

235. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam*, 29–32.

Bahrain; they were then held successively in Oman, Hadramat, and Yemen, and the cycle concluded with five consecutive *suqs* in and around Mecca. The last *suq* of the year was held in Ukaz immediately before the month of the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).²³⁶

The Quraysh took all measures to preserve peace in the Haram zone, especially during the sacred months, to prevent any disruption of commercial activities. They were successful in achieving this goal most of the time, except during the al-Fijar war, which lasted for a period of four years in the late part of the sixth century CE. This was a series of battles that took place between the Quraysh and the Hawazin, in a response to a quarrel between two merchants in the vicinity of Ukaz during one of the four holy months. The man from Hawazin was murdered by a man from Quraysh. These battles became known as the *hurub al-Fijar* (sinful war). It is reported that Mecca was forced into a fight after having opted to withdraw, out of respect for the sacred month. The other tribe, the Hawazin, did not abide by the concept of no fighting during the holy months, so the war continued for four years.²³⁷

Shortly after the end of the al-Fijar war, a visiting Yemeni merchant from **Zubayd** agreed to sell some of his goods to a prominent Meccan merchant, **al-A's ibn Wa'il**, who bought them all but did not pay him. When the man realized that he was about to lose everything, he appealed to several clans of Quraysh to support him. They all declined to stand against al-A's ibn Wa'il. It became obvious that the law of retribution did not function when one party in a dispute was wealthy and so powerful. In his desperation, the Yemeni from Zubayd stood on top of a hill overlooking the Ka'bah at sunrise, when the men of Quraysh gathered around the Ka'bah. He made his appeal to them, stating his case in a passionate and desperate manner. He reminded them of their position as the custodians of the sacred house of worship. **Al-Zubayr ibn Abd al-Muttalib**, an uncle of Muhammad, stood up and said that injustice must not be allowed.

A meeting was organized in the house of **Abdullah ibn Jud'an**. Representatives of many clans of the Quraysh were present. The attendants gave their pledges, swearing by God that they would stand united, supporting anyone in Mecca who suffered any injustice, whether he was a Meccan or an alien. The alliance then forced Ibn Wa'il to return the goods to the man of Zubayd. The alliance became known as the **al-Fudul alliance**, and their agreement became known as the al-Fudul covenant. This covenant aimed at preserving commercial integrity and preventing the exclusion of Yemenites or merchants of other tribes from the Meccan market.²³⁸

The Quraysh managed to secure a monopoly over the north-south trade, so that they alone were allowed to service the foreign caravans. They also were able to

236. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 30.

237. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam*, 31.

238. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 9.

control intertribal trade. The *suqs* were arranged in a way that benefited Mecca the most. The seasonal rotation around the peninsula that ended in Mecca and stayed there for four months emphasized the position of Mecca as the financial center of Arabia. Its location in the center of Hijaz surrounded by vast desert gave Mecca relative isolation from the great powers of the region, Byzantium and Persia. Neither of them had any interest in the difficult terrain of Arabia, so the Quraysh could create a modern economy without imperial control. The separation from the great powers led to an independent economy that was immune to any decline of the economy of these empires. In the late part of the sixth century and the start of the seventh century, Persia and Byzantium were engaged in debilitating wars with one another, which weakened both. As Syria and Mesopotamia were the battleground of these wars, the trade routes in these regions were abandoned. Quraysh took advantage of the situation, which enabled them to control the intermediary trade between north and south. This period also witnessed the decline of Yemen and serious conflicts among several trading peninsular tribes. All these factors enhanced Mecca's position and contributed to the success of the Quraysh in their efforts to monopolize trade in Arabia.²³⁹

Mecca's innovative religio-economic system linking the religious and economic life of the city was behind the growth and wealth of Mecca. Its competitors realized this fact. This was why, in 570 BCE, the Abyssinian Christian ruler Abraha tried to destroy the Ka'bah after constructing his own pilgrimage center in Sana'h. Abraha targeted Mecca's sanctuary not because the Ka'bah was a religious threat, but because Mecca was an economic rival. (The attack failed, and soon thereafter, the Abyssinians were defeated by the Sassanians.)

Mecca enjoyed its position as the largest city in Arabia. However, the prestige brought with it corruption of the ideals on which it had been built. The Quraysh leaders became extremely wealthy; prominent merchants controlled most of the wealth. The rich were controlled by the rules of the market economy: ruthless competition, greed, and individual enterprise, and not the communal spirit and the tribal ethic. The affluent clans were engaged in fierce competition with one another for wealth and prestige. Instead of sharing their wealth with the other members of the community, they were hoarding their money and building private fortunes. Not only did they ignore the plight of the poor, but they exploited the rights of orphans and widows. The principles of *muruwah* seemed incompatible with market economy. Cruelty, unjust practices, and the deprivation of others' rights by force went unpunished. This inevitably led to tension and the destruction of the fabric of Meccan society.²⁴⁰

239. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam*, 31.

240. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 52.

The Great Powers Surrounding Arabia

In the sixth century CE, the Near East was divided between two great powers: the **Romans** in the west and the **Persians (Sassanids)** in the east. The Roman Empire was known as the Eastern Roman Empire or the **Byzantine Empire**. The western part of the Roman Empire had ceased to exist in the fifth century after it was overrun by barbarians. The Eastern Empire, with its capital Constantinople, survived and was able to expand in the sixth century. It included Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and southeastern Europe. It also controlled the Mediterranean islands and part of Italy. The Christian kingdom of Axum was a Byzantine client-state. Byzantium also controlled Arab tribes on the border of Palestine and Syria.

The **Persian (Sassanian) Empire** was known as Iran or Iranshahr. The Sassanids came to power in 224 CE and retained their dominance until the mid-seventh century. Their territory included modern-day Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, eastern Syria and Turkey, part of the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf. The Sassanians established several protectorates over Arab tribes on the East Arabian coast and in Oman.

The two empires were engaged in many wars between the fourth and sixth centuries in an effort to protect or expand their territories. Both empires were interested in controlling the key zones of Mesopotamia and Armenia and establishing alliances with lesser states in the region. Both empires were interested in financial and economic gains from profitable trade with the Orient. Different products were brought from the East to the Mediterranean basin: southern Arabian incense, Chinese silk, Indian pepper and cotton, spices, and other products from the Indian Ocean region. Arabia occupied a strategic position in the Orient trade, which led both powers to intervene in its affairs.

In the third and fourth centuries, the Byzantine emperors declared themselves champions of Christianity. In the sixth century, the majority of the Near Eastern population were Christians, but they were divided into several sects. The official church of the Byzantine Empire was the Greek Orthodox Church. Christians following the teachings of Bishop Nestorius (Nestorianism) were forced to leave the Byzantine Empire after Nestorius was deposed for heresy by the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE (see page XX) and took refuge in the Sassanian Empire. Another Christian sect, the Monophysites, were declared heretics by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. Monophysitism was the creed of most Christians of Axum, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Iran. The Sassanian kings, for their part, embraced Zoroastrianism as their official religion. The majority of the population of Iran and southern Mesopotamia were Zoroastrians. Although both the Byzantine and the Sassanian empires embraced the official religions of their countries, large populations of Jews were scattered throughout the Near East in major cities such as Alexandria, Jerusalem, Tiberias, Antioch, Hamadan, Rayy, Susa, Constantinople,

and Ctesiphon. Communities of all three revealed scriptural religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism—were also found in Arabia.²⁴¹

The Abyssinians were the third major empire bordering Arabia. This empire, which was established around 400 BCE, embraced Christianity in the third century CE. The Abyssinians controlled the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea coast, and occasionally western Arabia. They also controlled Yemen between 521 and 570 CE.

Muhammad, the Global Influencer

The prophet Muhammad (570–632 CD) is named by Michael H. Hart as the world's most significant person due to his enormous influence on both the secular and religious levels during his lifetime.²⁴² Muhammad was born in Mecca and orphaned at age six, and he grew up illiterate in modest circumstances. When he was forty years old, Muhammad realized that Allah, the One True God, had chosen him to spread the true faith. As his adherents grew, the Meccan authorities began to view him as a threat, and in 613 he was forced to flee to the city of Medina (previously called Yathrib, some three hundred kilometers north of Mecca). In Medina, he gained many followers and considerable political power; a number of battles between Mecca and Medina followed, culminating in Muhammad's victorious return to Mecca in 630. He then spent the last two years of his life converting the Arab tribes to Islam and consolidating power across southern Arabia.

Following Muhammad's death in 632, under the leadership of Muhammad's close friends and successors Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab, the unified Arab armies conquered all of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. By 642, Egypt and Persia had fallen under Muslim control; by 711 Arab armies had taken all of North Africa as well as Spain. They pressed further north, but were finally defeated in the Battle of Tours (France) in 732.

All the lands they conquered converted to Islam, and although some places, like Spain, later reverted to Christianity, most of the territory remained under Arab control. Islam continued to spread, especially eastward, becoming a significant force in India, Central Asia, and Africa.

Hart points to a few reasons why Muhammad's influence was greater than that of Jesus, even though Christianity is a more prevalent religion globally. First, Muhammad established the theology and religious practices of Islam himself, and took the lead in proselytizing. Furthermore, the holy scripture of Islam, the Quran,

241. Fred M. Donner, "Muhammad and the Caliphate," chapter 1 of the *Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1–5.

242. Michael H. Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 1992), 3.

consists of the word of God as revealed to the Prophet himself, transcribed faithfully and compiled shortly after his death. In Christianity, however, it was Paul, not Jesus, who was responsible for developing the theology of Christianity and was its main proselytizer; the Christian Bible is derived from a mix of sources, and contains no firsthand account of Jesus's teachings. Finally, Muhammad was the driving force behind the Arab conquests of the seventh century, which brought a lasting unity of religion and culture to all the Arab lands, making him one of the greatest political leaders of all time. The Arab conquests continue to play a key role in human history to this day.²⁴³

It is important, however, to understand that the success of Islam was due to both the Messenger and the Message.

Muhammad Pre-Revelation

Muhammad was born in the last half of the sixth century CE, into the clan of Hashim, one of the most prominent clans of the Quraysh. (Muslim historians picked the year 570 CE as Muhammad's birth year in order to institute a firm Islamic chronology.) The clan of Hashim was the custodian of the Ka'bah, and had the privilege of providing the pilgrims with water. Muhammad's grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, was one of the most visionary rulers of Mecca and the most respected leader of the Quraysh. He had been the first merchant to organize his own independent trade caravans between Yemen and Syria.

Abdullah, Muhammad's father, married Aminah, the daughter of the chief of the clan of Zuhra. Muhammad was orphaned at a young age, and was brought up by his paternal grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, and then by his uncle Abu Talib, who became the chief of the Banu Hashim. For the rest of his life, Abu Talib took care of Muhammad, supporting the Prophet even in the face of the strong opposition from the Quraysh, until he died. Abu Talib was greatly respected in Mecca, even though his business was failing, and he protected Muhammad from falling into debt and slavery—the fate of most orphans in Mecca.²⁴⁴ Abu Talib provided Muhammad a home and the opportunity to work for his caravan. Hamzah, the youngest of Abd al-Muttalib's sons, instructed Muhammad in martial arts, making him a skilled archer and competent swordsman. Muhammad's uncle Abbas, a banker, was able to get him a job managing the caravans traveling north to Syria.

The young Muhammad was well-liked in Mecca. He was handsome, with a compact, solid body of average height. His hair and beard were thick and curly, and he had strikingly luminous expression and a smile of

243. Hart, *The 100*, 3–10.

244. Aslan, *No god but God*, 22.

enormous charm. He was decisive and wholehearted in everything he did . . . When he did turn to speak to somebody, he used to swing his entire body around and address him full face. When he shook hands, he was never the first to withdraw his own. He inspired such confidence that he was known as al-Amin, the Reliable One. But his orphaned status constantly held him back.²⁴⁵

Muhammad was talented and proved himself as skillful merchant who knew how to strike a deal. He was well known in the community for his honesty and morality, which earned him high respect in Meccan society. The turning point in his life was working as an agent for a rich widow, **Khadijah bint Khuwaylid**. His outstanding performance in his trading activity in the local markets and bazaars prompted her to hire him to lead one of her caravans to Syria. His first trip was a great success; he was able to make twice as much as she had hoped.

Khadijah, being a wealthy widow, received several marriage proposals. She realized, however, that her money was motivating these proposals. So she declined all the proposals that she received. She was a woman of great intelligence and strong character. Her business relationship with Muhammad made her recognize that money was not the greatest priority for him. She considered the idea of marrying Muhammad after she consulted her uncle Waraqa ibn Nawfal (one of the original four *hanafi* who later converted to Christianity), who recognized that Muhammad was destined to have great future.

Khadijah approached Muhammad indirectly, through a close friend, to establish whether he would be willing to marry her.²⁴⁶ This conversation was followed by a direct communication between Khadijah and Muhammad, which ended in the formal marriage ceremony. Although polygamy was common in Arabia, Muhammad did not take a second wife while Khadijah was alive. Their happy union lasted for twenty-five years and resulted in six offspring. First was a boy named al-Qasim, followed by four daughters: Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum, and Fatimah. Abdullah was the last child. Al-Qasim lived only few years, while Abdullah died in infancy. The first three daughters died in Muhammad's life, in Madina, while Fatimah survived him and died six months after his death. Muhammad also adopted his uncle Abu Talib's son Ali.

Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah elevated his status in the Meccan society. He was extremely successful in managing his wife's business and enhancing her wealth. He became well known as an affluent merchant, respected for his fair and ethical conduct. Despite his great success in business and his improved social status, he did not become part of the ruling elite of Mecca. But Muhammad was distressed over the serious changes in the Meccan society as a result of the market economy and Mecca's

245. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 37.

246. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 44.

religio-economic system. He realized that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few ruling families had not only altered the social and economic landscape of Mecca, but also destroyed the tribal ideals of social egalitarianism. He was troubled by the absence of any concern for the poor and marginalized, and the disappearance of the tribal ethic that held that the tribe was only as strong as its weakest members. He saw the Meccan society was stratified: at the top were the leaders of the ruling families of the Quraysh, and at the bottom were those with no protection such as orphans and widows. He was less interested in accumulating more wealth than in finding solutions.

Muhammad was able to diagnose the serious ills of the Meccan society. He was aware of the restlessness among the younger generation. The ruling elites had introduced class distinctions that were alien to the ideals of the *muruwah* (tribal honor system). The wealthier families lived beside the Ka'bah, while the less prosperous inhabited the suburbs and the mountainous region outside the city. Muhammad was convinced that the Quraysh had retained only the worst aspects of *muruwah*: recklessness, arrogance, and egotism that were morally destructive and could bring the city down. He was convinced that social reforms were overdue.²⁴⁷

Muhammad was concerned about the religious situation in Mecca as well. He had had an early religious exposure to Hanifism when he was very young, and his trips to Syria put him in contact with Christian Arabs. Through his exposure to Hanifism, Judaism, and Christianity, he had been able to learn more about the concept of monotheism. Muhammad's concern for Mecca's troubles and problems made him seek solitude. He found a cave (called **Hira**) on one of the rocky hills outside Mecca. He began staying for several nights at a time in this cave, praying and meditating. During these solitary vigils he had strange experiences that eventually led to his revelation.

The Revelation of Muhammad

Muslims believe that the Revelation came upon the Prophet Muhammed one night in 610 CE, in the cave of Hira. As Muhammad was sitting alone, meditating, he experienced the most astonishing attack. Suddenly an invisible presence embraced him, crushing his chest. He struggled to free himself, but he could not move. The pressure in his chest increased until he could no longer breathe. As he surrendered his final breath, light filled the cave and a terrifying voice came loud and clear: "**Recite!**" Muhammad responded: "What shall I recite?" The invisible presence tightened its embrace and said, "Recite!" Muhammad asked again, "What shall I recite?" Once more the presence tightened its grip and once more repeated the command: "Recite!" Finally, as the pressure in his chest stopped, he felt these words enter his heart:

²⁴⁷. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 39.

Read: In the name of your Lord who created.

Created man from a clot.

Read: And your Lord is the Most Generous.

He who taught by the pen.

Taught man what he never knew.

(Chapter 30, Surah 96: 1–5, Clot “Al-’alaq”)

This was a terrifying experience for Muhammad. He managed to make his way back home, frightened and trembling. As he arrived home, he asked Khadijah to wrap him up; she threw a cloak over him and held him tightly in her arms until the trembling stopped. When he calmed down, he explained to her what happened to him, then said: “Khadijah, I think that I have gone mad.” Khadijah replied: “This cannot be, my dear. God would not treat you thus, since He knows your truthfulness, your great trustworthiness, your fine character, and your kindness.” Khadijah then went to her cousin, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who as a Christian was familiar with the scriptures. He recognized what Muhammad was experiencing. He assured her, saying, “He is a Prophet of this people; bid him be of good heart.”

The terrifying experience Muhammad had in the cave of Hira kept him in a state of confusion. An urgent issue occupied his mind and consciousness: What does this experience mean and what is next? Waraqa assured him that God was sending him a message, and that he was now God’s messenger. Over the following days he was waiting for answers and expecting another revelation. During this period of silence, he was very anxious and started doubting himself. Finally, when he was at his lowest, a second verse was sent down from heaven in the same violent manner. The new message was assured and affirmed that he was the messenger of God. Muhammad responded to God’s command, and began his mission.

The Initial Call to Islam (the Secret Call)

The initial call to Islam was a secret call targeting selected members of the community. This period lasted for approximately three years. Prophet Muhammad initiated his sacred, secret mission right from home and then moved to the people closely associated with him. Khadijah was the first to accept the new religion. His cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, who had been living with him since his early childhood; Zayd ibn Harith, his adopted son; and his intimate friend, Attiq ibn Uthman (known by his *kunya*, Abu Bakr As-Saddiq), accepted Islam next.

Abu Bakr was a well-respected merchant whose house was frequently visited by many people seeking his friendship and knowledge. He invited those whom he trusted to convert to Islam, which a good number of his friends and acquaintances did. Abu Bakr introduced to Muhammad a group of five men who became the

main prominent leaders of the young Islamic state during Muhammad's life and the years after.

The Muslims who accepted Islam during the first three years fall into three groups. The first group was composed of young men under thirty, from the most influential families of the most influential clans. This group was closely related to the men who actually held power in Mecca—those who became Muhammad's strongest opponents. The second group was composed of young men, again under thirty, from less prominent families and clans. This group was not greatly different from the first, and the members of this group still had strong influence among their clans and families. Some members of this group were Arabs from outside of Mecca, attached to clans as "confederates." The men in the first two groups came from the stratum of society immediately below the topmost stratum, and they felt the same discontent with Meccan society as Muhammad did. The third group was composed of a number of men who were outside the clan system, including foreigners of Byzantine or Abyssinian origin who might originally have come to Mecca as slaves. Usually these men were nominally under clan protection, but the clan was either unwilling or unable to protect them. Hence the early Muslims came from different clans and different social classes; many of them were women.²⁴⁸

The early Muslims enjoyed equality and a brotherhood which was above blood relationships. They formed the nucleus of the community of believers which was soon to create the most noble society humanity had ever known in its long history. Their headquarters was **the house of al-Arqam**, the first Islamic school where the followers of the new religion received their instructions directly from the Prophet.

The Earliest Message of the Qur'an

The main theme of the early verses of the Quran is the goodness and power of God. He is the creator of humans. He is behind all forces of nature and all that exists around humans. He is the provider of everything humans need for sustenance and survival. He is **ar-Rahman**, "the most merciful," and **al-Akram**, "the most generous."

Monotheism is very clear in the early verses of the Quran; however, there is no harsh attack or criticism of paganism. The main objective was revealing to the Meccans what kind of god Allah was: the Creator, the Merciful, the Compassionate. It went further, reminding the Quraysh that Allah was the lord of the Ka'bah.

The second theme of the revelation that dominated the early verses was a social one.²⁴⁹ The call for social and economic justice was accompanied by a warning: The Day of Judgment, when humans return to God for punishment or reward, would come.

248. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 36–37.

249. Aslan, *No god but God*, 40.

Have you considered him who denies religion?
 It is he who mistreats the orphan.
 And does not encourage the feeding of the poor.
 So woe to those who pray.
 Those who are heedless of their prayer.
 Those who put on the appearance.
 And withhold the assistance.

(Chapter 30, Surah 107: 1–7, Common Kindness Al-Maoun)

For three years, Muhammad kept a low profile, preaching to only selected groups of people. Three years after the revelation had begun, Allah instructed him to deliver the message to the Hashim clan. He reached out to members of the tribe on different occasions, but failed to convince them to accept Islam. He only succeeded in getting a pledge of protection from his uncle, Abu Talib.

The Public Call

After the Prophet became sure of Abu Talib's commitment to his support and protection, he expanded his preaching mission to include the entire Meccan community. He preached the oneness of God, and criticized the belief in and worthlessness of their idols. Not a single voice was raised in praise after he spoke.

Muhammad's public message was a significant event in the history of Islam. It was the beginning of social reform in Arab society. The call for monotheism did not mean just the substitution of one god for the collection of all the idols housed in the Ka'bah, but also meant a complete change in the social, cultural, and political life of Meccan society.²⁵⁰

Muhammad was persistent in his efforts to deliver his message to the Quraysh. He spoke to Meccans whenever he passed by a gathering of the idolaters. Then he began worshipping Allah before their eyes in the Ka'bah, and reciting the verses of the Quran aloud. Few of the Meccans responded to his call and accepted Islam.

Initially, the chiefs of Mecca did not take any action against Muhammad's preaching activities. However, as the Prophet increased his attacks against their pagan faith, they began to think that the matter was too serious to be ignored. Abu Talib, who continued to follow the religion of his people, calmed them down; however, he did not promise them much. The Quraysh knew that Muhammad intended to spread his message among the pilgrims who flocked to the Ka'bah from all over Arabia. So they set out to formulate a plan for how to warn the arriving pilgrims against Muhammad's preaching activities. They decided on a strategy aimed at preempting

250. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 87–88.

Muhammad's preaching by circulating fierce propaganda accusing him of being a sorcerer, and sometimes describing him as a madman.

Muhammad was extremely active during the pilgrimage season, moving from one camp to the other, eloquently delivering his message. Although he did not gain many followers, as most pilgrims pledged their support to the chiefs of the Quraysh, he managed to create a stir in the whole area. Those people who listened to Muhammad carried the news to their tribes when they went back. Thus the Quraysh's plan failed, and unintentionally allowed all of Arabia to learn about the new religion.

The Government of Mecca

In 569 CE, when Muhammad was born, Mecca was a tiny city-state governed by a city council composed of ten members representing the ten tribes of the city. These members were the chiefs of the tribes. Each chief was selected by the elders of the tribe for life, and upon his death a new chief was selected in the same manner. Each member of the city council was responsible for specific function. Upon the death of that member, his responsibility was inherited by the new appointee. For example, the Banu Hashim were responsible for providing water to the pilgrims and were the custodians of the well of Zamzam. Below is a list of the different municipal functions for which the ten tribes of Mecca were responsible, along with the names of Muhammad's supporters whose tribes were responsible for those functions:

1. Drinking water for pilgrims (Muhammad's family)
2. Banner in an independent war (Abu Sufyan's family)
3. Tax to aid pilgrims
4. Flag during a war along with allies, and house of parliament (Mus'ab ibn Umair's family)
5. Senate
6. Justice in case of tort (Abu Bakr's family)
7. Cavalry during war (Khalid ibn al-Walid's family)
8. Foreign relations (Umar ibn al Khattab's family)
9. Deciding choice by holy arrows
10. Justice of penal cases, and guardianship of offerings the temple of the Ka'bah²⁵¹

Before Islam, the Prophet had participated in the life of his community as a respectful and loyal citizen of Mecca. But when Islam began, the situation changed: he and his slowly increasing number of followers managed their own affairs, religious and

²⁵¹ Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State and His Succession* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2007), 20–22.

non-religious. The Muslims referred to the Prophet and not to the municipal council for any of their concerns or affairs; their situation was a “State in a State.”

The Shahada

It was perhaps at this time that new converts were required to utter the declaration of their faith recited by all Muslims today: the **Shahadah**. It goes as follows:

Bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his Messenger.

The Shahada was a challenge to the Quraysh. Monotheism was nothing new; it was espoused by the Jews and Christians, as well as the *hanifs*. But Muhammad’s message was different: Muslims must not only refuse to venerate the idols, but must also ensure that nothing should distract them from their commitment to God alone. Wealth, tribe, family, material properties, and even such noble ideas as patriotism must take second place. Muhammad was declaring to Mecca that the God of heaven and earth required no intermediaries whatsoever, but could be reached by anyone. Thus the idols housed in the sanctuary, and the sanctuary itself, insofar as it was a repository for gods, were utterly useless. And if the Ka’bah was useless, then there was no more reason for Mecca’s supremacy as either the religious or the economic center of Arabia. Believing in Allah the creator required human beings to imitate Him in all their dealings; instead of despising and oppressing vulnerable people, they should behave like Allah and spread over them the wings of tenderness.²⁵²

God condemned the behavior of the Quraysh’s elders, who were snobbish and arrogant. They imagined that they were superior to the poor and the humbler people of Mecca, whom they considered second-class citizens. Instead of realizing their dependence on God, they regarded themselves as self-reliant, and refused to bow to Allah. They were bursting with self-importance, addressing others in an offensive manner, and flying into a violent rage if others disagreed with them. They were convinced that their way of life was ideal. Their hearts were veiled, rusted over, sealed, and locked.²⁵³

The Ethics of Islam

God urges Muslims to behave with *hilm*, a traditional Arab virtue. Men and women of *hilm* are forbearing, patient, and merciful. They can control their anger and remain calm in the most difficult circumstances instead of exploding with rage. They are slow to retaliate, they do not hit back when they suffer injury, but leave revenge

252. Aslan, *No god but God*, 43–45; Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 73–75.

253. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 78–79.

to God. *Hilm* inspires positive action: to look after the weak and disadvantaged, liberate their slaves, counsel each other to patience and compassion, and feed the destitute, even when one is hungry oneself. Muslims must always behave with consummate gentleness and courtesy.²⁵⁴ They are to respect their parents and the sacrifices they made, taking care of them in their old age.

Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and that you be good to your parents. If either of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, nor scold them, but say to them kind words.

And lower to them the wing of humility, out of mercy, and say, "My Lord, have mercy on them, as they raised me when I was a child."

(Chapter 15, Surah 17: 23–24, the Night Journey)

The servants of the Merciful are those who walk the earth in humility, and when the arrogant address them, they say, "Peace."

And those who, when they spend, are neither wasteful nor stingy, but choose a middle course between that.

And those who do not implore besides Allah any other god, and do not kill the soul which Allah has made sacred—except in pursuit of justice—and do not commit adultery. Whoever does that will face penalties.

And those who do not bear false witness; and when they come across indecencies, they pass by with dignity.

(Chapter 19, Surah 25: 63, 67–68, 72, the Differentiation)

All efforts to dissuade the Prophet from preaching his message failed; as a result, the Meccans began a campaign of terror and persecution against Muslims. As the Prophet continued preaching his message, and attacking the beliefs and gods of the Quraysh, Mecca's elders were determined to fight Muhammad and his new religion fiercely.

As Muhammad continued his active campaign of spreading the message of Islam, the Meccan establishment intensified their campaign of terror against the followers of the new religion. As mentioned earlier, the early Muslims were drawn from all clans; among them were the poor, the slaves, and the deprived, as well as open-minded and liberal-thinking individuals from the powerful classes. Some of the early Muslims escaped physical persecution, as they were protected by their clans. However they were subjected to taunts and ridicule. Those who belonged to the lower class were even subjected to physical harm.

254. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 80.

As persecution intensified, Muhammad considered the option of migration of the most vulnerable Muslims to Abyssinia. The Christian king of Abyssinia was known to be fair. A group of twelve men and four women left Mecca for Ethiopia in the fifth year of the Prophet. They slipped out of Mecca under the heavy curtain of a dark night and headed for the sea, where two boats happened to be sailing to Abyssinia.

The Conversion of Hamza and Umar

The gradual conversion of distinguished Meccan members, like Muhammad's uncle Hamza and the Quraysh leader Umar, who were men of high position and prestige, enhanced the Prophet's position. The conversion of Umar was a real triumph for the cause of Islam. So great and instant was the effect of his conversion on the situation that the believers who had until then worshipped Allah within their four walls in secret now assembled and performed their rites of worship openly in the Holy Sanctuary itself. This raised their spirits; at the same time it created anxiety and uneasiness among the Quraysh. Islam's followers might be few in number, but they had strength of character and powerful new converts.²⁵⁵

The Quraysh Negotiate with Muhammad

The elders of the Quraysh developed a plan for restraining Muhammad that depended on temptation. A delegation headed by two men known for their diplomatic talent went to Muhammad, making him what they considered to be an attractive offer: "We will make you the wealthiest of us all, and we will give you the prettiest of our virgin daughters to marry. We will ask of you nothing in return except to stop abusing our gods and ridiculing our practices." They were not surprised when Muhammad rejected their offer. Deep down, the chiefs recognized the strength of the Prophet's character and the truthfulness of his message. They also realized that the social and economic structure of the Meccan society that had brought them all the privileges they enjoyed would not last forever, as resistance to Muhammad's message was not expected to continue.

As the Quraysh failed to achieve their goals through negotiations with Muhammad, they escalated their ruthless campaign of repression of the Muslims. Those who lacked influential support and protection suffered the most. Those who enjoyed protection were not immune, either: they were placed under enormous physical and mental pressure. The weak and vulnerable were subjected to intense torture aimed at forcing them to convert back to paganism. Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, described the torture methods utilized against the vulnerable Muslims: "They

255. Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008), 102–103.

used to beat their victims very badly, and allow them nothing to eat or drink, until they could not even sit up. They inflicted so much pain that the victim would give or say anything he was asked just to win a short rest.”²⁵⁶

Social and Economic Boycott (Seventh through Ninth Years of the Revelation)

The Meccan leaders realized that there could be no chance for an agreement with the Muslim community. At the same time they realized that their persecution measures had failed to hold back the growth of this community. They also had failed to persuade Abu Talib to abandon his nephew. So they held a meeting in which they formed a confederation and decided to impose a social and economic boycott against the Banu Hashim and the Banu Muttalib clans. They all took an oath not to have any business dealings with them nor any sort of intermarriage, social relations, visits, or even verbal contact until the Prophet was given up to them to be killed. This pact was put in writing in the form of a treaty that was attached to the wall of the Ka’bah. Everyone in the Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib clans was boycotted, whether they were believers or disbelievers, except for Abu Lahab.

In response to this treaty, Abu Talib withdrew to a valley on the eastern outskirts of Mecca. The Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib joined him. All the Hashimite clan, including the non-Muslims among them, along with Muslims of other tribes, suffered a great deal as a result of the boycott. The situation became very grave as month after month went by with no food supplies reaching the boycotted quarters. The Muslims and the Hashimites were starving. Occasionally there was some relief as kind-hearted people smuggled supplies under cover of darkness. The hardship continued for nearly three years. Finally, the members of the community recognized the inhumanity of the boycott and rescinded the treaty.

Thus the boycott ended after three years of excessive hardship, during which the Muslim community suffered greatly but became stronger. Despite the boycott, new recruits joined the Muslim community and proved to be strong and highly dedicated believers.

A Last Attempt at Negotiations

Shortly after the end of the boycott, Abu Talib became ill. The Quraysh leaders, realizing that the Muslim community had gained strength by having more influential members such as Hamzah and Umar, and others from all the Quraysh clans, made another attempt to negotiate with Muhammad. This interaction between the

²⁵⁶Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 161.

Prophet Muhammad and the leaders of the Quraysh has been reported in all biographies, including those of Ibn Hisham and Ibn Ishaq. It is not clear whether the Prophet elaborated and explained to them how the declaration of the Oneness of God would grant them the supremacy over Arabs and non-Arabs. Muhammad's message was that social justice was demanded by God the creator, who would have the final word on the Judgment Day. His message aimed at establishing justice in Arabia and beyond. He was the messenger for all humanity. He was confident that his message would prevail in Arabia. He was also confident that the Muslim community of Arabia would spread justice throughout the world and that the Arabs would lead a universal revolution aimed at justice for all.

The leaders of the Quraysh were concerned about the privileges that they had achieved by controlling the Ka'bah that hosted all the deities in Arabia, and the position of Mecca as the trade center of Arabia. Muhammad, who had the vision of changing the world by establishing justice for all, was confident that the Muslim community of Arabia would lead the world. He was inviting the Quraysh to be part of this vision.

The Deaths of Abu Talib and Khadijah (Tenth Year of Revelation)

Shortly after the meeting with the leaders of the Quraysh, Muhammad lost his uncle, Abu Talib, who had taken care of him since he was eight years old and treated him like his own son. Abu Talib was the protector who supported Muhammad against the Quraysh's leaders when he needed protection, and did not yield to the Quraysh's demands and pressure to desert his nephew. Now, after his death, those leaders started to abuse Muhammad and humiliate him publicly. Abu Lahab, the Prophet's own uncle, joined them in their stiff opposition and persecution. The majority of the Hashimites who had not joined Islam and continued with their pagan beliefs elected to withhold their support from Muhammad, which they had previously provided on grounds of tribal loyalty.

Within five weeks of Abu Talib's death, the Prophet suffered another great loss when his wife, Khadijah, died. She was a kind, loving wife who had comforted him throughout their life together. She was the first to believe in Islam when he received the message, and from that day forward she had been his main supporter.

The deaths of Abu Talib and Khadijah meant that Muhammad lost both internal and external support. The death of Abu Talib made him more vulnerable to the Quraysh's attacks. At the same time, the humiliation and harm he was receiving would have been more tolerable if Khadijah had been alive to comfort him. This situation prompted him to explore new sources of support. He thought that seeking protection outside Mecca would be the answer, so he traveled to Ta'if, a mountainous town about 110 kilometers to the north, asking for support and protection. The

Prophet approached the leaders of the Thaqif (Ta'if's tribe) calling on them to believe in God and to convert to Islam. For ten days he spoke to one chief after another. None gave him a word of encouragement or support; on the contrary, they expelled him from their town.²⁵⁷

Muhammad's failed trip to Ta'if taught him an important lesson: he must not venture outside Mecca until he could secure a good reception for his message that would guarantee his safety and the safety of his followers.

The Prophet's weak position affected other Muslims, especially the more vulnerable and unprotected. Even the wealthy were affected by the boycott, as it exhausted their assets and businesses. Abu Bakr, for example, lost most of his wealth, and his business declined to the point of being bankrupt. Abu Bakr's Taym clan was too weak to protect him. Hence Abu Bakr considered migrating to Abyssinia. **Ibn Dughunnah**, one of the Bedouin allies of the Quraysh, heard what happened to Abu Bakr and took him under his own protection.²⁵⁸

The Night Journey to Jerusalem (Eleventh Year of Revelation)

The losses of Abu Talib and Khadijah and the failure at Ta'if were devastating events. It is fair to say that this period was the most difficult time of Muhammad's life. He was very depressed, as he could no longer rely on his own clan, the Hashimites, for support. However, his firm belief that God was looking after him and would always protect him kept his head high and his morale strong. This belief reached its highest level when he had the most marvelous experience of his life. One night, as he was asleep in the home of his cousin, Umm Hani bint Abi Talib, in Mecca, the angel Gabriel came and woke him up and took him by the hand to the sanctuary, where he found an animal with two wings. Both Muhammad and Gabriel rode the animal, which was called **Al-Buraq** (a name derived from *barq*, meaning lightning). In no time, Al-Buraq flew them to Jerusalem in Palestine.

In Jerusalem, Muhammad met Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other noble prophets and led them all in prayer. Following this gathering, the Prophet ascended to heaven, where he met other prophets who preached the message of God's Oneness to mankind. In his journey he saw examples of the suffering of those who would be condemned to Hell. He was then allowed into paradise and saw examples of those who would be rewarded for their deeds with the pleasures of paradise. While he was in paradise, he was informed by God of the obligatory prayers he and his followers were expected to offer. Then the Prophet returned to his cousin's home in Mecca just before dawn. The whole journey lasted only part of the night.²⁵⁹

257. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 178–179.

258. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 78.

259. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 182–183.

The significance of this journey, whether physical or spiritual, had a great impact on the message of Islam. The Quran clearly states the aim and purpose of the journey. Muhammad had the chance to see some of God's signs and his real might at a point of his life when he was experiencing extreme difficulties. The night journey marked the end of any sense of despair resulting from such difficulties. From that point on Muhammad's life was free of any feelings of weakness, unaffected by adversity; he was quite certain, to the last day of his life, that he would be victorious as long as he and his followers were true believers.

Glory to Him who journeyed His servant by night, from the Sacred Mosque, to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We have blessed, in order to show him of Our wonders. He is the Listener, the Beholder.

(Chapter 15, Surah 17:1, the Night Journey)

The night journey has a great meaning: The fact that Muhammad led the other prophets in prayer signified the concept that the message of all the prophets is the same. It emphasized the continuity of these messages and affirmed the fact that the message of Islam is for mankind, not for Arabs alone.

The Quran emphasized this shared vision. God makes it clear that the faithful must believe in the revelation of every single one of God's messengers:

Say, "We [Muslims] believe in Allah, and in what was revealed to us; and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs; and in what was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit."

(Chapter 3, Surah 3:84, the Family of Imran)

The Quran is simply a confirmation of the previous scriptures, the Torah and the Gospel:

Those who have belief, and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians— whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and does what is right— they have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve.

(Chapter 6, Surah 5:69, the Feast)

For each of you We have assigned a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He could have made you a single nation, but He tests you through what He has given you. So compete in righteousness. To Allah is your return, all of you; then He will inform you of what you had disputed.

(Chapter 6, Surah 5:48, the Feast)

God was not the exclusive property of one tradition, but was the source of all human knowledge: “God is the light of the heaven and the earth.” The divine light could not be confined to any individual lamp, but was common to all, enshrined in every one of them:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and earth. The allegory of His light is that of a pillar on which is a lamp. The lamp is within a glass. The glass is like a brilliant planet, fueled by a blessed tree, an olive tree, neither eastern nor western. Its oil would almost illuminate, even if no fire has touched it. Light upon Light. Allah guides whomever He wills. Allah thus cites the parables for the people. Allah is cognizant of everything.
(Chapter 18, Surah 24:35, the Light)

A New Strategy: Moving to a New Community

During the **tenth year of his revelation**, Muhammad faced several events that influenced his thinking and prompted him to formulate new plans. The tenth year witnessed the death of Abu Talib and Khadijah. This significant loss created a serious situation for Muhammad and his followers. His attempt to find protection and support in Tai’f failed. His life was threatened as he lost the protection of the Banu Hashim (Hashimites), which forced him to seek protection from another clan in Mecca. In the Prophet’s mind this was a temporary measure and a transitional period until he was able to develop new strategy. He realized that he had reached a dead end in Mecca, and he must find an alternative city or tribe to achieve a breakthrough. This was the same thinking behind his trip to the city of Ta’if. However, Muhammad had learned a very important lesson from his experience with the Thaqif tribe: that he must ensure a good reception for his message before he ventured into a new location.

The pilgrimage season was the natural time for recruitment. In the past, Muhammad had succeeded in bringing several individuals to Islam during that time. The new plan was to recruit tribes and not just individuals. The pilgrims from the different tribes formed their own camps and remained together throughout their stay around Mecca. So he went to each camp, addressing the entire tribe. However, he also continued to approach individuals who enjoyed a position of respect among their people.

The First Aqabah Pledge (Twelfth Year of the Revelation)

During the pilgrimage season of the twelfth year of the revelation, the Prophet met a group of six men from the **Khazraj** tribe who came from **Yathrib (later Medina)**. They met at a place called **Aqabah**, at Mina, where pilgrims would encamp for three days. He outlined to them the principles of Islam and read them a passage from the

Quran. The beliefs he described are summarized in the following *surah* (112) from the Quran, Surah Al-Ikhlās (Sincerity):

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:
Say he is God, the one.
God, the Absolute.
He begets not, nor was He begotten.
And there is nothing comparable to Him.

He asked them to believe in God as the only deity to be worshipped. The six men accepted the Prophet's call and declared their belief in God and the message of Islam and asked for his help mediating hostilities between tribes.²⁶⁰

The six emissaries carried the Prophet's message to their own people, who received it positively. Those who adopted the new religion were hopeful that the Prophet and his message would be the catalyst that they needed in order to achieve peace, reconciliation, and unity in their city.²⁶¹

The Aws and Khazraj tribes of Yathrib were familiar with the concept of monotheism through their contact with the Jews. The idea of monotheism appealed to them; however, they had not converted to Judaism because of the arrogance of Jews who looked down at the non-Jewish tribes, stating that Judaism was the religion of the elite only. So it became clear to Muhammad that Yathrib was a fertile environment for the spread of Islam.

During the next pilgrimage season, in 621 CE, the original six were joined by another group of six men to meet Muhammad in the same place at Aqabah. At this meeting, the Prophet entered into a covenant with the twelve men—ten from the Khazraj tribe and two from the Aws tribe. The twelve men pledged “to worship no deity other than God, to commit neither theft, nor adultery, nor child-murder, to utter no monstrous falsehood of their own invention, and never to disobey the Prophet over anything which was just or reasonable.”²⁶²

The Prophet sent Mus'ab ibn Umayr to Yathrib with the new followers. His mission was to educate the new Muslims in their new faith and to teach them the Quran. He was to lead the Muslims in prayer and to call other people to adopt Islam. Mus'ab stayed with As'ad ibn Zurarah, a Khazraj with immediate relatives from the Aws. During the following months, Mus'ab gathered a lot of information about the people of Yathrib, and quickly learned how to deal with both tribes. He succeeded in gaining the trust and respect of the new followers of Islam, which allowed him to spread Muhammad's message rapidly. With his genial temperament, he was able to bring to

260. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 197–198.

261. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 198.

262. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 199.

the new faith several influential leaders of the city, among them the most prominent figures of the Abd al-Ashal clan, a branch of the Aws tribe. A prominent figure from the clan of Salamah accepted Islam as well.

Mus'ab returned to Mecca shortly before the next pilgrimage season to report to Muhammad the good news that members of all the clans and families of Yathrib had joined Islam. He provided the Prophet with valuable information about the composition of the city and the relationships among the different clans of both tribes. This information was highly valuable for Muhammad to determine whether Yathrib was a suitable place for the establishment of the first Islamic state. The Prophet recognized the problems that would need to be addressed if he decided to make Yathrib his new city. He had to deal with the non-Muslims in the city who might form a camp of resistance to Islam and figure out how to bring them gradually to his side. He also needed to prepare himself for all possible reactions from the Jewish population of the city. In addition, he recognized the urgency of developing an economic plan to provide for the Muslims who would immigrate from Mecca. Muhammad also realized another important issue to be addressed: how to deal with the Quraysh's reaction toward the new Muslim state in Yathrib.

As the Prophet listed the above issues, he reached the conclusion that Yathrib was suited to host the new state. The two tribes of Yathrib were considered the maternal uncles of the Prophet: his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, had been born to a woman from the clan of al-Najjar. The city was already embracing Islam; a good number of followers were coming to Mecca to meet with him. The city was also easily defensible, as it had natural fortifications: on both the eastern and western sides there were two extended areas of volcanic stones that were difficult to traverse on foot, horse, or camel. Only its northern side offered access to attackers; however, a small number of guard units would be sufficient to intercept a large army. The Aws and Khazraj tribes were known for their pride, integrity, bravery, and high standard of military excellence. When Muhammad analyzed all the available information, he became quite sure that Yathrib was where his followers should emigrate. Logically the first step would be to prepare a meeting with the new followers who had arrived in Mecca as pilgrims. This meeting was planned to take place at Aqabah on the last night of pilgrimage. As the Prophet made up his mind to move to Yathrib and establish a state for Muslims there, he confided his plans to his uncle al-Abbas, who was not yet a Muslim, and invited him to the meeting.

The Second Aqabah Pledge (Thirteenth Year of Revelation)

In 622 CE, the thirteenth year of the revelation, seventy-three men and two women from Yathrib quietly met with Muhammad in the middle of the night. Al-Abbas, Muhammad's uncle, addressed the Muslims who came from Yathrib:

You know how highly we rate Muhammad. We have protected him against our own people, with whom we share the same opinion of his call. He is indeed well protected within his own people and in his own city. Nevertheless, he is determined to join you. If you feel that you will indeed fulfill your pledges to him and will indeed protect him from his enemies, you are welcome to do as you please. Should you, however, feel that you may let him down, after having taken him away to your city, it would be better for everyone if you decide here and now to leave him alone, for he is well looked after in his hometown.²⁶³

The answer from the attendants was clear: “We have truly understood what you have said.” Then they turned to Muhammad and invited him to lay down his conditions.

The Prophet gave a brief address, starting with a passage from the Quran, followed by brief explanation of the message of Islam, and ending his speech with his conditions: **“You pledge to me that you will protect me as you protect your own womenfolk and your own children.”**

The pledge came from one of the leading figures of Yathrib, **Al-Bara ibn Ma'rur**: “By Him who has given you the message of the truth, we will defend you as we defend our women. Take up our pledges, for we are the children of war and the best people with arms.”

They all said, without hesitation: **“We are committed, come what may.”** Then, addressing the Prophet: **“What will our reward be if we honor our commitments?”** **The Prophet said: “Paradise.”** Then they all shook hands with the Prophet, concluding the deal.

Yathrib in the Seventh Century CE

Yathrib was situated in an oasis, about thirty square kilometers, surrounded by volcanic rocks and uncultivable stony land. Yathrib was different from Mecca: it was not a large city, but a series of hamlets and small villages, each occupied by a different clan. In the seventh century CE, it was a thriving agricultural oasis. The inhabitants of the oasis were a mixed population of Jewish tribes and pagan Arab tribes. A large Jewish community had lived in the city over several centuries. They were mostly Arabs who had been converted to Judaism in the first century CE by Jewish preachers who had arrived in Arabia from Palestine or Mesopotamia. They preserved a separate religious identity; in other ways, however, they were similar to other pagan

²⁶³.Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 206.

Arabs. There were about twenty Jewish tribes, and they did not live as a united Jewish community but acted as individual clans who formed allegiances with non-Jewish Arab clans. Over time, the Jewish settlers had cultivated the oasis and established a very prosperous community. The Jews occupied the most fertile agricultural lands and became wealthy as masters of Arabia's most valuable crop, dates. They were also skilled jewelers, clothiers, arms makers, and vintners (Jewish wine was considered the best in the peninsula). But Yathrib's dates were what made the Jews very rich. The Jewish tribes controlled the city's sole market, which allowed them to enjoy a total monopoly over the entire economy.²⁶⁴

The Jewish tribes lived in complete separation from each other; each tribe had its own quarters, which included an open agricultural section and another fortified one. The Jewish forts provided protected shelters for women and children in times of war. The forts were also used as barns for the storage of agricultural products, and as a safe storage place for weapons as well. Temples and schools were usually located in the forts.

During the sixth century CE, **the tribe of Bani Qayla had emigrated from South Arabia** (Yemen) and settled in Yathrib. There were several reasons for the emigration, including the conquest of Yemen by the Abyssinians and the major economic setback following the collapse of the Mar'ib dam. This tribe consisted of two clans, the **Aws** and the **Khazraj**, which evolved into two separate tribes over time. Although the Aws and Khazraj tribes arrived at the oasis many centuries after the settlement of the Arab tribes who adopted Judaism, they gradually acquired agricultural land and built their own fortresses, and by the early seventh century had become the dominant force in the oasis.²⁶⁵

The largest of the Jewish tribes were the Qurayzah, the al-Nadir, and the Qaynuqa. Relations between these tribes were not peaceful, and they often were at war with each other. Both the al-Nadir and the Qurayzah were allied with the Aws.²⁶⁶

The Aws clans settled in the more fertile southern and eastern areas of Yathrib, which were known as the upper part, while the Khazraj clans settled in the less fertile central and northern areas which were known as the lower part. The Aws and the Khazraj were engaged in almost continuous military conflicts and exhausting wars over the years, which weakened them both. The Jewish tribes played a major part in perpetuating the hostilities between the two Arab tribes in order to keep them in a state of exhaustion and weakness.²⁶⁷

The non-Jewish residents of Yathrib suffered from the Jewish control over their city's economy, especially when they needed to borrow money. The Jews insisted on

264. Aslan, *No god but God*, 54.

265. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 89–90.

266. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 226–227.

267. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 229–230.

secured loans where the borrowers were obliged to pledge their personal property as security for repayment of the loan, and sometimes the creditors forced the borrowers to pledge their women and children. Such transactions caused hatred between the mortgagees and the mortgagors. Most people in Madina detested the Jews for these practices and their usuriousness and profiteering.²⁶⁸

Yathrib was clearly completely different from Mecca: while Mecca had a single faith and a single community, Yathrib had different faiths, cultures, and communities who lived side by side. Mecca was a large, unified city, while in Yathrib there were multiple quarters separated from each other by significant fortifications and natural barriers. Economically, the two cities were completely different. Mecca's economy was dependent upon commerce. Although some of Yathrib's inhabitants engaged in trade, the majority were farmers, making a living from dates and other agricultural products. Unlike the Quraysh, Yathrib's tribes retained more of the old *badawah* values, for better and for worse. They continued to believe in *muruwah*, but at the same time were engaged in hostilities with other tribes outside their oasis or even among themselves. In short, life in Yathrib was much more complicated than in Mecca.

At the time of Muhammad's revelation, Mecca was an organized city-state that had some twenty-five public offices, including different departments such as the army, the revenue department, the Ka'bah, the foreign affairs department, and the department for the administration of justice. Mecca was neither a monarchy nor a republic. The city was governed by a council composed of ten members representing the ten principal tribes in town. The different functions of the municipality were decided among the ten tribes. The chief of each tribe was selected for life by the members of the tribe.

In contrast, Yathrib was in a state of anarchy where tribalism prevailed. The population was divided into numerous Arab tribes and clans and about twenty Jewish tribes. These tribes and clans had been engaged in hostilities among themselves over several generations. At the time of the second Aqaba Pledge, Yathrib's pilgrims were looking forward to having the Prophet move to their city in order to help them establish peace and order.²⁶⁹

Emigration to Madina (622 CE)

Shortly after the second Aqaba Pledge, Muhammad told the Muslims of Mecca that they were now welcome in Yathrib, and they could start emigrating to their Muslim city. Emigration took place gradually and in small numbers, with the people moving in the middle of the night. As soon as a Muslim arrived from Mecca, he immediately

268.S. Abul Hassan Ali Nadawi, *Muhammad Rasulallah*, trans. Mohiuddin Ahmad (Lucknow, India: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1979), 161–162.

269. Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State*, 45–46.

was settled with one of the Muslims of Yathrib. Although the immigration happened in secret, the Meccans soon realized what happened and became alarmed: a new Muslim community was now forming in another city protected by other tribes. Hence, the leaders of the Quraysh adopted a policy of preventing Muslims from leaving their city, and even began chasing them if they managed to escape in order to bring them back. However, the majority managed to escape and reached their final destination in Yathrib. The Prophet, who was awaiting God's instructions for when to leave Mecca, asked his friend Abu Bakr and his cousin Ali to stay behind with him.

The Quraysh leaders realized that if Muhammad escaped from Mecca to Yathrib—hence called Madina—he would become a great threat to their authority in Arabia. Therefore they met at Dar al-Nadwah to discuss this matter. After a lengthy debate, they settled on a plan to kill Muhammad in a manner that involved participation of every tribe to spread the blood libel. They decided to carry out their assassination plot the same night. While Muhammad had been under the protection of al-Mut'im ibn Adiy since his trip to Ta'if, that noble gentleman had died in August of 622 CE, just prior to the Quraysh's meeting at Dar al-Nadwah, leaving Muhammad with no protection.

The Prophet learned of their plan and executed his own counter-operation to escape. Shortly before midday, he went to Abu Bakr and asked him to prepare two camels for their departure. It was agreed that Muhammad would come to Abu Bakr's house at midnight, and the two of them would immediately start their journey to Yathrib. Ali was to sleep in the Prophet's bed so that the assassins watching Muhammad's house would imagine that the Prophet was in bed. Ali was given the responsibility of returning the deposits to those who had given them to Muhammad for safekeeping; many pagan Meccans had entrusted the Prophet with their valuables.

At midnight, as sleep overpowered the assassins, the Prophet left his house and went straight to Abu Bakr, and the two men started their journey. They headed south, opposite of the direction of Yathrib, and stayed in **the cave of Mount Thawr** for three days before they took off toward their final destination.

When the Quraysh leaders arrived at the Prophet's house in the morning, they realized that Muhammad had escaped. On forcing their way into the house, they were shocked to find out that the man lying in bed was Ali. Immediately, several groups of horsemen were dispatched to chase and capture Muhammad. By then Muhammad and Abu Bakr were safe in their cave south of Mecca. After three days, Muhammad and Abu Bakr resumed their journey to Yathrib, taking all necessary precautions to evade the Quraysh agents who were chasing them. Muhammad was aware that almost everyone in Arabia was watching for them and hoping to receive the Quraysh's reward if they captured him.

The Prophet's vision of the total victory of his mission never faded, even when he was being chased by the Quraysh and their spies. His goal from the start of his

mission had been to spread the message of Islam to all of Arabia and beyond. While he was evading his enemy, following a zigzag line close to the Red Sea coast, instead of the traditional route to Yathrib, he was still sure of complete victory.

After twelve days of travel across some five hundred kilometers, the Prophet and his companion Abu Bakr reached the village of **Quba** on the southern outskirts of Yathrib. The Prophet spent a few days in Quba, during which he laid down the foundations of the first mosque in Islam. Ali ibn Abu Talib, who had been left behind in Mecca to take care of what Muhammad had assigned to him, arrived in Quba and joined the Prophet and Abu Bakr in their march to Yathrib. When they arrived at the **valley of Ranuna**, a group of about 100 men fully dressed in battle attire joined them to escort the Prophet to Yathrib. The Prophet entered the city on **the twelfth day of the lunar month of Rab'i al-Awal** in the year that was to become the first in the Islamic calendar. This date has been calculated to correspond to **September 27, 622 CE**. As the Prophet made his way through the city, every clan invited him to be their guest. He did not want to offend anybody, so he asked them to let his camel go on her own. His camel continued to walk in the streets and alleys until she finally stopped at a courtyard belonging to two orphans, Sahl and Suhayl, who were under the guardianship of As'ad ibn Zurarah. The orphans offered their property as a gift, but the Prophet insisted on paying for the land, as he intended to build a mosque for the city and a house for himself and his family on this property. This land happened to be near the home of Abu Ayyub, who immediately took the Prophet's luggage into his home. Muhammad stayed at Abu Ayyub's house until the completion of the construction of the mosque and the house. From the moment the Prophet arrived in Yathrib, the city became known as **Madina al-Munawwarah, or the City of Light**.²⁷⁰

The first project that got the attention of the Prophet after he arrived in Madina was the building of a mosque. The building, completed with the help of the community and his own participation, was completed in April of 623 CE, about seven months after the emigration. On the northern wall, a stone marked the *qibla* (the direction of prayer), orienting the people toward Jerusalem, a tradition that Muhammad had initiated following his night journey to Jerusalem. The mosque was a square building about sixty-five meters long each way. Two rooms were built next to the mosque for the Prophet to use as a home.

Establishing the Umma

After accepting the protection of the people of Yathrib in the Second Aqabah, Muhammad established a new socioreligious community that united all people regardless of their previous tribal origin. Muhammad called this new community the

270. Meraj Muhiuddin, *Revelation: The Story of Muhammad* (Scottsdale, AZ: Whiteboard Press, 2015), 180–181.

Umma. By enacting a series of radical religious, social, and economic reforms, he was able to build a new society that had never been seen before in Arabia; it was completely different from the traditional tribal society. The only way to become a member of a tribe was to be born into it. To be a member of the Umma, you were required only to declare the Shahada (as previously noted, this is the profession of faith; the first and most important pillar of Islam): “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is God’s Messenger.” This meant that a theological statement became an oath of allegiance to the new society and its ideology. And because neither ethnicity nor culture nor race nor kinship mattered in Islam, the Umma had an almost unlimited capacity for growth through conversion.²⁷¹

As the leader of the Umma, Muhammad had the authority and power to implement all the necessary reforms to unite the Umma. He was interested in creating a society built on the principle of *hilm* (forbearance) and forgiveness. Such principles are essential for building a strong, cohesive community where all members are prepared to forgive each other and are ready to defend their community collectively. He was successful in strengthening the unity between the Emigrants and the Helpers, and between the Aws and the Khazraj—the major divisions in the Umma.

Although the Emigrants (**the Muhajirun**) were well received in Madina, they were not used to the type of life of their new city; they were mostly merchants, like the rest of the Quraysh, while the well-to-do Muslim inhabitants of Madina, the Ansar were mostly farmers. Such differences required a great deal of adjustment. To assist in this matter, the Prophet called for a general meeting of the Ansar and told them that each head of the family should take one Meccan family, on the condition that members of the two families would jointly work, jointly earn, and jointly share. Such an arrangement established a special bond of brotherhood. It was not just a spiritual bond; it evolved into something much stronger than any tribal or family relationship. The members of the two families became one family, sharing jobs, income, and even inheriting each other’s property to the exclusion of other blood relations.²⁷²

The Security of Madina’s Muslim Community

The next urgent issue that got the Prophet’s immediate attention was the security of the Muslim community in Madina. The Muslims of Mecca had been persecuted in their own city for many years, and were forced to escape to a safe territory under the protection of new tribes. After Muhammad arrived in Madina, the Quraysh kept sending messages to city officials, asking them to kill or to expel the Prophet from their city. It was very clear that the new Muslim community of Madina was facing the threat of annihilation by the Quraysh.

271. Aslan, *No god but God*, 54–58.

272. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 235–236; Hamidullah, *The Prophet’s Establishing a State*, 83–84.

In response to these threats, the Prophet invited the chiefs of all the tribes, Muslims and non-Muslims, and suggested that a city-state of a confederal type be constituted; one that guaranteed internal autonomy to each unit and at the same time would establish strong defensive measures for the protection of the city from external threats. The total number of Muslims in Madina at that time was a few hundred, while the total population was about ten thousand, half of them Jews.²⁷³ In spite of this, all parties agreed to the proposal. In consultation with the representatives of all tribes, a written constitution of state was prepared. This document, which became known as the Madina Constitution, is the first known constitution in world history. This document makes it apparent that the Jews agreed to be part of the city-state of Madina. The constitution guaranteed the Jews equal status to the other inhabitants of the city, with full autonomy in all affairs: political and religious, as well as judicial. The Jews enjoyed an independent juridical life, having their own court and being governed by their own laws. The constitution established security for all citizens of the city-state based on solidarity against foreigners: an enemy of one group was to be the enemy of each and all. Very soon afterwards, the Prophet persuaded the non-Muslim tribes who lived around Madina to enter into a military alliance with the state of Madina.²⁷⁴

The Madina Constitution

The Madina Constitution, which Prophet Muhammad issued in 622 CE, shortly after he arrived in Madina, was well preserved and passed down by several Muslim historians and biographers. This document was issued by Muhammad in the form of a letter addressed to all Muslims of the city, Emigrants and Helpers (Muhajirun and Ansar) alike:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

This is a document drawn up by Muhammad, the Prophet for the believers and Muslims from the Quraysh and Yathrib [Madina] and whoever joins them and takes part in their struggle for their cause: they are one nation, distinguished from all other people.

The document has been referred to as the **Kitab**: a chart of rights and duties. From a historical viewpoint, it declares the city of Madina a city-state and lays down the code for its administration.

This document contains fifty-two sections. The first twenty-three sections establish rules affecting the Meccan refugees (Muhajirun) and the Madinite helpers

²⁷³ Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State*, 45.

²⁷⁴ Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State*, 24–25.

(Ansar); the rest of the sections discuss the rights and obligations of the Jewish tribes of Madina. In both parts, the Prophet himself is considered the final court of appeal. The document commands that the idolaters and the followers of the Jewish faith should follow the Muslims and help them in war. In other words, these people were given the right of citizenship on condition of cutting off all connections with the Quraysh. The document also states that the Arab tribes of Madina had become sick of fratricidal and internecine fighting, and they were prepared to follow a life of peace, accepting the Prophet as the judge whose decisions would be final and binding to all parties.

The central authority of the city-state had exclusive rights with respect to the question of war and peace. Military service was made compulsory. All Muslims were required to be helping one another. The right to seek justice was transferred from individuals to the community. All Muslims were to give full cooperation in the matter of the punishment of anyone who committed a crime.

A summary of the main sections of the Madina Constitution is listed below:

- The believers and their dependents constitute a single community (Umma).
- Each clan or subdivision of the community is responsible for blood money and ransom on behalf of its members (arts. 2–11).
- The members of the community are to show complete solidarity against crime and not to support a criminal even when he is a near kinsman, where the crime is against another member of the community (arts. 13, 21).
- The members of the community are to show complete solidarity against the unbelievers in peace and war (arts. 14, 17, 19, 44), and also solidarity in the granting of ‘neighborly protection’ (art. 15).
- The Jews of various groups belong to the community, and are to retain their own religion; they and the Muslims are to render “help” (including military aid) to one another when it is needed (arts. 24–35, 37, 38, 46).²⁷⁵

This constitution clearly defined the position of the Jews and their relationship with the Muslim state. Jews were considered citizens of the new Muslim state; they enjoyed religious freedom and state protection. They were required to support the state against any enemy, and never to conspire against it.

The constitution was influenced by the pre-Islamic principles that dealt with crimes and offenses. It was a sacred duty for each member of the tribe to give help to another member, and if necessary, to avenge his death based on the principle of “an eye for eye, a tooth for tooth, and a life for a life.” Over time, the demand of an actual life

275. W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 4–6; Michael Lecker, *The Constitution of Medina* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2004), 32–39.

for a life was modified by the possibility of accepting blood money as an alternative. In Muhammad's time the blood money for an adult male was a hundred camels; for a woman, fifty.

The provisions of the constitution related to vengeance and retribution are amplified by the Quran:

And those who, when wronged, defend themselves. The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it. But whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward lies with Allah. He does not love the unjust.

As for those who retaliate after being wronged, there is no blame on them.

Blame lies on those who wrong people, and commit aggression in the land without right. These will have a painful punishment.

But whoever endures patiently and forgives—that is a sign of real resolve.

(Chapter 25, Surah 42:39–43, Consultation)

Although the Quran approved the law of retribution as a legitimate response to injury, Muhammad urged believers toward forgiveness. The Quran, through other verses, supported the Prophet's position.

Likewise, the constitution sanctioned retribution as the principal deterrent for crime, but with the stipulation that the entire community could do nothing except oppose the criminal, a clear indication that Muhammad was laying the foundation of a society built on moral rather than utilitarian principles. The constitution also equalized the blood money of all members of the community, so that one life could no longer be considered more or less valuable than another.²⁷⁶

Articles of Faith

The core beliefs and practices of Muhammad's faith are encompassed in the five pillars of Islam. These are summarized as follows:

1. **Profession of Faith (*shahada*)**. The belief that "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God" is central to Islam. This phrase, written in Arabic, is often prominently featured in architecture and a range of objects, including the Quran, Islam's holy book of divine revelation. One becomes a Muslim by reciting this phrase with conviction.
2. **Prayer (*salat*)**. Muslims pray facing Mecca five times a day: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and after dark. Prayer includes a recitation of the

276. Aslan, *No god but God*, 59.

opening chapter (*surah*) of the Quran, and is sometimes performed on a small rug or mat used expressly for this purpose. Muslims can pray individually at any location or together in a mosque. Men gather in the mosque for the noonday prayer on Friday; women are welcome but not obliged to participate. After the prayer, a sermon focuses on a passage from the Quran, followed by prayers by the imam and a discussion of a particular religious topic.

3. **Alms (*zakat*)**. In accordance with Islamic law, Muslims donate a fixed portion of their income to community members in need. Many rulers and wealthy Muslims build mosques, drinking fountains, hospitals, schools, and other institutions both as a religious duty and to secure the blessings associated with charity.
4. **Fasting (*sawm*)**. During the daylight hours of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, all healthy adult Muslims are required to abstain from food and drink. Through this temporary deprivation, they renew their awareness of and gratitude for everything God has provided in their lives—including the Quran, which was first revealed during this month. During Ramadan they share the hunger and thirst of the needy as a reminder of their religious duty to help those less fortunate.
5. **Pilgrimage (*hajj*)**. Every Muslim whose health and finances permit it must make at least one visit to the holy city of Mecca, in present-day Saudi Arabia. The Ka'bah, a cubical structure covered in black embroidered hangings, is at the center of the Haram Mosque in Mecca. Muslims believe that it is the house Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic) built for God, and face in its direction (*qibla*) when they pray. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, believers from all over the world have gathered around the Ka'bah in Mecca on the eighth and twelfth days of the final month of the Islamic calendar.

Social and Economic Reforms

Justice, equality, and preservation of the dignity of all members of the community were among the main teachings of Islam. A whole set of economic and social measures were implemented by Muhammad to achieve justice and to take care of the needy. The Prophet outlawed usury, which was a major problem in the Meccan economic system; it was also a major concern in Madina. To enhance the new economic system of Muslim society, the Prophet established a new market, which—unlike the one controlled by the Banu Qaynuq—charged no tax on transactions and no interest on loans.

Prior to the emigration of Muslims from Mecca to Madina, the Quran called Muslims to give part of their assets and income to the needy (the third pillar of Islam,

as listed above). *Zakat* means purification of wealth; Muslims give away a part of the growth of their wealth in order to purify it. In the first thirteen years of Islam, and before the emigration to Madina, each Muslim spent *zakat* according to his means and at his own will, whenever there was a worthy cause or a deserving case. In Madina, when the city-state was established, the revelation was more forceful and required compulsory charity. In this second stage, Muslims brought their alms to the Prophet to be distributed to the needy. As the Muslim community became well established, charity became obligatory in the form of taxes collected by the state, which were spent according to clear instructions. In this third stage, around the year 8 AH, *zakat* became a mandatory tithe which every member of the Umma had to pay according to his or her means.²⁷⁷ In this stage it was raised to the rank of one of the five pillars of Islam. As the small city-state expanded to include larger areas of Arabia, tax collectors were posted all over the country, and detailed instructions were given as to the rate and tariffs of various taxes.²⁷⁸

The *zakat* of the time of the Prophet Muhammad included not only tax on cash, but also land revenues and taxes on domesticated animals (sheep, goats, camels, and cows), beehives, and mines (gold, silver, and iron). *Zakat* comprised the entire income of the state, and was distributed according to revelation. The following verse of the Quran lists the eight beneficiaries:

Charities are for the poor, and the destitute, and those who administer them, and for reconciling hearts, and for freeing slaves, and those in debt, and in the path of Allah, and for the traveler in need—an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.

(Chapter 10, Surah 9:60, Repentance)

It is noteworthy that in the above-mentioned Quranic list of the beneficiaries of *zakat* revenues, there is no mention of the head of state. On the contrary, the Prophet himself said that *zakat* revenues are forbidden to the Prophet and all members of his tribe, the Banu Hashim, and also the members of their cousin tribe, the Banu Muttalib.

It was very clear that Prophet Muhammad had established a welfare state that went much beyond what was known in the neighboring countries of Byzantium and Iran.

Righteousness does not consist of turning your face toward the East and the West. But righteous is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, in the Angels, and the Scripture, and the Prophets. Who gives money, though dear, to near relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and

²⁷⁷. Aslan, *No god but God*, 60.

²⁷⁸. Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State*, 79–103.

the homeless, and the beggars, and for freeing of slaves; those who performed prayers, and pay the obligatory charity, and fulfill their promise when they promise, and patiently persevere in the face of persecution, hardships, and in the time of conflict. These are the sincere; these are the pious.

(Chapter 2, Surah 2:177, the Cow)

Protection of Women

One of the most important social reforms was the protection of women. In pre-Islamic Arabia, women were treated as a man's property. They could neither own property nor inherit it from their husbands (Khadijah was an exception). The widow herself and her dowry would be inherited by the husband's heir along with any property left behind by the deceased. A female orphan had no right to inherit from her father upon his death.

Muhammad amended Arabia's traditional marriage and inheritance laws, removing all obstacles that prohibited women from inheriting and maintaining their own wealth. Women in the Umma, for the first time, were given the right both to inherit the property of their husbands and to keep their dowries as their own personal property throughout their marriage. This legislation did not sit well with the male members of the community; they were arguing, "How can one give the right of inheritance to women and children, who do not work and do not earn their living?" Muhammad's answer was clear: "This was God's command."

The Quran emphasized the equality of women and men in the eyes of God:

Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, men who guard their chastity and women who guard, men who remember Allah frequently, and women who remember—Allah has prepared for them a pardon, and an immense reward.

(Chapter 21, Surah 33:35, the Joint Forces)

The next major reform related to women was the regulation of marriage. In pre-Islamic traditions, both men and women practiced polygamy. Paternity was an unimportant matter in Bedouin society; it made no difference how many husbands a woman had or who fathered her children. In sedentary societies like Mecca, where the accumulation of wealth brought the subject of inheritance to the surface, it became extremely important to determine the paternity of a child. So there was no

place for polyandry (the practice of having more than one husband) among women. In the new Muslim society, polyandrous unions were prohibited, and never again did a Muslim woman have more than one husband.

In pre-Islam Arabia, divorce was a simple matter, requiring only a statement from the man to his wife: “I divorce you.” In the new Muslim society, in order for divorce to happen, a three-month reconciliation period was required before the sentence of divorce could take effect.

The subject of polygamy was more complicated. Islam accepted the concept of polygamy as a necessity for the protection of widows and orphans resulting from wars. The Quran sets the rules for polygamy:

If you fear you cannot act fairly toward the orphans—then marry the women you like—two or three, or four. But if you fear you will not be fair, then one, or what you already have. That makes likely that you avoid bias. Who are lawful for you, up to two, three, or four, but only if you can treat them all equally.

(Chapter 4, Surah 4:3, Women)

You will not be able to treat women with equal fairness, no matter how much you may desire it. But do not be so biased as to leave another suspended. If you make amends, and act righteously—Allah is forgiving and merciful.

(Chapter 4 Surah 4: 129, Women)

It is clear that the two verses cited above, when combined together, should be interpreted as a rejection of polygamy.

The Prophet’s Wives

The Prophet lived a monogamous life with Khadijah for more than twenty-five years. After her death, in the course of ten years in Madina, he married nine different women. Most of these marriages were not sexual unions, but political ones.

The Prophet married his second wife shortly after the death of Khadijah. **Sawda bint Zam’ah** was the cousin and sister-in-law of Suhayl, the devout pagan chief of the clan of Amir. She had been married to one of the Muslims who had migrated to Abyssinia in 616 CE. When her husband died in exile, she returned to Mecca. Sawda was an older woman who had passed her first youth, but she could take care of Muhammad’s domestic needs. Muhammad may also have hoped to win over Suhayl.²⁷⁹

279. Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, 92.

Around the same time, Abu Bakr, who was eager to forge a closer link with the Prophet, proposed that he should marry his daughter **Aisha**, who was then six years old. The marriage was consummated when Aisha reached puberty.²⁸⁰ She was the only virgin Muhammad married, and the most beloved creature to him.

In the third year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet married **Hafsah bint Umar ibn al-Khattab**. She was a widow; her ex-husband was Khunais ibn Hudhafah, who died in the period between the battles of Badr and Uhud. This marriage linked him to Umar.

The Prophet married **Zainab bint Khuzaimah** in the fourth year of Al-Hijra. She was from Bani Hilal ibn Amir ibn Sa'sa'ah, and was nicknamed Ummul-Masakeen (the poor), because of her kindness toward them. She was a widow; her husband, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, had been martyred at Uhud. She died two or three months after marrying the Prophet.²⁸¹

In the month of Shawl of the fourth year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet married **Umm Salamah**. She was a middle-aged widow; her husband, Abu Salamah, had been one of the first companions who emigrated (together with his wife)—first to Abyssinia, and then to Madina. He had been wounded at the battle of Uhud when he remained steadfast with the Prophet. Although his wound had healed and he became well enough to be the commander of another expedition against the tribe of Asad, he suffered a recurrence of his injury, which led to his death. The Prophet's marriage to Umm Salamah forged an important relationship with one of Mecca's most powerful clans, the Makhzum.²⁸²

Zayd ibn Harithah was a slave who had been given to Muhammad by his wife Khadijah as a wedding gift. Zayd originally belonged to an Arabian tribe in northern Arabia. As a young boy, he had been captured by another tribe in a raid and then sold in Mecca. Muhammad freed him, but he continued to work for Muhammad. As mentioned earlier, Zayd's father came to Mecca to free his son when he learned about his location. Zayd, who was by then a free man, elected to stay with Muhammad rather than returning to his original tribe, so Muhammad adopted him. Muhammad arranged for him to marry **Zainab bint Jahsh ibn Riyab**, whose mother was Umaymah bint Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's own paternal aunt. The Prophet's purpose behind marrying his own cousin to a former slave was to destroy all class distinctions for once and for all. Zainab and her brother consented to the marriage with reluctance, out of obedience to the Prophet.

Zayd's marriage with Zainab was not a happy one; She had no love for him and could not rid herself of her class feelings. Zayd could not tolerate Zainab's attitude, and complained to the Prophet, who counseled Zainab. But the situation in Zayd's home continued to flare up every now and then. The Prophet was then instructed by

280. Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, 93.

281. Al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, 418.

282. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 397–398; Aslan, *No God but God*, 64.

God to allow Zayd to divorce his wife; he was also instructed to marry Zainab when the divorce was final. The Prophet was extremely perturbed by these instructions and kept them to himself for a long time, hoping that God might relieve him of this difficult duty. When Zayd came back to the Prophet complaining and expressing the desire to divorce Zainab, the Prophet said to him: "Hold on to your wife and have fear of God." At this point, Quranic revelations were received by the Prophet criticizing his attitude and encouraging him to allow Zayd to divorce his wife. He was also commanded to marry Zainab when she was fully divorced.

When you said to him whom Allah had blessed, and you had favored, "Keep your wife to yourself, and fear Allah." But you hid within yourself what Allah was to reveal. And you feared the people, but it was Allah you were supposed to fear. Then when Zayd ended his relationship with her, We gave her to you in marriage, that there may be no restriction for believers regarding the wives of their adopted sons, when their relationship has ended. The command of Allah was fulfilled.

(Chapter 22, Surah 33:37, the Joint Forces)

When Zayd divorced his wife and she had completed her waiting period, the Prophet asked Zayd to go over to Zainab and propose to her on his behalf.²⁸³

After the defeat of Banu Qurayzah, the Prophet selected **Rehanah bint Zaid ibn Amr ibn Khinafah ibn Sham'un ibn Zaid** for himself and married her in the sixth year of Al-Hijra. She died shortly after the Farewell Pilgrimage.

The Muslims defeated the al-Mustalaq tribe, who were preparing an attack against Madina. According to the traditions of war in Arabia and neighboring countries, the prisoners of war became slaves. The Prophet did not accept the concept of slavery; however, he felt that changing this tradition unilaterally could create a problem as long as slavery was an international practice. So he devised a different way to achieve the goal of setting the prisoners of al-Mustalaq free. He took Barrah, the daughter of the chief of al-Mustalaq, to himself and set her free, and then proposed to marry her. When she accepted and became his wife, all the Muslims who had slaves from al-Mustalaq voluntarily set them free. They considered the whole tribe to be relatives of the Prophet, and did not want to have his relatives as their slaves. The Prophet gave his new wife the name of **Juwayriyyah**.²⁸⁴

Umm Habibah Ramlah Bint Abu Sufyan was married to Ubaidullah bin Jahsh. She migrated with him to Abyssinia. When Ubaidullah converted to Christianity, Umm Habiba refused to convert and stood fast to her religion. When Ubaidullah died in Abyssinia, in the seventh year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet sent Amr ibn Umair

²⁸³. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 487–492.

²⁸⁴. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 406.

Ad-Damri with a letter to the Negus, the king of Abyssinia, asking him for Umm Habibah's hand. Umm Habiba received a dowry of four hundred dinar (the gold currency), equivalent to four thousand dirham (the silver currency), which was the largest dowry of all the Prophet's wives (their dowries were four hundred to five hundred dirham).

Safiyah bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab was the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, who was the Jewish leader most hostile to Islam. Safiyah was part of the spoils taken at the battle of Khaybar. The Prophet took Safiyah for himself, set her free, and then married her.

In the seventh year of Al-Hijra, after the peace treaty of al-Hudaybiyah and the war against Khaybar, the Prophet sent envoys to the rulers of neighboring countries with messages calling them to convert to Islam. One of the envoys, Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah, carried a message to **the ruler of Egypt in Alexandria, Al-Muqawqis**. The ruler of Egypt was courteous to the envoy and sent to the Prophet a positive reply that fell short of accepting Islam. He also sent gifts and a maid from noble Coptic family, **Mariyah**. The Prophet accepted the gifts and married Mariyah, who gave birth to his son Ibrahim, but the boy died while still a child in the tenth year of Al-Hijra.

Maimunah bint Al Harith was a woman of noble descent; her sister was married to the Prophet's uncle, al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib. The Prophet married her in the seventh year of Al-Hijra. He tried to have a wedding banquet after the completion of the *umrah* ritual, at the end of the three days the Quraysh allowed the Muslims to stay in Mecca. The Quraysh leaders were concerned about the potential for the Muslims to interact positively with the Meccans at a wedding banquet, so they insisted that Muhammad and the Muslim pilgrims leave immediately.²⁸⁵

Muhammad's wives have been the subject of fierce attacks against the Prophet and the religion of Islam. Contemporary scholars—Muslims and non-Muslims alike—have defended these marriages. With very few exceptions, these marriages were not sexual unions, but political ones. The Prophet Muhammad, as the sheikh of the Umma, aimed at forging links within and beyond his community through these marriages. His unions with Aisha and Hafsa linked him to the two most influential leaders of the early Muslim community. His marriage to Umm Salamah forged an important relationship with one of the most powerful clans, the Makhzum. His marriages to Rehanah and Safiyah linked him to the Jewish tribes. His marriage to Mariyah, a Christian Copt, created a significant political alliance with the Christian ruler of Egypt. His marriage to Juwayriyyah was a smart move on his part to free the tribe of al-Mustalaq from slavery. His marriages to Sawda, Zainab bint Khuzaimah, Umm Habiba, and Maimunah were to support widows who lost their husbands. Furthermore, his daughters married two other influential companions: Ali ibn Abi Talib and Uthman ibn Affan.

285. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 582.

Changing the Qibla from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah

Prior to the Hijra to Madina, the Ka'bah was the holy house for Muslims, as it was also for the Meccan pagans. It was the house that Abraham had built. After the revelation, the Prophet and his companions prayed in the Ka'bah and practiced the rituals of the pilgrimage as well. When the Quraysh denied them access to Ka'bah, they performed the service of prayer in their houses or the house of al-Arqam. The Muslims, then, were instructed to pray in the direction of the Ka'bah. After the night journey to Jerusalem, the Prophet instructed the Muslims to pray in the direction of Jerusalem.

Once the Muslim community had been established in Madina, the Prophet experienced hostility from some of the Jews toward him and toward the Emigrants. They resented the economic reforms, which included prohibiting usury and abolishing taxes on merchandise. They were not respectful to Islam when they came to the mosque; some of them would laugh at the Quran. Muhammad became disturbed by such behavior and started to study and examine the Jewish religious practices. He did not accept their belief of having an exclusive religion; he was offended by the idea of a "chosen people." He was also disturbed by the concept of the Trinity adopted by some Christians. These concerns prompted him to return to the religion of Abraham, who was neither a Jew nor a Christian. The Quran referred to this religion as Islam, meaning complete submission to God. Abraham did not belong to an exclusive cult; he had been a Muslim, "one who surrendered himself to God." When Abraham and his son Ismael built the Ka'bah, they prayed to God, saying: "O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship." (Chapter 1, Surah 2:127–129, the Cow)

In the Quran, Allah emphasizes clearly that submission is the basis of all the messages that came from him through all the prophets:

Religion with Allah is Islam. Those to whom the Scripture was given differed only after knowledge came to them, out of envy among themselves. Whoever rejects the signs of Allah, Allah is quick to take account.
(Chapter 3, Surah 2:19, the Family of Imran)

This was so in Noah's time, as the Quran points out:

And relate to them the story of Noah, when he said to his people: O my people, if my presence among you and my reminding you of Allah's signs is too much for you, then in Allah I have put my trust. So come

to a decision, you and your partners, and do not let the matter perplex you; then carry out your decision on me, and do not hold back. But if you turn away, I have not asked you for any wage. My wage falls only on Allah, and I was commanded to be of those who submit.

(Chapter 11, Surah 10:71–72, Noah)

In Abraham's time, the Quran remarks:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Monotheist, a Muslim. And he was not of the Polytheists.

(Chapter 3, Surah 3:67, the Family of Imran)

In the time of Lot:

We evacuated all the believers who were in it. But found in it only one household of Muslims.

(Chapter 27, Surah 51: 35–36, the Spreaders)

In January of 624, Muhammad received a revelation to pray in the direction of Mecca instead of Jerusalem:

We have seen your face turned toward the heaven. So We will turn you toward a direction that will satisfy you. So turn then your face toward the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you may be, turn your faces toward it. Those who were given the book know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is aware of what they do.

(Chapter 2, Surah 2:144, the Cow)

This verse of the Quran was a reminder for the Prophet's companions that they had their own religion, and they were not following other religions, but following God himself. It was a declaration of independence. Both Emigrants and Helpers were delighted by this declaration. The Ka'bah was deeply rooted in Arab tradition.²⁸⁶ Prior to these developments, the Prophet's companions, the believers, were referred to as the Umma. After the revelation of the above verses, they became known as Muslims, the ones who surrender themselves to God.

286. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 107–111.

Imposing an Economic Siege on Mecca

Muhammad's mission began in Mecca, the capital of Arabia. He observed the serious ills of the Meccan society, which had become stratified, with the wealth concentrated in the hands of a few who were controlled by arrogance, selfishness, egotism, and lack of charity. Social reforms were overdue. When Muhammad received God's call, he was hoping that his tribe would accept the message and change their behavior, as a first step toward changing Arabia and beyond. But the Quraysh rejected the message, persecuted him and his followers, and finally forced them out with death threats.

During the first year in Madina, Muhammad was occupied with the urgent problems that needed immediate attention. But his main mission in life stayed alive on his mind and in his heart. He was God's messenger to the world, to all humans. He had to put God's revealed will into practice and create a just, egalitarian society. His Muslim society in Madina was just the beginning; he should not be confined to an isolated oasis in Arabia.

Muhammad was aware of the challenges he was facing; however, he was determined to expand the new state to include all of Arabia. As Mecca was the capital of Arabia, in order to achieve his goals and to fulfill his dream he had to defeat the non-believers in Mecca, bringing the capital of Arabia under the wings of Islam. The Meccans were merchants who cared about their wealth more than anything else. Thus, Muhammad decided to fight them where it would hurt them the most: their economy. An essential part of his strategic plan was to intercept their caravans. So the Prophet decided to send bands of Emigrants on raiding expeditions against the Meccan caravans going to and from Syria. The aim was not to shed blood, but to capture camels, merchandise, and prisoners who could be held for ransom. Most of the Emigrants were merchants who had earned a living in Mecca through trade. In Madina, there was very little opportunity for trade, because its economy depended on agriculture. The Emigrants had no experience in farming; besides, no more farming land was available. So Muhammad envisioned the Emigrants eventually organizing their own caravans. He also envisioned Madina becoming the center of trade of Arabia as well as a sanctuary (*haram*), in addition being the most prosperous agricultural community. Muhammad realized that these expeditions could lead to real war. He knew that nonbelievers in Mecca would retaliate, but he thought that this might be what needed to happen. Bringing Mecca under the wings of Islam was not going to occur peacefully.

Muhammad believed that Arabia would not condemn his raids, because the Quraysh had persecuted him and his followers and forced them out of their homeland. Exile from the tribe violated the deepest sanction of Arabia. He strongly believed that these raiding expeditions were not only justified on the basis of the *ghazu*

(rules), but were also permitted by God. The Muslims had suffered; their expulsion from Mecca was an act that had no justification.

The expedition raids, although they were few and sporadic, provided the funds required to cover the Emigrants' financial needs. They also disrupted the trade flow in and out of Mecca; the caravans had to make unnecessary detours, and the Meccans had to provide more people to guard and protect their merchandise. Some of non-Meccan caravans changed their routes and started to go through Madina to take advantage of the security provided by the Muslims. The raids demonstrated the readiness of the Muslims to attack the caravans and their willingness to go to war if needed. They were deliberate challenges and provocations, which must have increased the anxieties of the Meccans and at the same time sent a message to the nomads of the region that Muhammad meant business.²⁸⁷ After January 624 CE, Muhammad received a new revelation justifying such raids, even during the month of Ramadan:²⁸⁸

Fighting is ordained for you, even though you dislike it. But it may be that you dislike something while it is good for you, and it may be that you like something while it is bad for you. Allah knows, and you do not know. They ask you about fighting during the Holy Month. Say, fighting during it is deplorable; but to bar others from Allah's path, and to disbelieve in Him, and to prevent access to the Holy Mosque, and to expel its people from it, are more deplorable with Allah. And persecution is more serious than killing.

(Chapter 2, Surah 2:216–217, the Cow)

The Battle of Badr (15 March 624 CE)

The initial raid expeditions were carried out by only the Emigrants, but after January, 624 CE, the Helpers (Ansar) began to participate in the fighting. During the month of Ramadan (March 624), a large contingent of about 314 Muslims led by Muhammad himself was organized to intercept an important caravan coming back from Palestine. The leader sent a message to Mecca asking for help, and a force of one thousand men and marched toward Madina. The two armies camped at opposite sides of Badr Valley. The Quraysh, led by Abu Jahl (Amr ibn Hisham) assumed that their overwhelming numbers would cause Muhammad to retreat and return to Madina. However, Muhammad decided to go to war. If he had retreated from the battlefield and returned to Madina, he would lose the respect of all Arabia and never be able to recover from such a defeat.

²⁸⁷ Aslan, *No god but God*, 82–83.

²⁸⁸ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 109–112.

While the Quraysh were feasting and drinking in their camp, certain that the Muslims would surrender, Muhammad was preparing his army for the battle. He lined up his troops in close formation and positioned his men by the wells, depriving Quraysh of access to water. He prayed, asking God for help. When the Quraysh advanced toward the Muslims, Muhammad refused to strike first, as God commanded. When Abu Jahl's men attacked, however, the Muslims responded fiercely. They bombarded the enemy with arrows and finished the fight in hand-to-hand combat with their swords. By midday, the Quraysh had fled in disarray, leaving more than fifty of their leaders dead, including Abu Jahl himself. The Muslims then began rounding up the prisoners, a total of seventy. Muhammad immediately ordered his troops not to kill the prisoners, as was the tribal tradition in wars. A revelation came down to ensure that prisoners of war must either be released or ransomed.²⁸⁹

When you encounter those who disbelieve, strike at their necks. Then, when you have routed them, bind them firmly. Then, either release them by grace, or for ransom, until war lays down its burdens.

(Chapter 26, Surah 47:4, Muhammad)

The Prophet issued an order that any prisoner who could read and write would be set free for no ransom if he taught ten Muslim children to read and write. For the rest, the ransom for the release of a prisoner equaled a thousand to four thousand dirhams, depending on the financial ability of the prisoner. The Prophet waived the ransom if the prisoner was poor.²⁹⁰

After Badr, Muslims became the new political power in Hijaz, and Yathrib was no longer just an agricultural oasis, but the seat of power: **al Madina**, “The Prophet’s City.” Clan representatives from throughout the peninsula flooded into Madina to ally themselves with Muhammad.²⁹¹ The battle of Badr marked the end of the *gazu* (acquisition raids) and the beginning of war between the Muslims and the Quraysh. From this point on, there were armies to be assembled, arms to be acquired, and fortifications to be erected. Muhammad knew that it was only a matter of time until Mecca marched to Madina for revenge. He realized that Muslims now should prepare themselves for a long, costly war, which he termed *jihad*. This term, introduced for the first time by Muhammad after the battle of Badr, **does not mean “holy war”;** rather, it describes the constant struggle to put the will of God into practice. Muslims are required and urged to strive on all fronts: intellectual, social, economic, and spiritual, and to dedicate enormous effort and energy to transform the ideology

289. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 119–124.

290. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 283.

291. Aslan, *No god but God*, 89–90.

of Islam—that is, justice and peace—into reality. Sometimes you have to go to war to achieve the goal of creating, defending, and protecting justice and peace.

As the Muslims were returning to Madina from Badr, Muhammad said:

We are returning from the lesser jihad and going to the greater jihad, the immeasurably more important and difficult struggle to reform our own society and our own hearts.²⁹²

The Doctrine of Jihad

The doctrine of jihad in Islam developed slowly following the battle of Badr. Islamic warfare (jihad) was differentiated from pre-Islamic warfare by its ethical dimension. The Quran emphasized the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. The killing of women, children, monks, rabbis, the elderly, or any other noncombatant was absolutely forbidden. Torture of prisoners of war was prohibited, as well as mutilation of the dead, rape, molestation, and any kind of sexual offenses. The lives of diplomats were protected. Demolition of residential buildings and religious and medical institutions was prohibited.

In the doctrine of jihad, only defensive wars were allowed:

And fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not commit aggression; Allah does not love the aggressors.

(Chapter 2, Surah 2:190, the Cow)

Permission is given to those who are fought against, and Allah is able to give them victory.

Those who were unjustly evicted from their homes merely for saying, “Our Lord is Allah.” Were it not that Allah repels people by means of others: monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques—where the name of Allah is mentioned much—would have been demolished. Allah supports whoever supports Him. Allah is Strong and Mighty.”

(Chapter 17, Surah 22:39–40, the Pilgrimage)

When it came to war, the Quran commanded Muslims to fight with courage and steadfastness in order to bring the conflict to an end as quickly as possible. The Quran also emphasized the importance of mercy and forgiveness, even during armed conflict; the moment the enemy asked for peace, Muslims had to lay down their arms.

292. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 125.

The term “holy war” was not used by Muhammad or the Muslims who conquered the Roman and Persian empires. That term was introduced to the Near East by the Crusades in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and more recently in the twenty-first century by US president George W. Bush.

As the Crusades ended and Rome’s attention turned away from the Muslim threat and toward the Christian reform movement that affected all of Europe, the classic doctrine of jihad was challenged by a new generation of Muslim scholars. In the thirteenth century CE, **Ibn Taymiyya** introduced a completely different concept of jihad, calling for the killing of nonbelievers who refused to convert to Islam.

Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretation of jihad was accepted by other Muslim scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Wahhabi movement adopted this position, as did extremist scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood such as Sayyid Qutob. It also underlay al-Qaeda’s interpretation of jihad, as manifested by the writings of **Abdullah Yusuf Azzam** (1941–1989), a professor of Islamic philosophy at King Abdulaziz University. In the hands of the new radical militant groups (al-Qaeda and ISIS), jihad has become an offensive weapon that can be used against all perceived “enemies” of Islam, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. **It is worth mentioning at this point that about 98 percent of the casualties of the terror campaign of the new jihadists have been Muslims.**²⁹³

This position is contrary to what Muhammad was advocating. It also violates one of the most important principles in Quran: that of “no compulsion in religion”:

There shall be no compulsion in religion; the right way has become distinct from the wrong way. Whoever renounces evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handle; which does not break. Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

(Chapter 3, Surah 2:256, the Cow)

Had your Lord willed, everyone on earth would have believed. Will you compel people to become believers?

(Chapter 11, Surah 10:99, Jonah)

O disbelievers

I do not worship what you worship.

Nor do you worship what I worship.

Nor do I serve what you serve.

Nor do You serve what I serve.

You have your way, and I have my way.

(Chapter 30, Surah 109: the Disbelievers)

293. Aslan, *No god but God*, 87–88.

The Conflict with the Jews in Madina

The constitution that Muhammad wrote shortly after he arrived in Madina stated that the members of the community were to show complete solidarity in peace and war. It required all inhabitants to participate in defending the oasis against any attack. The constitution also stated that the Jews were given equal rights, and guaranteed religious freedom.

About ten weeks after Badr, the Quraysh leader Abu Sufyan mobilized a force of two hundred horsemen and went toward the fields outside Madina. Under cover of night, he visited **Sallam ibn Mishkan, the chief of the Jewish tribe an-Nadir**, in his fortress. He obtained information about the Muslims in Madina and probably formed an alliance with the Jewish tribe. Before dawn of the following day, Abu Sufyan and his men attacked an area called Urayd, nearly five kilometers out of Madina, where they killed two men of the Ansar and burned down several houses. When Muhammad learned about this raid, he went out at the head of two hundred men in pursuit. The Meccan raiders were a long way ahead of the Muslim pursuers and managed to escape. To move faster, the raiders dropped food and other supplies, improving their chances of escape.²⁹⁴

Muhammad was alarmed by this incident because the Jewish tribes who lived in the south of Madina, the Nadir and the Qurayzah, had large armies, numbering more than 1,500 fighting men. If they sided with Mecca, it would pose a major threat to the Muslim state. Muhammad was also alarmed by the conduct of the other Jewish tribe, the Qaynuqa, who decided to break their alliance agreement with the Prophet. The Qaynuqa were the wealthiest tribe, as they controlled the oasis market. But the Muslims had established their own market where no taxes or interest applied to transaction, thus competing with the Qaynuqa and affecting their profits. Muhammad visited their district, urging them to keep their commitment to solidarity and peace. Their answer was as follows:

O, Muhammad, you seem to think that we are your people. Do not deceive yourself, because you have encountered a tribe with no knowledge of war and got the better of them; for by Allah, if we fight you, you will find that we are real men.²⁹⁵

Shortly after this encounter, fighting broke out in the market after a Jewish goldsmith insulted a Muslim woman. Muhammad was called in as the arbiter, but the chiefs of **Qaynuqa** refused to accept his judgment and moved to their fortress. Their Arab allies refused to come to their aid. After a siege of two weeks, they were forced to

294. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 320.

295. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 129.

surrender unconditionally. The traditional punishment in Arabia for their actions would have been for the men to be executed, and the women and children to be sold into slavery. When they pleaded for clemency, however, Muhammad allowed them to leave Madina immediately.

The Battle of Uhud

The victory that was achieved by the Muslims at Badr had a significant effect on the position of the Muslim community of Madina. Badr was the first major battle between the young city-state of Madina and the well-established city-state of Mecca, which was the capital of all Arabia. The decisive victory of the Muslims in this battle established them as a major force in Arabia, no less so than the Quraysh, and perhaps even more. Several Quraysh leaders had been killed in the battle. For the Quraysh, the defeat was devastating; no one in Arabia expected this outcome, especially given that the Quraysh's army outnumbered the Muslims three to one. The Meccans were greatly humiliated; they needed a significant victory, as soon as possible, in order to regain their status in Arabia. In addition, the economic siege imposed on them by the Prophet and his companions was having a significant effect. It was not just a matter of wounded pride, but a matter of survival. They could not afford to lose their trade income as a result of the interruption of their trade routes.

The Quraysh's trade routes to Syria were under constant threat from the Muslims in Madina, prompting them to use a different route for their caravans other than the coastal one; they took the route leading to Iraq, through Najd. Soon the Prophet learnt of the new route. He sent a force of a hundred men, led by Zayd ibn Harithah, and captured a caravan which was worth 100,000 dirhams. Thus the economic siege became even more devastating, making preparation for retaliation an urgent matter. A decision was unanimously taken by the leaders of the Quraysh to utilize the value of the caravan that they had saved before the battle of Badr to fund preparations for the war against the Muslims.²⁹⁶

Over the next six months, the new chief of the Quraysh managed to build a large, well-equipped army composed of three thousand men with three thousand camels and two hundred horses. Several allied tribes contributed to this army in response to envoys who had been sent to different regions of Arabia. In addition, they were able to secure a sizable contingent of mercenaries from the tribe of Ahabish.

The Quraysh army left Mecca in total secrecy on March 11, 625 CE, camping north of Madina on a plain in front of Mount Uhud. Muhammad learned of the Quraysh's plans from his informants in Mecca and consulted his companions. They wanted to confront the Quraysh forces outside Madina on an open battlefield. Although the

²⁹⁶ Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 320–321.

Prophet himself wanted to carry out a defensive war in the streets and alleys of the city, he acceded to the majority. A force of about a thousand men, with Muhammad at the head, marched out after the mid-afternoon prayer.

What looked like an early victory by the Muslims turned into a rout when Muslim archers, having repelled the first attack, rushed down from their vantage point on the hill of Aynayn in order to take the spoils left by the retreating forces. This went against Muhammad's direct orders, as he had told them to hold their positions. With the archers absent, the Muslim forces were open to attack, and they were overwhelmed by the Quraysh. The Madinan forces took heavy casualties, and the Prophet narrowly escaped.

The defeat at Uhud could have been worse had the Quraysh continued their assault and chased the Muslim army all the way to Madina. As it was, twenty-two Meccans and sixty-five Muslims had been killed, including Muhammad's uncle Hamzah. This showed the Muslims not to disobey the instructions of the Prophet.

Muhammad was concerned about the possibility of a second attack from the Quraysh if they learned that he had survived. Therefore, the following day, and his forces established a defense line at **Hamra al-Asad**, fourteen kilometers from Madina, and stayed there for three days. On the Prophet's instruction, they collected as much wood as they could and used it to light numerous fires at night to give the impression that their army was far larger than it actually was. Reports reached Meccan leader Abu Sufyan that the Muslims had mobilized all their forces and were ready to defend the city. At the Quraysh camp, which was not far from the Muslims, this news made him rethink the idea of attacking again, and he withdrew his forces.²⁹⁷

After the defeat at Uhud, Muhammad had to deal with many threats: the threat of the Quraysh, opposition from the Jewish tribes, the waverers (Hypocrites) in Madina, and infighting between the Helpers and the Emigrants. He also had to contend with the Bedouin tribes who had forged alliances with the Quraysh. One of those tribes, an Arab Jewish tribe called the Banu Nadir, plotted to assassinate Muhammad. When the assassination failed, the Nadir were forced to leave Madina in August 625 CE. Each was allowed a camel load of belongings, but they were forbidden to take arms with them.

The Battle of the Trench (Moat) and Its Consequences

The Muslim state that Muhammad had established in Madina in 622 CE proved to be a new society built on completely opposite principles from those of the stratified Meccan society. The principles of justice and equality for all created the most progressive social and political system in Arabia. During the five years following his

²⁹⁷ Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 353–334.

emigration from Mecca, Muhammad had been able to build a strong and prosperous state. This success prompted Muhammad's opponents in Arabia to form an alliance aimed at annihilating Muslims and putting an end to their society and its ideology.

The Banu Nadir, who had been residing at Khayber since being exiled from Madina in August 625 CE, took upon themselves the mission of forming a coalition against Madina. A delegation from Nadir contacted the Quraysh, the **Ghatafan**, and other tribes who traditionally opposed Muslims, promising them Nadir's entire date harvest for a whole year if they achieved their victory against Muhammad. The Jewish delegation secured support from other tribes, and the alliance was able to raise a strong army of ten thousand men which marched toward Madina under the command of Abu Sufyan in the month of Shawal (**February 627 CE**).

As soon as Muhammad received information about this new threat, he consulted his companions and formulated a defense plan. The geography of Madina allowed the Prophet to fortify his city and wait for the attackers to assault Madina rather than engaging them in an open fight. Only the northern side of the city was vulnerable to attack. The other sides were naturally fortified. To the east and west, volcanic rock, stretched over considerable distance, forming natural barriers. To the south, thick groves of palm trees stretched over a large area, forming another natural barrier; behind these fields lay the fortified homes of the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah, with whom Muhammad had a peace treaty. To secure the city completely, the Muslims needed only to dig a trench on the north side of Madina, wide enough to form an obstacle that would prevent cavalry from crossing.

The Prophet divided his three thousand companions into groups of ten and assigned each one a section of forty yards to dig. By the time the allied forces arrived at Madina the moat was fully completed. It took the Muslims a little more than two weeks to complete the job. Women and children were sent to the towers and fortresses in the south of the city.

When the allied forces witnessed what the Muslims had done, they were shocked. They had never experienced any defensive structure of this kind, and did not know how to build a bridgehead over a moat. They therefore camped near the moat in two locations: in the valley by Wadi al-Aqiq, and beside Mount Uhud. The horsemen tried to find a weak point where they could cross to the other side, but in vain. For their part, the Muslims were fully aware of what the failure of their defenses would mean, so they encamped very close to the moat and showered any attackers with their arrows. They guarded their defensive lines on all sides, day and night.

Ali and the Giant

On March 15, 627 CE, a small group of cavalry led by Ikrama managed to jump the ditch at the narrowest point. There were seven men in the group, including Ikrama and

an enormous man who was the first to land. This enormous man was Amr ibn Abd Wud, known as the Giant, who challenged the Muslims, shouting: “Is there anyone among you who has the courage to meet me in single combat?” The Giant, who was famous for his strength and skill, had never yet lost a duel or spared an opponent.

The events that followed were most remarkable. Because of the great importance and the valuable effect on the Battle of the Moat, the details of this encounter are stated below as described by General Akram in his book *The Sword of Islam*, based on the writing of Ibn Hisham and Ibn Sad.

The challenge was received by the Muslims in silence. The Giant then laughed and shouted again: “Is there anyone among you who has the courage of a man? And what of your Islam? And your Prophet?” At this blasphemous taunt, Ali approached the Prophet and sought permission to engage the challenger. The Prophet replied: “Sit down. This is Amr!” The Giant then repeated his insults. Again Ali went up to the Prophet. Again the Prophet declined permission. More laughter and more taunts came from the Giant: “Where is your Paradise, of which you say that those who lose in battle will enter it? Can you not send a man to fight me?” When for the third time Ali moved toward the Prophet, Muhammad saw in Ali’s eyes a look which he knew well; he realized that Ali could no longer be restrained. The Prophet then took his turban and wound it around Ali’s head. He next took off his sword and girded it to Ali’s waist. And he prayed: O, Lord! Help him!²⁹⁸ This sword became the most famous sword in Islam, killing more men in fair combat than any sword in history. This was the blade **Zulfiqar**.

Ali strode toward the unbelievers, accompanied by small group of Muslims. As Ali came within dueling distance of the challenger, he stopped. The Giant knew Ali well. He had been a friend of Ali’s father, Abu Talib. The Giant smiled indulgently at Ali as a man might smile at a boy.

Ali said: “O, Amr! It is believed that if any man of the Quraysh offers you two proposals, you always accept at least one of them.”

“True.”

“Then I have two proposals to offer you. The first is: accept Allah and his Messenger and Islam.”

“I have no need of Them.”

“Then dismount from your horse and fight me.”

298. A. I. Akram, *The Sword of Allah: Khalid Bin al-Waleed, A Biographical Study of One of the Greatest Military Generals in History* (Birmingham, England: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2007), 66–67 (in reference to Ibn Sad, 572).

“Why, O son of my brother? I have no desire to kill you!”

“But I have great desire to kill you!” replied Ali.

With a cry of rage, the Giant dismounted and rushed at Ali. Amr struck at Ali many times, but Ali remained unharmed. He would parry the blow with his sword or shield or step aside to let the Giant’s sword whistle past him harmlessly. At last, the Giant stood back, panting and baffled. He wondered how this could be. Never before had any man survived so long in personal combat against him. And now this boy was looking at him as if he was playing a game!

Then things happened so fast that no one could quite follow the sequence—neither the Muslims nor the Quraysh nor the Giant himself. Ali dropped his sword and shield to the ground; his body shot through the air like a missile and his hands grasped the Giant’s throat. With a wrestler’s kick he knocked the Giant off balance, and the Giant came crashing to the ground—all in a matter of seconds. Now the Giant lay down on his back with Ali sitting astride his chest. The bewilderment on the Giant’s face changed to fury. His face went purple, the veins stood out on his neck and his huge biceps and forearms trembled as he strained to break Ali’s grip. But he could not move it an inch. There was the quality of steel in the muscles of Ali.

“Know, O, Amr,” said Ali gently. “That victory and defeat depend on the will of God. Accept Islam! Thus not only will your life be spared, but you will also enjoy the blessing of God in this life and the next.” Ali drew a sharp dagger from his waistband and held it close to Amr’s throat. The Giant did not accept the offer, as he could not accept to live the rest of his life under the shadow of defeat and disgrace. He gathered the spittle in his mouth and spat into the face of Ali, then arched his back and raised his chin to offer his throat to Ali. But Ali did not plunge the dagger into the Giant’s throat; he rose calmly from the Giant’s chest, wiped his face, and stood a few steps away, gazing solemnly at him. “Know, O, Amr, I only kill for the way of Allah and not for any private motive. Since you spat in my face, my killing you now could be from a desire for personal vengeance. So I spare your life. Rise and return to your people!”

The Giant rose. But there was no question of his returning to his people a loser. He would live a victor, or not at all. Intending to make one last attempt at victory, he picked up his sword and rushed at Ali, who had just enough time to pick up his sword and shield and prepare for the fresh assault. The Giant, in furious desperation, delivered a savage blow that shattered Ali’s shield, but in doing so lost its force, and could

then do no more than make a shallow cut on Ali's temple. Before the Giant could raise his sword again, **Zulfiqar** flashed in the sunlight, and its tip slashed open the Giant's throat. The blood of the Giant gushed forth like a fountain. For a moment the Giant stood motionless. Then his body began to sway as if he were drunk. He then fell on his face with a crash and lay still.

The Muslim fighters now rushed at the six remaining Quraysh, killed one of them, and forced the rest to withdraw across the ditch.

Treachery and Defeat

For defenders of a besieged city, it is vital for their survival to secure adequate supply lines. Madina's defenders were in a favorable situation, as their farms were located within the defense lines of the city. On the other hand, the alliance forces were in a difficult position; their supply lines were virtually nonexistent. They had to rely on what they had brought with them. The Quraysh and their allies realized that unless the Muslim defense lines could be breached, the defenders would be able to survive for a long time. The most vulnerable area of their defenses was the south side, where the Jewish Qurayzah tribe resided in fortified homes. Muhammad was counting on the Qurayzah's adherence to the peace treaty that they had signed with him as an essential part in his defense plan of the Muslim state. The Nadir leaders realized that the alliance could not maintain the siege for very long, and therefore their plan to destroy the Muslim state and annihilate all Muslims was doomed. In a desperate attempt to save their plan, Huyayy ibn Akhtab managed to visit **Ka'b ibn Asad**, the leader of Qurayzah, at his fort south of Madina. With tremendous effort, he managed to persuade Ka'b to abrogate the treaty with Muhammad and to join the alliance forces in a decisive attack from the south.²⁹⁹

As soon as the Prophet learned about the treachery of the Qurayzah, he sent the chiefs of the Aws and Khazraj tribes to the Qurayzah to confirm what he had learned. The delegation tried to persuade Ka'b to maintain their peaceful relations and to confirm their alliance with the Prophet. S'ad ibn Mu'adh, the chief of the Aws, said to them: "Qurayzah, you know our past relations. I fear for you a destiny similar to that which befell al-Nadir, or even worse." They rejected these overtures, however, with vulgar and obscene words.

When the Prophet received the news confirming the treachery, he was fully aware of what it meant: the Muslims were, in effect, besieged by two enemies who were determined to exterminate them. Yet his response to his companions was, "Rejoice, for

²⁹⁹ Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 438.

the end will be a happy one.” This statement reflected his total trust in God and his belief that, despite the great forces he was facing, the Muslims would be victorious if they were truly on God’s side. To give them more comfort and assurance he said:

By Him who holds my soul in His hand, God will provide you with a way out of this hardship. I indeed hope to go around the Ka’bah feeling absolutely safe, and that God will enable me to hold the keys of the Ka’bah in my hand. God will surely destroy the Persian and Byzantine Empires, and their treasures will be spent to further the cause of God.³⁰⁰

Huyayy ibn Akhtab went back to Quraysh with the news that the Qurayzah were joining them against the Muslims, but they needed ten days to prepare. They also requested that the allies should intensify their attacks against the defenders’ positions to prevent the Muslims from settling with the Qurayzah first. The Quraysh and the other allies were pleased with what Huyayy ibn Akhtab had accomplished, and they became certain of achieving victory. They intensified their attacks against the Muslim positions, especially the one where the Prophet himself stood. The fighting continued all day and extended through the night, and in the end, the attackers were repelled.

Nuaym ibn Mas’ud, a Ghatafan, came to Muhammad professing his faith in Islam and offered to help. He was able to plant seeds of doubt in the Qurayzah and Quraysh, causing them to lose trust in one another. As the two parties argued, the rest of the allied forces, who had joined the attack in hopes of plunder, lost resolve. Unprepared and now unwilling to continue the long siege, they finally gave up after a violent rainstorm devastated their camps.

In the morning, when the Muslims found out that their enemies had left and the siege had ended, their faith in the Prophet’s message grew stronger. Many believed that the arrival of Nuaym ibn Mas’ud to the Muslim camp and the success of his actions were God’s way of helping Muhammad and his companions to achieve victory. The split in the ranks of the enemies could not have occurred by chance; rather, it was the work of God, who decided to help the Muslims of unshakable faith.

The Judgment against the Banu Qurayzah

The treachery of the Jews was the most critical event of this war. After the departure of the allied forces, the Muslims forces then imposed a siege on the Jewish fortified positions that lasted twenty-five days. When the Qurayzah surrendered, the Prophet ordered their men to be detained and handcuffed. The Aws leaders begged him to

300. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 442 (quoting Ibn Kathir).

have mercy on their former allies. The Prophet answered: “Would you accept if I refer the matter between me and your former allies to one of you”? They were pleased by Muhammad’s response to their plea, and chose the chief of the Aws, S’ad ibn Mu’adh, to pass judgment on the Qurayzah.

When Muhammad told S’ad of his task, he said: “It is God and His messenger who are entitled to pass judgment.” The Prophet told him that it was God’s command that he should give his verdict. S’ad then asked the Aws; “Do you give me your most solemn oath by God that my verdict is acceptable and final?” Their answer was affirmative. Then he turned his head to the other side where Muhammad and other Muslims were sitting, and asked the same question. The Prophet answered, “Yes.”

S’ad then asked the Qurayzah whether they would accept his verdict, whatever it was, and they agreed. When S’ad received the answers from all parties, he announced the verdict: “I hereby rule that the fighters from the Qurayzah are to be killed, their properties to be divided, and their women and children be taken prisoner.” The Prophet endorsed the ruling. The judgment was then implemented. According to Umar al-Waqid, the total number of the fighters executed was twenty-five.

The execution of the Banu Qurayzah has been the subject of intense debate among scholars and historians. Western historians, especially the Zionists among them such as Heinrich Graetz and S. W. Baron, have linked the Banu Qurayzah to the rebels of Masada in 72 CE. They also gave exaggerated reports of the number of Jews who were executed, claiming that between four hundred and seven hundred were killed. Contemporary Muslim scholars such as Baraka Ahmad and W. N. Arafat present a completely different account of to the number killed and the circumstances. The Jews of Qurayzah were not freedom fighters or rebels; they were simply traitors. Karen Armstrong states that the execution was neither illegal nor immoral according to the tribal ethics of the time. Michael Lecker has demonstrated that the people of Qurayzah were not executed for being Jews, but for their treachery. Lecker demonstrated that a significant number of the Banu Kilab, who were Arab clients of the Qurayzah, were also executed for treason at the same time. Furthermore, thousands of Jews continued to live in Madina after the Battle of the Trench.³⁰¹

Muhammad’s Strategy and Plans following the Battle of the Trench

The failure of the joint expedition against the Muslim state marked a turning point in the history of Islam. This new stage was described clearly by Muhammad when he said: “Now we will no longer be on the defensive; they will not attack us again.”

The position of Muhammad in Arabia was greatly enhanced following the victory over the Quraysh and their allies at the Battle of the Trench. During the months that

301. Aslan, *No god but God*, 93–95.

followed, the Muslims carried out multiple raids against the tribes who had allied themselves with the Quraysh. These raids gave the Muslims complete control of the area surrounding Madina and tightened the economic blockade against Mecca.

As Madina's position improved, Mecca's position was on the decline. The continuing success of the Muslims made many of the Arabs question the validity of their traditional faith. Islam was able to make inroads into many tribes, and won new followers all over Arabia, including members of several clans of the Quraysh. There were many Muslims in Mecca who adopted Islam but did not publicize their status, as they did not wish to sever their ties with their families, but hoped that over time the entire community would accept Islam. Others were unable to emigrate to Madina; a number of converts who tried to leave Mecca were intercepted and forced to return to Mecca and stay with their families as prisoners.³⁰²

Many tribes who lived around Mecca or in the north along the trade routes to Syria signed a treaty of alliance with Muhammad. The Prophet did not demand that these tribes should accept Islam as their religion, and did not force them to pay alms (*zakat*). The nomadic **tribe of Ashja**, who lived within easy range of Madina, signed a treaty of alliance with Muhammad. In 627 CE, the prince of **Dumat-al-Jandal** signed a treaty of alliance with Muhammad and gave his daughter in marriage to one of Muhammad's companions, though he himself remained a Christian.³⁰³

Although the Muslims had gained several allies after the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet concluded that further spread of his message could not be achieved through more raids and wars. Ever since he had begun sharing his message, compulsion had never been the method of conversion. The Prophet was always trying to convey the principles of Islam to unbelievers, to help them understand what his message was all about. The Quraysh had represented the greatest obstacle to achieving this goal, as their opposition to Islam had prompted most of the Arabian tribes to ignore Muhammad's call. Ending the state of war between the Muslims and the Quraysh might remove that obstacle and allow the Prophet to spread his message freely. He concluded that the Muslims needed to demonstrate to all of Arabia that war was not their mission in life; rather, they wanted to achieve peace and justice. War was a necessary means to that end. The Prophet became interested in a peaceful relationship with the Quraysh, even if that meant lifting the economic blockade.³⁰⁴

The Peace Offensive of Al-Hudaybiyah

Around the sixth year of Al-Hijra, Muhammad announced to his companions that he had a strange dream where he saw himself standing in the Ka'bah with the shaven

302. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 523.

303. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 177–180.

304. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 521.

head of a pilgrim, wearing the traditional hajj costume, holding the key to the Ka'bah. This announcement was followed by a call to all Muslims in Arabia to join him in his visit to Mecca, as he intended to make the hajj. He also made it clear that this visit was not a military expedition, and he had no intention of violating the rule of pilgrimage forbidding all fighting. His announcement startled his companions, as they could not imagine themselves going to Mecca unarmed. Muhammad was firm with regard to the purpose of his visit to Mecca: It was nothing more than making the pilgrimage.

About 1,400 Muslims from Madina accompanied Muhammad on his peaceful march to Mecca in the month of Thul-qa'dah (**February–March, 628 CE**). He mounted his camel, al-Qaswa, and brought along seventy camels that he intended to slaughter at the end of the hajj rituals to distribute their meat to the poor in the sanctuary. When he arrived at a place called Dhul-Hulayfah, about nine kilometers from Madina, he stopped to pray, then marked the camels, following Arabian tradition, to make it known that they were to be slaughtered after the completion of the divine rituals. Muhammad and his companions then went into a state of purification (*ihram*), donning white garments. As they resumed their march, Muhammad, in a loud voice, uttered the pilgrims' cry: "Here I am, O, God, at Your service." It was very clear to everybody who saw the Muslims in their *ihram* costumes that they were on a peaceful mission.

The Quraysh were extremely agitated when they learned about the peaceful march of the Prophet and his companions. They immediately prepared themselves to stop this march by any means, including force. The Prophet continued his march until they reached a place called **Ghadir al-Ashtar**, where one of the scouts he sent to spy on the Quraysh came back and told him that the Quraysh had sent a force of two hundred men to intercept the march. In response to this information, he asked whether anyone knew of an alternative route that would allow them to avoid confrontation. A man from the tribe of Aslam led them through rough terrain to the plain of **al-Hudaybiyah**, south of Mecca, about a day's walk from the sanctuary.

As soon as the Prophet entered the sacred zone, he asked the companions to set up their camp, then declared:

By Him Who holds my soul in His hand, I shall respond favorably to any proposal the Quraysh puts to me today which helps establish good relations and guarantees respect to God's sanctuaries.

When Muhammad established his camp at al-Hudaybiyah, he was in effect, in a state called "**sit-in**," waiting for permission from the Quraysh to enter the city, refraining from violence, in accordance with the Arab tradition. The Muslims' pilgrimage to Mecca was a demonstration that Islam was not a foreign religion, but essentially an

Arabian one, with Mecca at its center. It also sent a clear message to the Meccans that Muhammad was prepared to establish a peaceful relationship with the Quraysh.³⁰⁵ Arab tribes who were on their way to Mecca for the pilgrimage understood this message. He sent a message to the Quraysh, assuring them that he had no intention of fighting anyone, informing them that he wanted to visit the Ka'bah to show that Muslims recognized its sanctity, and offering them a truce with them if they so desired. The Quraysh rejected his offer.³⁰⁶ Muhammed was determined to resolve the impasse peacefully, so after much back-and-forth with emissaries, he sent **Uthman ibn Affan** to Mecca to deliver his message. Uthman argued with the Quraysh that they should be faithful to their duty as custodians of the Ka'bah, which obligated them to make it possible for all pilgrims to visit the sacred house. The Quraysh rejected his argument, but offered Uthman permission to do the *tawaf* himself. Uthman made it clear that he would not do so until the Prophet had done his own *tawaf*. He stayed in Mecca for few days longer than he had planned in hopes that he would be able to persuade the Quraysh. He also took the opportunity to contact some of his old friends who had adopted Islam in secret. There were quite few of them who were happy to meet with him. Uthman passed on the Prophet's message that victory would be coming soon.

A rumor began to spread in the Muslim camp that Uthman had been killed; it became more plausible with each passing day that Uthman did not return. Muhammad became very sad and was deeply hurt by this development, as it meant that the Quraysh had terminated all possible attempts for peaceful settlement, leaving no other option but war. He declared to the Muslims in the camp: "Uthman was on a mission given to him by God. I, therefore, make a pledge on his behalf to fight the Quraysh." Then he called on his companions to give him a pledge to fight the Quraysh to the bitter end. Each companion, then, pledged to fight and never flee from battle, even if that meant his own death. This pledge became known as "**Bay'at al-Ridwan.**"

Allah was pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, and sent down serenity upon them, and rewarded them with an imminent conquest. And abundant gains for them to capture. Allah is mighty and wise.

(Chapter 26, Surah 48:18–19, the Triumph)

The companions realized that they were far inferior to the Quraysh in number; furthermore, they had started their journey carrying only what was absolutely necessary for traveling in the desert Arabia: their swords in their sheaths; none of them wore body armor. Shortly after the pledge was made, Uthman arrived back at the

305. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 183–184.

306. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 501–502.

camp. Muhammad was very pleased to see him alive, but was not happy to learn that the Quraysh still rejecting peace.

When the Quraysh learned about the pledge, their chiefs realized how determined the Muslims were to achieve their goal. They also considered the consequences of fighting near the sanctuary, especially during the sacred month. A delegation headed by **Suhayl ibn Amr** was therefore sent to the Muslim camp for negotiation with the Prophet.

Suhayl represented the new leadership of Mecca that had evolved after the failure of the Battle of the Trench. The Prophet received the Quraysh's delegation well, as their coming to the Muslims' camp for negotiations was itself a victory for him. He was extremely eager to conclude a peace agreement with the Quraysh, as he believed that he could achieve more with peace than through war. The Quraysh, however, were determined to prevent Muhammad from visiting the Ka'bah. Still, though they had rejected the advice of all mediators and refused the offer presented by Uthman, Muhammad's emissary, they were now at his camp ready to negotiate a peace treaty with him. For Muhammad, the terms of the agreement were not the issue; the goal was to bring peace between the two sides, as it was through peace that the Muslims would be able to spread God's message to all of Arabia.

The Prophet accepted all the conditions and demands that Suhayl presented for the sake of peace. This gave the Quraysh no excuse not to conclude the peace treaty. The Prophet's companions were shocked and distressed over the conditions that the Prophet accepted. They questioned the wisdom of accepting such terms, and argued among themselves against it, but the Prophet insisted.

The Prophet then called in Ali ibn Abi Talib to write down the peace agreement so that it might be signed by both sides. First, he asked Ali to write: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." Suhayl interrupted: I do not know this. Write down: "In your name, Our Lord." The Prophet told Ali to write the phrase Suhayl proposed, then continued with his dictation: "These are the terms of the peace agreement between Muhammad, God's messenger, and Suhayl ibn Amr." Again, Suhayl interrupted: "Had I accepted that you are God's messenger, I would not have fought you. You have to write down your name and your father's name." The Prophet accepted Suhayl's point and revised the dictation, telling Ali to write the following terms of the agreement between Muhammad and the Quraysh:

- Both have agreed to a complete truce for a period of ten years, during which all people will enjoy peace and security and will not attack one another.
- Moreover, if anyone from the Quraysh joins Muhammad without permission from his guardian or chief, he shall be returned to the Quraysh.
- If anyone from those in the camp of Muhammad joins the Quraysh, they are not required to return him.

- Both sides agree that they harbor good intentions toward each other.
- No theft or treachery shall be condoned.
- Whoever wishes to enter into an alliance with Muhammad may do so, and whoever wants to enter into an alliance with the Quraysh may do so.
- It is further agreed that Muhammad shall return home this year without entering Mecca. At the end of one year, the Quraysh shall evacuate Mecca for Muhammad so that Muslims may enter it to stay for three days only. Muslims shall carry only the armaments necessary for travelers—namely, swords in their sheaths, and no other arms.

Although the Prophet acquiesced to the terms of the agreement, it was extremely difficult for Muhammad's companions to accept it without unease and bitterness. Now they had to go back home without being able to make the hajj. They were still in the sacred state of *ihram*, the state of consecration, as they had been since leaving Dhul-Hulayfah. Traditionally, this state ends when the pilgrim has offered his sacrifice and shaved his head after completing the *tawaf*. The fact that they were prevented from visiting the sacred house put them in effect in the position of *muhsar*, a state of being unable to make the hajj owing to reasons beyond their control. In such a situation, God allows for release from *ihram* by slaughtering animals (sacrifice), and shaving one's head. The Prophet went out from his tent, slaughtered an animal, and called someone to shave his head. As soon as he had done that, the rest of his companions did the same. Umar then asked the Prophet: "Have you not told us that we would go to the Ka'bah and do our *tawaf* there?" the Prophet replied: "Have I told you that you will go there this year?"

The peace agreement between Mecca and the Islamic state of Madina opened new avenues for the message of Islam. For all practical purposes, it put an end to the economic blockade that had been imposed on Mecca. Muhammad was not interested in harming the Meccans; rather, he wanted to bring them into the fold of Islam and have them become an important component of the Islamic state.³⁰⁷ Furthermore, since receiving his revelation in 610 CE, Muhammad had faced strong opposition from the Quraysh. Most of the Arabian tribes sided with the Quraysh and adopted a hostile position toward the Prophet. Now, having concluded an agreement that ended the Quraysh's hostility, the Prophet had a greater chance of enhancing the position of the Islamic state through alliances with many tribes, which would allow him to spread the message of Islam throughout Arabia.³⁰⁸ And, in fact, several tribes accepted his call and adopted Islam. However, his mission was not limited to Arabia; he believed that he was the messenger of God to all mankind. Therefore, after the peace

307. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 185–186.

308. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 521.

agreement, he sent messengers to the kings and rulers of all the states surrounding Arabia, informing them of his message and calling on them to adopt Islam.

The War against Khaybar

In August 628 CE, a few weeks after the return to Madina, the Prophet called on Muslims to get ready for an expedition. This time the target was Khaybar, where the Nadir tribe had taken refuge. It was from Khaybar that the Jewish leaders had started their conspiracies against Islam. The new leader of Khaybar's Jews followed the same policies and tactics as the previous leadership. He had renewed his tribe's alliance with the Ghatafan, an Arab tribe whose quarters were not far from Khaybar. When the Prophet learned about the Nadir building new alliances, he formulated a plan consisting of two components. The first was to persuade the Jewish tribes to adopt a policy of peaceful coexistence with the Muslims based on equal respect of the interest of both sides; the second, to prepare for military confrontation if the first one failed.

The Prophet realized that to achieve total victory, he had to crush their power completely. He formulated a strategic plan to confront the enemy at each of their forts simultaneously by assigning a small detachment to attack a specific fort while the larger part of the army followed, capturing one fort at a time. After several weeks of sieges and attacks, most of the forts were captured; the remainder were forced to surrender in return for their safety. The surrender agreement stipulated that none of their fighters would be put to death; they would be allowed to leave Khaybar and its vicinity, taking with them their women and children. They would abandon all their claims to their land, money, horses, and arms. Shortly after the agreement was signed, while they were getting ready for departure, the Prophet received a request from their leaders to allow the Jews of Khaybar to stay and work in the orchards in return for giving the Muslim owners half the yield of all the land. The Prophet accepted the offer and amended the agreement.³⁰⁹ To seal the agreement, the Prophet took Safiyyah, the beautiful daughter of the chief of Nadir, as his wife.³¹⁰ The other Jewish population centers—Fadak, Wadi al-Qura, and Tayma—signed similar agreements with Muhammad.

When the Prophet returned to Madina from Khaybar, he celebrated the return of his cousin Ja'far ibn Abi Talib from Abyssinia, whom he had not seen for fourteen years. He also celebrated the arrival of his new wife Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, who was among the returnees. Earlier that year, her husband Ubaydallah ibn Jahsh had died in Abyssinia, so the Prophet proposed to her. The wedding ceremony was performed by proxy before the Negus (the king of Abyssinia).³¹¹

309. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 531–542.

310. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 180.

311. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 180–181.

The Second Trip to Mecca: The *Umrah* (Lesser Pilgrimage)

During the year that followed al-Hudaybiyah, the Muslims enjoyed many successes. Several tribes responded positively to Muhammad's message, and more Arabs adopted Islam as their religion. The Muslim expedition against Khaybar was a great success. The Muslims in Madina enjoyed calm and security. They feared no enemy to the north after the surrender of the Jews; nor did they fear any enemy to the south after signing the peace agreement with the Quraysh.

In **March 629 CE (the month of Dhul-Qa'adah, the seventh year AH)**, it was time to prepare for the promised pilgrimage to Mecca. The Prophet called his companions to join him in his journey to Mecca, and 2,600 Muslims answered his call. The pilgrims went into the state of consecration (*ihrām*) at the doorstep of the mosque in Madina.

The terms of the peace agreement stipulated that the Muslims were allowed to carry only their swords in their sheaths, which they did. However, for protection and to guard the pilgrims against any possible threat, the Prophet sent ahead of the group a hundred horses carrying more armaments, including shields, spears, and protective headgear, led by Muhammad ibn Maslamah. The pilgrims followed, with the Prophet on al-Qaswa, his camel, surrounded by companions who were watching all directions. Abdullah ibn Rawahah, a companion of the Prophet from the Ansar, held the reins of the Prophet's camel.

When Muhammad ibn Maslamah arrived at a place called **Marr al-Zahran**, which was only about one day's travel from Mecca, with the horses, a few men from the Quraysh questioned him about his mission and why he had so many horses. Those men informed the leaders of the Quraysh. This information prompted them to send a delegation to the Prophet asking him about the purpose of bringing horses and arms. He assured them that he was not going to carry the arms to the city. The head of the delegation then replied: "This is more like what we have known of your faithfulness."

When the Prophet was very close to the Haram, he told Abdullah ibn Rawahah to chant the following phrases:

There is no deity but God alone. He has fulfilled His promise, given victory to his servant, and dignity to his soldiers, and He alone defeated the confederates.

Abdullah ibn Rawahah repeated these phrases, and all the Muslims repeated them after him, providing an atmosphere of great strength and enthusiasm.

It had been agreed at al-Hudaybiyah that this year the Muslims could only make the lesser pilgrimage, the *umrah*, which did not include a visit to Mount Arafat and the Valley of Mina. The Quraysh elders watched the arrival of Muhammad from top of a nearby mountain. The sound of the Muslims loudly chanting the above-mentioned

phrases echoed through the valleys and empty streets of the city. The Meccans were impressed by the discipline of the Muslims. The huge crowd of pilgrims entered into the city slowly and solemnly, led by Muhammad on al-Qaswa. The Quraysh people were eager to see the Prophet and his companions coming into Mecca, especially as they had heard a rumor that they had been weakened physically by an epidemic. The Prophet was aware of this rumor, so when he reached the Ka'bah he dismounted, kissed the Black Stone, and then proceeded to make the circumambulation (*tawaf*) jogging. His companions did the same for the first three rounds. When he completed the seven rounds of *tawaf* and *sa'i*, he stopped and began slaughtering the sixty camels he had brought as a sacrifice. His companions did the same. Afterward, the Prophet and his companions shaved their heads and released themselves from the state of consecration (*ihram*).³¹²

The Prophet had left two hundred of his companions at a place close to Mecca called Ya'jaj, to guard the horses and the arms. When he and those companions who joined him in his *umrah* had completed their rituals, he sent a group of them to Ya'jaj to replace those who stayed behind. He himself remained in the Ka'bah until it was time for midday prayer (Zuhr). He ordered Bilal to go to the top of the Ka'bah and call for the prayer (Adhan):³¹³

God is most supreme. I bear witness that there is no deity but God. I declare that Muhammad is God's messenger. Come to prayer. Come to a certain success. God is most supreme.

Bilal climbed onto the roof of the Ka'bah three times a day. "His loud huge voice reverberated through the valley, urging Muslims to come to *salat* with the cry 'Allah Akbar,' reminding people that Allah was 'greater' than all the idols in the Haram, who could do nothing to prevent this ritual humiliation. It was an immense triumph for Muhammad, and many of the younger Quraysh became even more convinced that the old religion was doomed."³¹⁴

The Prophet and his companions stayed three days in Mecca, walking through the streets of the city without fear. The Meccans were able to see how close-knit the Muslim community was. Their dedication to the cause of Islam was clearly visible in the way they talked to one another, and in their deference to the Prophet. The Meccans admired the great degree of unity among the Muslim community despite the fact that Muhammad's followers belonged to many tribes. The Muslim community that the Prophet Muhammad established was based on justice, equity, and good conscience, prompting many people to join. This community, known as the Umma at the time of

312. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 192; Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 576–580.

313. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 580.

314. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 194.

emigration to Madina, later on was referred to as the Muslim community of Madina. The Quran speaks of it thus:

**You are the best community that ever emerged for humanity: you advocate what is moral, and forbid what is immoral, and believe in Allah.
(Chapter 3–4, Surah 3:110, the Family of Imran)**

The chiefs of the Quraysh became worried that their own people would begin to have second thoughts about Islam after they witnessed what Muhammad had achieved. Therefore, when the three days were over, two emissaries went down to Mecca to tell Muhammad, who was sitting with S'ad ibn Ubaddah and other helpers: "Your time is up and you have to leave." S'ad was angry at their lack of courtesy, but the Prophet silenced him, saying: "O, S'ad, no ill words to those who have come to visit us in our camp!" To the astonishment of the Quraysh, Muhammad and his companions left Mecca that night in an orderly fashion. Their peaceful withdrawal from the city showed their confidence that they expected a speedy return.³¹⁵

The news of the Muslims' pilgrimage spread rapidly throughout the entire peninsula. More and more Bedouins came to Madina to meet Muhammad and to declare their adoption of the religion of Islam. Many tribes became Muhammad's confederates. A steady stream of the younger generation of the Quraysh who had converted to Islam arrived in Madina. Prominent young Quraysh warriors, including Amr ibn al-As and Khalid ibn al-Walid, converted to Islam and made the Hijra to Madina. Khalid's brother was in the Prophet's company when he came to Mecca, and tried to see Khalid after he had completed the duties of the *umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), but Khalid had left Mecca before the arrival of the Muslims. Khalid's brother then sent him a letter, saying: "I am amazed at the fact that you continue to turn away from Islam when you are as intelligent as I know you to be. God's messenger asked me about you and said, 'A man of his caliber cannot remain ignorant of Islam.' It is high time, brother, for you to make amends for the great benefits you have missed." When Khalid read the letter, he felt as if a veil had fallen from his eyes, and he decided to emigrate to Medina. On his journey to Medina, he met two other men from the Quraysh who had made the same decision: Amr ibn al-As and Uthman ibn Talhah.

Upon his arrival to Medina, Khalid went to meet the Prophet and declared his faith, and then said: "Messenger of God, I am thinking of those battles at which I was fighting against the side of the truth. I request you to pray God for me to forgive me." The Prophet said: "When you embrace Islam, all your past sins are forgiven." Khalid went on to become a key figure in the Prophet's efforts to spread Islam.

315. Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1983), 291.

The Expedition to Syria (the Battle of Mu'tah)

As the Muslim state in Madina became more secure, Muhammad felt that he could devote time and effort to expand his call to other communities. He picked a number of his companions who combined charming personality with intelligence and ability to handle difficult situations and sent them as envoys to the rulers of neighboring countries. His envoys were received with varying degrees of hospitality. The rulers of Byzantium, Abyssinia, Egypt, and Yemen replied cordially, while the Persian emperor sent back a rude reply.

In September of 629, about three months after the *umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), the Prophet sent an envoy to Shurahbil ibn Amr, the Ghassanid ruler of Bostra in southern Syria, to convey to him the message of Islam. Shurahbil beheaded Muhammad's emissary. When the news of this hostile act reached the Prophet, he mobilized an army of three thousand men toward Syria under the command of his adopted son, Zayd ibn Harithah. Muhammad gave instructions that if Zayd should be killed, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, who was the Prophet's cousin, should take his place. Abdullah ibn Rawahah was named as third commander should Ja'far be killed. If all three were incapacitated, the men were to choose their commander.

When news of the Muslim march reached Shurahbil, he was able to mobilize all the Arab tribes under his control, raising a larger force of tens of thousands of soldiers. In spite of this, the Muslims decided to press on, advancing northward until they reached a point not far from the southern end of the Dead Sea.

As the two armies faced each other, Zayd realized that the Muslim army was vastly outnumbered on a scale that they had never experienced before. Furthermore, the slope of the land was against his army, so he decided to withdraw southward to Mu'tah, where they would have the ground advantage. There the two forces clashed. The Byzantines managed to kill all three Muslim commanders, assuming that this would bring them victory. Undaunted, however, the Muslim soldiers chose Khalid ibn al-Walid as their commander, and he was able to maneuver a successful withdrawal with minimal losses. From that day he was named "the Sword of Allah," a title bestowed upon him by the Prophet.³¹⁶

The loss was a heavy one for Muhammad, and it weakened him politically. It soon was eclipsed however, by a far more consequential event: the Quraysh broke the Treaty of al-Hudaybiya, bringing the longstanding ideological conflict between Mecca and Medina to a head.

316. Martin Lings, *Muhammad*, 298–299.

The Conquest of Mecca

The heart of the al-Hudaybiyah agreement, established after the Battle of the Trench, was the establishment of a peaceful relationship between the Muslims and the Quraysh. The agreement stipulated that Arabian tribes were free to make alliances with either side. The end of hostilities applied to those allies in the same way as they applied to the main parties of the agreement.

Now, the Bakr tribe had signed an alliance with the Quraysh, while the Khuza'ah had entered an alliance with the Muslims. In **Sha'ban, 8 AH (November 629 CE)**, the Bakr clan of Dayl attacked a group of men of the Muslim-aligned Khuza'ah who were gathering at a water spring called al-Watir near Mecca. The Khuza'ah were forced to retreat, taking refuge at the consecrated area of the Ka'bah, where fighting was prohibited; all Arabs recognized the sanctity of that area. The Bakr, however, violated this precept and killed a large number of the Khuza'ah. Moreover, the Quraysh aided Bakr in this attack by providing them with arms and men. Hence the peace agreement was violated not only by the Bakr tribe but also by the Quraysh.

When the fight was over, the Khuza'ah sent a delegation to Madina. They presented to the Prophet the full details of the attack and the role of the Quraysh in the violation of the treaty. There was no doubt in Muhammad's mind, then, that the Quraysh had committed a blatant violation of the peace agreement. The Quraysh, realizing that this put them in a grave situation, sent Abu Sufyan to Madina in an attempt to rectify matters and renew the peace agreement with the Prophet. But the Prophet saw his opportunity to finally resolve the conflict between Medina and Mecca. He turned Abu Sufyan away, and began preparing for war against the Quraysh.

Marching on Mecca

The Prophet already had formulated his plans for the expedition against Mecca. The most important elements of the plan were to take the Quraysh by surprise and give them no time to prepare their defenses or build alliances. He asked Abu Bakr to keep the decision to attack Mecca a secret. He told his closest companions to start preparing immediately, but quietly. He put Umar ibn al-Khattab in charge of security. Umar appointed patrols on all routes leading out of Madina or into it, and gave them instructions not to allow anyone suspicious to pass through.

The surprise factor was not the only element in Muhammad's military strategies. The Prophet was always concerned about bloodshed. Muhammad believed that his objective could be reached in a bloodless manner by striking at the right moment when the enemy would not dare offer any resistance. Victory could be obtained by overwhelming the enemy rather than annihilating it. His plan was to preserve the

resources and energies of the Quraysh, and to redirect those resources after victory in a constructive way toward enhancing the power of the Islamic state.³¹⁷

The Prophet sent messages to the Muslims in other regions of Arabia to get ready for a major expedition, but kept the target a secret. Most Muslims assumed that they would be marching to Syria in compensation for the setback in Mu'tah. The preparations for war could not be concealed, but the most important job was to keep the destination unknown and to divert attention away from the intended target.

On the tenth day of Ramadan in the eighth year of the Islamic calendar (**January 630 CE**), The Prophet marched at the head of a large army. As they made their way in the direction of Mecca, Muslims from various tribes joined the army in great numbers. All the Muhajirun and Ansar participated in this expedition; none of them was left behind. Raising such an army in those days was unprecedented; indeed, it was overwhelming. When the army reached a place called **Asfan, not far from Madina**, the Prophet asked for a jug of water. Raising it high to be seen by his army, he drank during the day and indicated that the soldiers were to follow his example; that is, they were allowed not to fast while traveling. He himself did not fast during the twelve-day march until he reached Mecca.

The Muslims continued marching until they reached **Marr al-Zahran, not far from Mecca**, where they camped. Remarkably, the Quraysh had not received any intelligence about the march until then. The Quraysh were terribly concerned about the Prophet's plans, and they were sending people to gather information, but failed to receive any news about the Muslims' activities. To increase the impact of his presence, the Prophet ordered every single soldier to light a fire. His strategy was to win the psychological war in hopes of averting a full-scale war. The fires created a magnificent scene that attracted the attention of Abu Sufyan, who went out that night to gather intelligence. Al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, had mounted a mule and headed toward the city; arriving at a place called the **Valley of Arak**, he heard people talking, and recognized the voice of Abu Sufyan. He called to him, identified himself, and walked toward him. When Abu Sufyan learned about the massive force that Muhammad had assembled, he agreed to go to the Muslim camp to meet the Prophet.

The next morning, when Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, he found the Meccans very restless, confused, and not knowing what to do. They were gathered in groups all over the city. Having no time to waste, Abu Sufyan shouted: "People of Quraysh, Muhammad is approaching at the head of an army for which you are no match. He who goes into Abu Sufyan's house is safe. He who enters the mosque is safe, and he who stays in his home with his door locked will be safe." The Meccans then dispersed and did what Abu Sufyan had asked them what to do.

317. Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of The Prophet Muhammad* (New Delhi: Nusrat Ali Nasri for Kitab Bhavan, 2007 (first printing 1923), 79.

The Muslims laid siege to Mecca from all sides. Mecca is situated in a valley, surrounded on all sides by high mountains. There was only one highway, which passed through the city from north to south. Two roads joined the main highway: the **Hajun Road** and the **Kada Road**. As his army reached the outskirts of Mecca, the Prophet separated it into four divisions, each entering Mecca from one side so that the whole city would be in their hands at the same time. Muhammad, the supreme commander, was kept informed of the activities of the different detachments. When the Prophet came to know that one of his commanders had made remarks about taking revenge on the Quraysh, that commander was replaced; the Prophet declared: **“The honor of Mecca shall increase today, and its sanctity will in no way be violated, as it is there that the Qiblah of Islam is situated.”**³¹⁸

One of the divisions of the army commanded by Khalid ibn al-Walid was attacked by a group of Quraysh people led by Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl. Khalid responded to their attack and his detachment killed twenty Meccans, while the Muslims lost two soldiers. When the Prophet learned about this fight, he was angry, and said: “Have I not given clear orders to all units not to fight?” He was then told that Khalid had been attacked by the Meccans and was forced to fight back. The Prophet said: “Whatever God brings is good.”

The Prophet was overwhelmed by the great victory God granted him. Only eight years had passed since he had been forced to flee from Mecca, and now he was returning to his city and facing no resistance. He bowed his head very low as he entered. His entry to Mecca was unparalleled in history. No conqueror would enter the capital of his enemy with excessive modesty and gratitude, as the Prophet did. Muhammad entered Mecca prostrating himself repeatedly on the back of his camel, reciting the *surah* entitled “al-Fath” (Victory) continuously. The Prophet was thankful for God’s graciousness; he felt that it was all achieved by the will of God.

When the authority of the Muslim army was established in Mecca, a tent was set up for Muhammad in al-Hujun. Then he went straight to the Ka’bah, riding his camel. When he arrived there, he touched the Black Stone with a short stick he was carrying and raised his voice: “God is the most supreme.” The Muslims echoed his cry. Then he started his *tawaf* on his camel, and upon the completion of the seven rounds, he dismounted and prayed at Maqam Ibrahim. The Prophet then called in Uthman ibn Talhah, who kept the keys of the Ka’bah, and asked him to open the door. There were 360 idols on and around the Ka’bah; they all were removed.

The Prophet prayed inside the Ka’bah, and then addressed the Quraysh:

There is no deity other than God, who has fulfilled His promise, supported His servant, and defeated the confederate tribes on His own. No

318. Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 86.

practice of pride or privilege nor any revenge or claim to any property is valid except that of the care of Ka'bah and the provision of drinking water to pilgrims. People of Quraysh, God has taken away from you the passionate pride of ignorance which made you attach great value and honor to your ancestors and value them highly. All people are the descendants of Adam, and Adam was created from clay.

He then recited:

O people, We created you all from a male and female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. The best among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Allah is all-knowing, well-experienced.

(Chapter 26, Surah 49:13, the Private Room)

Then he asked the Quraysh, "What sort of judgment do you think I am going to pass against you?"

They replied: "You are a benevolent one. You are an honorable brother and the son of an honorable brother of ours."

He said: "You may go free. You are all pardoned."

Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin, came to him with the keys to the Ka'bah in his hand and requested, "Messenger of God, give us the privilege of looking after the Ka'bah in addition to our present one of providing drinking water for pilgrims."

The Prophet refused, and called Uthman ibn Talhah. He handed him the keys back and said, "This is a day of honesty, when promises are honored."

The Meccans who had been unceasingly hostile to Muhammad and his followers for twenty years did not expect to receive such treatment from the Prophet. To be pardoned was beyond their wildest dreams. He spared their lives, guaranteed their safety, and protected their properties. Such treatment achieved an instant change of attitude in every Meccan. They were amazed by the changes Islam made in their fellow Arabs' behavior. They admired the Muslims' discipline and dedication, and the bonds Islam had created within the Muslim community. The Meccans now had the chance to learn more about Islam, which prompted many of them to come to Muhammad to declare their adoption of the faith; the majority wanted to become Muslims. The Prophet, therefore, sat at the hill of al-Safa and received their pledges of embracing Islam. No one was forced to come. The Prophet not only captured Mecca, he also captured the hearts of all Meccans.

Only a few people were under penalty of death for serious crimes committed against Muslims. One of them was Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl, who had attacked Khalid's forces. When the Muslim army had entered Mecca, Ikrimah had fled to Yemen. His

wife, Umm Hakim bint al-Harith, became a Muslim. She went to the Prophet and asked him to pardon Ikrimah and grant him safety. He granted her request. She then went to Yemen and brought Ikrimah back to the Prophet, and he adopted Islam.

The Prophet stayed nearly twenty days in Mecca, making all the decisions and arrangements needed for the Muslim community of Mecca. He took all measures to remove the idols from the homes of the new Muslims. He also sent several expeditions to the surrounding area to remove all idols. Khalid ibn al-Walid went to Nakhlah to destroy al-Uzza, Amr ibn al-As went to Hudhayl to destroy its idol Suwa, and S'ad ibn Zayd was sent to destroy Manat.

The Battle of Hunayn (Shawal, 8 AH/January 630 CE)

Muhammad's conquest of Mecca was shocking to many tribes in Arabia, especially when the news spread that the Quraysh had embraced Islam. Two powerful tribes of Hijaz—the Hawazin, who lived in a mountainous area close to Ta'if, and the tribe of Thaqif, whose home was the fertile oasis of Ta'if—decided to go to war against the Prophet and his new Meccan followers. Other tribes of Hijaz joined this coalition, including the Nasr, the Jusham, S'ad ibn Bakr, and groups of the Hilal. The allied forces of these tribes agreed to give the overall command to Malik ibn Awf of the Hawazin tribe. Malik was a young man of immense courage who was well respected by all the clans; he managed to gather about twenty thousand soldiers. He asked each fighting man to bring to the battlefield his family and all their wealth, including camels, cattle, and silver, believing that his men would have no choice but to fight hard to protect their women, children, and property.

As soon as Muhammad heard about the enemy marching toward Mecca, he organized a large force consisting of the ten thousand Muslims who had marched on Mecca and two thousand Meccans. Muhammad left Mecca on January 27, 630 CE, and camped close to the enemy at a place called Hunayn on the evening of January 30. The next morning, the Muslims started their march to meet the enemy forces. As they approached the entrance of the valley, they encountered a heavy shower of arrows aimed at them from all directions, which disrupted their march and caused chaos in their lines. It took Muhammad and a hundred men from the Muhajirun and the Ansar to rally behind the Prophet and to counteract the enemy's assault, forcing the Hawazin to retreat and to flee. The Muslims chased them and confronted them again at a valley called *Awtas*. Many of the Hawazin were killed; the rest fled and took refuge at the fortified city of Ta'if. The events of this encounter are mentioned in the Quran:

Allah has given you victory in numerous regions; but on the day of Hunayn, your great number impressed you, but availed you nothing;

and the land, as spacious as it was, narrowed for you; and you turned your backs in retreat.

Then Allah sent down his serenity upon his Messenger, and upon the believers; and He sent down troops you did not see; and He punished those who disbelieved. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.

(Chapter 10, Surah 9:25–26, Repentance)

Ta'if, the home of the Thaqif tribe, was a fortified city, and its inhabitants were well prepared. A siege was imposed on the city; however, after twenty days, the Prophet realized that a prolonged siege would be of little use. It was also clear to him that the Thaqif were not in a position to plan an offensive war against the Muslim state. Therefore Muhammad decided to leave them alone for the time being, especially since the consecrated months were about to begin.

The Muslims had gained great wealth from the Hawazin. All their women and children became captives. The spoils consisted of **twenty-four thousand camels, forty thousand sheep, and four thousand ounces of silver**. When the battle ended, all the prisoners and the spoils were gathered at **al-Ji'ranah** valley, a short distance from Mecca. When the Prophet arrived at al-Ji'ranah, he received a delegation from the Hawazin headed by Malik ibn Awf himself, declaring their acceptance of Islam and appealing for mercy. The Prophet responded to their request and freed the women and children. He acted mercifully, demonstrating forgiveness from a point of strength in his response to their appeal. The remainder of the spoils were divided among the Muslim fighters, with the Quraysh leaders receiving a significant portion. A fighter on foot received four camels or forty sheep. A horseman received three times as much, as was customary. None of the Ansar, be he a chief or an ordinary member of his clan, was given any special gift. Several Ansar leaders expressed their concerns and dissatisfaction with this. The chief of the Ansar, S'ad ibn Ubadah, went to the Prophet and said to him: "Messenger of God, you have distributed the spoils of war among your own people and the other Arabian tribes, but no such gifts were made to any person among the Ansar; the clans of the Ansar have taken your action to heart." The Prophet appeared to be surprised that the Ansar felt this way, so he asked S'ad to assemble these clans in a nearby place and to let him know when they had assembled; the Prophet then addressed them, saying: "People of the Ansar, are you aggravated at a trifle of this world which I have given out to certain people in order to win their hearts over to Islam and left you to rely on your faith? Are you not satisfied, people of the Ansar, that other people should go to their quarters with sheep and camels while you go back to your own quarters with God's messenger?" As they heard the Prophet's words, tears sprang to their eyes. They were so touched that their beards were wet with tears. They said: "We are satisfied with God's messenger

as our share.”³¹⁹ The Prophet then finished sharing out the spoils among the different tribes who had participated in the war.

One of Muhammad’s greatest achievements after the conquest of Mecca was the genuine reconciliation with the leaders of Mecca, the men who few months before had been his implacable enemies. It is not surprising to find that Abu Sufyan helped with the destruction of the idol of al-Lat at Ta’if, and was later present at the Battle of Yarmouk in 636. It is more surprising to learn that, after Muhammad’s death when there was disaffection in some of the tribes, Suhayl ibn Amr is credited with being chiefly responsible for keeping the Meccans loyal. Most interesting of all is the case of Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl. At first proscribed by Muhammad, then pardoned, he became a keen Muslim and was given several important military and administrative posts. Ikrimah died as martyr in one of the battles in Syria.³²⁰

Arabia after Hunayn

From al-Ji’ranah, the Prophet Muhammad went to make the lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*) at Mecca, then started his journey back to Madina after being away for three months, between the month of Ramadan and the month of Dhul-Hijjah. The period of time that followed the Prophet’s return to Madina was a peaceful one, during which only few small expeditions were sent to certain tribes to convey the message of Islam, or to destroy certain famous idols. However, it was a time that saw radical changes in Arabia beyond recognition.

The most important change that happened after the conquest of Mecca and the victory of Hunayn was the change in the attitude of Arabia toward Islam. Upon the return of the Prophet to Madina, in the early part of the year 9 AH, he received delegations from various parts of Arabia. All had different missions; some of them merely wanted to gather information about Islam and the nature of the society it had established; others came to pledge their loyalty without committing themselves to being Muslims; but a significant number came to declare that they had accepted the faith of Islam and to tell the Prophet that he could rely on their support. The Prophet received all those delegations warmly, and dealt with them tactfully. He learned from his close companions, especially Abu Bakr, the internal politics of the various groups and the relations between the subdivisions of any group. There was no question of coercing or pressuring any group of people, or any individual, to accept Islam. It was sufficient, from the Islamic point of view, for any tribe or community to declare its willingness to live in peace with Islam, not impeding its progress or conspiring against it, to maintain the friendliest of relations with the Muslim community. Delegations who accepted Islam were assured that they were part of the Muslim community, enjoying

319. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 668–669.

320. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 210–211.

all the rights of Muslims. With each such delegation, the Prophet sent one or more of his companions to teach them the essentials of their new faith and to help them lead an Islamic life.

Those delegations continued to arrive, one after another, throughout the tenth year of the Prophet's settlement in Madina. The net result of that year was indeed that the whole of Arabia was now more or less loyal to Islam.³²¹

Tribal Relationships with Islam

The biographies of the Prophet present us with long lists of the tribes that sent deputations to Madina. It is not clear from these biographies what obligations these tribes had toward the Muslim state of Madina. Muslim historians have assumed that the arrival of the deputation to Madina signified the tribe's adoption of Islam and the acceptance of the obligation to **perform the prayer (*salat*), and to pay the tax (*zakat*)**. However, this was not the case; the relationship between the Arab tribes with Madina was not the same in different regions of Arabia. W. Montgomery Watt summarizes the status of the Islamic state in 632 as a conglomeration of tribes in alliance with Muhammad on varying terms. The tribes in Hijaz were all firmly united with Muhammad, and all professed Islam. In Najd, northeast of Madina, parts of the tribes of the region embraced Islam, allied themselves with the Prophet, and paid taxes. The majority of the Banu Hanifah, east of Madina, opposed Islam. In Yemen and the rest of the southwest, many groups professed Islam, but they generally constituted only a section of each tribe, and in all were probably less than half the population. The position in the southeast and along the Gulf was similar. On the Syrian border beyond the Gulf of Akaba, there had been little success in detaching tribes from the Byzantine emperor.

Although the Prophet Muhammad, then, had not made himself the ruler of entire Arabia, he had to a great extent unified the Arabs. Through the religious and political system he had created, Arabs became aware of themselves as an ethnological and cultural unit. Islam provided an economic, social, and political system that attracted men of the nomadic tribes in various ways. Religion was an integral part of this system, since it gave the ideas on which the whole was based. All Muslims were equal, and Muhammad treated his followers with the courtesy and respect shown by a nomadic chief to his fellow tribesmen. The Arabs of that day certainly thought of the system as a whole, and were incapable of distinguishing its economic, political, and religious aspects independently. They could not have the economic and political benefits of membership without the religious profession of belief in God and His messenger.³²²

321. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 773–774.

322. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 223–225.

The Byzantine Threat and the Invasion of Tabuk (Rajab, 9 AH/October 630 CE)

Greater Syria was an important part of the Byzantine Empire. Southern Syria, including the areas known today as Palestine and Jordan, was governed by Arab rulers from the tribe of Ghassan who exercised limited authority as agents of the Byzantine emperor. After defeating the Seleucids in the first century BC, the Roman emperor **Augustus** sent a failed expedition to South Arabia aiming at controlling the trade coming from India to the Middle East through South Arabia. This failure prompted the Romans to establish a maritime route linking the Mediterranean world with Arabia and India. They also utilized the services of their allies, the Abyssinians, for the protection of their interests in the region.

Before Islam, in the late sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century CE, Byzantium viewed Arabia as a vast desert which could present no danger to the empire. They assigned to their agents the duty of protecting their southern borders from potential raids, the Ghassanids. The radical changes in Arabia as a result of the establishment of the Muslim state in Madina alarmed Byzantium. The battle of Mu'tah was a clear indication of what this state represented. Although that battle technically ended in a military defeat, the Byzantines witnessed how a small Muslim force was able to confront a much larger Byzantine army, and how they were able to withdraw in an orderly fashion after they inflicted heavy losses on their enemy. Byzantium also watched the events in Arabia over the following eighteen months as Muhammad was able to defeat his opponents and expand the Muslim state to include almost all of Arabia.

The Prophet received information from Syria that the Byzantines were raising a large force to attack the Muslim state. He also learned that the Ghassan, the Byzantines' agents in Syria, were in contact with some of the Hypocrites in Madina in an effort to bolster opposition to the Prophet. More intelligence reached Muhammad, indicating that forces from the Arab tribes of Lakhm, Judham, Amilah, and Ghassan were mobilized and gathered at the plains of Balqa, in Palestine, in preparation for a march toward Madina.³²³

The Arab tribes along the road to Syria were less open to converting to Islam than the tribes in other parts of Arabia that had accepted Islam and allied themselves with Muhammad. The northern tribes were largely Christians, and they had also a long history of association with the Byzantines. The prestige of the Byzantine Empire stood high after the decisive victory over the Persians and the restoration of the **Holy Rood** (a relic of the True Cross) to Jerusalem in March of 630. The Prophet realized that to win over the tribes in the north, along the road to Syria, he had to demonstrate greater power by launching an attack against Byzantium in Palestine. The mounting

323. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 685–686.

of a huge expedition would be a counter-blast to what Heraclius had done in 630. So the Prophet announced his decision in the month of Rajab, and called the nation to start preparations for the march to face the enemy in Palestine, a journey of up to a thousand kilometers on camelback. The call to arms was spread all over Arabia, so that all new Muslims could join up.

This was the first time that the Prophet had announced the destination of an expedition. In the past he had always planned his expeditions in a way that allowed him to take his enemy by surprise. The difficult nature of this expedition required him to inform his followers how serious and challenging this mission would be so they could prepare themselves for the urgency of the critical situation. The Prophet called upon the Umma (community) to respond to the call of jihad to defend the cause of Islam against the aggression of Byzantium. He encouraged the rich to be generous in providing resources for the war. The Muslims responded well and donated thousands of camels, horses, and silver. The women donated their jewelry to help equip the fighters with arms and transport. The Prophet was very pleased by the generosity of his companions, saying, “The one who has equipped the ‘hardship army’ has been forgiven his past sins.” (The “**hardship army**” was the title given by the Muslims and historians to that expedition.)

As soon as the Muslims heard the Messenger’s call, they rushed to comply with his orders. Tribes and clans from all regions of Arabia began pouring into Madina. Almost all Muslims responded positively. The needy and poor who could not afford a ride came to Muhammad asking for one so that they would be able to share in the fight against the Byzantines. Only the Hypocrites abstained from spending and stayed behind.

Once the army was equipped, the Prophet started the march northward to **Tabuk**. The army was composed of **thirty thousand fighters**; the Muslims had never marched in such great numbers before. It was a long and difficult journey in the middle of a hot summer; however, they were patient and persistent.

An interesting measure of the Muslims’ growing wealth and strength, relative to their strength at the battle of Mu’tah, is the number of men and the number of horses on their previous expeditions. At **Uhud** in 624, they had more than three hundred men and only **two horses**. In 626, in their march to **Badr** to meet Abu Sufyan, a year after Uhud, they had 1,500 men and only **ten** horses. Two years later, in 628, at **Khaybar**, there was about the same number of men, but **two hundred** horses. In March 629 CE, at **Mu’tah**, the Muslim army comprised three thousand men. At **Hunayn** in 630, seven hundred Emigrants had **three hundred** horses, while four thousand Ansar had another **five hundred** horses. In the expedition of Tabuk they had thirty thousand men and **ten thousand** horses.³²⁴

324. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 214–215.

When the Muslim army arrived at Tabuk it encamped, ready to confront the Byzantine forces and their allies. However, they found no trace of any Byzantine forces. Either the Byzantines had withdrawn their forces when they heard of the strength of the Muslim army—a force ten times greater than the one they had faced at Mu'tah—or the information received by the Prophet was not correct. As the information about the mobilization of Byzantine forces had come from Coptic traders from Egypt doing business in Arabia, it was most likely that the Byzantines had decamped. Their forfeit gave the Muslim army a great victory; they gained a tremendous political and military reputation in Syria as well as at home in Arabia, far better than if their victory had come in a direct military confrontation.³²⁵

After this show of force by the Prophet and the Muslims, many tribes and delegations came to pledge their allegiance and agree to pay taxes, and he secured the northern borders through alliances with those tribes. These agreements ensured that the Muslim state in Madina became better insulated against any trouble from the northern parts of Arabia.

The Prophet's march from Madina to Tabuk was in the month of Rajab, and his return was in Ramadan. This expedition took fifty days, twenty days of which were spent in Tabuk, and thirty days were the time it took to travel to Tabuk and back to Madina. The army was received in Madina by all the Muslims as a great and victorious force. Women and children were singing, expressing great happiness and pride. When the Prophet had settled back in his city, he began to receive delegations from all regions of Arabia declaring their acceptance of Islam. Thaqif representatives came to Madina for negotiations with the Prophet. He gave them no concession on any of the issues they presented. They had no alternative but complete surrender and acceptance of Islam. The Thaqif delegation accepted the Prophet's terms.

The Tabuk expedition marks a new phase in the history of Islam. It is true that this expedition was a response to a threat, but the expansion of the Muslim state beyond Arabia to include the Fertile Crescent had always been on Muhammad's mind. Islam was a call to Arabs and non-Arabs, aimed at a spiritual union that embraced all of humanity in all the countries of the earth. The expedition to Tabuk, then, was a reconnaissance of the route to Syria, and an assertion that the Muslim sphere of influence extended beyond the borders of Arabia. It was clearly a strong and serious challenge to the Byzantine Empire. The treaties with the Christian communities on and near the Gulf of Aqaba, guaranteeing them protection in return for payments of tribute, imply that this assertion of a sphere of influence was intended to be permanent. These Christian communities were not asked to become Muslims, but only to submit to the Islamic state on certain conditions—mainly that the payment of an annual tribute, in money or in kind, would allow them to manage their own affairs as

325. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 700–701.

they had done before, and in their relations with outsiders they would be under the protection of the Islamic state.³²⁶

Upon returning from Tabuk, the Prophet was firm in dealing with the opposition in Madina. Three incidents connected with the Tabuk expedition shed light on the nature and extent of such opposition: an assassination plot against him, which took place on a dangerous road on a dark night when he was returning to Madina; the “Mosque of Dissension,” which the Hypocrites built outside the city to be a center of conspiracy against Islam; and the Hypocrites who had stayed away from the expedition, and who were behind the first two issues.

The Declaration of No Place for Unbelievers in Arabia (Dhul-Hijjah, 9 AH/December 630 CE)

The Prophet and the Muslim army returned to Madina from Tabuk in the month of Ramadan. Two months later, the Prophet sent Abu Bakr to carry out the pilgrimage as the emir of Muslim pilgrims. Three hundred Muslims from Madina accompanied Abu Bakr; the Prophet also sent camels to be slaughtered in Mecca on his behalf. The purpose of this particular pilgrimage was to emphasize the difference between the Islamic way of pilgrimage and that of the unbelievers. The unbelievers used to do their *tawaf* naked. Islam prohibited this tradition and required the Muslims to cover their bodies.

After Abu Bakr left Madina, a new *surah* entitled “Repentance” was revealed. It starts with a declaration terminating all past treaties made between the Prophet and the Arabian tribes, with the exception of those tribes which had been absolutely faithful to the terms of their treaties. A grace period of four months was given. It was necessary to convey the message to all Arabian tribes, but most importantly to those who were parties to such treaties. The approaching pilgrimage season was the proper occasion for the termination of treaties to be announced.

The Prophet consulted with his companions, and they suggested that he should send someone to inform Abu Bakr of the new declaration so that he could announce it there. The Prophet said: “Only a man from my own household should convey this on my behalf.” This was in keeping with social traditions of the time. So he summoned his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and gave him the following instructions:

Take out this new revelation of the beginning of the *surah* and declare to all people on the day of sacrifice, when they have assembled in Mina, that no unbeliever will go into heaven, and no unbeliever may offer the pilgrimage after this year. No one is allowed to do the *tawaf* naked, and

³²⁶ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 218–219.

whoever has a covenant or a treaty with the Prophet, that treaty will be honored for the full length of its term.

On the appointed day, on the tenth day of Dhul-Hijjah, when all the Muslims were in Mina, Ali made his declaration:

This is an address to all people. Let them all know that no unbeliever may be admitted to heaven. No unbeliever is allowed to offer the pilgrimage after this season, and no one is allowed to do the *tawaf* round the Ka'bah in the nude. Whoever has a treaty with the Prophet, that treaty will be honored for its full term. Those who do not have treaty with the Prophet are hereby given four months' notice.

This declaration was simply claiming Arabia as a land of Islam. The announcement sent a clear message to the unbelievers that there was no place for them in Arabia. Those who had treaties and were faithful to the terms of their treaties were given a new confirmation that the treaty was to be honored by the Prophet and Muslims to the last day. If any treaty lapsed before the end of four months, then those who had that treaty would enjoy the longer period of four months. These regulations applied only to the Arabian Peninsula. Outside Arabia, the unbelievers would not be affected by these regulations. Followers of other religions, such as Christians and Jews, were treated differently. They were considered equal citizens of the Muslim state, provided that they abided by the rules and laws of the state.³²⁷

The Prophet had maintained security agreements with different tribes since his emigration from Mecca to Madina. As a matter of fact, the Madina Constitution was the first of these agreements. **It was a pact of alliance among all residents of Madina regardless of religion or descent (the emigrants from Mecca, the Aws, the Khazraj, and the different Jewish tribes),** who were all committed to participation in the protection of their new city-state. He extended this security agreement to include tribes and clans in the neighboring areas. The al-Hudaybiyah agreement with the Quraysh was also a security agreement which allowed him to build alliances with other tribes.

The polytheists' opposition to the message of Islam was not simply opposition to the concept of the oneness of God, but opposition to all that was behind it. It was opposition to the principles of justice, equality, and the care for the needy, and opposition to the belief in the Judgment Day. The experience of the Prophet over twenty-two years had shown clearly that there could be no real coexistence between Islam and polytheism. They were two fundamentally different ways of life. Indeed, they differed

327. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 735–738.

on every point of detail in matters of faith, morals, and social values, as well as in their economic, political, and social structures. It was not to be expected that such radically opposed concepts of life could exist peacefully for any length of time. Every step taken by either side must be totally and completely opposed to the attitude of the other. The clash between them was inevitable.³²⁸

The expedition to Tabuk was a clear indication of the Prophet's emphasis on expansion northward. The religious aspect was almost always uppermost in his thoughts, and the motivation which drove him on was the desire to fulfill God's command to spread Islam. Utilizing the resources of all of Arabia was essential for the success of this great mission. Most likely, Muhammad had shared this vision with his close companions, Abu-Bakr and Umar. He must have been able to frame the policies and strategies of the expansion into Syria and conveyed his thoughts to his two companions.³²⁹

The Farewell Pilgrimage (Dhul-Hijjah, 10 AH/March 632 CE)

In the tenth year of the Islamic calendar, the Prophet announced that he intended to offer the pilgrimage, and made it known that he welcomed anyone who wished to offer the pilgrimage with him. People from all over Arabia started to come to Madina to join the Prophet in his journey to Mecca to offer the pilgrimage. The number of pilgrims who arrived at Madina was estimated between 90,000 and 130,000. A similar number were waiting for him in Mecca. The Prophet left Madina on the twenty-fifth day of Dhul-Qa'dah. He had with him a hundred camels which he intended to slaughter as a sacrifice. He entered the state of consecration in a place called Dhul Hulayfah, ten kilometers from Madina.

The peaceful march continued until they arrived in Mecca on the fourth day of Dhul-Hijjah. At Arafat he delivered a major speech that became known as the Farewell Sermon. The Prophet's speech was the highlight of this pilgrimage, as it outlined the nature of Islamic society.

People, listen to me as I explain to you, for I do not know whether I will ever meet you again in this place after this year.

My Lord, bear witness. He who holds something belonging to another for safekeeping must give it back to the person to whom it belongs. All usury transactions which have been made in the past days' ignorance are hereby abrogated. You may claim only your capital, neither inflicting nor suffering injustice. God has decreed that no usury is permissible. . . .

328. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 737.

329. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 222.

My Lord, bear witness. People, you have an obligation toward your womenfolk and they have an obligation toward you. Your womenfolk are in your custody; they are helpless. You have taken them on the basis of a pledge to God, and they are lawful to you with God's word. Fear God, then, in your treatment of women, and be kind to them.

My Lord, bear witness. People, the believers are brothers. It is illegal for anyone to take the property of his brother unless it is given without any coercion. People, your Lord is one and your father is one. All of you are the children of Adam, and Adam was created from dust. The most noble among you is the most God-fearing. No Arab enjoys any privilege over a non-Arab except through the fear of God.

My Lord, bear witness. People, Satan has given up any hope of being worshipped in this land of yours. He is satisfied, however, to be obeyed in matters which you consider trivial. Guard yourselves against him, lest he corrupt your faith. I have left with you what should keep you safe from going astray should you hold fast to it. It is something clear and simple: God's Book and the *sunnah* [way] of his Prophet.

During his pilgrimage, the Prophet recited the following verse to his companions:

This day I have completed your religion for you, and perfected My grace to you and approved Islam as your religion.

(Chapter 6, Surah 5:3, the Feast)

The *surah* entitled "Victory" was revealed to the Prophet on the second day of his stay at Mina:

When God's help and victory come, and you see people embracing God's faith in groups, glorify your Lord and praise Him and ask His forgiveness, for He is much-forgiving.

(Chapter 30, Surah 110:1–3, Victory)

A New Expedition to Syria

A few weeks after the Prophet's return to Madina, he received news that prompted him to start preparations for an expedition against Byzantium. Muhammad as messenger of God was commanded to deliver the message not just to the people of Arabia, but all mankind. This is why he had sent emissaries to all rulers in neighboring regions. One of the rulers who received a message from the Prophet was **Farwah**

ibn Umar al-Juthami, the governor of Ma'an, in the south of present-day Jordan. This territory was part of the Byzantine Empire, and the governor was appointed by the Byzantine emperor. When Farwah received the message, he responded positively and sent a message to the Prophet informing him of his acceptance of Islam. When the Byzantine emperor learned about his appointed governor's response, however, he gave an order to arrest him. Farwah was sentenced to death; and shortly afterwards was executed near a spring known as **Afra** in Palestine. He was crucified and left on the cross for a long time in order to dissuade others from following his example.

The Prophet viewed the execution of Farwah as an act of provocation that required a firm response from the Muslims. Therefore Muhammad ordered that an army be raised under the command of **Usama ibn Zayd ibn Harithah**, a talented young man in his twenties. It was expected that Usama's army would include a large number of capable soldiers much older than Usama, who were highly qualified to be commanders themselves. By this appointment, the Prophet meant to emphasize that seniority of age or position counted for nothing. Usama's father, Zayd ibn Harithah, had been a slave owned by Khadijah, Muhammad's first wife. Muhammad had set him free and adopted him as his own son. Zayd had been appointed as the first commander of the first army in the first war between the Muslim state and the Byzantine Empire. The choice of Usama as the commander of the army of this expedition was a clear demonstration that under Islam, a son of a former slave was worthy of being the commander of an army in which many people of noble birth were ordinary soldiers. A great number of the Prophet's companions volunteered to take part in that expedition, including Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab.³³⁰

The Prophet gave Usama very clear instructions that outlined the purpose of the expedition. He was to take his army into the heartland of Palestine as a demonstration of strength and a warning. The mission was to make the Byzantine rulers think twice before embarking on any provocative adventure against the Muslim state. Another purpose was to assure the Arab tribes that the Muslim state had the power to protect them against any threat or danger from the Byzantine Empire.

Usama's army encamped at a place called **al-Jurf**, a few kilometers from Madina, waiting for the volunteers to get ready. The prophet's illness delayed their departure, however.

The Prophet's Illness

In the tenth year AH (the beginning of 632 CE), the Prophet was visibly failing, increasingly conscious that he was approaching the end of his life. He made his final pilgrimage and delivered the Farewell Sermon, as recounted above. Just as he sensed

330. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 792.

that he would never see Mecca again, he also sensed that he didn't have much longer to live. Muhammad was sixty-three years old, after all—a long life for his time. He had been wounded several times in battle and had survived a few assassination attempts.³³¹ When he returned to Madina, he began to experience incapacitating headaches and fainting attacks, but he never retired permanently to bed. He would often wrap a cloth around his aching temples and go to the mosque to lead the prayers or to address the people. One morning, he seemed to pray for long time in honor of the Muslims who had died at Uhud. At length, he said, “God has given one of his servants the choice between this world and that which is with God, and he has chosen the latter.” Abu Bakr, who understood that the Prophet was referring to his own imminent death, began to weep bitterly. “Gently, gently, Abu Bakr,” Muhammad said tenderly.³³²

On Monday, the twenty-ninth day of Safar in the eleventh year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet complained to his wife Aisha that he had a headache. He used to visit all his wives every day in the morning. That day, when he was in Maymuna's home, his pain became worse, and he felt too weak to carry on with his rounds. He therefore asked his wives if they would let him be nursed in Aisha's home. As they all agreed, he went there, supported by two of his cousins.

His illness continued to get worse that morning, and he became feverish. He asked to be given a cold bath. His family, at his request, poured on him seven containers of water gathered from several wells. When his temperature had gone down and he felt better, he asked his cousin, al-Fadl ibn Abbas, to take his hand and walk him to the mosque. He sat on the pulpit with a band round his head, then he asked al-Fadl to call the people. When they gathered to listen to the Prophet, he addressed them:

I praise God, the One other than whom there is no deity. If I have ever beaten any one of you on his back, let him come and avenge himself by beating me on my back. To dispute is not part of my nature, nor does it appeal to me. The one of you who is dearest to me is the one who has a right against me and claims it. By so doing, he releases me, and I will be able to meet God with nothing held against me by any person.³³³

Between the final days of the month of Safar and the early days of Rabi al-Awwal, the Prophet showed no signs of any improvement in his health. His illness was getting worse, and it was obvious to those people who were around him that he was

331. Lesley Hazleton, *After the Prophet: The Epic Story of the Shia-Sunni Split in Islam* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 7.

332. Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 193–195.

333. Salahi: *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 802.

suffering, which made them very sad. Despite his discomfort and suffering, he continued to lead the believers in prayers. As his condition worsened, he ordered Abu Bakr to lead the prayers. Abu Bakr led the prayers seventeen times—that is, for three and a half days.

On Monday, the **twelfth day of Rabi al-Awwal 11 AH (June 8, 632 CE)** the Prophet emerged from Aisha’s room and came to the mosque as they stood in their rows fully engaged in their worship, with Abu Bakr reciting the Quran. The Muslims were overjoyed when they saw him, and started to move to give him chance to pass. He signaled them to stay in their positions. The Prophet was so happy to see his companions at prayer led by Abu Bakr; he was assured that the nation was strong and unified. His companions thought that he was on his way for full recovery.

Aisha described what happened when he returned from the mosque:

He came back and laid down, putting his head in my lap. A man from Abu Bakr brought a green *miswak* to the Prophet. He took it and cleaned his teeth with it very strongly, then put it down. I felt his head getting heavier in my lap. I looked at his face and noticed that his eyes were staring hard. Then he said in a faint voice: “The Highest Company in Heaven.”³³⁴

As soon as Abu Bakr learned about the tragic news, he went to Aisha’s room. He uncovered the Prophet’s face and knelt down and kissed him, saying: “My father and mother may be sacrificed for your sake. The one death that God has decreed that you shall experience, you have now had. You shall not die again.”³³⁵ Abu Bakr covered his face and went to the mosque where the people of Madina had gathered. They were stunned and did not know what to do. Despite the repeated hints by the Prophet of his impending death, they could not imagine or comprehend the event. Umar ibn al-Khattab was shocked and could not think logically; he was speaking to the people around him in a state of denial. Abu Bakr stopped him and then addressed the crowd, saying, after he praised God, “People, if any of you has been worshipping Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead. He who worships God knows that God is always alive; He never dies.” He then recited a verse from the Quran:

Muhammad is no more than a messenger. Messengers have passed on before him. If he dies or gets killed, will you turn on your heels? He who turns on his heels will not harm Allah in any way. And Allah will reward the appreciative.

(Chapter 3, Surah 3:144, the Family of Imran)

334. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 802.

335. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 804.

When people heard Abu Bakr reciting that verse of the Quran, it was as if they had never heard it before. Umar said: “When I heard Abu Bakr reciting that verse, I was stunned and perplexed. I fell down to the ground, feeling that my legs could not support me. I realized, however, that God’s messenger was dead.”³³⁶

Muhammad’s Legacy

Muhammad was the “Seal of Prophets”; none could exercise the religious role of prophet after his death. The mission of the apostle of God was not something that could be passed on.

Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; but he is the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the prophets. Allah is cognizant of everything.
(Chapter 22, Surah 33:40, the Confederates)

The Prophet did not depart from the world without having delivered the entire set of principles of the new religion, as revealed to him by God in a manner calculated to prevent any confusion or ambiguity.

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My favor upon you, and have approved Islam as religion for you.
(Chapter 6, Surah 5:3, the Feast)

The next thing to be done was to prepare the Prophet’s body for burial. Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-Abbas’ two sons, al-Fadl and Qutham, as well as Usama ibn Zayd, were given that task. When they finished washing him, they discussed where to bury him. Abu Bakr told them that the Prophet had mentioned that every prophet was buried in the place where he died. So he was buried in Aisha’s room.

The Prophet died without appointing a successor or advising his companions how to manage their affairs upon his death. He did not address the problem of succession or what form of a political system to adopt. If the establishment of a state with a specific political system had been on his mind, he would have addressed this issue. Muhammad was a prophet, a messenger; his mission was to convey God’s message. The religion of Islam aims at the reformation of human life and redirecting humans to the righteous path, the path leading to God. Islam aims at preparing humans for Judgment Day, and for the entrance into their eternal state. It is a holy and pure preaching which calls all humanity, regardless of the color of their skin, to the mercy of the Lord in heaven and earth and to his good in both worlds.

³³⁶Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 804.

In his life the Prophet left every tribe or region alone to manage their own affairs, guided by the principles of Islam and its moral obligations. In his last days in this world, he left the matter of succession in the hands of his followers. All they needed to do was to continue to be bound to the principles of their faith.³³⁷

The death of Muhammad marked the end of the first stage of Islam: that of the Message, the religion; and the beginning of a new stage: that of the state, the Arab Empire. The Islamic teachings had elevated the Arabs as a united nation to a very high position among other nations, the best during their time. “A pure creed, untarnished by polytheism, a faith established solidly in the deepest part of the soul, a morality which the Prophet had raised to the highest peak, an intellect in accordance with the soundest nature, a sense of vitality accruing from the natural environment, a union under God capable of reconciling extremes and eradicating differences, binding them into true fraternity under God—such was the condition of the Arabs at the death of the Prophet.”³³⁸

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds, that He will make them successors on earth, as He made those before them successors, and He will establish for them their religion—which He has approved for them—and He will substitute security in place of their fear. They worship Me, never associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that—these are the sinners.

(Chapter 18, Surah 24:55, Light)

The Muslim State during the Life of the Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad’s emigration to Madina in 622 CE marked the beginning of a new phase of the history of Islam that was completely different from the first phase, which had taken place in Mecca. It was in Madina that the first Muslim community had been born and Muhammad’s social reform movement started. The ten years of Muhammad’s life in Madina became the reference point in Islam for all historians, scholars, politicians, and reformers for the fourteen hundred years that followed. This short period of the history of Islam has been interpreted in different ways by different thinkers and movements. Such differences are attributed to the fact that Muhammad’s biographers were living at a time in which the Muslim community had become an enormously powerful empire.³³⁹ The first Muslim his-

337. Ali Abdel Razek, *Islam and the Foundations of Political Power*, tr. Mariam Loutfi, ed. Abdou Filali-ansary (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 92–101.

338. Razek, *Islam and the Foundations of Political Power*, 108.

339. Aslan, *No god but God*, 53.

torians began to write about the life of the Prophet Muhammad in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Before Islam, the Prophet participated in the life of his community as a respectful and loyal citizen of Mecca. But when Islam began, the situation changed: he and his slowly growing group of followers managed their own affairs, religious and non-religious. The Muslims referred to the Prophet and not to the municipal council of Mecca for any of their concerns or affairs; their situation was that of a **state within a state**.³⁴⁰

Unlike Mecca, there was no state in Yathrib (Madina); there were several tribes fighting among themselves. When Muhammad arrived in Madina, he immediately settled the Meccan Mujahirun (Emigrants) among the Ansar (his supporters), and suggested that each Madinan family fraternize with a Meccan family. In no time his position was established as the arbiter between the two tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj. Both tribes started to address their problems and asked for his advice and recommendations. Practically speaking, he became the leader of the city.

The first and most urgent issue that got the Prophet's attention, as the leader of the new city-state, was the security of the Muslim community in Madina. As soon as the Prophet and his companions settled in Madina, the Meccans sent an ultimatum to the Madinans: **"Either kill or expel our enemy, Muhammad, or we shall take necessary measures."**³⁴¹ This threat prompted Muhammad to bring together the chiefs of all the tribes, both Muslims and non-Muslims, and suggest the creation of a constitution for a confederal type of city-state that would guarantee autonomy to each unit. In consultation with these representatives, a written constitution was prepared.

The constitution of the city-state of Madina is in fact the oldest written constitution in world history. All groups in the city regardless of religion or birth (tribe or clan) enjoyed equal rights and complete autonomy in all matters, not just religious affairs. The different Jewish tribes, as well as the Muslims and non-Muslims of Madina, accepted this constitution and became bound to its terms. The document was issued by Muhammad in the form of a letter addressed to all Muslims of the city, Emigrants and Helpers (Muhajirun and Ansar), and their non-Muslim allies:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

This is a document drawn up by Muhammad, the Prophet for the believers and Muslims from the Quraysh and Yathrib [Madina] and whoever joins them and takes part in their struggle for their cause: they are one nation, distinguished from all other people.

340. Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State*, 20–22.

341. Hamidullah, *The Prophet's Establishing a State*, 24.

This document, as discussed on **page XX** earlier in this chapter, was a pact of alliance among all residents of Madina regardless of religion or descent (**the emigrants from Mecca, the Aws, the Khazraj, and the different Jewish tribes**), who were all committed to participating in the protection of their new city-state. The constitution emphasized the solidarity of all the inhabitants of Madina against foreigners: **an enemy of one group was to be the enemy of each and all**. The constitution was influenced by the pre-Islamic principles that dealt with crimes and offenses. It was a sacred duty for each member of the tribe to give help to another member, and if necessary, to avenge his death based on the principle of “an eye for eye, a tooth for tooth, and a life for a life.” The constitution adopted the principles of retribution as the basis of the justice system; however, it modified the principle of a life for a life with the possibility of accepting **blood-money** as an alternative. The Quran approved the law of retribution as a legitimate response to injury; however, Muhammad urged believers toward forgiveness. The Quran supported the Prophet’s position:

The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it. But whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward lies with Allah. He does not love the unjust.

(Chapter 25, Surah 42:40, Consultation)

The city-state of Madina was a confederation of different groups who enjoyed much autonomy, with only one restriction: not to violate the principles of Islam. As more people converted to Islam, the state expanded, but continued to be a confederation. In the year 5 AH, the Prophet sent a letter to a number of chieftains, telling them that if they embraced Islam, the Prophet would allow them to continue to enjoy their ruling powers.

The second urgent issue that the Prophet had to address was justice, equality, and preserving the dignity of all members of the community. Muhammad believed that he had to take care of the needy by utilizing the *zakat* (alms) revenue for this purpose. A whole set of economic and social measures were implemented by Muhammad to achieve this goal. The Quran calls money the very subsistence of humanity, and demands charity for the needy. Charity soon became duty and an obligation in the form of a tax (*zakat*) spent in accordance with a clear and well-defined system of expenditures.

During the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the administration of finance was an important exercise. He devoted great effort to managing revenue and expenditure. He put in place the required measures to secure the needed funds from different sources: the religious tax, spoils from raiding expeditions, and the tithes paid by the People of the Book. He established proper procedures for tax collectors and agents.

The Quran states clearly the beneficiaries of *zakat*:

Righteousness does not consist of turning your face toward the East and the West. But righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Scripture, and the Prophets. Who gives money, though dear, to near relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and the homeless, and the beggars, and for the freeing of slaves; those who perform the prayers, and pay the obligatory charity, and fulfill their promise when they promise, and patiently persevere in the face of persecution, hardship, and in the time of conflict. These are the sincere; these are the pious.

(Chapter 2, Surah 2:177, the Cow)

The Battles of the Prophet

The Prophet was involved in several military activities and carried out multiple expeditions in order to defend the Muslim community of Madina and to protect Muslims in general. **None of those military activities were aimed at forcing any tribe to accept Islam.** Muhammad was the messenger of God; his mission was to spread the word of God through persuasion and not through coercion. Religious preaching takes effect only by words, not by swords. The Quran was clear about this issue:

There is no compulsion in religion.

Right guidance has been distinguished from error.

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good Advice, and debate with them in the most dignified manner. Your Lord is aware of those who stray from His path, and He is aware of those who are guided.

(Chapter 14, Surah 16:125, the Bee)

So remind. You are only a reminder. You have no control over them.

(Chapter 30, Surah 88:21–24, the Overwhelming Event)

The Ethics of Warfare

The Prophet was a great military strategist and commander. When we examine the formation of the fighting units and their positions in the battlefields, we realize that he exhibited great vision and unprecedented skills. In the battle of Badr, he controlled the only source of water in the region. In the battle of Uhud, he controlled the high ground and the avenues for retreat. The Battle of the Moat was the first of its kind in the history of Arabia. In all three battles, he was carrying out a defensive war against an aggressor, the Quraysh. The Prophet carried out several military expeditions in

the north and east of Arabia against tribes who were threatening the Madinan caravans to Syria and Iraq, or were conspiring and preparing to attack Madina. In these expeditions he skillfully utilized the element of surprise, giving the enemy no time to prepare their defenses or build alliances.

The surprise factor was not the only element in Muhammad's military strategies. The Prophet was always concerned about bloodshed. He believed that his objective could be reached in a bloodless manner by striking at the right moment when the enemy would not dare offer any resistance. Victory could be obtained by overwhelming the enemy, and not through annihilation. The conquest of Mecca demonstrated masterful military planning and preparation. Muhammad raised the largest army—more than ten thousand fighters from all over Arabia—and marched toward Mecca from different locations, yet he managed to keep his march to Mecca unnoticed by the Quraysh. As he encamped a short distance from Mecca, he asked each soldier to start his own fire: the most magnificent scene that shocked the Quraysh and gave them no option but to surrender unconditionally. Muhammad then crowned his great victory by pardoning the Quraysh for all the crimes and persecution they had inflicted on him and his companions. Thus he captured their hearts as he captured their city.

The Prophet established new rules for his wars, which became known as the doctrine of jihad. Islamic warfare (jihad) is differentiated from pre-Islamic warfare by its ethical dimension. The Quran emphasizes the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. The killing of women, children, monks, rabbis, the elderly, or any other noncombatant is absolutely forbidden. Torture of prisoners of war is prohibited, as well as mutilation of the dead, rape, molestation, and any kind of sexual offenses. The lives of diplomats are protected. Demolition of residential buildings, religious and medical institutions is prohibited. In the doctrine of jihad, only defensive wars are allowed:

And fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not commit aggression; Allah does not love the aggressors.

(Chapter 2, Surah 2:190, the Cow)

The battles fought by the Prophet Muhammad are characteristic of the man: conspicuous, he stood head and shoulders above many others, past or present. He was practically always victorious. His small city-state of Madina expanded at an average of 830 kilometers daily; after ten years, it reached some three million square kilometers, inhabited by millions of people. This conquest was at a cost of less than 250 men killed on the battlefields on the enemy side. Muslim losses were at the rate of one martyr a month for a period of ten years on average (138).³⁴²

342. Hamidullah, *The Battlefields of the Prophet Muhammad*, 2–3.

The Prophet understood, from the moment he received the revelation, that he was the messenger of God to all mankind. His night journey to Jerusalem affirmed his universal message. However, it was not possible for Muhammad to expand his call beyond Arabia when his Muslim state in Madina was not yet secured. In the early months of his seventh year in Madina, it became clear to him that the Arabian scene had changed radically, especially after his triumph in Khaybar that followed the al-Hudaybiyah peace treaty with the Quraysh. As the Muslim state in Madina became more secure, he felt able to devote time and effort to expanding his call to other communities. He sent envoys to the rulers of neighboring countries to determine how receptive they were to Islam, using the results to determine his strategy.

The Prophet was aware of the situation in Iraq and Syria. The wars between Persia and Byzantium had exhausted the two powers. He was confident that the Muslim Arabs would be able to conquer both empires. He believed strongly that the message of Islam would prevail and spread throughout Arabia and beyond. This belief existed in his heart and mind even before he emigrated to Madina. It was what motivated him to send expeditions to Syria twice: first, the excursion to Mu'tab, which ended in defeat, but with the loss of only twelve martyrs; and then the victory at Tabuk, where the Byzantine forces chose not to fight.

The Prophet's Political System

The Prophet instituted a political regime which was unique and completely different from the typical government institutions and typical temporal power. It was based on simplicity and the absence of formalities. It lacked the essential devices of typical temporal governments, yet it provided all necessary measures to manage the affairs of the community. In this system, the Prophet had complete and unlimited power and authority over his people, but it was different from the authority and power that a temporal ruler wields over his subjects. The Prophet's authority belonged to the category of sacred power attributable to prophets alone. It was a spiritual authority that was born of the believers' faith, and their willingness to obey and submit wholeheartedly to the messenger of God. Islam constituted a religious union in which Muslims became one community; the Prophet was the head and the leader of this union, with absolute power none could defy or oppose. The Prophet possessed a power that no king would ever have over his people, either before or after him.³⁴³

Islam was a call to Arabs and non-Arabs; it aimed at a spiritual union that would embrace all of humanity in all the countries on earth. Although the Quran was revealed in clear Arabic, it did not mean that Arabs were superior to others, and it was

343. Razek, *Islam and the Foundations of Political Power*, 82–86.

not meant to create an Arab entity or to become an Arab religion. But it was revealed in Arabic and through an Arabic apostle, so it was natural that Islam spread first among the Arab people.

The Arab lands were home to a number of tribes that differed from one another, speaking in different dialects and spread over a wide geographic region. They also lived under different political systems. There were huge differences in their systems of government, their customs, and their economic livelihoods. Despite these differences, however, the Arab tribes came together under the banner of Islam and joined to one another with religious ties, forming a single community, the Umma, under the authority of the Prophet Muhammad. This union of the Arabs was not a political union but a religious one; it was a union of faith, of religious doctrine.

The Prophet Muhammad never intervened in the political affairs of the various tribes. Nor did he intervene in their social or economic relations and affairs. He left all these matters to the people, declaring: "You are better informed than I am in affairs of the temporal realm." Each tribe was responsible for its particular conditions: political, social, or economic. They were only bound by the principles of Islam and its moral obligations. During the time of the Prophet, the Arabs maintained diversity in their political, social, and economic systems. It is worth mentioning here that this diversity was mitigated by the strong bonds of Islam and the spiritual leadership of the Prophet. Before Islam, this diversity led to conflicts and violent interactions, but after they adopted Islam, the conflicts almost disappeared as a result of the new faith. This facts well stated in the Quran:

And hold fast to the rope of Allah, altogether, and do not become divided. And remember Allah's blessings upon you; how you were enemies, and He reconciled your hearts, and by His grace you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Allah thus clarifies His revelations for you, so that you may be guided.

(Chapter 4, Surah 3:103, the Family of Imran)

The Islamic Empire

The Prophet died without appointing a successor or advising his companions how to manage their affairs upon his death. He did not address the problem of succession or what form of a political system to adopt. He had sensed since the month of Dhul-Hijjah, in 11 AH, that he didn't have much longer to live, and he was very ill for ten days, between the later part of Safar and the first part of Rabi al-Awwal, yet he made a conscious decision to leave the matter of succession in the hands of his followers. Most likely he believed that his companions, the *shura* (council) would follow the tribal tradition of electing new chief.

After Muhammad

As soon as the Ansar (Helpers) learned of the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the head of the Khazraj tribe, **S'ad ibn Ubada**, called for the *shura* to elect a successor. The call went out only to the leaders of the Ansar; the Muhajirun (Emigrants) were not invited. When the Muhajirun learned about the Ansar's meeting, they turned up in force, led by **Abu Bakr, Umar, and Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah**, and gate-crashed the meeting to stop what they considered a plot to seize the succession and deprive the Muhajirun of their rights.

The debate between the Muhajirun and the Ansar took a long time and reached a deadlock. The debate became violent and physical. Loyalties shifted, and finally the two groups chose Abu Bakr, the Prophet's best friend and closest companion, who had been among the first to adopt Islam and had emigrated with him. This choice was made for the sake of maintaining the unity of Islam and out of fear of discord and civil war.

Abu Bakr realized that it was essential for him to earn the support of the Meccans in order to save the Islamic Commonwealth. With the loyalty of the Ansar in doubt

and many of the Arab tribes deserting, only Mecca, the former enemy city which had submitted to Muhammad just two years before, could provide the forces needed to put down the rebellion in Arabia. Since their surrender, the Meccans had done very well under the rule of Islam. Muhammad had treated them most generously and had appointed many of them to powerful positions as army leaders, governors, and alms-tax collectors. Now Abu Bakr had more to offer them than Muhammad ever have done. Abu Bakr had established their right to rule Arabia in the name of Islam, due to his claim that the Arabs would not obey anyone else.³⁴⁴

The Burial of the Prophet's Body

While the *shura* was taking place at the Saqifat Bani Sa'ida, **Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Abbas's two sons al-Fadl and Qutham, Usama ibn Zaid, and Shaqran**, the Prophet's servant, were preparing the Prophet's body for burial.³⁴⁵ Ali did not participate in the *shura*, but stayed in Aisha's chamber with the body. To leave the man who had been father and mentor before consigning him back to the earth was out of the question.

By the time Ali and his kinsmen heard the news of Abu Bakr's election, Muhammad had been dead a full day and a half; custom decreed that a body be buried within twenty-four hours. In the intense June heat, the matter of burial was becoming urgent. It must have crossed Ali's mind at that moment, before he proceeded with the burial process: why was it urgent to convene the *shura* with such haste? What harm would have been done if those at the meeting had suspended their debate for a day to give their Prophet's body what it deserved of honor before resuming their deliberation?

In the small hours of that Wednesday morning, Ali and his kinsmen dug the grave at the foot of the sleeping platform, honoring Muhammad's wish to be buried, like all prophets, where he had died. When it was deep enough, they tipped up the pallet holding the Prophet's body, slid it down into the earth, quickly covered it, and placed the stone slab of the platform on top. None of the wives was present, nor any of the other Emigrants, nor any of the Helpers.³⁴⁶

The Public Oath of Allegiance to Abu Bakr

On the day after allegiance was sworn to Abu Bakr in Saqifat Bani Sa'ida, the Muslims gathered in the mosque. As Abu Bakr sat on the pulpit, Umar stood up and said: "Allah has left among you His book, which contains the guidance of Allah and His

344. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44.

345. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, 805.

346. Hazleton, *After the Prophet*, 65–66.

Messenger. If you adhere to it, Allah will guide you to that to which He guided him. Allah has united you under the leadership of the best among you, the Companion of the Messenger of Allah, the second of the two when they were in the cave; so get up and swear your allegiance to him.”

After the people in the mosque swore their allegiance, Abu Bakr spoke:

O people, I have been appointed over you, but I am not the best of you. If I do well, support me, and if I do wrong, correct me. Truthfulness is sincerity, and dishonesty is a betrayal. The weak one among you is strong in my eyes until I restore his rights, if Allah wills; and the strong one of you is weak in my eyes until I take what is due from him, if Allah wills. If people abandon jihad for the sake of Allah, He will humiliate them. If immorality becomes widespread among the people, Allah will send His punishment upon them all. Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger; if I disobey Allah and His Messenger, you have no duty to obey me. Get up and pray, may Allah have mercy on you.³⁴⁷

Abu Bakr was the closest companion to the Prophet. His friendship with Muhammad was well established a long time prior to the revelation. He had been among the first to accept Islam, and was the most dedicated to the message of Islam. He had succeeded in bringing a large group of prominent and influential Meccans into the fold of Islam in the early phase of the message. He was closely involved in managing and planning the affairs of the Muslim community. As a trusted adviser to Muhammad, he was the most committed companion to the message of Islam and the expansion of its authority over all Arabia and beyond. No doubt Muhammad had shared with Abu Bakr his vision of conquering the Persian and Byzantine empires in order to bring both Syria and Mesopotamia under the mantle of Islam. Abu Bakr believed that the political successor to the Prophet must have a full understanding of this vision, as well as the ability to develop a clear plan of implementation. He was confident that he could be that man. Abu Bakr also recognized that, without a nomination by the Prophet, he would have to work hard to neutralize any potential opposition.³⁴⁸

The initiative of the Ansar to choose a leader among themselves was a true stroke of luck for Abu Bakr. It gave him the chance to present himself as the spokesman for the unity of the Muslim community. The absence of the majority of the Muhajirun in that meeting had limited the choices and made him the most eligible for the post. If Ali had been in the meeting, he would have been accepted by the Ansar or even been

³⁴⁷ Ali M. Sallabi, *Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq: His Life and Times*, (Riyadh, SA: International Islamic Publishing House, 2014), 230–231.

³⁴⁸ Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 39.

proposed by them. Not only was Ali a Quraysh man, but he was also the closest relative of Muhammad. Abd Shams, one of the two most powerful clans of the Quraysh, would have backed Ali's nomination, had he been present. Several prominent members of the Meccan clans refused to support Abu Bakr because of this.³⁴⁹ Thus, in spite of Umar's claim that the necks of all Muslims were stretched out for Abu Bakr, he did not have full support. The Muslim community in Madina was divided into different factions: **the Ansar, Ahl al-Bayt (the Banu Hashim), the early Meccan companions, and the newly converted Meccans.**

Umar took charge of securing the pledge of allegiance of all the residents of Madina. He dominated the streets of the city with the help of leaders of the Khuza'a and the Aws. Umar gathered a group of armed men and led them to Ali's house. Umar threatened to set the house on fire unless they came out and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. **Al-Zubayr** came out with his sword drawn, but stumbled and lost it, whereupon Umar's men jumped upon him. When **Ali refused to come out**, Umar threw his whole weight against the door, and when the latches and hinges gave and it burst open, Umar rushed in and slammed with full force into the person standing on the other side of the door. That person was Muhammad's daughter **Fatima**, several months pregnant with the Prophet's third grandson. Fatima fell to the ground, doubled over in pain; her arm was broken and her chest was bruised. Umar retreated and left. A few weeks later, Fatima gave birth to a stillborn infant.³⁵⁰

The failure of Umar's mission to convince Ali and the Banu Hashim to pledge allegiance to the new ruler, Abu Bakr, prompted Abu Bakr to subject them to financial pressure and social boycott. When Fatima sent a message to Abu Bakr asking for her share of her father's estate—date palm orchards in the oases of Khaybar and Fadak—his response was that the Prophet's estate belonged to the community and not to his family. He claimed that the Prophet had confided to him: "We Prophets do not have heirs; whatever we leave is alms." At the same time, he made a point of providing generously for Muhammad's wives, particularly for his own daughter Aisha, who received valuable property in Madina as well as in Bahrain.³⁵¹

Ali was subjected to different kinds of pressure to bring him in line and force him to pledge to Abu Bakr. He was subjected to social boycott. People turned their backs, friends kept their distance, and acquaintances passed by in silence. Even in the mosque, Ali prayed alone. Fatima refused to bow to the pressure. When she got sick and knew that her death would come soon, she asked Ali for a burial like that of her father. She requested that Abu Bakr not be informed when it happened; he was to be given no chance to officiate at her funeral. She was to be buried quietly, with her close family, only Banu Hashim, in attendance. Ali honored Fatima's wishes. He buried her

349. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 39–41.

350. Hazleton, *After the Prophet*, 71–72.

351. Hazleton, *After the Prophet*, 72–73.

in the dead of night, as he had so recently buried her father. Then he conceded and pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr. Ali had been loyal to Fatima to the end, but many tribes in northern and central Arabia were rebelling, so there was no time to hold grudges. He would pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr for the sake of unity in the face of the rebellion, for the good of the community, and to present a solid front against the forces of divisiveness.³⁵² Ali's pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr put an end to the isolation of the Banu Hashim and, on the surface, closed the ranks of the Muslims in support of Abu Bakr. Yet there was no reconciliation, and there could not be. Ali knew that Abu Bakr would do all he could to keep the Banu Hashim away from power and influence. Abu Bakr likewise understood the insincerity of Ali's pledge of allegiance. Ali stayed away from Abu Bakr, and the latter was hardly eager to draw him into his company.

Muhammad's Vision

Muhammad's message was one of social justice demanded by Allah, the creator. His message was aimed at establishing justice in Arabia and beyond. He was the messenger for all humanity. He was confident that his message would prevail in Arabia; he was also confident that the Muslim community of Arabia would spread justice throughout the world and the Arabs would lead a universal revolution aimed at justice for all.

In the first twelve years after he received the revelation, Muhammad was able to mentor a special group of companions in Mecca while he was preaching the entire community. He was hopeful of reforming the Meccan community and bringing his tribe, the Quraysh, to Islam as a first step toward reforming all Arabia. During these first twelve years, Muhammad faced strong resistance from the Quraysh aristocracy that forced him to flee with his companions from the city of Mecca, fearing for their safety and life. The city of Yathrib, al Madina al Munawwarah, became his new home where he carried out his reforms and established his Muslim community.

Over the eight years that followed, he was engaged in a series of wars defending his new city and spreading the message of Islam. In the eighth year, he returned to Mecca victorious. The Quraysh surrendered to Muhammad and accepted Islam. He was able to protect Mecca and retain its sanctity; he pardoned his tribe and accepted them as real Muslims and partners in his drive toward completing his mission. During the last two years of his life, he expanded his message to almost all Arabia and started preparing for the next phase of his mission: **expansion to the north toward Syria.**

352. Hazleton, *After the Prophet*, 73–76.

Muhammad's military expedition to Tabuk was a reconnaissance of the route to Syria, and an assertion that the Muslim sphere of influence extended beyond the borders of Arabia. The treaties with the Christian communities in the Gulf of Akaba region implied that this assertion of a sphere of influence was intended to be permanent. The Tabuk expedition was a major military project that required the Prophet to recruit all the forces he had at his disposal. He prepared the Muslims for a battle against the Byzantines and their Christian Arab allies who were planning to invade Arabia and attack Madina. When the Muslims found no traces of any Byzantine forces, the Prophet had the option to move on to Syria or return to Madina. It appears that the assessment of the situation by the Prophet and his companions led to a decision not to proceed with the invasion at that time. And when he returned to Madina, he started exploring what was needed for a successful invasion.

Although the Prophet had received delegations from all over Arabia, the commitment of those delegates and the tribes they represented was not firm. Some of them pledged loyalty without committing themselves to being Muslims, while others declared their acceptance of the faith of Islam and told the Prophet that he could rely on their complete support. When Muhammad returned from Tabuk, he realized that the expansion to the north would require the full and complete submission of Arabia to Islam and to the authority of the Muslim state. This new policy became evident when he sent Ali ibn Abi Talib to Mecca during the pilgrimage of 9 AH to deliver the Declaration of No Place for Unbelievers in Arabia. The Prophet intended to unite Arabia under the banner of Islam, so that loyalty to Islam and the Muslim state superseded all others. He believed that the subjugation of all of Arabia to his rule had to materialize before he embarked on the Syrian adventure.

The Prophet was counting on the new converts of Mecca to assist in achieving this goal. He was also aware of the Meccans' ability to control and utilize the power of the Bedouins of northern Hijaz in future wars. He utilized the Meccans' talent, fully, to enhance the power of the Muslim state. He appointed many of their prominent men to important administrative and military positions. They accepted Islam and demonstrated their sincere loyalty and support for the Prophet's policies and plans. As experienced merchants, they realized the potential material gains of the expansion of the Muslim state north to include Syria. Not only would the old trade route between South Arabia and Syria be revived, but Muslims would also be able to gain control of the trade routes of East Arabia (the Persian/Arab Gulf routes).

Abu Bakr Khalifat Rasul Allah

After taking power, Abu Bakr adopted the official title **Khalifat Rasul Allah**, Successor of the Messenger of God. As the new ruler of the Muslim state, two urgent issues

need to be addressed immediately: The military campaign toward Syria that had been ordered by the Prophet, and the revolt of the Arab tribes against his authority (the Riddah, or the Apostasy).

The Army of Usama

An examination of the list of leaders whom Abu Bakr appointed to command the Muslim armies that conquered Arabia shows that he relied heavily on the Meccan aristocracy for the implementation of his plans. It is very important to mention here that the prominent military commanders who served during the life of the Prophet did not play a role in Abu Bakr's wars. It is also important to note that these prominent early Muhajirun commanders played an important role during Umar's reign after Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr declared his intention as caliph to follow the policies and practices of Muhammad in every respect. So the day after he received the public pledge of allegiance in the mosque, in order to comply with the Prophet's wishes, he ordered the planned campaign toward the Syrian border areas to go ahead. As ordered by the Prophet, all the distinguished companions who were available for war were sent to the army camp at al-Jurf to serve under the command of the youthful Usama. Even Umar was sent to the camp. For the next few days the preparation continued, even as reports of the rapid spread of the apostasy arrived.

The expedition had been decided by the Prophet a few weeks after he returned from the Farewell Pilgrimage. Abu Bakr's decision to send the army of Usama was a clear message that he was following Muhammad's policy of expansion, and that he was determined to implement this policy immediately and without any delay.

A group of prominent companions suggested to Abu Bakr that he should keep the army in Madina, saying: "This army has most of the Muslims; many tribes have rebelled against you; you should not send away the majority of the Muslims." Usama himself sent Umar ibn al-Khattab from the camp with a message to Abu Bakr, asking him to permit the army to remain at Madina. He stated: "All the leaders of the community are with me; if we go, none will be left to prevent the infidels from tearing Madina to pieces." As Umar was leaving the camp to deliver this message, he was met by a group of leaders who made the same suggestions, adding: "If he does not agree to our remaining in Madina, ask him to place an older commander than Usama." Abu Bakr disagreed, and insisted that the military campaign should continue to move toward Syria under the command of Usama, no matter what the circumstances or the outcome.³⁵³

On June 24, 632 CE, (the first of Rabi-al-Akhir, 11 AH) the army of Usama broke camp and moved out. Abu Bakr walked some distance beside the mounted Usama

353. Sallabi, *Abu Bakr as-Siddiq*, 289.

and refused to let the young commander dismount from his horse. Then he asked if he could keep Umar with him as adviser, to which Usama agreed.

On leaving Madina with three thousand men, Usama marched to Tabuk, where most of the tribes in the region had opposed Abu Bakr's authority. He swept across the land with fire and the sword, and raided Quza'a and Daumat-al-Jandal. Next Usama marched to Mu'ta, fought the tribes of Kalb and Ghassan and avenged his father's blood, and then returned safely to Madina, after being away for forty days, bringing with him large number of captives and a considerable amount of wealth, part of which comprised the spoils of war and part the taxes paid by the repentant tribes.

The Apostasy

As soon as the people of Arabia learned of the death of the Prophet, all the Arab tribes, with the exception of those in Mecca, Madina, and Taif, revolted against the political and religious authority of Madina and broke their oaths of allegiance. This revolt became known in the history of Islam as the Apostasy (al-Riddah).

Montgomery Watt, the Western historian, accepts the view of the Muslim historians that this movement is best described as apostasy: **"In the Riddah the religious and political factors were inseparably mixed with one another. . . . The Riddah was a movement away from the religious, social, economic, and political system of Islam, and so was anti-Islamic. . . . In al-Bahrayn and 'Uman there seems to have been little mention of religion; but elsewhere the special feature of the Riddah was the appearance of 'false prophets,' each preaching a new religion with himself as centre."**³⁵⁴

Most of the tribes who had converted in the last two years of the Prophet's life became Muslims mainly for political reasons. They saw Muhammad as powerful political leader, the head of the Muslim state of Madina, rather than a prophet, the Messenger of Allah. The victories Muhammad achieved over Khaybar, Mecca, and Hawazin made him the most powerful and influential leader in all Arabia. The true Muslims were the Muslims of Mecca and Madina who had been mentored by the Prophet for many years. They were the companions who defended the message of Islam from persecution and all attempts by the unbelievers to destroy their community. The tribes who revolted had not enjoyed this spiritual experience. In most cases, when a chief became a Muslim, the tribe followed him out of tribal loyalty rather than religious conviction. With the death of the Prophet, the tribes felt free to renounce their allegiance, as they considered their commitment to have been made to a person and not to the state or religion.³⁵⁵

354. Watt, *Muhammad at Madina* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 147–148.

355. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 129.

The traditional accounts of the Muslim historians concerning the Riddah state that it was a religious movement directed against Islam, and that the death of the Prophet signaled the beginning of the tribes' break with Islam, change of belief, and revolt against the authority of Madina. Some of the leaders of the movement were "false prophets" who propagated a religion far inferior to Islam. Other tribal leaders were chieftains and elders who did not claim prophethood but united with the false prophets in their treacherous designs to extinguish the flame of Islam and return to tribal independence.

Bernard Lewis focuses on another dimension of the Riddah. He says:

The refusal of the tribes to recognize the succession of Abu Bakr was in effect not a relapse by converted Muslims to their previous paganism, but rather the simple and automatic termination of a political contract by the death of one of the parties. The tribes nearest Madina had in fact been converted and their interests were so closely identified with those of the Umma that their separate history has not been recorded. For the rest, the death of Muhammad automatically severed their bonds with Madina, and the parties resumed their liberty of action. Having taken no part in the election of Abu Bakr, they apparently felt no obligation to him, and at once suspended both tribute and treaty relations. To restore the hegemony of Madina, Abu Bakr had to make new treaties. While some of the nearer tribes accepted those, the more distant ones refused, and Abu Bakr was compelled to undertake the military subjugation of these tribes as a prelude to their conversion.³⁵⁶

The obligation of Muslims to pay a regular annual tax, rather than giving voluntary alms, was initiated in the year 9 AH. At first, only a few loyal tribes were asked to pay the tax. The tax collectors were members of the tribes themselves. During the last year of the Prophet's life, the enforcement of the alms-tax was handled with caution and discretion on the part of the Prophet. There are no reports of any force used against tribes failing to pay. Muslims were required to pray, to fast, to join collectively in jihad and to give voluntary alms. When the alms became an obligatory tax, it took on a different meaning to the Arab tribes; they felt that they had lost their autonomy, especially when the tax collectors started to inspect and assess private property. It meant the subjugation of the tribe to a ruler or government, something the tribes resisted.³⁵⁷

At the beginning of the year 11 AH, just two months before his death, Muhammad sent out tax collectors to the tribes of Hijaz. On the other hand, in the outlying regions

356. Bernard Lewis *The Arabs in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 50.

357. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 47.

he asked the autonomous governors to collect the tax, which most likely was not as obligatory or accurate as it was from the Hijaz region. Upon the Prophet's death, many of the loyal tribes who recognized Abu Bakr as the successor of the Messenger refused to pay the alms-tax. Umar and Abu Ubayda urged Abu Bakr to rescind the tax for the year and to treat the tribes loyal to Islam leniently in order to enlist their support for the fight against those who abandoned Islam. Abu Bakr rejected any compromise on the tax, making it the yardstick for the loyalty of the tribes to Islam itself. He insisted that those refusing payment of the tax were to be treated and fought as apostates, just like those who had abandoned Islam and those who never accepted it. He stated: **"If they withheld only a hobbling-cord of what they gave the Prophet, I would fight them for it."**³⁵⁸

The most immediate threat to Madina was posed by **Tuleiha ibn Khuweiled**, the chief of the Bani Asad, and the tribes of west-central and north-central Arabia that followed him. Tuleiha had opposed the Prophet for many years, but the Bani Asad had been forced to submit to Muhammad after the Battle of the Moat. During the Prophet's illness, Tuleiha declared himself a prophet, and after Muhammad's death, he intensified his efforts and gained the support of the Bani Asad, and severed his ties with Madina.

The concentrations of the Bani Asad nearest to Madina were located in two areas: **Abraq**, a hundred kilometers northeast of Madina, and **Zu Qissa**, forty kilometers east of Madina. A week or two after the departure of Usama's army, the apostates at Zu Qissa sent a delegation to Abu Bakr and informed him that they would continue to pray, but they would not pay any taxes. Abu Bakr's response was: **"By Allah, if you withhold a single ounce of what is due from you, I shall fight you. I allow you one day in which to give your reply."** The following morning, before the end of the deadline given to them, they left Madina, indicating that they rejected Abu Bakr's demands. Soon after their departure, Abu Bakr sent his own envoys to all the apostate tribes, stating his position and demanding their obedience.³⁵⁹

The apostate delegation returned to Zu Qissa and told their people about Abu Bakr's demands. They also told them that they had noticed no warriors present in Madina. Tuleiha, who was stationed at **Sameera**, sent his brother **Hibal** with a contingent to Zu Qissa for reinforcement in preparation for an attack on Madina. When Abu Bakr learned about the apostates' plan, he mobilized the forces available in Madina. The Bani Hashim, who had remained behind in Madina, joined the Muslim forces. With Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam, and Talha ibn Ubeidallah commanding this force, Abu Bakr launched a surprise attack on the apostate camp in Zu Qissa and drove them back. After the defeat of the apostates at Zu Qissa, several apostate clans turned viciously upon those of their members who remained Muslims

358. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 47–48.

359. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 135–136.

and slaughtered them. The killing was done mercilessly; some Muslims were burnt alive and others thrown from the top of cliffs. On the other hand, the Muslims' victory at Zu Qissa, though not decisive, had raised spirits. Some of the apostate tribes living near Madina repented, rejoined the faith, and paid their taxes. Shortly after the victory at Zu Qissa, the army of Usama was back with captives and wealth.³⁶⁰

Abu Bakr decided that he needed more time before launching a general offensive. He made sure that the army was well rested and equipped. The target now was Abraq, where the apostate forces were gathered. Abu Bakr himself led the Muslim army toward Abraq, in the second week of August 632 CE, (third week of Jammadi-Al-Awwal, 11 AH). When the Muslims arrived in Abraq, they found that the enemy was already formed up in battle array. Without delay, Abu Bakr deployed his army and attacked the apostates. The apostates, who were numerically superior, initially resisted the Muslim attack, but at the end their defenses broke down and they were forced to flee to **Buzakha**. The clans living in the countryside of Abraq repented and paid the tax.³⁶¹

While these conflicts were initially defensive, aimed at preventing the apostates from attacking Madina, Abu Bakr realized that subjugation of the rebel tribes would require a powerful Muslim army and a detailed strategic plan. He had to fight not one but several enemies. He had to deal with widespread apostasy on the eastern and southern coasts of Arabia. There was also apostasy in the region south and east of Mecca. **Quza'a** in northern Arabia rebelled again after the return of the army of Usama.

While Abu Bakr was at Zu Qissa, in early August 632 CE after the battle in Abraq, he began the development of a strategic military plan, as well as the preparation of the Muslim army for the final war against the apostates who controlled most of Arabia. By the end of August 632 CE (early Jamadi-al-Akhir, 11 AH), he was ready to start the campaign of apostasy that would result in the liberation (or conquest) of Arabia.

The Conquest of Arabia

Abu Bakr formed eleven corps, each under its own commander. The available manpower was distributed among these corps; while some commanders were given immediate missions, others were given missions to be launched later so that previous campaigns could lend support. Diplomacy was used alongside military force to defeat the rebels and convince the tribes to commit to remaining faithful to Islam and to paying taxes. The commanders were also instructed to pick up brave men on the

360. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 138–140.

361. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 141.

way as they marched to their objectives—from the northern borders of Syria and Tabuk through Medina, Yamama, Bahrain, Oman, Mahra, Yemen, and Kinda.

As soon as the corps were ready to march, Abu Bakr sent envoys to all apostate tribes with a final offer to submit. These envoys were given the instructions to call upon the tribes to return to Islam and render full submission; if they did so, there would be forgiveness and peace; those who resisted would be fought until no opposition remained, and their women and children would be enslaved. The commanders of the Muslim forces were asked to call the *azan* (the Muslim call to prayer) before the attack; if the tribe responded and attended the prayers, it would be assumed that it had submitted. The commander would then ask the tribe to confirm its submission by paying the taxes. If confirmed, there would be no attack. Those who did not answer the *azan*, or did not confirm full submission after the *azan*, would be dealt with by fire and sword. Abu Bakr also instructed the commanders to kill all apostates who had killed Muslims. As soon as the instructions were conveyed to the commanders, Khalid ibn al-Walid marched off, to be followed a little later by Ikrama and Amr ibn al-As. The other corps were held back to be dispatched weeks or even months later, depending on the progress of Khalid's operations.

The Battle of Buzakha: The End of Tuleiha's Campaign

The major battles against the apostates by the Muslim army were the Battle of Buzakha and the Battle of Yamama. With the spread of apostasy, Tuleiha received offers of support from the major tribes of north-central Arabia. He gathered his forces at Sameera, and after the Muslims' operations against Zu Qissa and Abraç, he moved with his army to Buzakha. Contingents from the Ghatafan and Tayy tribes joined him in the new location.

Abu Bakr asked **Adi ibn Hatim**, the chief of the Tayy, who was a devout Muslim, to join Khalid's corps. When Adi had tried to prevent the apostasy of the Tayy, they had renounced him, and he had been forced to leave the tribe along with a group of his faithful supporters. Abu Bakr asked Adi to try again to persuade the Tayy to abandon Tuleiha. As Khalid marched toward Buzakha, he turned left to the area south of the **Aja Mountains**, where the tribe of Tayy was gathered. This time, Adi succeeded in persuading his tribe to return to the fold of Islam and join Khalid's army. Adi also persuaded another apostate tribe, the tribe of **Jadeela**, who lived close by, to return to Islam and join the Muslim army. Jadeela provided Khalid a thousand warriors. With the strength of his corps augmented by these men and five hundred horsemen from the Tayy, Khalid was now much stronger than when he had left Zu Qissa. His corps swelled to six thousand men.

The two forces met on the plain of Buzakha in the middle of September, 632 CE. Khalid's forces dealt the rebels a decisive defeat, cutting down all who did not retreat;

Tuleiha fled to Syria. Khalid pursued the apostates who had withdrawn to Ghamra and Naqra, defeating them and taking their commanders prisoner.

While the Battle of Buzakha was being fought, the tribes of **Amir** and certain clans of **Hawazin** and **Bani Suleim** stood aside and watched. These tribes came to Khalid and submitted after the battle had ended. Soon other groups of repentant Arabs began to pour into Buzakha. "We submit!" was the universal cry. But Khalid refused to accept their submission (which meant that they could be attacked, killed, or enslaved) until they had handed over every murderer in the tribe. To this the tribes agreed. All the murderers were lined up. Khalid's justice was swift; each murderer was killed in exactly the same manner as he had employed to kill his Muslim victim.

At Zafar a large concentration of apostates had gathered: a clan of the Ghatfan tribe under the command of **Salma (Umm Ziml)**, along with those who survived the battles at Buzakha, Ghamra and Naqra. Salma's father, Malik ibn Huzeifa, was a prominent chief of the Ghatfan; her mother, Umm Qirfa, was also an important figure, well respected and admired by the leaders of the Ghatfan tribe. During the life of the Prophet, Umm Qirfa had fought against the Muslims and had been captured in battle and killed. Salma had been taken captive and led to Madina, where the Prophet presented her as a slave to his wife, Aisha, but Salma was not happy, so Aisha had set her free.

Khalid marched his corps from Buzakha to Zafar, where the army of Islam came face to face with Salma's army. Khalid took the initiative and attacked the enemy. It was a hard battle for the Muslims. While Khalid was able to drive back the wings, he could make no progress against the center. Salma, who personally commanded the center of her army, surrounded by her bravest warriors, stood firm. Khalid realized that the fighting would continue as long as Salma was alive, so he led a group of exceptionally strong warriors and attacked Salma's camel. As soon as the camel was brought down, Salma fell down too and was killed; with her death, all resistance collapsed. Salma's father, Malik ibn Huzeifa, appealed to Khalid for clemency and pledged fealty to Islam, offering the taxes as proof of repentance, but his apostasy and support for the fighters at Zafar made his apostasy clear. Khalid put him to death in reprisal for his deeds.

The Battle of Yamama

Museilima was one of the prominent leaders of the Bani Hanifah, one of the largest tribes of Arabia who inhabited the region of Yamama. During the Year of Delegations, the Bani Hanifah had sent their representatives to Madina and submitted to Muhammad. Although Museilima accompanied the delegation to Madina, he did not meet Muhammad, as he stayed behind to guard his comrades' mounts in their camp outside Madina. When the delegation returned home, the whole tribe converted

to Islam. Museilima did not become Muslim, but proclaimed prophethood during Muhammad's lifetime. After the death of Muhammad, Museilima gained the support of the whole Bani Hanifah tribe. Not all believed in his divine mission, but most of them accepted him for political reasons, motivated by tribal loyalty.

Abu Bakr had appointed Ikrama ibn Abi Jahl as commander of one of the eleven corps, instructing him to march toward Yamama and make contact with the army of Museilima, but not to get involved in battle with his forces. Abu Bakr was aware of the strength of the Bani Hanifah and did not wish to risk fighting them with insufficient forces. The purpose of establishing a Muslim base in Yamama was to keep Museilima occupied while Khalid was carrying out his missions in Buzakha and elsewhere. The caliph had decided that Khalid, his finest general, would command the Muslim forces against Museilima after he had finished with the other enemies. In preparation for the battle against the Bani Hanifah, Abu Bakr instructed Shurahbeel ibn Hasana to march toward Yamama and join Ikrama's forces; again, he asked both commanders not to engage in any military action, and to wait for further instructions.

When Ikrama learned that Khalid had routed the two forces of both Tuleiha and Salma, he could not restrain himself from trying to seize glory as well. Without waiting for Khalid or Shurahbeel, he set his corps in motion and attacked Museilima's position, but his offensive failed and the Muslims suffered a serious defeat. He had to retreat to his base after losing many men. Abu Bakr, who was extremely disappointed by Ikrama's disobedience, changed Ikrama's assignment and instructed him to leave Yamama and proceed with his forces to Uman to assist Huzeifa. Shurahbeel, now, was given the responsibility of remaining in contact with the forces of Museilima and waiting for further instructions.³⁶²

Finally Khalid's army arrived, and early on a cold morning in the third week of December 632 CE (the beginning of Shawwal, 11 AH) the battle of Yamama began. Khalid had thirteen thousand men, among them several famous Muslim leaders. Museilima commanded an army of forty thousand warriors. Both armies were organized into a center and two wings. In this battle, Khalid formed his men not in tribal groups, as had been the custom before, but in regiments with tribal contingents intermingled.

Khalid took the initiative to attack, throwing his opponent on the defensive. He led the center and cut down every man who came before him. But the enemy stood firm and fought fanatically, preferring death to giving up an inch of ground. Museilima fought defensively initially, but after some time, he ordered a general counterattack all along the front. The apostates moved forward like a tidal wave and forced the Muslims back. Some lack of cohesion was now felt in the Muslim regiments due to the mixture of tribal contingents, which were not yet accustomed to fighting side by

362. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 180–181.

side. Gradually the numerical superiority began to affect the fighting; the Muslims proceeded to fall back steadily and were forced to withdraw. As the apostates' assault became bolder, the Muslim withdrawal turned into a confused retreat. Some Muslim regiments fled; others soon followed their example, causing a general exodus from the battlefield. The Muslim army passed through its camp and went beyond it before it stopped.³⁶³

As the Muslims left the plain of Aqraba, the apostates, in an instinctive reaction, stopped at the Muslim's camp and began plundering it. While his opponents were occupied with looting, Khalid had the time to prepare his army for the second offensive. He reformed his army in tribal regiments, and once the reorganization was complete, he advanced to the plain of Aqraba. The Muslims then launched violent assaults all along the front. The apostates resisted the attack, and the two fronts were locked in mortal combat. Many men from both sides lost their lives. Now Khalid realized that, with their fanatical faith in their false prophet, the apostates would not give in. It was evident that only the death of Museilima could break the spirit of the infidels. Khalid, who had picked a handful of warriors and formed them into a personal bodyguard, stepped out toward the enemy's center and challenged them to single combat. Several champions came out of the apostate ranks to accept the challenge. Khalid took perhaps a minute to dispose of each opponent. Slowly and steadily he advanced toward Museilima, killing champion after champion until there were none left to challenge. But by now he was close enough to Museilima to talk to him without shouting. Khalid was determined to kill him; the purpose of initiating talks with Museilima was only an attempt to be close enough. As fast as Khalid moved toward him, Museilima was faster to run away.³⁶⁴

The withdrawal of their prophet had a depressing effect on the spirit of his followers. So Khalid ordered an immediate renewal of the offensive. The apostates began to fall back as the Muslims struck with sword and dagger. Their front broke into pieces, and their top commanders were killed. The commander of the right wing then shouted: "O, Bani Hanifah! The gardens! The gardens! Enter the gardens and I shall protect your rear." The commander of the right wing covered the retreat with a small rear-guard. This group of warriors was cut to pieces by the Muslims, including their commander. The Muslims pursued the fleeing apostates across the plain of Aqraba, striking down the stragglers left and right. Only a little over seven thousand men, Museilima among them, reached the gardens, and felt safe and secure after they closed the gate. **Barra ibn Malik**, a distinguished and well-respected companion, managed to climb the wall and jumped into the garden. In a minute or so managed to kill two or three men of the enemy who stood between him and the gate. As soon as he opened the gate, a new phase of the battle of Yamama began. The Muslims poured

363. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 185–188.

364. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 189–193.

into the gardens through the gate. Both sides became engaged in vicious fighting. Museilima drew his sword and joined in the combat, surprising the Muslims with his strength and skills. Abu Dajana, the famous savage who had murdered Hamza in the battle of Uhud, tightened his grip on his javelin when he saw Museilima. From his position some distance behind the Muslim front, he moved forward to get within javelin range of his target; with a practiced eye, he measured the distance and then released his weapon. The javelin struck Museilima in the belly, and as soon as he fell, Abu Dajana was upon him. With one stroke, Abu Dajana's sword severed Museilima's head. The cry of Abu Dajana announcing the death of Museilima was heard by everyone, and it put an end to the fighting.³⁶⁵

With the successful conclusion of the Battle of Yamama, most of Arabia was freed of the apostates. The battle of Yamama was the fiercest and the bloodiest battle fought in the history of Islam thus far. The apostates lost 21,000 men. Twelve hundred Muslims fell as martyrs, included three hundred of those who knew the Quran by heart. Two of the Muslim commanders were among the martyrs; Zayd (Umar's brother), the commander of the right wing, and Huzeifa, the commander of the left wing.

The Collapse of the Apostasy

When the battle of Yamama was over, the caliph sent Shurahbeel ibn Hasana and his corps to assist Amr ibn al-As in the campaign against the rebels in northern Arabia. In few weeks the two commanders were able to crush the revolt in this region. All the tribes submitted and re-entered Islam. In **Oman**, the **Azd tribe**, upon the death of Muhammad, had revolted and renounced Islam. Abu Bakr ordered Huzeifa ibn Mihsan to march to Oman to deal with the revolt, and sent Ikrama to assist him. The combined forces attacked the rebels and defeated them in the battle of Daba at the end of November 632 (early Ramadan, 11 AH). Huzeifa was then appointed governor of Uman to restore law and order, while Ikrama carried out military operations against the Azd warriors who fled to the countryside. Then, following the orders of Abu Bakr, Ikrama marched to Mahra.

The rebels in **Mahra** consisted of two factions. One faction surrendered before the fighting and joined the Muslim forces against the other faction. The Battle of Jeirut took place in early January 633 CE. The leader of the rebels was killed, and Ikrama left with a great deal of plunder.

In **Bahrain**, Abu Bakr sent **Ula ibn al-Hadrami** to lead the corps assigned to deal with the rebels. The enemy forces gathered at **Hajr** and entrenched in a strong position. Ula mounted several attacks, and the battle continued for several days without

365. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 193–196.

success. Finally, a surprise nighttime attack succeeded in penetrating their defenses; Ula's forces slaughtered many of them and pursued those who fled and defeated them. This operation was completed around the end of January 633 CE (the second week of Zu Qad, 11 AH).

Apostasy in **Yemen** had actually begun in the lifetime of the Prophet. **Aswad al Ansi**, the chief of the tribe of the **Ans** in the western part of Yemen, decided that he would become a prophet. He gathered his tribe, recited some verses, claiming that they were verses of the Quran revealed to him, and announced that he was a messenger of Allah. He gathered a force of seven hundred horsemen and captured Najran, then San'a.

The Prophet had sent a delegate to San'a to organize a resistance movement against Aswad. The resulting underground movement included **Firoz al-Deilami**, who managed to enter the fortified palace of Aswad and kill the imposter. The resistance forces then seized San'a and killed many of Aswad's followers, forcing the rest to flee the city. News of these events reached Madina shortly after the death of the Prophet. Abu Bakr appointed Firoz as governor of San'a.

When word arrived that the Prophet had died, a man named **Qeis ibn Abd Yaghus** plotted to assassinate Firoz and other important Muslim leaders by inviting them to his house. Some Muslims fell in the trap and were killed. Firoz learned about the plot and managed to leave San'a, finding a safe refuge in the hills. For the next six months he succeeded in organizing an army composed of few thousand Muslims. Then he marched to San'a in mid-January 633 CE (late Shawwal 11 AH). The Muslims defeated Qeis, who escaped to Abyan and tried to organize a resistance, but failed. Qeis and other chiefs surrendered and were subsequently pardoned by the caliph. Later on, some of those who had returned to Islam fought in Iraq and Syria.

The last revolt in the south was that of the powerful tribe of **Kinda**, which inhabited the region of Najran, Hadramaut, and eastern Yemen. The governor of Hadramaut, **Ziyad ibn Lubeid**, was a devout Muslim who was strict in the collection of taxes, which caused resentment among the Kinda. A large section of the tribe revolted and began arming themselves. Several other dissident elements joined them and established military camps and prepared for war.

Ziyad sent a column on a night raid to one of their camps, killing some of the rebels and capturing others; the rest fled. However, **Ash'as ibn Qeis**, one of the prominent Kinda chiefs, set aside his pledge to Islam, intercepted the Muslim column, and liberated the captives. After this incident, many Kinda joined Ash'as.

Ziyad waited for the last of the corps to be dispatched by Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr directed **Muhajir ibn Abi Umayya**, who had just subdued some rebels in Najran, and Ikrama, who was in Abyan, to proceed to Hadramaut to join Ziyad. The battle against the rebels, in late January 633 CE (the second week of Zu Qad, 11 AH), did not last long. After his defeat, Ash'as retreated to the fort of **Nujeir**, where he was joined

by other followers, and prepared for a siege. The siege continued for several days as Ash'as negotiated the terms of surrender. He knew Ikrama well, for in their days of unbelief they had been good friends. The old friendship with Ikrama saved Ash'as's life, as he was sent to Madina as a captive.

Ash'as was no stranger to Madina; he had visited the city during the Year of Delegation, when the Kinda submitted to the Prophet and embraced Islam. During that visit he had also married **Umm Farwa, sister of Abu Bakr**; but he had left her behind with Abu Bakr, promising to pick her up on his next visit. He was pardoned by the caliph, and stayed in Madina with Umm Farwa. In later years he fought with distinction in Syria, Iraq and Persia; and in the time of Uthman he was appointed governor of Azerbaijan.

With the defeat of the Kinda at Nujeir, the Campaign of the Apostasy was completed; and Arabia became united under the central authority of the Caliph in Madina on March 13, 633 CE. This campaign was Abu Bakr's greatest achievement.

The Fall of Rome and the Spread of Islam

The early decades of the seventh century CE made up one of the most eventful periods in the history of the land of Palestine. Within the twenty-four years between 614 and 638, the country changed hands three times. The four-centuries-long conflict between Rome and Persia was to come to an end in a final collision of the Byzantine and Sassanid armies. Both these powers had attained great victories and suffered terrible defeats, and as they continued to enfeeble each other, they made way for the rise of a new power, the Islamic state, which would drive them both out of the region.

The two monotheistic religions claiming Palestine as their holy land were joined by a third faith, newly born and extraordinarily vigorous. The Muslim conquest was destined to shape the character of the entire Middle East for the thirteen centuries that followed, down to this very day.

Persia: The Sassanians (226–629 CE)

In April of 224 CE, the local ruler of the province of Persia, Ardashir, rebelled against the Arsacid king, extending his authority to neighboring provinces.³⁶⁶ After ten years of fighting, Ardashir declared a new dynasty, the Sassanian, named after his predecessor Sasan.

³⁶⁶The Arsacids ruled Armenia from 12 to 428 CE. A branch of the Arsacid dynasty of Parthia, secured as a client-state of Rome, was abolished by the Sassanian Empire in 428. The Arsacids converted to Christianity and created the Armenian alphabet.

From the start of his rule, Ardashir was determined to establish a new regime that was completely different from the Parthian system. He devoted his efforts and attention to suppressing internal opposition, and as soon as he crushed the rebellions of the other local rulers, he prepared to go to war against the Romans to restore the territory that the Parthians had lost in previous wars. After his death in 241 CE, his son Shapur continued the same policy and carried out multiple military campaigns against the Romans.

The wars between Rome and the Sassanids (Persians) weakened both powers to the point that made it possible for a new power to emerge on the horizon of world powers: Islam.

The Precarious Balance between Persia and Rome

The events in Palestine during those years should be seen within the wider context of the relations between the powers in the Orient. Several centuries of struggle had created a sort of equilibrium: the Persians ruled east of the Euphrates, Rome ruled to its west, and the “buffer states”—Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine—constituted the battlefield for their frequent wars. Khazaria at this time was also rising to power (see page XX), and as Islam became predominant to the east and Christianity to the west, it served as a buffer, its rulers choosing to convert to Judaism as a means of self-preservation.

Before the conquests of the areas immediately outside of Arabia, Muslim soldiers fought a number of historically important battles with their Meccan counterparts. In fact, there is little debate as to how momentous and decisive the earliest of Muslim-Meccan battles were in helping to cement Islam in the peninsula and forging a new and powerful Muslim identity in the heart of the Middle East. **The battles of Badr (624), Uhud (625), and al-Khandaq (the Moat; 627)** have been ingrained in the psyche of both early and modern Muslims as powerful historical achievements that allowed for the development of a new social order as well as the ascendance of a new religious movement. The early battles had definitive political, military, and psychological impact, and ultimately helped pave the way for Arab and Muslim expansion in Arabia and the rest of the region.

Palestine, in particular, appears to have occupied a truly meaningful religious space in the minds of the early Muslim rulers. The documentary record paints a portrait of early Muslim leaders, including the Prophet Muhammad himself, believing that the capture and liberation of Jerusalem symbolized the fulfillment of ancient biblical as well as Quranic prophecy. This infatuation with *al-ard al-muqaddasa* (the Holy Land) helped fuel Arab-Muslim ambitions to wrest Syria-Palestine from the Byzantines, and, by extension, from Christianity, operating under the belief that, as sons of Ishmael (or as members of *millatu Ibrahim*, the religion of Abraham),

Arab Muslims were entitled to the land, believing it to be their rightful earthly inheritance and a reward from God.

As recounted previously (see pages XXX), the Prophet Muhammad sent two military expeditions into Syria-Palestine. The first, at **Mu'tah** in 629 CE, was against the Ghassanid governor, a vassal of the Byzantine empire who protected its eastern border against the Persians, in response to the assassination of a Muslim emissary. The vastly outnumbered Muslim forces suffered a resounding defeat, although Khalid ibn al-Walid, who assumed leadership of the military after the three commanders before him were killed, managed to retreat with as few casualties as possible.

The second expedition, to Tabuk (a journey of a thousand kilometers), comprised a force of thirty thousand men, led by the Prophet on camelback in one of the hottest months of the year. The Byzantine army and its allies, intimidated by the size of the Muslim army, withdrew their forces without engaging, which was a great victory for Muslims. After lengthy consideration, the Prophet decided to return to Medina rather than continuing into Syria at that time.

Abu Bakr wasted no time in continuing the military policies of Muhammad, and under him, Arab-Muslim armies raided and penetrated further into Palestine and the rest of Syria, while the Hejaz and the remainder of the peninsula were incorporated into the growing Arab polity. He dispatched the Muslim commander Amr ibn al-As to fight a Byzantine force near the Dead Sea, which led to the defeat of the Byzantine governor of Palestine in 634. Khalid ibn al-Walid was then recalled from his expeditions in Mesopotamia to Palestine, where he defeated the Byzantine army at the **Battle of Ajnadayn near Jerusalem, between al-Ramla and Bayt Jibrin**. This consequential battle opened up all of Syria-Palestine to the Arab-Muslims.

By late 633 or early 634, the Muslim conquest of al-Shamm (Greater Syria) came into full swing. Baysan (Bet She'an/Scythopolis) fell in 634, and between 636 and 638 the major Syrian towns of Dimashq (Damascus), Baalbek (Heliopolis), and Homs (Emesa) were all conquered as well. In June or July of 637, the Muslims captured Gaza and Iliya (Jerusalem), and by 639/640 Asqalan (Ashkelon) and Qaysariyya (Caesarea Maritima) had fallen as well, thus concluding the capture and conquest of al-Shamm. The Arab-Muslims continued westward into Egypt, and by 642 Isqandariyya (Alexandria) was taken.

Two more monumental battles were also won by Umar's generals. These included the Battle of the Yarmouk in 636, which ejected Heraclius and the Byzantines from much of the Near East, relegating them mainly to the western half of Anatolia. This was considered Khalid ibn al-Walid's greatest victory.

The Battle of the Yarmouk was a major battle between the army of the Byzantine Empire and the Muslim forces of the Rashidun Caliphate. It consisted of a series of engagements that lasted for six days in August 636, near the Yarmouk River along what are now the borders of Syria-Jordan and Syria-Palestine, southeast of the Sea of

Galilee. The battle concluded in a complete Muslim victory that ended Byzantine rule in Syria. The Battle of the Yarmouk is regarded as one of the most decisive battles in military history, heralding the rapid advance of Islam into the then-Christian Levant.

The battle of al-Qadisiyyah in 637, under commander Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, brought an end to the Sassanids' rule in Iran. Much as the Battle of Yarmouk had opened the way to the conquest of Roman territory the Arabs in the West, this battle opened territories to the east all the way to Persia to the Muslim forces.

During the early 630s, under Abu Bakr, the Syria-Palestine region was divided into four main districts for administrative and military purposes. Later, under the Umayyad dynasty, a fifth region was added. Umar divided Palestine into two districts (*junds*), as had been the case under Roman and Byzantine rule. The province of Jordan (Jund al-Urdunn) included Galilee and Acre, while the province of Palestine (Jund Filastin), with its capital first in Lydda (Lod) and later in Ramla, comprised all the land south of the Plain of Esdraelon.

In 638, following the siege of Jerusalem, Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab and Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, signed Al-Uhda al-'Omariyya (the Umariyya Covenant), an agreement that stipulated the rights and obligations of all non-Muslims in Palestine. Christians and Jews were considered People of the Book, and enjoyed some protection. Jerusalem was declared the third-holiest place in Islam. The Temple Mount became al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary). The Aqsa Mosque was built near the former temple. The process of Arabization of Palestine quickly set in; Islamization, however, took longer.

The Conquest of Iran and Iraq

During the early part of the Christian Era, Arab tribes migrated to Iraq from Yemen. One of the great chiefs of these tribes was Malik ibn Fahm, who proclaimed himself king and began to rule over the western part of Iraq. Two generations after him the throne passed to Amr ibn Adi, of the tribe of Lakhm, who established the Lakhmid dynasty. The kings of this dynasty ruled for many generations as vassals of the Persian Empire.

Abu Bakr decided to start a full military campaign against the Persian Empire and put Khalid ibn al-Walid in charge of preparations, ordering him to recruit volunteers rather than sending the regular army. Khalid began his march to Iraq with 18,000 men. Before doing so he wrote to Hormuz, the Persian governor of the frontier district of Dast Meisan:

Submit to Islam and be safe. Or agree to the payment of the *jizya*, and you and your people will be under our protection; else you will have

only yourself to blame for consequences, for I bring a people who desire death as ardently as you desire life.³⁶⁷

When Hormuz read the letter, he informed the **Persian emperor, Ardashir**, of Khalid's letter, and made up his mind to teach the crude Arabs a lesson that they should never forget.

The **battle at Kazima** started in grand style with a duel between the two army commanders. Both dismounted and began to fight with sword and shield, then they dropped their swords after a long engagement, to start wrestling. Although Hormuz tried to trick Khalid by calling a group of his fighters to attack and capture him, Qaqa was ready, and jumped in with his horse in time to kill the attackers. Khalid was able to knock Hormuz down and kill him with a dagger.

Following the duel, Khalid ordered his men to attack the enemy. The fast-moving Muslims, with their iron discipline and courage, defeated the Persians who outnumbered them. This was the first of a series of victories by Khalid and his men over the Persian army, the most fearsome military machine of that time.³⁶⁸ The decisive defeat of the Sassanids in Iraq by the Muslims came three years later, at the Battle of Qadissiyah, in 636, under command of Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, ending Sassanid rule in Persia.

By 651, most of the urban centers in Iranian lands, with the notable exception of the Caspian provinces and Transoxiana, had come under the domination of the Arab armies. Though conquered politically, the Persians began to reassert themselves by maintaining their Persian language and culture. Regardless, Islam was adopted by many—for political, sociocultural, or spiritual reasons, or simply by persuasion—and became the dominant religion.

Transition and Political Intrigue

After the death of Muhammad, in June of 632, the Muslim state was led by the four Rashidun caliphs. In the years after Muhammad's death, these leaders set out to subdue and Islamize the Arabian Peninsula and the eastern Byzantine provinces that made up al-Shamm (Greater Syria and Syria-Palestine), as well as Mesopotamia and Persia. They did so in astonishingly swift fashion.

Abu Bakr was the first caliph; upon his death in 634, **Umar ibn al-Khattab** was chosen. Umar expanded the empire from Syria to Iraq and Persia to Egypt. Before his death, he nominated six electors—one being **Ali ibn Abu Talib**—with the stipulation that his son not be elected to succeed him. **Umar was assassinated in November 644, and was succeeded by Uthman (Osman) ibn Affan, who ruled**

367. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 206.

368. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 270.

until 656. Uthman, a member of the Umayyad aristocracy, was pious, but placed his own family members in positions of power, leading to discontent and uprisings, and eventually to his own assassination in 656. Members of several tribes shared in committing his murder in order to avoid blood libel.

The last of the Rashidun caliphs was **Ali ibn Abu Talib**, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. He was opposed by a coalition headed by Aisha and by Meccans **Talhah** and **al-Zubayr**. He defeated this coalition in the **battle of al-Jamal** (the Camel) in 656.³⁶⁹

Once secure in his position, Ali shifted the capital to Kufa, in Iraq, and proceeded to dismiss most of the provincial governors that Uthman had appointed, demanding an oath of fealty from the others. This put him in direct opposition to **Mu'awiya ibn Abi-Sufyan**, Uthman's kinsman, who had been appointed by Caliph Umar as governor of Syria. Mu'awiya was bent on seizing power and moving the capital to Damascus. The intrigue and maneuvering that resulted from this rivalry constitute an important chapter in the history of the Islamic world. It is classified as the first civil war in Islam.

Mu'awiya put Ali on the defensive by demanding that Uthman's assassins be brought forth; if he failed to do so, Ali would be branded a conspirator unworthy of the position of caliph. Ali's forces and Mu'awiya's troops faced each other in 657, and after several weeks of skirmishing, when it appeared that Ali would prevail, Mu'awiya's wily adviser **Amr ibn-al-As** suddenly proposed that Ali's legitimacy be determined by arbitration rather than by fighting. For the purpose of the vote, both men would be stripped of their title.

Ali's naïve acceptance of this proposal led to his downfall. Mu'awiya, a provincial governor, had previously been lower in status to Ali, as the succeeding caliph. When Ali assented to arbitration, however, he put himself on the same level as Mu'awiya—both being pretenders to the throne. Ali also unwisely chose a pious but uninspired representative, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, while Mu'awiya was represented by the brilliant and unscrupulous Amr. These poor choices alienated many of Ali's followers, and he lost the support of Egypt. One disaffected group became known as the **Kharijites** (outsiders);³⁷⁰ after just two years in power, Ali was assassinated by a Kharijite in 661. There was a brief period of civil war, but soon the caliphate of Mu'awiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, was recognized.

The Umayyad Dynasty: 661–750 CE

The **Umayyad caliphs**, whose origins lay in the Bani Umayya clan of the Quraysh, established a strong and sprawling state whose territory stretched across three

369. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 179–180.

370. Akram, *The Sword of Allah*, 181–182.

continents. The first caliph, Mu'awiya, made Damascus the capital of the Muslim empire rather than Kufa, which had been Ali's seat of power. He took some aspects of governance and administration from the Byzantines, including making the caliphate hereditary. Before Mu'awiya died, he had assigned his son Yazid to succeed him as caliph; thus the Umayyad caliphate was the first in the history of Islam to become a dynasty.³⁷¹

In the early years of the Umayyad caliphate, however, the seeds of its downfall were planted. The sons of Ali and Fatima, **al-Hasan** and **al-Hussein**—the grandsons of the Prophet—lived quietly in Madina while Mu'awiya was alive. Hasan, who received a stipend from Mu'awiya, was poisoned by his wife and died in Madina—allegedly Mu'awiya bribed her to commit this deed.³⁷² After Hasan's death, support for Ali's younger son, al-Hussein, prevailed in Iraq, which was the only part of the caliphate not conquered by the Umayyad military. After Mu'awiya's death, Hussein refused to acknowledge Mu'awiya's son Yazid as the rightful successor to the caliphate. Hussein's supporters in Iraq urged him to leave Madina and travel to Kufa.

In 680, Hussein left Madina with his family and supporters in a small entourage of some two hundred people. Yazid sent an army of four thousand headed by Umar, the son of the general Sa'ad ben Abi Waqqas. The Umayyad army easily defeated the small party, killing Hussein and his entire family and entourage; Hussein's head was cut off and sent to Yazid in Damascus. This act, on top of Ali's assassination and Hasan's earlier murder, **cemented the opposition of the Shia faction** (as supporters of Ali became known) to those supporting Yazid's caliphate, causing the great schism between the Shia and Sunni Muslims that still exists in Islam, separating countries and dynasties.³⁷³ **This was the beginning of a recurring pattern in history in which religious differences became political, and later on, political divisions were recast as religious schisms.** Ali and his sons were canonized as saints and martyrs; every year, millions of Shia pilgrims visit al-Najaf, where Ali is buried, and Karbala, where Hussein is buried.

The third contender for the caliphate was **Abdullah ibn-al-Zubayr**, a nephew of Aisha. Ibn-al-Zubayr, whose father had been killed by Ali at the Battle of al-Jamal, also lived in Madina, and had encouraged Hussein to march to Kufa. Hussein's death left al-Zubayr as the caliph favored by all Hijaz, South Arabia, Egypt, and parts of Syria. Following al-Zubayr's open proclamation as ruler, Yazid immediately retaliated. Three years of fighting, with two military campaigns, followed. In 683, punitive forces from Damascus sacked Madina and then proceeded to Mecca, where al-Zubayr had taken refuge in the holy mosque. The invaders rained stones on the mosque, burned down the Kabah, and split the Black Stone into three pieces. During the two months in which

371. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1937; rev. tenth edition pub. 2002), 184.

372. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 182.

373. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 191.

these events took place, Yazid died, and his forces withdrew to return to Damascus. Al-Zubayr continued to oppose the Umayyad caliphs. Finally, the fifth Umayyad caliph, Abd-al-Malik, sent the ferocious general al-Hajjaj (also called al-Saffah, the butcher) to attack Mecca in 692. After a six-and-a-half-month siege, al-Zubayr was killed, and the Umayyad caliphate was able to turn its attentions outward.³⁷⁴

From this point on, the territories of Islam were further consolidated. The Umayyad state reached its peak of power, grandeur, and breadth during the reign of the tenth caliph, Hisham bin Abdul Malik (691–743), extending from China and India in the east to France in the west, from the Caucasus, Anatolia (now Georgia and Turkey), and the coasts of Italy in the north, to the land of Ethiopia and the African forests in the south.

Palestine under the Umayyad Dynasty

In 680, under the second Umayyad caliph **Yazid** (son of Mu'awiya), a fifth military province was added. The *ajnad*, as these districts were called represented an attempt to organize settlements along the northern reaches of the new Arab polity—that is, the territories closest to Byzantium—so as to be able to quickly mobilize the garrisons for protection of the northern reaches of the burgeoning Arab state as the political center of gravity began to shift from Arabia and into Syria-Palestine.

In 691, **the fifth Umayyad caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan**, undertook the construction of the Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhra), an impressive edifice in the Aqsa compound of Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, the third-holiest place for Muslims after Mecca and Medina. Umayyad rule ended circa 750, when the Abbasid dynasty from Baghdad took over, but from time to time there were uprisings by groups in Palestine which remained loyal to the Umayyads.

Spain under the Umayyad Dynasty

In 710 CE, the Muslims sent four hundred troops to Spain in preparation for their invasion of the Iberian Peninsula and found conditions favorable. In the spring of 711 CE, a small Muslim force composed of twelve thousand soldiers under the command of **Tariq ibn Ziad** crossed the Straits of Gibraltar (Mount of Tariq) and advanced northward into the Iberian Peninsula. On July 19, Tariq's army won a splendid victory over Roderick, the Visigoth king, that sealed the fate of Spain for many centuries.

By 715 CE, the Muslim army of Berbers and Arabs had conquered all of Spain except for the mountainous areas in the northwest. The Muslim army followed a tactic of moving fast from one city to the other; to guard the gates, the invading army

374. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 192.

established local garrisons made up mainly of Jews. The Jewish population cooperated because they regarded the invaders as liberators.³⁷⁵ Much of the Jewish population had fled to North Africa as a result of the persecution measures put in place against them since King Reccared's conversion to Catholicism in 587 CE. Many of the Jews of North Africa welcomed the victorious Arab forces and joined the Muslim armies in their mission to control all the territories of North Africa.

Spain was formally annexed to the Umayyad caliphate in 713–714 CE; practically speaking, however, it was autonomous because of the distance from the central Muslim authority in Damascus. The mountainous geography of the country forced the new rulers to utilize a decentralized method of government; centralization and unification did not occur until the ninth century, under Abd ar-Rahman III. Christians continued to live willingly in their cities; initially only a small number of the indigenous Spanish population converted to Islam (mass conversion did not take place until the ninth century). The invasion promptly set off a wave of Jewish immigration from North Africa to the newly conquered territories. The new Islamic authority in Spain followed the same policies as in the East: Christians and Jews were protected by law and permitted to practice their beliefs freely.

In the year 750, the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus was crushed and the Abbasid Caliphate moved the capital to Baghdad. **Abd ar-Rahman I** escaped to Spain and re-established the Umayyad emirate in Cordoba, which lasted from 756 to 1032.³⁷⁶ The new rulers of Cordoba set up a strong central government backed by a strong army. They followed a policy of encouraging trade, arts, and industries to stand on an equal footing with Baghdad.

Under the Umayyads, Spanish cities emerged as centers of industry and trade. The markets were flooded with products from Italy, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, and even further east. Agriculture, the backbone of the economy, flourished. Gold and silver circulated throughout the country. Arabic travel increased during the eighth and ninth centuries. Arabs were also interested in education and enhancing their knowledge in all sciences. Scholars departed Spain to gain more knowledge from the famous schools of North Africa, Cairo, and Persia.

The Muslims who controlled the Mediterranean created a universal economy that included all the territories of the Mediterranean, and made the sea routes safer by constructing lighthouses along the shores and introducing new, improved naval vessels. The unity of the Mediterranean world under the Pax Islamica in the tenth century was reminiscent of its ancient unity under the Pax Romana in the first and second centuries. Muslims, Christians, and Jews enjoyed the prosperity of the new era. Mercantile families of all faiths dealt with each other in partnerships and formal friendship.

375. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 18–19.

376. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 25.

Cordoba was not the only seat of Andalusian culture. Other cities such as Seville, Granada, Malaga, and Lucena emerged. The middle classes of the Jews and Christians enjoyed the prosperity of Spain under Muslim rule. The Spanish Jews assimilated almost completely in Islamic Andalusia. Jews and Christians held prominent positions in the administration and participated in all cultural activities.

In 929, **Abd ar-Rahman III** proclaimed himself caliph of Cordoba. He devoted his efforts to unifying the different Muslim factions and made peace with the Christians by offering them the opportunity to participate in state affairs and by granting them religious freedom. He established a lavish court in a suburb of Cordoba known as **Madinat az Zahra**, where he surrounded himself with a “wide circle of men of means and taste.” A talented Jew or Christian would be able to gain entree to this circle. Even a slave from Africa or Eastern Europe could also rise if he or she possessed special talent.³⁷⁷

In the tenth century, the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba was one of the three great Islamic empires claiming legitimacy as the rightful heir to the office of caliph, alongside the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad and the Shi’ite (Fatamid) dynasty of Egypt and Palestine. Upon the death of Abd ar-Rahman III in 961, his son **al-Hakam II** continued his father’s policy toward the Christians and Jews of his kingdom and established a friendly relationship with Byzantium; however, he continued to be wary of the Christian kings in the north of Spain.

A number of Sephardic Jews gained a special position in the Muslim caliphate system of Cordoba, being educated in astronomy, geometry, philosophy, and medicine, as well as Arabic language and poetry. Several prominent Jews were notable figures in the Umayyad court. **Hasadi ibn Shaprut** (915–970) was a well-known physician who became a well-trusted administrator in the court of Abd ar-Rahman III. Before long he was appointed as the head of the Jewish community, a position known as *nasi* (prince) among the Jews. Samuel ibn Nagrela (993–1055), another prominent Jew, attained the position of vizier in the kingdom of Granada.³⁷⁸

In 1013 CE, the caliphate of Cordoba dissolved when Berber forces attacked the city. Three Berber groups parceled out the country into rival kingdoms. The **Hammudids** controlled the southern coast up to Granada, ruling Malaga and Algeciras. The **Zirids** took control of Granada. The **Abbadids** took control of Seville. These petty kingdoms lasted until 1091. The prince of Seville sought assistance from the Almoravid kingdom of Morocco in his fight against the Christian kings of the north. The Almoravid ruler succeeded in reuniting Andalusia under one crown. However, the new regime was not tolerant of the other religions. Christians and Jews began migrating to Christian Spain.

The intervention of the Muslim rulers of Morocco to stop the southward advancement of the Christian kingdoms did not last long. One city after another fell into the

377. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 42–43.

378. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 46–57.

hands of the Christians. In 1248, King Ferdinand III (1199–1252) won a decisive victory when he added Seville to his kingdom. Only the small enclave of Granada remained in Muslim hands until 1492. During the long campaign of reconquest from the eleventh through the thirteen centuries, the Jews were constantly on the move in Christian Spain, migrating from areas of active intolerance into those that seemed to be somewhat tolerant. At first, they found themselves in favorable positions, as the Christian Spanish kingdoms offered Jews in Toledo, Saragossa, and Tortosa land grants, elective privileges, and tax exemptions to replace the fleeing Muslim population. The new rulers offered such incentives to all inhabitants of the conquered areas—Christians, Jews, and Muslims—to stay in the recaptured territories as artisans and tillers of the soil. Christian Spain offered the Jews an opportunity to flourish. The new kings installed Jews in prominent positions and encouraged other Jews to move to their kingdoms. This policy facilitated a smooth transition from Muslim to Christian rule.

However, the adoption of such policies by royal authorities created friction with the Church. In the thirteenth century, Ferdinand III felt that any humiliating restrictions imposed on the Jews would force them to flee to Muslim Granada, which would be disastrous for the revenues of his kingdom. For this reason, he refused Pope Honorius III's request to force Jews to wear a special badge and clothing.

During the reign of Ferdinand III, Muslim culture was preserved and protected. Scholars were encouraged to translate Arabic classics into Latin; Jewish scholars played an important role in these activities. Astronomical tables were translated from Arabic. The entire Koran was translated into Latin, as well as the philosophies of Maimonides, Gabirol, Averroes, and al-Ghazzali.

Persecution of Jews and Muslims in Spain

The favorable position of the Jews in Christian Spain gradually was replaced by discriminatory policies of the church in response to proselytization by Jews. In 1378 CE all Seville's synagogues were destroyed, and all Jews were confined to a ghetto. Prominent Jews were removed from all positions of influence. In June of 1391 CE, the Jews of Seville were attacked by rioters who set fire to the gates of the Jewish quarters and killed many of its residents. As the pogroms spread throughout Iberia, the Jews were given the choice between conversion or death. An estimated 100,000 Jews were converted; another 100,000 were murdered, and about 100,000 survived by going into hiding or fleeing to Muslim lands.³⁷⁹

A significant number of the forcibly converted Jews (Conversos) emigrated to the eastern Mediterranean after 1391 CE, settling in Jerusalem, being moti-

379. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 113.

vated by their messianic religious beliefs. Other settled in Constantinople, Albania, Crete, and the Venetian islands. Many more emigrants settled in North Africa. The remaining Jews in Spain were divided into three groups: those who continued to practice Judaism; those who became Conversos and remained so; and those who privately renounced their forced conversion while secretly maintaining their adherence to Judaism—they were called Marranos, or turncoats.

The surviving Jews were devastated; their homes, synagogues, and workshops were destroyed. They were subjected to harsh measures and humiliation to push them toward the path of conversion to Christianity. The Conversos were referred to by practicing Jews as the *anusim*, or “forced ones.” Some of the Conversos who studied philosophy convinced themselves that no religion held the truth and practically ceased to be believing Jews. They were accepted by the Church and enjoyed all the privileges of other Christians. Economic restrictions were lifted, and they were allowed to hold high positions in administrative offices, in the military, or in religious orders. Conversion to Christianity continued throughout the fifteenth century, which led to a significant increase in numbers as well as in status. Although the Conversos were accepted by the Church, the common people mistrusted and rejected them. The relationship between the “old Christians” and the Conversos deteriorated over time; hostilities intensified and reached a pogrom level in Toledo in 1449. Many discriminatory regulations were issued by the Toledo authorities following the pogrom; however, these statutes were overruled by Pope Nicholas V.³⁸⁰

In 1469, Ferdinand, king of Aragon, married Isabella, queen of Castile, ending serious conflicts between the two kingdoms. The union of the two kingdoms led to stability and a restoration of order in Spain. The status of the Jews improved in the new state. The Aragon and Castile rulers were supporters and defenders of the Jews and Muslims; they initially regarded them as lawful subjects who deserved protection.³⁸¹

The Inquisition

The status of Jews in the new kingdom changed when **Queen Isabella** received reports of alleged Judaizing activities by the Conversos. She was advised by **Alonso de Hojeda**, a Dominican prior of Seville, to start an **Inquisition** under royal control, which would bring more power to the monarchy and at the same time deal with Jewish proselytization. Muslims were also subjected to these trials. In **1478**, the royal couple obtained from Rome the permission to establish their Inquisition proceedings, which began in Seville three years later and expanded during the decade that followed to include the entire country. It is estimated that over thirty thousand Conversos were burned. Water torture and hanging were used to extract confessions

380. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 113–127.

381. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 128–129.

during painful interrogations. The guilty ones were paraded through the square where stages or scaffolds were erected, and the “honor” of lighting the pyre was usually given to some distinguished guest. The mode of operation of the Inquisition remained in place until its abolition in the nineteenth century.³⁸²

In 1478, the war with the kingdom of Granada was rekindled. The battles continued for more than a decade, and at the end of 1491, King Muhammad XII agreed to surrender. The Muslims were temporarily allowed to retain their mosques and to emigrate freely, if they chose. In January 1492, the Spanish flag was raised over the tower of the Alhambra, the palace fortress in Granada that symbolized the former glory of the Islamic kingdom of Andalus. This victory gave the monarchs the chance to devote their efforts to deal with the unresolved question of the Conversos and Jews.³⁸³

The Abbasid Caliphate: 750–1258

The Abbasid Caliphate is the second of the two great dynasties of the Muslim empire. It was founded by the descendants of **Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib**, the youngest uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. The Abbasids, in establishing their rule, relied on the Persians—who held a grudge against the Umayyads for excluding them from state positions and major centers while favoring Arabs—and also on the Shia Alawites, who helped them destabilize the Umayyad state.

The Abbasid revolution first broke out in Khorasan under the leadership of Abu Muslim, a Persian general who turned against the Umayyads. Its first caliph was Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah. However, al-Saffah’s successor, Abu Jaafar al-Mansur, is considered the true founder of the Abbasid state. He established a prosperous civilization and quickly controlled most of the Islamic areas that had been under the Umayyads. After the success of their revolution, the Abbasids moved their capital from Damascus to Baghdad, which flourished for two centuries and became one of the largest and most beautiful cities in the world. They left the Umayyad administrative structure unchanged, only installing new rulers over the different regions.

The golden age of the Abbasid Caliphate was the era under **Sultan Harun al-Rashid** (r. 786–809), and after him, his son **al-Ma’mun** (r. 813–833). During this period, lanterns were used for the first time to illuminate roads and mosques; there was also a rapid development of the sciences, especially astrophysics and technology, as well as a number of inventions such as the water clock. Harun al-Rashid also took care of agriculture and institutionalized its systems. His regime built bridges and large arches, dug canals and streams connecting rivers, and established dedicated

382. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 129–132.

383. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*, 132–134.

structures to supervise the implementation of these reform works. He also encouraged trade exchange between states and guarded trade routes between cities.

The Breakup of Abbasid Power and Saladin: The Ayyubid Dynasty

In the tenth century, the Abbasid empire began to fracture, and small autonomous dynasties began to assume power in different locations. In Mesopotamia, tribal forces seized control. In Transoxiana and Khorasan, the Samanids, a Sunni Muslim empire of Iranian origin, established their autonomy from the Abbasid Caliphate. In power from 819 to 999, the Samanids considered themselves descendants of the Sasanian Empire, and created a Persianate culture that brought Iranian speech and traditions into the Islamic world. At its greatest extent, the Samanid empire covered Persia and Central Asia.

In North Africa, the **Fatimids** emerged. This was a Shi'ite family of Arab origin that traced its ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, Fatima, and her husband Ali bin Abi Talib. From their base in North Africa, they challenged the power of the Abbasid dynasty, founding a state in Morocco in 909, and then in 969 transferring it to Egypt, where they built the city of Cairo and Al Azhar Mosque. Their state flourished for two centuries, until 1171, extending to Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Hijaz, Yemen, Iraq, Sicily, and Malta. Their reign ended when Saladin al Ayyub (1137–1193) declared independence and established the **Ayyubid dynasty** (1171–1260).

Saladin, a Sunni Muslim of Kurdish origin, had originally served the Fatimid king **Nur ad-Din**, leading his army in battle against the Crusaders, after which he was made vizier. In the wake of a family power struggle following the death of Nur ad-Din, Saladin was proclaimed as the first sultan of Egypt; he rapidly expanded the new sultanate, the Ayyubid dynasty, beyond the frontiers of Egypt to encompass most of the Levant. Because his sultanate included the Hijaz—the location of the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina—he was the first ruler to be hailed as the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, a title that would be held by all subsequent sultans of Egypt until the Ottoman conquest of 1517.

Saladin's military campaigns in the first decade of his rule, aimed at uniting the various Arab and Muslim states in the region against the Crusaders, set the general borders and sphere of influence of the sultanate of Egypt for the almost three and a half centuries of its existence. Most of the Crusader states, including the kingdom of Jerusalem, fell to Saladin after his victory at the **Battle of Hattin** (in Palestine) in 1187. However, the Crusaders reconquered the coast of Palestine in the 1190s.

After his death in 1249, as-Salih Ayyub (the tenth Ayyubid ruler and the grandson of Saladin's brother) was succeeded in Egypt by his son **al-Mu'azzam Turanshah**. However, the latter was soon overthrown by his Mamluk generals, who had repelled a Crusader invasion of the Nile Delta. **This effectively ended Ayyubid power in Egypt**

in 1250. The Ayyubids remained in power in Syria until 1260, when the Mongols sacked Aleppo and took control of most of the area.

The Mamluk Dynasty

The **Mamluks**—whose name was the origin of the later Mamluk dynasty—were soldier-slaves who came from areas north of the Black Sea and a region of the Caucasus Mountains. They entered the Muslim world in the service of kings and sultans. There is a close link between the history of the Ayyubids and the history of the military Mamluks. Generally speaking, Mamluks were enslaved when they were young, and were raised to maintain absolute loyalty to the sultan. They were treated well by the Ayyubids and were educated and raised on the Quran, and they were taught the Arabic language. When their education was deemed sufficient, they were freed, but were expected to remain in the service of the sultanate for their lifetime. Saladin's father, Najmuddin Ayyub, relied on Mamluks to retain his state, and the Ayyubids triumphed over the Crusade that threatened Egypt thanks to the power of the Mamluk soldiers.

After sacking Baghdad and defeating the Abbasid Caliphate, the Mongols intended to control the Levant and Egypt as well, but the Mamluks thwarted them. The Mongols were defeated in the battle of **Ain Jalut** in Palestine led by the Mamluk general **Baybars** under Sultan Qutuz in 1260. The Mongol leader **Hulegu Khan** ordered the execution of the last Ayyubid emir of Aleppo and Damascus, **An-Nasir Yusuf**, and his brother, who were in captivity, after he heard the news of the Mongol defeat at Ain Jalut. However, the Mamluks captured Damascus five days later, followed by Aleppo within a month. They maintained power in Syria and Egypt for the next two centuries. The empire was at its height from 1260 to 1341, but when al-Nasir Muhammad (1310–1341) died, it quickly devolved into factional struggles. Nonetheless, the Mamluks maintained power until their defeat at the hands of the Ottomans in the battle of **Marj Dabiq** (near Aleppo) and the battle of **Reidani** (in Egypt) under **Sultan Selim I** in 1517. They remained as a political and social force in Egypt until they were finally defeated by **Napoleon** in 1798. **Muhammad Ali**, viewing them as a threat, massacred the last of the Mamluks in 1811 (see page XX).

The Crusades (1095–1291)

Viewed in their rightful setting the Crusades appear as the medieval chapter in the long story of interaction between East and West, of which the Trojan and Persian wars of antiquity form the prelude and the imperialistic expansion of modern Western Europe the latest chapter . . . [T]he Crusades represent the reaction of Christian Europe against Moslem Asia, which had been on the offensive since 632 not only in Syria and Asia Minor but in Spain and Sicily also. . . . An immediate cause of the Crusades was the repeated appeal made in 1096 to Pope Urban II by the Emperor Alexius Comnenus, whose Asiatic possessions had been overrun by the Saljuqs [Seljuks] as far as the shores of Marmora. . . . The pope possibly viewed the appeal as affording an opportunity for reuniting the Greek Church and Rome.³⁸⁴

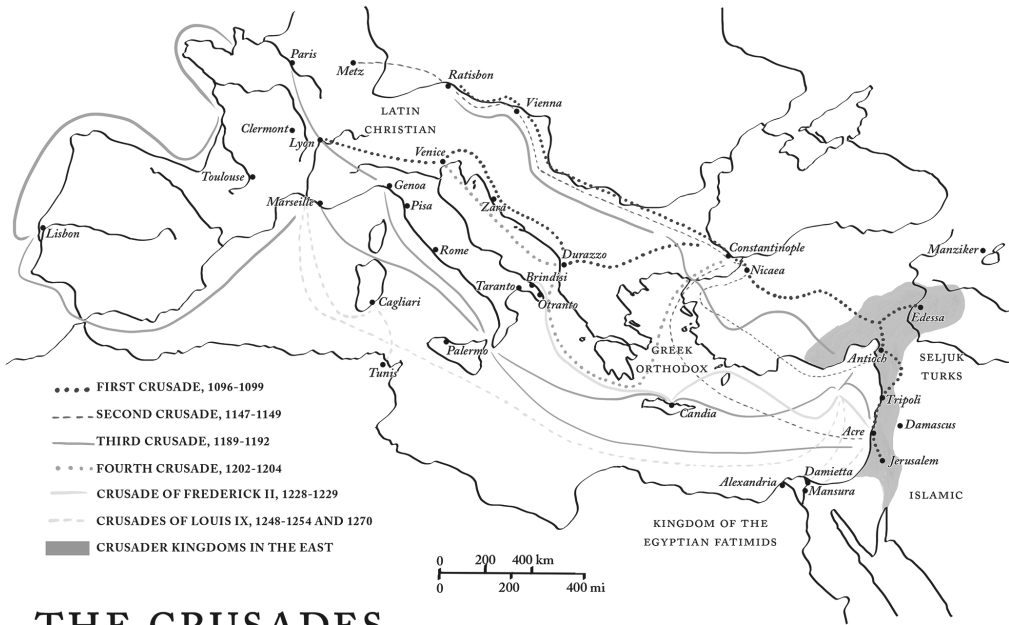
In the eleventh century, Western Europe had become a fragmented group of small polities controlled by warlords, nominally ruled by the crown monarch of the larger land. Despite the endemic lawlessness of society, Western civilization was beginning to develop and expand, with the growth of cities, the revival of a money-based economy, and the resurgence of long-distance trade. The Normans of northern France and the Christian rulers of Iberia began pushing out militarily; the former colonizing Anglo-Saxon England and the latter focusing on regaining territory from the Muslims of Spain. Forays in trade and conquest brought these rough, uncultured groups into contact with the long-established civilizations of the Mediterranean: the Byzantine Empire and the multifaceted Arab-Islamic world.³⁸⁵

The embrace of Christianity by **Constantine**, the ruler of the Roman Empire, in the year 312 CE, was a catalyzing event in history. European rulers like Charlemagne adopted Christianity as a way of legitimizing their right to rule. The Pope, in Rome, could confirm (or deny) the legitimacy of the European kings. The Latin Christianity of the day, which pervaded almost every aspect of human life, emphasized the importance of sinfulness and the judgment that would come after death. The faithful were expected to confess to their sins and repent through prayer and the giving of alms, as well as the purgative devotional journey called a pilgrimage. Pilgrims traveled to certain shrines and churches, as well as major Christian centers like Rome—but the most sacred destination was the holy city of Jerusalem.³⁸⁶

384. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 635–636.

385. Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Land* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 8.

386. Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 42.



THE CRUSADES

Jesus, in the Gospels, was explicit about Christianity being a religion of peace, but over the centuries Christian thinkers began rationalizing campaigns of aggression against unbelievers. The North African bishop St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) established the conditions under which a war could be lawful and justifiable, setting the template that eventually gave rise to the Crusades. These were carried out under the pretext of fighting a holy war, and were, like a pilgrimage, supposed to confer spiritual benefit to those who took part.

With Constantinople under threat of Muslim invasion, and seized by the possibility of reuniting the Greek Church with Rome, in 1095 **Pope Urban** gave a speech urging the faithful to “enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre, wrest it from the wicked race and subject it” (the “sepulchre” referred to was the remains of the cross on which Jesus had died, kept in Jerusalem). In response, between sixty thousand and a hundred thousand Frankish Christians set out to march to the east on the first Crusade. About half of them were knights and infantry troops; the rest were noncombatants, women, and children.³⁸⁷ Setting out from Constantinople in 1097, they first besieged and ransacked Nicaea with the assistance of Byzantine troops. They then continued southeast, reaching Jerusalem in 1099 and taking control of numerous cities along the way. By 1099, four fiefdoms were under the control of the invaders: Al-Ruha (Edessa) and Jerusalem, which became Burgundian princedoms; Antioch, under Greek control; and Tripoli, which was Provençal.³⁸⁸

The Muslim side fought back, however. **Zangi**, the governor of Mosul, was able to assume control of Aleppo in 1128; in 1144 he conquered Edessa, dealing a serious blow to the Christians who had controlled the city for nearly fifty years.³⁸⁹ Fearing the loss of all Christian territory in the Near East, Pope Eugenius III declared the second Crusade—the largest one—in 1145. Under the leadership of Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany, some sixty thousand French and German knights, Knights Templar, and Hospitallers massed together, galvanized by the presence of Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, who traveled all over Europe recruiting knights, soldiers, and lay people to the cause. The army set out in early summer of 1147 and marched east. However, the troops were repeatedly repelled by the Turkish Seljuk forces, and thousands were killed or died of starvation; the kings had to resort to returning to the West by boat.

Zangi’s son, **Nur-al-Din**, succeeded his father, seizing Damascus bloodlessly and taking control of parts of the territory around Antioch. Nur’s lieutenant Shirkuh navigated military and diplomatic hurdles to attain the viziership of Egypt under the last of the Fatimid caliphs. Shirkuh’s nephew, Salah-al-Din Yusuf (**Saladin**), succeeded him in this office. Saladin had two overarching goals in life: to replace Shi’ite Islam

387. Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 42.

388. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 643.

389. Asbridge, *The Crusades*, 195.

in Egypt with the Sunnite faith, and to prevail in the holy war against the Franks.³⁹⁰ Saladin eventually gained control of Syria in a battle with Nur's son and successor; the Abbasid caliph then gave him a diploma of investiture over Egypt, al-Maghrib, Nubia, western Arabia, Palestine, and central Syria. In the next ten years, Saladin gained control over northern Syria as well. He recaptured Jerusalem in 1187, and then took most of the other towns and cities in the region, save only Antioch, Tripoli, and Tyre.

When Europe heard of the fall of Jerusalem, its rulers abandoned their petty quarrels and united to take arms against Islam. The legendary Third Crusade, declared by Pope Gregory VIII in 1187, was led by Frederick of Barbarossa (who drowned in a river shortly after starting out), Richard Coeur de Lion of England, and Philip Augustus, king of France. The Europeans decided to focus on 'Akka (Acre), and embarked on a siege that lasted for two years before the Muslims finally surrendered. As Philip Hitti says, "Peace was finally concluded on November 2, 1192, on the general principle that the coast belonged to the Latins, the interior to the Moslems [sic], and that pilgrims to the holy city [Jerusalem] should not be molested."³⁹¹

Saladin, who died not long after the truce was brokered, achieved a great deal in his lifetime, not least the **founding of the Ayyubid dynasty** that succeeded the Fatamids in Egypt. His heirs reigned in Egypt, Damascus, and Mesopotamia, and maintained generally friendly relations with the Crusaders. Over the next thirty years, however, all the cities conquered by Saladin reverted to Frankish rule—even Jerusalem, which fell in 1229. Saladin's grandson, **al-Kamil**, set about clearing Egypt of Crusaders. Though he succeeded, he allowed free passage for trade ships from Italy and generally was favorably disposed toward Christians.

Al-Kamil's second successor, al-Malik al-Salih Najm-al-Din Ayb, in 1244 encouraged Khwarizm Turks, whom the Mongols under Genghis Khan had rendered homeless, to restore Jerusalem to Islam. A sixth Crusade, led by Louis IX of France, marched on Egypt, but succumbed to illness; Louis and his surviving forces were taken prisoner. Meanwhile, after al-Salih's death in 1249, the Mamluks finally took control of Egypt under their ruler **Aybak**, the founder of the Mamluk dynasty. The fourth Mamluk ruler, **al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars**, brought a final end to the Crusaders' efforts. In 1260 Baybars had decisively defeated the Mongols at Ayn Jalut, ending their predations and protecting Cairo from being sacked. **Baybars went on to raid Crusader towns, facing little to no opposition, finally evicting the occupiers from Antioch, Tripoli, and even Acre, after which all of Syria returned to Islamic control.** Freed by the Mamluks, Jerusalem remained free until the Ottomans took over.

390. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 646.

391. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 651.

Consequences of the Crusades

The conquest of the Muslim-held territories in southern Italy, Sicily, and the Iberian Peninsula bolstered the sentiment that, despite differences between states, the people of Europe did share a common identity and cultural heritage. On the flip side, this resulted in an increase in xenophobia and religious intolerance. There were pogroms against the Jews (notably in northern France and the Rhineland in 1096–1097) and violent attacks on pagans, schismatics, and heretics across Europe.

The Crusades also caused a rupture in relations between the West and the Byzantine Empire. Horrified at the unruly groups of warriors causing havoc in their territory, the Byzantines grew mistrustful of European intentions. Outbreaks of fighting between Crusaders and Byzantine forces were common. The situation culminated in the shocking sacking of Constantinople on 1204 CE during the Fourth Crusade, which also saw the appropriation of art and religious relics by European powers. The Byzantine Empire became so debilitated it could offer little resistance to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

The Crusade movement spread to Spain, with attacks against the Muslim Moors there starting in the eleventh century. Prussia and the Baltic (the Northern Crusades), North Africa, and Poland, amongst many other places, would also witness crusading armies all the way to the fifteenth century, as the idea of a crusade as an expression of religious devotion continued to appeal to leaders, soldiers, and ordinary people in the West.

On the Muslim side, despite the religious significance of Jerusalem, the coastal Levant area was only of minor economic and political importance to the caliphates of Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Though the Crusades offered an opportunity for greater unity in opposition to the invading Western forces, Muslim rulers often failed to take advantage of it. The Muslim world was itself divided into various sects and beset by political rivalries and competition between cities and regions. **Only the Mamluks, facing the hazard of Mongol invasion, were able to unify the Islamic world, forging a military state under Baybars and Qalawun.**

With the Allied occupation of Palestine in the First World War in the twentieth century, the ghosts of the Crusaders came back to haunt the present in the form of propaganda, rhetoric, and cartoons. By the Second World War, the very term “crusade” was, conversely, stripped of its religious meaning and applied to the campaigns against Nazi Germany. And in the current century, the fight against terrorism has frequently been couched in terms of a “crusade.” With the rise of Arab nationalism, the debate over the position and validity of the state of Israel, and the continued interventionist policies of Western powers in the Middle East, the secular goals of territorial control and economic power have been mixed and confused with divisions

of religion so that terms such as “crusade,” “Christian,” and “Muslims” are used in political contexts and are being stripped of their religious meaning altogether.

The Mongols

In the twelfth century CE, there were about 700,000 Mongols scattered across the steppes of Central Asia. They were nomads who lived in small encampments, divided up into clans and tribes engaged in continuous wars with each other. By the late thirteenth century, however, the Mongols ruled an empire that covered 24 million square kilometers, making it the largest empire in human history. The founder of this empire was **Genghis Khan**, a man of tremendous ambition, great courage, and extraordinary insight.

Genghis, who had been born with the name **Temujin**, was elected as **Khan of All Khans in 1206**. Once he took his seat on the throne, he adopted the name **Genghis Khan**, which means **Strong and Fearless**. He devised new systems for organizing fighters and collecting and sending information that allowed him to conquer the tribes to the south and west, gaining access to the Silk Road, the fabled trade route between China, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, and the Jin empire of northern China.

The Mongol Invasion of the Muslim World

The **Khwarazmian Empire** (1077–1231) was a vast Islamic empire that covered large parts of modern-day Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan, as well as parts of Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Azerbaijan. Culturally Persian and Sunni Muslim, it was founded by Turkic Mamluks, and was the successor to the **Seljuk Empire**, upon which its systems were modeled. From 1200 to 1220, it was ruled by Shah Ala ad-Din Mohammad II, whose capital was **Samarkand**, a prosperous city of more than half a million citizens. The empire was extremely wealthy, as it controlled several trade routes, including the Silk Road, and kept a standing cavalry army of 400,000 Turkic soldiers.

In 1216 Shah Mohammad reneged on a commercial treaty he had signed with the Mongols, murdering Genghis Khan’s representatives. In response, in the winter of 1219, Genghis Khan assembled four divisions of fifty thousand warriors and advanced towards Khawarazm. The Mongols conquered the cities of Otrar, Bukhara, and finally Samarkand, slaughtering hundreds of thousands of people and sparing only strong young men and those with special skills. With the fall of Samarkand, Genghis Khan became the lord of the Khwarazm Empire.³⁹²

392. Thomas J. Craughwell, *The Rise and Fall of the Second Largest Empire in History: How Genghis Khan’s Mongols Almost Conquered the World* (Beverly, MA: Fairwinds Press, 2010), 138–141.

Genghis Khan died in 1227 and was succeeded by his third-born son, **Ogodei**. The new khan started his rule with grand building projects that depleted the empire's treasuries by 1235. Ogodei proposed to his generals that they invade India, their wealthy neighbor. However, **Subotai**, Genghis's greatest commander, offered a fresh solution: an invasion of Europe. Ogodei assented, and the planning began.³⁹³ Two years later, in the winter of 1237, the Golden Horde of Batu Khan, Genghis Khan's grandson, swept into Russia and began their subjugation of Europe.

The Mongol Invasion of Europe

Under the command of Subotai, the Mongols first put the town of Riazan to the sword, followed by three other small, fortified towns in the region. Early in January 1238, the Mongols overwhelmed Moscow's defenses. Ordinary soldiers were killed quickly, but the officers and noblemen were crucified, burned, or flayed. Women were spared. Strong young men were also spared for slave labor. The following month, the Mongols besieged the city of Vladimir, treating it in a similar fashion.³⁹⁴ In 1240 the Mongols conquered **Kiev**, the largest city in Russia and one of the largest cities in the Western world, within a single day.

With the conquest of Russia completed, the Mongol commanders gathered at Batu Khan's camp outside Przemysl, today a city in southern Poland but part of Russia in 1240. Their respected leader Subotai presented a plan that he had developed for the invasion of Europe: **Thirty thousand Mongol warriors would remain in Russia; another thirty thousand men would sweep into Poland and Lithuania; and the remaining ninety thousand would be divided into four columns of 22,500 each, which would advance through the Carpathian Mountains toward Hungarian cities of Buda and Pest. Once the Poles and the Lithuanians were defeated, those men would march from the north and rejoin the main army.**³⁹⁵

The plan was a complete success. The Mongols burned Polish cities and ravaged the countryside, burning down Krakow and Legnica and annihilating their armies. They defeated the Hungarian forces defending the city of Pest, entered the city, and burned it down to the ground.³⁹⁶ They spent the remainder of 1242 conducting raids throughout central and eastern Hungary.

Many towns and villages were leveled; most of the farmlands were destroyed, and as much as half of its population was lost. The Mongols then controlled Eastern Europe from the Baltic Sea to the Danube River. When the winter came and the Danube froze, they rode across to bring their campaign to Western Europe. During

393. Craughwell, *Rise and Fall*, 162–168.

394. Craughwell, *Rise and Fall*, 178–182.

395. Craughwell, *Rise and Fall*, 186–188.

396. Craughwell, *Rise and Fall*, 196–202.

January of 1242, the Mongols advanced through Croatia, Austria, and Italy. However, their campaign ended when Batu learned that Ogodei Khan had died. The Mongol armies in Europe broke camp and headed back to Mongolia.³⁹⁷

Genghis Khan's Successors

During the reign of Ogodei, three queens played an important role in governing the empire. **Sorkhokhtani**, the widow of Genghis Khan's youngest son, Tolui, ruled northern China and eastern Mongolia. **Ebuskun**, the widow of Genghis Khan's second son, Chaghatai, ruled Central Asia (Turkestan). Though Ogodei reigned as Great Khan, he was too drunk to lead the empire, and gradually he conveyed administrative power to **Toregene**, the most capable of his wives. Upon his death in 1241 she became the official regent. Eventually, however, Sorkhokhtani, with the assistance of Batu Khan, managed to have her oldest son, **Mongke**, elected as the great khan. A serious man, Mongke alone among members the Golden Family was not addicted to alcohol. To increase his legitimacy as the great khan of the Mongol Empire and to rewrite history, he retroactively awarded his father Tolui the title of great khan. He also transformed the modest city of Karakorum into an imperial capital of the empire. He was able to stabilize the economy and control government spending sufficiently to renew the Mongol invasions, this time in the direction of the Middle East and south China.

The Mongolian Invasion of the Middle East

In the spring of 1253, Mongke's brother **Hulegu** was assigned to attack the Arab cities of Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo; Khubilai was assigned to conquer the Sung dynasty; the youngest brother, Arik Boke, stayed behind in Karakorum to assist Mongke in managing the empire.

Before he could conquer Baghdad, Hulegu had to reassert Mongol authority over several rebellious areas en route. He used subterfuge to defeat these groups fortress by fortress. This opened up the route to Baghdad, the largest and richest city in the Muslim world, known for its palaces, mosques, schools, private gardens, public fountains, luxurious baths, and overflowing bazaars. Besides being the capital of the Muslim empire, it was also a religious center for Christians, who erected many churches, and a cultural center for Jews, who built numerous synagogues and schools.

In November 1257, Hulegu began to march toward Baghdad. To supplement his own army, he summoned the armies of the vassal states of Armenia and Georgia, as well as a variety of Turkic tribes. While the main army was advancing from the north

397. Craughwell, *Rise and Fall*, 204.

and the east, the others were approaching from the north and the west. By the final week of January 1258, the invading armies had encircled the city and occupied the suburbs beyond the city walls, filling the city to its maximum with refugees. Hulegu surrounded the city with a deep ditch and a rampart and began the assault with a terrifying bombardment of the city.³⁹⁸

Because his mother and two wives were Christians, he had strong connections with the Christian communities in the Middle East. He also had maintained good relations with his Christian vassal kingdoms of Armenia and Georgia. Taking advantage of these connections, Christian envoys secretly slipped back and forth between the city of Baghdad and the Mongol camp, bringing vital information to Hulegu and securing promises of special treatment for the Christians in the city.³⁹⁹

The population of Baghdad in the thirteenth century probably was over a million. The city was guarded by an army of sixty thousand troops. However, this army had been neglected, and at the time of the Mongol's attack was ill-equipped, barely trained and of doubtful loyalty. While its commander demanded emergency defense measures and additional troops, **Caliph al Musta'sim** seemed more concerned with frivolous pleasure. The caliph lost the respect and loyalty of his close aides. Even the chief minister was in touch with the Mongols. Conditions inside the city were terrible, with hordes of refugees having flooded in from surrounding villages. Yet the defenders put up a determined resistance for almost a month.⁴⁰⁰

The Mongols were equipped with special military devices and weapons that the defenders were not familiar with. The Mongol engineers bombarded the city from a distance, which confused the defenders, who had never before been attacked by an enemy far away. On February 5, 1258, the Mongol forces broke through the walls of Baghdad. The garrison was then murdered in cold blood, along with as many as a hundred thousand ordinary men, women, and children.⁴⁰¹

To prepare the city for looting, Hulegu ordered the people of Baghdad to surrender their weapons, abandon all their goods, and leave the city. He then sent his Christian troops into the city to collect the loot, but they found many people had refused the order to evacuate and were hiding in their homes. For disobeying the order, the invaders killed them. The Christians inside Baghdad joined the troops in slaughtering the Muslims and looting the city, and were allowed to destroy the tombs of the long line of Abbasid caliphs. The churches and Christian property in the city remained secure from plunder. One of the caliph's palaces was given to the Nestorian patriarch Catholikos Makikha.⁴⁰²

398. Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2004), 181–182.

399. Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 181.

400. David Nicolle, *The Mongol Warlords*, (London: Brockhampton Press, 1990), 108–109.

401. Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 182–183.

402. Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 183.

The Mongols destroyed libraries and schools; many teachers and scholars were killed or dispersed, and the irrigation system was almost completely ruined.⁴⁰³ In less than two years, the Mongol army had accomplished what the European Crusaders from the West and the Seljuk Turks from the East had failed to do in two centuries of sustained effort.

While the Mongols defeated the Arabs, the Crusaders, who at this time occupied a series of castles and small cities along the Mediterranean coast, had watched the Mongol approach cautiously. Suddenly, with the fall of Baghdad, they saw an opportunity for themselves to ally with the Mongols and share in their victories. When the Mongols left Baghdad and headed further west toward Damascus, the Crusader knight **Bohemond of Antioch** came out with his army to attack Damascus from the Mediterranean side, and brought supplies and food to the Mongols. Similarly, the Seljuk sultan sent his army from Anatolia to join the Mongol assault.⁴⁰⁴ Damascus surrendered and saved itself from sharing Baghdad's fate.

In the seven years since Hulegu had left Karakorum, he had conquered everything along a distance of some four thousand miles, and he had added millions of Arabs, Turks, Kurds, and Persians to the Mongol Empire. Although it seemed at the time that the Mongols were on their way to swallow all of the Muslim world, the Mongols had, in fact, reached their limit in the West. The Egyptian Mamluk army marched toward Palestine and defeated the Mongol forces at **Ayn al-Jalut** near the Sea of Galilee on the morning of September 3, 1260, putting an end to the expansion of the Mongol Empire.

Although the early Mongol conquests mercilessly crushed Muslim cities and rulers, and seemed to aid the enemies of Islam, their presence eventually proved beneficial to the Muslim world. In fact, **Berke**, the khan of the Golden Horde, converted to Islam; **less than a century later, Islam would be the religion of all the Mongol rulers of Western Asia.**⁴⁰⁵

Tamurlain (Timurlink): Restoring the Mongol Empire

Although he was not a Mongol, but a Turk of the Barlas clan—and a Muslim—**Timur-I Link** (1336–1405), saw himself as the heir of Genghis Khan, and established a dynasty that lasted from 1370 to 1526. After winning the Mongol western khanate in 1370 and emerging undefeated as the most powerful ruler in the Muslim world, he set his sights on restoring the Mongol Empire. He was a ruthless warrior who inspired much terror through his campaigns and was called invader of the world. He

403. Nicolle, *The Mongol Warlords*, 110.

404. Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 184; Craughwell, *Rise and Fall*, 223.

405. Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 328.

invaded vast territories in Asia, Persia, south Russia, and India, causing the deaths of more than 17 million people—that is, 5 percent of the global population at that time. Despite his brutality, however, Timur was a devout Muslim and a patron of the arts and architecture.

Before the end of 1399, Timur set out on his last great expedition in order to punish the Mamluks and the Ottoman sultan Bayazit for seizing some of his territories. In a seven-year campaign, Timur asserted control over Baghdad and Kurdistan, then extended it further west, opposing the Mamluks in Syria and the Ottomans in Anatolia. In Syria, he captured Aleppo, Hims, and Damascus, among other cities. Aleppo surrendered without struggle, but he subjected Damascus to looting and massacre. In 1402 he defeated the Ottomans in Ankara, taking **Sultan Bayazid** captive (Bayazid later died later in captivity). Satisfied at the blow to the Ottoman hegemony, he returned to his capital at Samarkand, and was preparing for the greatest exploit of his life—a campaign against China. He became ill and died in 1405 before he could fulfill his ambition.⁴⁰⁶

406. Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10–20.

PART III

Palestine in the Modern Era

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The Ottoman Empire

The Origins of the Ottoman Empire (1285–1923)

The original home of the Turks was in Central Asia. Between the seventh and eleventh centuries, most Turks lived in the area north of the Syr Darya River and the Aral Sea. A few Turkic groups moved west to Eastern Europe, including the **Bulgars**, **Khazars**, **Cumans (the western Qipchaqs)**, and **Pechengs**. As early as the beginning of the ninth century, the **Qarluq** and the **Oghuz** began their crossing of the Syr Darya into Transoxiana. The Qarluq, who converted to Islam around 960, seized Bukhara and Samarqand. The Oghuz, who also converted to Islam, left the region north of the Aral Sea and entered Transoxiana in the 980s.

The empire of **Khazaria** (see page XX) controlled several ethnic groups in the north: the Magyars, the Bulgars, the Pechenegs, the Oghuz (Ghuzz), and the Burtas. These different groups were vassals who supported the Khazars in their wars and paid tribute to the kagans, the Khazar rulers. In the second half of the tenth century, the Khazars were defeated by the Rus and lost control over the steppes; however, the Rus were unable to control this vast region as the Khazars had. The Seljuks—the founders of Muslim Turkey—were a Turkic tribe related to the Oghuz who moved southward into the vicinity of Bokhara. They were related to the Khazars; in fact, Seljuk himself was brought up at the Khazar kagan's court.

In 1033, a drought in Transoxiana forced the Seljuks, led by **Tughril**, to cross the Amu Darya into Khorasan in search of grazing land. In 1040 they controlled Khorasan, and soon after, began a campaign of conquest westward across Iran. Over the following few years they captured **Hamadan and Esfahan**, then advanced into **Armenia, eastern Anatolia, and northern Iraq**. In 1055 the Sunni caliph, in Baghdad, invited Tughril to take over his capital from the Shi'ite Buyid's control. In 1071, the **Seljuks** destroyed a huge Byzantine army in the historic battle of Manzikert and captured their emperor. **This marked the creation of the most powerful empire**

in the world during the next several hundred years.¹ During the reign of Tughril's successors, the empire expanded to include Armenia and Georgia, most of Syria and Palestine, and parts of Yemen and the Persian Gulf.

The Seljuk Empire disappeared in the early part of the fourteenth century, after two Mongol invasions, the first in 1243, when **Batu** (a grandson of Genghis Khan and chief of the western part of the Mongol Empire) of the Golden Horde attacked the sultanate and won a decisive victory at Kose Dagh; the second in 1260, when **Hulegu** (the Mongol chief of all Russians, who had sacked Baghdad in 1258, ending the Abassid dynasty) asserted his authority over the eastern half of Anatolia. Following these two defeats, the Seljuk's sultanate witnessed several decades of destructive civil wars which led to the empire's complete elimination.

The Rise of the Turks

Hulegu's conquest sparked a large wave of Turkish immigration into central and western Anatolia. As they entered these territories, the process of Turkification of the peninsula accelerated. Many of the Turkish newcomers joined the successful tribal invaders, which enabled some of the chieftains to gain power. One of these, the Seljuk chieftain of a Turkish tribe, **Osman** (born about 1260) developed a power base at **Soghut**. Osman benefited from the trade route between the Aegean and Central Asia, taxing the merchants who were using this route. His successful raids attracted large number of tribal invaders and adventurers. Osman's group became known as the **Ottomans**, or **followers of Osman**. This power base evolved into a state during the early part of the fourteenth century. Osman's son, **Orhan**, captured **Bursa, Nicaea, and Nicomedia between 1326 and 1337**.² During the reigns of Orhan and his son **Murat I**, the Ottoman sultanate captured several parts of the Balkans, and during the following two centuries evolved into a great empire. The Ottoman Empire was an extension of the **Seljuk Turkish Empire**, which had ruled over a large portions of Western and Central Asia between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. The Ottoman sultans claimed descent from the Seljuk dynasties.

During the late part of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century, the newly born Ottoman Empire suffered a major setback when **Tamurlaine's** forces, in 1402, defeated their army at **Ankara** and captured the sultan **Bayezit I**, who died in captivity eight months later (see page XX). The sultanate nearly disintegrated as a result of a long civil war between the sons of Bayezit. In 1413, **Mehmet I** revived the sultanate after he defeated his brother, and recaptured western Anatolia, and the European territories that had been lost during the civil war.

1. Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750: The Making of a Civilization*, second edition (Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 2017), 166–167.

2. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*, 303.

The most glorious periods of the Ottoman Empire were the reigns of Sultan **Mehmet II (1451–1481)**, Sultan **Selim I (1512–1520)**, and Sultan **Suleyman (1520–1566)**. **Sultan Mehmet II** captured Constantinople in 1453, annexed Serbia in 1459, and conquered the Safavids and annexed their territories in eastern Anatolia, most of Iraq, and Iran in 1473. **Sultan Selim I** captured Tabriz, the Safavid capital, defeated the Mamluks, and annexed all their territories including Syria, Egypt, and Hijaz in 1517. **Sultan Suleyman I** captured Iraq, Hungary, the island of Rhodes, and most of the North African coast.

The Ottomans and Palestine

Palestine, Syria, and the Hijaz were high on the list of the Ottoman government priorities. The legitimacy of Ottoman authority was, in Muslim eyes, bound up with the sultan's control of the Islamic holy cities and the routes of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Mecca were important religious centers: Jerusalem was the site of Muhammad's ascent to heaven, and Damascus was the place through which Muslims from the north and the east passed to make the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.³ In addition, Palestine and Syria were important sources of tax revenue for the Ottoman Empire; the Palestinian cities of Jerusalem, Jaffa, Acre, Nablus, Gaza, Bethlehem, and Hebron had trade connections with Europe and with the markets of Egypt, Lebanon, and other neighboring countries. Damascus and Aleppo were of great commercial significance; besides their trade with Europe, they derived their commercial wealth from pilgrimages and from trade with Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Persia, and the Gulf.⁴

The Ottomans had controlled Syria, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula since 1517. The *vilayat* of Hijaz—which included all land from the southern border of the *vilayat* of Syria, south of the city of Ma'an, to the north border of the *vilayat* of Yemen at the city of Al Lith—had been governed by the grand sharif, the lord of Mecca and Medina who reported directly to the sultan, since 1841. In Yemen, two military expeditions were carried out to establish effective Turkish rule, the first one in 1849 and the second in 1872 which coincided with the opening of the Suez Canal. The coastal province of al-Hasa was occupied in 1871. The principalities of Najd and Shammar were autonomous under the rule of the Houses of Sa'ud and of Ibn Rashid, who conducted their affairs and wars freely.

The situation was different in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and North Africa: Britain controlled the entrance of the Persian Gulf through an agreement with Masqat, and the entrance of the Red Sea by occupying Aden in 1839, and the Perim Island in

3. Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 19–20.

4. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 37–41.

1857; in North Africa, the Turks had lost Algeria to France in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881. England occupied Egypt and Sudan in 1882. Italy occupied most of Libya in 1912.

The Height of the Ottoman Empire

For roughly two centuries, the Ottoman Empire was one of the world's greatest powers. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, it occupied an area of 1,300,000 square kilometers. Its population was diverse, containing large numbers of Turks, Armenians, Magyars, Arabs, Greeks, Slavs, and Berbers. It also comprised many religious groups, including Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, several Christian denominations, and Jews. Compared to Europe, the empire had a much higher percentage of its population living in huge cities (Istanbul and Cairo) and large cities (Edime, Ismir, Aleppo, and Damascus).

Under the reign of Mehmet II (1451–1481), agents went out into the villages to seize—by force if necessary—the brightest and strongest Christian boys between the ages of eight and eighteen. They escorted the boys to Istanbul, where they were tested for a variety of abilities. The most promising were sent for training in the palaces of Edirne and Istanbul; the majority were assigned to Turkish farmers. Those who were sent to the palaces began a rigorous program of education and training. They studied the Quran and the various religious sciences; became fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish; and engaged in physical training such as wrestling, archery, and horsemanship. At the end of the program, the candidates were subject to a second screening. The majority (probably 90 percent) entered high-status positions in the administration or the army. The elite 10 percent who survived the second screening, the *ichoghlani*, became the most powerful civilian and military officials in the empire. Those who lived with the farming families learned the Turkish language and the rudiments of Islam. When they completed their education, they were enrolled in the ranks of the Janissaries, where they received training in the use of the muskets and artillery. The Janissaries owed supreme loyalty to the sultan. Their number increased over time; at the end of Suleyman's reign it reached twelve thousand. The Janissaries formed the bulk of the cavalry, which numbered over fifty thousand. The cavalry men were known as the *sipahis*. The Ottomans granted to each *sipahi* the agricultural tax revenue derived from a specific region. The more important the *sipahi* was, the larger the revenue. The powerful Turkish *sipahis* were the local lords in the countryside, while the authority of the devshirme was in the cities.⁵

In 1421, Mehmet I claimed the title of caliph, because he realized that this title was needed to earn the loyalty of all Muslims. However, the Ottoman sultan was

5. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*, 357–358.

aware that he could not aspire to be the spokesman for the entire Muslim world. The other Muslim rulers, the **Safavid** and the **Mamluk**, also claimed the title of caliph. Since 1260, the Mamluks had had a descendant of the Abbasid family—a puppet with no power—in Cairo, conferring upon him the title of caliph. **When Selim I defeated the Mamluks in 1517, he dismissed the puppet caliph in Cairo and proclaimed himself caliph of all Muslims, and the protector of the sacred places of Mecca and Medina.**⁶

From the Umayyad period (661–750) on, the *ulama* religious authorities had recognized the legitimacy of the government in return for a pledge from the government not to intervene in the affairs of religion. The government tried to control the *ulama* by employing them as *qadis* (judges). Some of the *ulama* realized that the state was using Islam as a means to legitimize its own sovereignty and policies, and they regarded government service as unethical. Most *ulama*, however, rationalized their service to the government and accepted employment. The Ottoman administration was the first Muslim government to develop a fully bureaucratic structure for the religious institutions of its society. Although they did not succeed in making all important *ulama* state employees, they were successful in controlling the religious institutions. Schools, hospitals, Sufi lodges, and mosques all over the empire facilitated the state's efforts to make local religious leaders dependent on the government. Religious functionaries, from the highest-ranking specialists in the capital city to the lowest preachers in the villages, were tied into the system. The *ulama* who served the government became powerful government officials. They possessed high status, honors, and privileges, and they could pass their wealth and status to their children. **The Sufi brotherhoods were considered a serious threat by the Ottoman government, which took strict measures to monitor their activity. Sufis considered spiritual authority to be superior to government authority, and they judged the worthiness of any government by the degree to which it adhered to the principles of justice and morality.**⁷

The Decline of the Ottoman Empire

The first ten Ottoman sultans were highly charismatic men of great ability, and they all personally led their armies and civil administrations. Before they occupied the throne, they had been trained by long service in various administrative and military positions. The reign of **Suleyman I** (1520–1566) was the most glorious in the history of the Ottoman Empire. The Europeans called him Suleyman the Magnificent, and no single European state would dare to attack the empire. The potential for further Ottoman expansion was a concern for all Europeans.

6. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*, 355.

7. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*, 359.

The death of Suleyman, however, marked the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The sultans who ruled over the empire during the two centuries that followed his reign had limited administrative experience, as princes of the empire were confined to the palace rather than being sent to the provinces to govern. In addition, the post-Suleyman era required the ability to reorganize the empire's military, civil services, and tax structure. None of the new rulers had what it took to overcome the challenges facing the empire during the period between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries.⁸

The main challenge was the need for new military strategies. Clashes with Austria in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century demonstrated that the European armies were rapidly shifting their resources to musket-carrying infantry, giving them an advantage over the relatively small Janissary corps armed with swords. The Ottoman military authorities recognized that their army was losing its technological advantage over the disciplined formation of European infantry musketeers and began making changes in their military structure. The *devshirme* system of training enslaved boys to become Janissaries could not produce enough soldiers, and so Muslim peasants were admitted into the army. The Janissary infantry units grew in size, reaching more than eighty thousand by the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, the new Janissary corps no longer had the discipline and dedication they had had when it consisted of trained slaves. The Janissaries who were assigned to provincial garrisons established roles in the local civilian population as shopkeepers, butchers, bakers, and so on. Though they were still on the military rolls, many refused to report for service when needed. Unable to count on its own troops to report for duty, the central government was forced to cede responsibility for local governance to landlords and merchants who, as local notables, carried out the functions of the state. The result of this process was decentralization and fragmentation of the empire. The government seized the *timar* farms formerly granted to soldiers in return for military service and turned them over to government officials or wealthy families. The revenues were forwarded to the central government, less any extra tax the holder of the tax farm could collect. The cavalry remained a large force; however, its soldiers were paid salaries by the government rather than giving them land. The new system reduced the number of loyal cavalymen in rural areas, and administrative and police authority declined in the countryside. The tax-farm system also forced the peasants to pay more taxes, which led to hunger and eventual eviction. The nationalist leaders took advantage of this situation, converting discontent into instability and revolts.⁹

The decline of central power was accompanied by a weakening of the authority of the sultan himself. The dismantling of the *devshirme* system was an important factor

8. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*, 368.

9. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*, 368–371.

in this decline. The important posts that had formerly been filled by loyal devshirme slaves went to members of powerful Ottoman families instead. These families gained more power by allying themselves with the leaders of the Janissaries. The sultans often allied themselves with different interest groups to protect their position against such coalitions.

During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, it became clear that the Ottoman Empire no longer had the dominant power that it once enjoyed. In 1683, the Austrians defeated the Ottomans and seized Hungary. And in 1699, an alliance between the Austrians, Venice, Poland, and Russia defeated the Ottomans and forced them to sign the treaty of Karlowitz, which recognized the loss of Hungary and ceded Southern Greece, islands in the Aegean, and the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea to Venice. Russia gained a foothold on the Black Sea.

During the first part of the eighteenth century, a reforming vizier acquired a printing press and announced sweeping military reforms patterned after the European models. His reforms were short-lived, as the leaders of the Janissaries, realizing that the new programs would lead to the loss of their privileges, forced him to abandon his reforms. At the same time, the *ulama* forced the removal of the printing press. This occurred at a time when the European nations were developing new technologies and techniques that allowed them to surpass the Ottomans in military and economic power by the mid-eighteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire faced revolts and uprisings in almost all of its European territories, which led to significant shrinking of the empire and the creation of independent European states. The empire also lost most of its territories in North Africa to the imperial European powers.¹⁰ By the beginning of the twentieth century, the empire consisted mainly of Turkey and the Muslim Arab world.

The Wahhabi Movement

The weakness of the Ottoman Empire also allowed a serious threat to emerge in the Arabic peninsula through the revivalist Islam movement of **Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab**, which became known as the **Wahhabi Movement**. Abdul-Wahhab did not call for a change in the doctrines of Islam or a new interpretation of its tenets, but denounced innovations and accretions and advocated a return to Islam's former purity. He was concerned about the superstitious practices that had spread. In 1747, Abdul-Wahhab found an ally in a scion of the House of Sa'ud, Emir Sa'ud, who accepted his teachings and became his champion. Sa'ud died in 1759 and was succeeded by his son **Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud**, who denounced the Turkish caliph's authority. Through

10. Algeria was lost in 1880, Tunis in 1881, both to France; Libya, the last Ottoman territory in Africa, was lost to Italy in 1911.

several military campaigns, the younger Sa'ud assumed full control of Iraq and Hijaz, and became a serious threat to Damascus and Aleppo.¹¹

Mehemed-Ali Tries to Establish an Empire

In the mid-1700s, **Zahir al-'Umar al-Zaydani** (1689–1775) was appointed governor of Acre by the Ottomans. Zahir used his ties with European consuls to make trade deals independent of the Ottoman government, bringing wealth to the region and garnering popular support for his rule, establishing a strong principality in the region. He annexed Haifa, Nablus, and Safed. (Interestingly, Lebanese Shi'ites—now the base of Hezbollah—played a role in his army.) Zahir ruled until the 1770s, when the Ottomans besieged Acre. He was killed in battle by **Cezzar Ahmed Pasha**, nicknamed “the Butcher” for his cruelty, who then ruled the region.¹²

In 1811, **Mehemed-Ali** (1769–1849), the governor of Egypt, at the sultan's demand, dispatched an army under the command of one of his sons to recover the holy cities of Islam from Wahhabi control. The Egyptian campaign in Arabia, which lasted seven years, ended in a decisive Egyptian victory and the surrender of the Wahhabi ruler. The power of the Mamluks was broken, and the victorious mission of the Egyptian army in restoring the sultan's authority over the holy places of Islam enhanced the reputation and the prestige of Mehemed-Ali and his son Ibrahim in the Arab world. This gave them the idea of establishing an Arab empire, and the ambition to be its rulers. He wanted to emulate the movement begun by Zahir al-'Umar.

The triumph of Mehemed-Ali in Arabia was followed by other successes, and he transformed the Egyptian army into a formidable force, well trained and equipped, with its own navy. In 1820, he sent an expedition into Sudan and conquered it. He sent other expeditions to the Red Sea to put an end to piracy there, and brought its ports on both the Arabian and African seaboard under his control. In response to a request from the sultan, he assisted the Turkish forces in suppressing an insurrection which had broken out in Greece. In 1822, he dispatched a naval force to occupy Crete; and two years later, a much greater military and naval force led by his son Ibrahim conquered the Morea peninsula and captured Athens. The Greek revolt was repressed, and Mehemed-Ali's forces occupied the greater part of Greece. In 1827, however, a combined British and Russian squadron destroyed the Turco-Egyptian Fleet at **Navarino**, ending Egypt's military campaigns.

11. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1939), 21–22.

12. M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 15–16.

Following the suppression of the Greek revolt, Mehemed-Ali pressed the sultan to reward him with the overlordship of Syria. When the sultan refused to hand over the title to the province, Mehemed-Ali took it by force. After the fortress of Acre surrendered to him in May 1832, Ibrahim moved swiftly to occupy Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo. By the end of July, he was the master of all Syria. The sultan, alarmed by how speedily Ibrahim had achieved his goal, dispatched emissaries to Mehemed-Ali to open negotiations. When, five months later, the negotiations broke down and a strong Turkish army marched into Syria, Ibrahim resumed the offensive and won a crushing victory. After this, the road to Constantinople lay wide open; however, Ibrahim halted on orders from his father, who was pressured by the Europeans. At last, in the spring of 1833, the sultan formally recognized Mehemed-Ali as governor of Syria. For the next seven years, Ibrahim administered the country on behalf of his father.¹³

The conquest of Syria gave Mehemed-Ali the opportunity to establish an Arab empire. He was then in full possession of an important portion of the Arab world, including Mecca and Madina, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus. He also entertained the idea of making a bid for the caliphate, since he had complete control of the holy places of Islam. The Muslims were prepared to welcome this claim; the Christians, who were envious of the fair treatment that Christians in Egypt enjoyed under his rule, were prepared to lend him their support as well.

Mehemed-Ali was an Albanian from Macedonia, but his son Ibrahim spoke of himself as an Arab and preferred to be regarded as one. He stated: **"I came to Egypt as a child, and my blood has since been colored completely Arab by the Egyptian sun."** He made no secret of his intention of reviving the Arab national consciousness and restoring Arab nationhood. During the first two years of his rule of Syria, Ibrahim was active in spreading his ideas of national regeneration. He surrounded himself with a staff who shared his ideas. In the space of less than a year, he succeeded in establishing a new order based on religious and civil equality and on protection of lives and property, in a way that Syria had not seen since the days of Arab rule in Damascus.

His initial success in building the new order was short-lived. European hostility and resistance from Arab notables whose interests and privileges were threatened by Ibrahim's reforms hampered his efforts. Ibrahim's march into Asia Minor opened the eyes of the world to how easy it would be for Egypt to overpower Turkey, and the consequences of replacing the outdated empire with a new modern state in the Near East. The European powers wanted to keep the Ottoman Empire alive, and were set on preventing the creation of a fresh new power that might threaten their imperialist

13. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 24.

plans. **A clash between Mehemed-Ali and Britain was inevitable.** His control of the Red Sea interfered with the world's trade routes, which were of great value to British commerce. Likewise, Russia could not tolerate his advance into Syria and his intention to take Constantinople. His plans to build an Arab empire in that vital region, which would force European trade and transport to depend on his assent, rather than that of an enfeebled Turkish state that was easy to manipulate, were not acceptable.

In 1840 he was forced to withdraw from Syria due to European pressure and local discontent. The local opposition arose from the measures Ibrahim had implemented in order to build a strong army. He imposed a new, more efficient tax system that eliminated the tax farms benefiting the urban elite. He also introduced conscription; to make matters worse, he decided to disarm the population as a prelude to general recruitment. Revolts broke out all over the country, first in Nablus and Hebron, then in Lebanon and regions east of the Jordan River. The introduction of these measures lost him the popularity that he had earned initially, and when the Europeans forced him out of Syria, he had no support from the people who had welcomed him as a liberator eight years earlier.

The years which followed the termination of the Egyptian occupation in 1840 were characterized by general restlessness and periodic disturbances. In less than a year after the Egyptian withdrawal, serious trouble broke out between the Christians and the Druze in Lebanon. Disorder erupted again in 1845, 1857, and 1860. The wave of hatred spread to other parts of the country. In July 1860, the Muslims in Damascus attacked the Christians. Eleven thousand lives in Lebanon and Damascus were lost, and a great deal of property was destroyed. Foreign warships were promptly dispatched to the Syrian waters, and at the end of August, a French force landed at Beirut. Following these serious events, deliberations between the Ottoman government and the European powers took place; Lebanon ended up being placed under a privileged regime with a large measure of autonomy. Its local government was to be administered by a Christian governor with the help of a representative council. The events of 1860 were decisive in awakening people's minds to the horrors of sectarian hatred, and the younger generation began moving in the direction of national aspiration instead of sectarian ideologies.¹⁴

The Westernization of the Ottoman Empire

Selim III (r. 1789–1807) is considered the father of the Westernization of the Ottoman Empire. He introduced Western military techniques and weapons as well as the advanced Western sciences and technology, in an attempt to prevent further decline

14. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 55–60.

of the empire. He also formed a special military corps called the “New Order” who were specially trained by European instructors. The Janissaries, however, opposed all innovations that would have compromised their privileges; they deposed him on May 29, 1807, and then assassinated him when the Bulgarian Bayraktar Mustafa brought an army to Istanbul to suppress their revolt. Selim’s nephew **Mahmud II** (r. 1808–1839) acceded to the throne and followed his uncle’s modernizing reforms. Mahmud realized that for reforms to be successful, they had to encompass the entire scope of Ottoman institutions and society, not only a few elements of the military. Furthermore, the only way that reformed institutions could operate was if the ones they were replacing were destroyed. Finally, the reforms had to be carefully planned and support assured before they were attempted. It took Mahmud more than a decade to consolidate his power. As first steps in the process of implementing his reforms, he filled the high positions of his administration with young, energetic men loyal to him. He also worked to get the support of the *ulama*, whose cooperation with the Janissaries had blocked many reform measures in the past. *Ulama* loyal to the sultan were promoted to high positions, while those who opposed him were dismissed or exiled. Mahmud also followed a careful policy of observing religious traditions and rituals to win over the *ulama*. By implementing these measures over several years, he was able to destroy the Janissary system and replace them with new army.¹⁵

Mahmud II introduced major changes in the structure of the central government aimed at denigration of the traditional power of the military and religious classes in favor of an ever-expanding bureaucracy made of administrators and scribes centered in the palace and the Sublime Porte where the central government was housed. He also introduced major changes in the provincial administration aimed at building a just system of rule and taxation. According to his new regulations, the tax farmers were to be replaced by salaried agents of the central government called *muhassils*. Independent financial and military officials answerable to the Istanbul ministries were to supervise the provincial officials. The provincial military garrisons became answerable to Istanbul rather than to the local governors. The new practices were first introduced in the Anatolian provinces as an experimental model for the new system.

The Tanzimat Reforms

Sultan Abdulmajid (1839–1861), who succeeded his father Mahmud II to the throne, faced the serious threat of Egyptian forces under Mehemed-Ali advancing into Anatolia and toward Constantinople. This crisis ended when the European powers intervened and forced Mehemed-Ali to evacuate Syria in return for hereditary rule

15. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1–25.

over Egypt.¹⁶ Under pressure from Britain, Abdulmajid promised to widen and extend the reforms that had begun during his father's reign. The reforms, called the Tanzimat, were officially proclaimed on November 3, 1839, in a decree (**the Decree of Gulhane**) signed by the sultan; they were known as the **Imperial Rescript**. The document consisted of two parts: the protocol (**Mazbata**), prepared under the guidance of statesman **Mustafa Resit** at the Sublime Porte; and the sultan's statement of authorization, the **Irade**, including his assent to the creation of new institutions that would **guarantee his subjects' security of life, honor, and property; establish a regular system to assess and levy taxes; and develop new methods to ensure a fair system of conscripting, training, and maintaining the soldiers of his armed forces.**¹⁷

The Tanzimat created a centralized government administered by the new ruling class, the bureaucrats. The executive and administrative duties of the central government were distributed among functional ministries: The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, and other ministries and central departments. The power of the provincial governors was weakened, as most of their functions were given to officials sent by and answerable to Istanbul. On February 7, 1840, the old tax system was replaced by standardized cultivation taxes of 10 percent of produce and fixed head taxes on cattle. Other service taxes were all fixed according to the taxpayer's income and ability to pay. Civilian collectors were sent from Istanbul to assess and collect taxes from each district in return for regular salaries paid by the treasury. Each province was divided into equal units of comparable population and wealth called *sanjaqs*; each *sanjaq* was headed by a *muhasil*. The *sanjaqs* in turn were subdivided into counties headed by administrators (*mudirs*). The third step in reducing the autonomous powers of the governors was to provide them with advisory councils composed of representatives of the ruling class as well as the principal subject groups in each area.

The final step in Mustafa Resit's effort to extend central control into the provinces involved a major reorganization of the army. The exact compliment of each army and the division of its regiments among infantry, cavalry, artillery, and reserves was dependent on local conditions. Soldiers completing their regular service were required to serve in the reserve forces for an additional seven years.

Sultan Abdul Aziz (r. 1861–1876) was interested in modernizing both the army and navy to meet the Russian threat. He purchased large-caliber cannons from Germany to reinforce the defenses of the straits. Starting in 1869, he introduced major military reforms and increased appropriations for the army and navy, which caused additional financial difficulties. During Abdul Aziz's reign, Mustafa Resit's original provincial reforms had been modified due to a shortage of trained salaried

16. His line of descendants continued to rule in Egypt until 1952, when the Egyptian army took over in a coup d'état and established the Republic of Egypt under Gamal Abdul Nasser (1918–1970).

17. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 55–60.

tax collectors (*muhassils*) who were supposed to be sent from Istanbul. The local provincial governors were allowed to collect taxes through the local notables. The provincial regulation of 1858 retained the existing structure of the provincial governments, but the governor was made chief authority over all matters and was the sole agent of the central government. The governors' power over provincial financial activities increased with the abolition of the independent treasurers and scribes sent from Istanbul.

The Tanzimat reforms were characterized politically by the domination of the Porte over the palace. Abdul Aziz had a good opportunity to regain power for the palace after the death of prominent Porte leaders. During the new period of palace power between 1871 and 1874, there was an increase in overall revenue of 20 percent; however, expenditures increased even more. This was caused by Abdul Aziz's extravagance: buying new warships and rifles, building palaces, and distributing lavish gifts, which led in turn to increased foreign borrowing at exorbitant rates of interest. Sultan Abdul Aziz was an extravagant monarch. His rule was characterized by incompetence, corruption, and dishonesty. He faced serious insurrections in the European provinces of the empire, of which the last was in Bulgaria. In 1876, he was deposed as a result of growing impatience with his corruption and his handling of the Bulgarian uprising, which evoked a storm of protest in Europe.¹⁸

Syria-Palestine under the Ottomans

Almost throughout the nineteenth century, the Palestinian economy was largely rural: most people lived in villages ruled by sheiks, selling agricultural and handicraft products to cities through the trading activity of Bedouins, nomadic people based in the Negev desert. During the Egyptian occupation (1831–1840) by Mehemed-Ali's son Ibrahim Pasha, land, which had until then mostly collectively owned, began to be concentrated in the hands of large absentee landlords. After the end of the Crimean War (1853–1856), with the Ottoman Empire already breaking down, a subterranean colonization of Palestine began. This migration was to become more and more definite during the rest of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth: missionaries and investors from European countries brought the traditional life and economy to a turning point. The missionaries were there to proselytize, but they built schools and cultural centers that benefited society. Railways were built, and, especially along the coast, a new type of agricultural cultivation began—no longer subsistence-based, but focused on specialized production (oil, citrus, sesame) for export. Expropriated peasants became laborers or workers, the urban population

18. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 153–156.

increased, and throughout society there was a major cultural flourishing: schools (often foreign, for studying languages and modern science) were created, libraries were established, widespread journals and newspapers were published (as late as 1912, the *Falastin* newspaper was being read in village squares to crowds of still-illiterate peasants), and political participation was active. Due to their high degree of education, the Palestinian bourgeoisie were elites in the Arab political and business world.

While in the early nineteenth century the population of Palestine, impoverished and crushed by taxation, was reduced to a historical minimum (275,000 inhabitants, including 7,000 Jews and 22,000 Christians), by the end of the century it had grown to about 600,000, of which 95 percent were Arabs and 5 percent were Jews (mostly in Jerusalem, where they made up about half of the inhabitants).

After the Crimean war, Palestine witnessed the slow emergence of a classic commercial bourgeoisie in the coastal cities of Jaffa, Haifa, and Acre, and in Jerusalem. This class was composed of Palestinian and Lebanese Christians, Jews, and Europeans who either purchased plots of land directly or acquired land as a result of peasant indebtedness. The emergence of this class was attributed to the growth of the Palestinian economy in the second half of the twentieth century and its gradual incorporation into the European economic system. The major crops of Palestine during this period were wheat, barley, dhura (sorghum), sesame, olive oil, cotton, and oranges. In addition to the agrarian sector, Palestine witnessed an increase in industrial production: soap, cloth, woven linen, pottery, souvenirs. It is estimated that before World War I, there were 1,236 factories and workshops.¹⁹

Administrative Policies in the Ottoman Empire

The major administrative policies that directly affected the Arab population in Syria-Palestine and had long-lasting effects were **the millet system, the Tanzimat reforms, and the land laws.**

Although the majority of the population of the empire were non-Muslims, only Muslims had access to powerful civilian and military positions. Soon after the conquest of Constantinople, **Mehmet II** established the **millet system**, where all subjects of the empire were regarded as belonging to a certain religious community, or millet. Each millet was allowed to maintain its people's laws and traditions, and each was directed by its own religious leader, who was responsible for civil and religious matters. The millet system gave non-Muslim religious leaders more power over their people than they had had under previous regimes. This policy enabled the various

19. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 37–45.

religious communities to live together with the least possible friction while ensuring that the state treasury was the beneficiary of taxes paid by non-Muslims.

In accordance with the Tanzimat laws explained above, Palestine was divided into four *sanjaqs*. Due to its special religious status, the *sanjaq* of Jerusalem was created as an independent administrative unit that answered directly to Istanbul. Sanjaq Jerusalem included Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza, Hebron, Beersheba, and I-Hafir. Sanjaq Acre in the north included Acre, Haifa, Tiberius, Safad, and Marg ibn Amer; this *sanjaq* was overseen by Wilayat Beirut. Sanjaq al-Balqa comprised Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm, and was also part of Wilayat Beirut. Sanjaq Transjordan consisted of Hauran and Amman; it belonged to Wilayat Damascus. During the late Ottoman period, the *sanjaqs* of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre formed the region commonly known as Palestine. It was the seventh most heavily populated region of the Ottoman Empire's thirty-six provinces.

The Land Law of 1858

The Land Law of 1858 was aimed at providing the central government the power to control the state land and the growth of large private-land ownership. Its intent was to reassert state ownership over the imperial possessions, which over the centuries had passed out of government control, and to gain more revenues for its treasury through collecting taxes on title deeds.

The new regulations required all the land and property to be surveyed according to the new laws; each person or institution claiming ownership was required to prove its legitimacy with legal documents before it could be given a new ownership deed. However, the government failed to achieve its purpose behind this law.

The fellahin (agricultural laborers) avoided registering their lands in their names so that they could evade paying the title taxes. For this reason and others, they registered their title deeds in the name of deceased relatives or wealthy urban or rural families. This led to the accumulation of the land in the hands of wealthy notables, who were able to use the new law to increase their power. Using false documents to prove their claims, extending their rights to include the sale of such properties to others, leaving them to distant relatives, or auctioning them off to the highest bidders, wealthy individuals and their families were able to control larger and larger private estates. These evasions were sanctioned or overlooked by officials who were willing to accept the financial advantages that went with cooperation.

Moreover, with the introduction of new legal codes and new taxation procedures, the government needed help from the elite to assist the local governors and to act as intermediaries between the government and the local population. Thus the central government was unable to control the tax collection process through its local authorities. The main beneficiaries of the land laws were the influential family chiefs

who assumed full control over the tax collection process. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many fellahin who had borrowed money from the wealthy elite were compelled to sell them their land. However, they had to continue cultivating it with the obligation to hand over a fixed percentage of the produce to the new owners.

A total of 250 families in Palestine owned about 414,300 hectares. The Ottoman government benefited only from the sale of state land to wealthy families. In 1869, the Butros, Sursuq, Tuwayni, and Farah Lebanese families purchased from the Ottoman government the land of seventeen villages in **Marj ibn Emir** for as little as twenty thousand British pounds. In 1872, the Sursuq family had about 23,000 hectares and a population of four thousand peasants in the neighborhood of Nazareth and Marj ibn Emir. Most of the Palestinian lands acquired by Zionist settlers in the late part of the nineteenth century were purchased from these Lebanese families.

The 1858 Land Law had drastic repercussions on the fellahin and contributed to their land being confiscated by the British during the British mandate of Palestine, and subsequently in the takeover and occupation of Palestine by Israel in 1948 and 1967, as the Palestinian *fellah* (farmers) were unable to prove ownership of their ancestral lands.

Abdul Hamid Takes Power

Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909) came to the throne in 1876, at the youthful age of thirty-four, after **Sultan Abdul Aziz** was deposed. Abdul Hamid was confronted with serious problems when he took office as the new ruler of the Ottoman Empire: a spirit of insurrection in the empire's European territories, the threat of war with Russia, a hostile and demanding Europe, limited financial resources and a treasury in default. Initially, Abdul Hamid enjoyed a reputation as a liberal-minded and progressive prince. The European powers were expecting him to introduce major reforms in the provincial administration. Progressive Ottoman activists, led by Midhat Pasha, were demanding the introduction of constitutional government. Abdul Hamid was a talented and wily politician; he knew what initiatives need to be introduced in order to assure the European leaders and the Ottoman progressive groups. On December 23, 1876, the very day on which the European leaders were assembling in conference to draw up their demands from the sultan, he stole their thunder by appointing **Midhat Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, as grand vizier** and authorizing a new constitution. This constitution, created under the guidance of Midhat Pasha, eliminated the autocratic power of the sultan and stated that all Ottoman objects, regardless of race, were equal. Abdul Hamid's action answered the concerns of the European conference, as well as the empire's subjects; at first, his initiatives brought

the adulation of his people. However, he did not intend to fulfill his promises; he was only trying to prevent his opponents from taking any action that might undermine his authority. **Early in February 1877, Abdul Hamid abruptly dismissed Midhat Pasha and exiled him to France. Then, in March of the same year, he suspended the new constitution.** His justification for these actions was Russia's declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire. The constitution remained suspended for thirty-one years.²⁰

The Russian–Turkish war of 1877 ended with the advancement of the Russian army toward the outskirts of Constantinople. The sultan was forced to sign the onerous **Treaty of San Stepheno**; however, thanks to British intervention, this agreement was replaced by the **Treaty of Berlin** in July of 1878. With the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin and the suspension of the constitution, an era of tyranny, corruption and abuse of power began. The administrative reorganization of the empire that had been passed during the reigns of **Abdul Magid** and **Abdul Aziz** was amended to give the sultan a greater degree of control.

Abdul Hamid's rule was a dictatorship enforced by repression and censorship. The sultan's government strictly controlled publications and journalism and silenced critical voices. Spies were planted in all corners of the empire in order to identify and crush any opposition. The court system became a tool of harsh punishment through detention or exile. As for the economy, Abdul Hamid followed policies that led the country to bankruptcy. He mortgaged the main resources of the empire to obtain money that he spent unwisely. He devoted a large share of the borrowed money to reorganize and equip the army. He spent vast sums of money on military training and education, while public education was ignored.

Since 1517, the Ottoman sultans had claimed the title of caliph and presented themselves as the protectors of the holy places of Islam in Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Abdul Hamid realized the value of this title, and worked hard to take the greatest advantage of religion. His plan was to restore the caliphate to its proper position in his sultanate by utilizing the achievements of the Muslim reformers, especially the movement of pan-Islamicist **Jamal al-din al-Afghani**,²¹ whose teachings he claimed to follow. His goal was to strengthen the position of the sultanate in the minds of the empire's subjects as well as among the millions of Muslims abroad. He was very strict in practicing the religious observances, and strongly discouraged the habits of drunkenness that previous sultans had indulged in the palace. He surrounded himself with theologians and holy men of wide renown and influence. A college was founded for the training of missionaries who were sent to other lands of Islam to preach the good tidings of the caliph. Subsidies to theological schools and colleges, within the empire and abroad, were provided. He spent large sums of money on the repair and decoration of the mosques of Mecca, Madina, and Jerusalem.

20. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 61–63.

21. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 68–70.

Such policies earned him the support of the non-Turkish Muslims (the Turkish masses of Anatolia were by nature loyal to the sultan). To further bolster support from non-Turkish Muslims, he showered bounties on Arab learning institutions and Arab chiefs and dignitaries. He appointed Arabs into his own personal service at the palace and prominent government positions. He surrounded himself with an aristocracy of religious dignitaries. Abu al-Huda al-Şayyadi, an Alephite Sufi, rallied influential religious leaders behind Sultan Abdul Hamid's claim to the caliphate and his ideology of Islamism. Wherever his policy of favor failed, the sultan used harsh measures to suppress opposing groups and individuals. Prominent opposition figures were exiled. Family quarrels and tribal disputes were exploited. He subsidized agents to provoke disturbances in order to provide an apparent pretext for the punishment of his opponents. In certain situations, he arranged assassinations.

Arabs of special status were invited to reside in Constantinople. One of those guests was **Husayn ibn Ali**, a descendant of the **Bani Hashem (Hashemite)**, the noblest of all Arab families. Husayn was courteously invited to bring his household and come to reside in Constantinople. He arrived in 1893 with his wife and three sons: Ali, Abdullah, and Faysal. This turned into a captivity that lasted more than fifteen years.²²

The most important undertaking during Abdul Hamid's reign was the construction of the **Hijaz railway line from Damascus to Madina and on to Mecca, which aimed to facilitate the pilgrimage**. An appeal to the Muslim world was issued, stressing the pious motives which had inspired the caliph to build the railway, and asking for contributions toward the costs. Wealthy Muslims responded generously and provided most of the funding for the project. A special tax in the form of a stamp duty was levied throughout the empire. German engineers began their work in the spring of 1901, and by the autumn of 1908 the line reached Madina, a distance of close to fifteen hundred kilometers, at a cost of three million pounds. This project was of great political and strategic value, evoking a great deal of enthusiasm throughout the entire Muslim world. It added greatly to the prestige of the caliphate. Strategically, it provided Abdul Hamid with a much-needed means of overland transport of his troops into and from Arabia, at no cost to his treasury. Before the line became operational, a fast caravan took forty days to travel from Damascus to Madina; with the railway, the trip took a mere five days.

Germany and the Ottomans

The Germans were interested in establishing an alliance with the Ottomans, and, through them, with the Islamic world. Abdul Hamid also was interested in building an alliance with Germany, recognizing the value of an ally of that caliber in the

22. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 72; Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 49–53.

councils of Europe. In 1883 a German military mission headed by **Colonel von der Goltz** arrived in Constantinople to transform the Turkish army into a strong, efficient machine. The most important achievement was the establishment of military colleges, whose high standards attracted many of the best brains of the new generation of both Arabs and Turks. Graduates of those military colleges went on to play an important part in the revolution which overthrew Abdul Hamid's tyranny, as well as in the Arab revolt a few years later.

The Ottomans began placing orders for arms and munitions with German firms. Agents of financial institutions and powerful banks arrived in Constantinople between 1888 and 1896 to secure concessions for railways in Anatolia that would connect the existing line from Haidar Pasha on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus down to Konia and the Persian Gulf. This railway was intended to extend eastward to Mosul and then turn southward to Baghdad and down to Basra, ending somewhere on the Persian Gulf, with branch lines that would provide direct communication between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.²³

In the autumn of 1898, **Kaiser Wilhelm II** arrived in Constantinople on a state visit to the sultan. From Constantinople he went to Jerusalem and Damascus. During his visit, he delivered a speech in Damascus in which he stated that **the sultan and the 300 million Muslims who revered him as caliph could rest assured that they would always have a friend in the German emperor**. Then, with great ceremony, he laid a wreath on the tomb of Saladin and ordered that a silver lamb be made for the mausoleum to demonstrate his enormous personal admiration for the Muslim hero.²⁴

The Coup by the CUP

Abdul Hamid's reign ended on July 23, 1908, when a revolution of **the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)**, a secret association of army officers—graduates of the military colleges mentioned above—forced him to restore the constitution that had been suspended for thirty-one years. On the following day, he abolished censorship, released his political prisoners, and dismissed his army of thirty thousand spies.

One of the first measures taken by the CUP was the appointment of Sharif Husayn ibn Ali to replace the ruling grand sharif of Mecca. The members of the CUP were of different races; the majority were Turkish officers, with Jews coming in second. The party included only a few Arab army officers. The constitution of 1908 was Midhat Pasha's project of 1876 with its old imperfections; however, it was received with rejoicing and enthusiasm. The fact that the constitution named Turkish

23. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 75–77.

24. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 76–77.

as the official language of the empire negated the announcement that all races of the state were equal.

The actions of the CUP during the process of the election of the parliament reflected their intent for the Turks to control the country. **The 245-member Chamber of Deputies assembled in December 1908 was composed of 150 Turks and only sixty Arabs, a ratio of five to two to the advantage of the Turks. In the senate, which numbered forty members appointed by the sultan, there were only three Arabs.**²⁵

On April 13, 1909, the troops forming the garrison of Constantinople revolted on behalf of Abdul Hamid, aiming to overthrow the CUP. This revolt was short-lived; **an Arab officer marched from Salonica to the capital and restored the CUP's authority.** Three days later, the senate and the chamber announced the deposition of Abdul Hamid and proclaimed his brother **Reshad, who took the name of Mehmet V, as the new sultan.** With his accession, the CUP had absolute control over the empire, and they established a new tyranny, adopting a policy of asserting Turkish nationalism. The diversity of races within the empire called for a decentralized form of government, which should have given Arabs and other non-Turkish provinces a large measure of home rule and the freedom to pursue their political and cultural development as autonomous members of the empire. However, the new regime adopted a policy of centralization. One of their first acts was to ban societies founded by non-Turkish racial groups. Among these was the **Al-Ikha' al-Arabi**, which eight months before had been inaugurated at an impassioned meeting of Arabs and Turks.

25. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 104.

The Birth of Zionism

The Ghettoization of Jews in Europe

In the Middle Ages, many Christians held the Jewish people collectively responsible for killing Jesus. During the Middle Ages in Europe there was full-scale persecution, which included expulsions, forced conversions and massacres. The persecution hit its first peak during the Crusades between 1096 and 1320, where Jews were subjected to frequent massacres. In 1396, 100,000 Jews were expelled from France; and in 1421 thousands were expelled from Austria. Most of the expelled Jews fled to Poland. From the thirteenth century, Jews in Catholic states were required to wear clothing identifying their religion. In Spain and Portugal, Jews were forced to convert to Christianity; however, many continued to secretly practice Jewish rituals. The church responded by creating the **inquisition** in 1478 and by expelling all remaining Jews in 1492. In 1542, the inquisition expanded to include the papal states. In 1516, the state of Venice decreed that Jews would only be allowed to reside in a walled area adjacent to Venice called the **Ghetto**. In 1555 the Pope decreed that Jews in Rome were to face similar restrictions. The requirement for Jews to live in ghettos spread across Europe. The ghettos were highly overcrowded and heavily taxed.

The persecuted Jews in Western Europe began migrating to Poland in the fourteenth century, and from there they moved to present-day Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus. In 1569, after the union of Poland-Lithuania, the new state held the majority of the Jewish population of Europe. The Jews there were under royal protection, enjoying communal autonomy. However, by the mid-seventeenth century, their situation declined. They became oppressed, and were forbidden to own land. They served the Catholic Polish landowners, managing their properties and collecting taxes from the Orthodox peasants.

In 1772, Poland was forced to cede considerable parts of its territory to its powerful neighbors: Prussia, Austria, and Russia. As a result, **by the end of the eighteenth century Russia had the largest Jewish community in the world.** The Russian government

of Catherine II considered the large Jewish population of the new territories to be a threat, which prompted her to create the **Jewish Pale of Settlement**, a territory where Jews were allowed to settle and pursue a wide range of economic activities. The Russian government prohibited Jews from living anywhere except in the Pale of Settlement, which included the Baltic provinces, most of Ukraine and Belarus, and the northern shore of the Black Sea.

The French Revolution was a major turning point in the history of the Jews in Europe. According to the new ideals of the French Revolution, all individuals residing in any particular state (that is, citizens) should have equal rights. **The French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 guaranteed freedom of religion and free exercise of worship.** In 1791, France became the first country in Europe to grant Jews legal equality. In 1799, during the French invasion of the Arab world, Napoleon Bonaparte issued a proclamation offering Palestine as a homeland to Jews under France's protection. This was also a way to establish a French presence in the region. In 1806, **Napoleon** passed a number of measures supporting the position of the Jews in the French empire. In conquered countries, he abolished laws restricting Jews to ghettos. He believed that the solution to the Jewish question was through assimilation. Emancipation spread rapidly; the Rome ghetto was opened and the Jews of Italy were granted full rights. Between 1808 and 1812, Prussia, the leading German state, granted Jews full legal emancipation.

During the nineteenth century, citizen-based states became the norm in most of Europe. The different sectors of European society (nobles and clergy, merchants and artisans, peasants and laborers) had to adjust to the new model in different ways, depending upon what they gained or lost.

For the Jews, adjusting to the new system was not a simple matter. For most of their history, Jews had been easily identifiable as a distinct social group: they often differed from the non-Jews in whose midst they lived not only in religion but in language, dress, eating habits, neighborhoods of residence, educational and social welfare systems, and occupation. Moreover, Jews who lived in one place often shared certain cultural attributes with Jews who lived in another part of the world.²⁶ In other words, they were considered to be a distinctive group. The new ideal, with its insistence on equality before the law, required them to gradually abandon the cultural characteristics that distinguished them from their neighbors.

However, it was not up to the Jews to enjoy the benefits of citizenship. In all European states, in the decades following the French revolution, citizens as a whole had to decide whether Jews could be admitted into their ranks. Many Europeans had doubts about whether Jews were worthy of being accepted as equal citizens. This matter was the subject of debate, the outcome of which varied from country to country.

26. David Engel, *Zionism* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2008), 7.

The overwhelming majority of Jews lived in the two great multinational empires of Eastern Europe: **Austria-Hungary** (more than two million) and **Russia** (over five million). In those countries, the situation was different, because neither of them followed the post-Napoleonic model of Western and Central Europe. The populations in the two empires were split along ethnolinguistic lines, including Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Croats, and Ukrainians. Several national movements evolved calling for independent states, rather than supporting a unified movement toward transforming the empires into citizen-states.

Eastern European Jews continued to be set apart from non-Jews in the two empires, having their own social and cultural characteristics. As a result, the Eastern European populations felt that the Jews did not belong to them. In response, some Jewish leaders advocated mass immigration to Western Europe and the Americas, where Jews would have greater opportunity for assimilation. Others preferred to work with non-Jewish liberals to transform Russia and Austria-Hungary into citizen-based states along Western European lines. Those Jews were driven by the principles of socialism, which held that the proper relationship between states and societies ought to be determined by class, and not on the basis of ethnolinguistic identity. Growing numbers of Jews in Eastern Europe felt that they comprised a nation themselves, and they should find some territory beyond Europe, open for immigration, where they could relocate. Once they become a majority, they would be able to constitute their own mono-national state.

Jewish Assimilation in Central and Western Europe

In Central and Western Europe, the European Enlightenment inspired several Jewish scholars to establish an intellectual movement aimed at integrating Jews into European society. This new movement became known as **Haskalah, or the Jewish Enlightenment**. It started among secular scholars in Germany; **Moses Mendelssohn** (1726–1789), who is considered the father of Haskalah, was held by the liberal Jewish reformers of the nineteenth century to be the greatest Jew of modern times. Haskalah later spread to Eastern Europe, Lithuania, and Russia. The followers of this movement were called the **maskilim, or “the wise.”** They believed that the solution of the Jewish question was through assimilation into European society.

The Haskalah movement emphasized secular knowledge, modern languages, and practical professional training in order to prepare Jews for integration into society. They encouraged shifting to skilled jobs such as crafts and agriculture instead of moneylending and trade. The maskilim thought this would improve both the character and the position of Jews in society. They established Haskalah schools where the curriculum included European languages, arithmetic, geography, history, and

art. They included Jewish studies in their curricula, but emphasized secular knowledge. They aimed to displace the Torah from its central position in Jewish education, removing references to Zion or Jerusalem and rewording traditional prayers that referred to a national redemption of the Jewish people in the messianic age. The Haskalah led to the revival of the Hebrew language as a replacement for Yiddish.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were about **two and half million** Jews in the world, some 90 percent of whom lived in Europe. There were roughly two hundred thousand in Germany, mainly in the eastern part of Germany, which was acquired by Prussia as a result of the partition of Poland. Most of them lived in the countryside, as few were permitted to live in the big cities. In 1815, only three thousand Jews lived in Berlin. Most of them were traders, middlemen between the cities and villages. In Berlin, the majority of the banks were in Jewish hands.

The beginnings of social and cultural assimilation took place in the **early eighteenth century**. In the first half of the eighteenth century, many German Jews spoke and wrote in German. They sent their children to non-Jewish schools and modernized their religious services. The messianic and nationalist elements of the Jewish religion were dropped. Organs and mixed choirs appeared in the synagogues. Mendelssohn and the Haskalah had paved the way for **de-Judaization**. During the last three decades of the eighteenth century, half the Jewish population of Berlin community converted to Christianity. In some communities, almost all the leading families converted.²⁷

The 1850s and 1860s witnessed significant gains for the Jews. They attained full civil equality in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Britain, and Scandinavia. During this period, the Jews achieved great successes in all fields of business, industry, banking, and free professions. In Berlin in 1905, they constituted less than 5 percent of the population but provided 30 percent of the municipal tax revenue. The Berlin Jewish community, which had numbered about three thousand in 1816, grew to fifty-four thousand in 1854. Several Jews held high government positions in Germany, France, Italy, and Hungary. The Jews of Central and Western Europe felt that at last they had found a secure haven, and now, after long suffering, had unlimited freedom to develop their talents. This new self-confidence and prosperity were reflected in the life and activities of the Jewish communities. The newly established synagogues were impressive and more dignified. Many Jewish students were admitted to universities, which resulted in a great influx of Jews into the free professions. In the field of science, Jews were making a contribution out of proportion to their numbers. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed continuous political and social progress; many Jews held prominent government positions in France, Holland, and Italy.²⁸

27. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 4–16.

28. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 23–27.

Jewish assimilation in France went much further; **French Jews** were integrated into culture and society much faster than in other countries. **In Britain**, emancipation came gradually; still, the British believed that there was no danger that Jews would become predominant, as their numbers, compared to those in Germany, were smaller, and they contributed far less to cultural life.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Europe and North America witnessed a major economic depression triggered by the financial crisis of 1873. Many banks and stock companies defaulted. Germany suffered from a widespread decline in all aspects of its economy on the heels of the great boom of the early 1870s. The majority of Germans attributed this decline to individual Jews who had played a prominent part in speculation, accusing them of being involved in risky transactions. These beliefs triggered a new wave of anti-Semitism aimed at limiting Jewish influence in public life. Several publications introduced by prominent German intellectuals argued that the penetration of Jewish influence had already gone too far and too deep; the Jews had made the Germans slaves and had become the dictators of the empire. Many voices demanded radical measures ranging from excluding Jews from certain professions even to the expulsion of all the Jews from Germany. German Jews were shocked by this new wave of **Judeophobia**. Attacks against Jews prior to the nineteenth century had focused on their religion (i.e., **the Jews had killed Christ and rejected his mission**). But the new attacks focused on ethnicity: the character of the Jews as a race. According to this new doctrine, the racial characteristics were immutable; a Jew would continue to be a Jew, and could not be transformed into a German.²⁹

A few of the Haskalah leaders considered the new wave of anti-Semitism a turning point in the history of the Jewish enlightenment and concluded that the new attacks meant the end of assimilation. This meant assimilation would not be the answer to the Jewish question. **But the majority of educated German Jews continued to believe in assimilation; they had been thoroughly Germanized. The overwhelming majority of Western Jews were optimistic about assimilation and were unwilling to abandon assimilation into European society as a goal.**³⁰

Several pamphlets and articles published in Central and Western Europe between the 1840s and 1860s stated that assimilation would not solve the Jewish question: there was nowhere that Jews were welcomed or loved. The Jews were neither Germans nor Slavs, neither French nor Greek. The most important of these was published in 1862 by **Moses Hess** under the title “**The Revival of Israel**”; it later became known as “**Rome and Jerusalem.**”

29. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 28–30.

30. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 39.

Early Zionists in Western Europe

Zionism emerged in Europe in the 19th century in response to anti-Semitism. **Its early thinkers made it clear that it was a movement based on politics and race, not religion.**

Moses Hess (1812–1875)

Moses Hess was born in Bonn, in 1812. His father, an Orthodox Jew, was a wealthy merchant. On his mother's side, Hess descended from a line of rabbis and scholars. In 1845 he joined the communist party, and under the influence of Marx began to preach the gospel of communism advocating the class struggle.

Hess was influenced by the writings of the Jewish historian **Heinrich Graetz** (*History of the Jews from the Oldest Times to the Present*), published in the 1850s. Graetz's writings were behind Hess's Zionist ideology.

The advocates of assimilation were convinced that anti-Semitism reflected the dying convulsions of the old order. Hess did not share their confidence; on the contrary, he believed that racial anti-Semitism was a deep, instinctive force, far more powerful than any rational argument. He stated in his book: **“The Germans hate the religion of the Jews less than they hate their race . . . Neither religious reform nor baptism, neither Enlightenment nor Emancipation, will open the gates of social life to the Jews . . .”** Jews might become naturalized citizens, but they would never convince others in Europe of their total separation from Judaism, as the nations of Europe had always regarded the existence of Jews in their midst as an anomaly.³¹

Hess's answer to the Jewish question was a return to what he called “the land,” a Jewish state in Palestine. The hope of a political rebirth for the Jewish people should be kept alive, until political conditions in the Middle East became ripe for the colonization of Palestine. France, he believed, would undoubtedly help them to establish their colonies, which might one day extend from Suez to Jerusalem, and from the banks of the Jordan to the shores of the Mediterranean. **Hess predicted that the majority of the Jews of Western Europe would remain where they lived. But many thousands of Eastern European Jews would emigrate to Palestine.** He also predicted that the new state would be basically socialist in character; the land would be owned wholly by the nation.³²

31. Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism* (Whithorn, UK: Anodos Books, 2019; originally published in 1918), 26.

32. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 51–52.

Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891)

The Jewish historians of the nineteenth century played a major role in the invention of the Zionist nationalist project by reconstructing the biblical stories and presenting the Jews as a race and a biological group. This Jewish cultural revivalism and renaissance, which began in the 1850s, reinvented Judaism as the ideology of a nation than a religion.³³ The Jewish historians Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow played a major role in the invention of the Jewish nation.

Graetz is one of several Jewish historians who invented the idea of a Jewish nation and a Jewish race and gave Zionism what it needed to build its ideology and maintain its course. These historians had the Old Testament as their main reference. They turned the mythologies into a history book. In the 1850s, Graetz published five volumes under the title *History of the Jews from the Oldest Times to the Present*. Although Graetz was never a complete Zionist, he formed the national mold for the writing of Jewish history. He introduced the narrative of the Old Testament as being the history of the Jewish people; however, he made some omissions and emphasized certain segments.

Simon Dubnow (1860–1941)

Simon Dubnow, a native of Belarus, was Graetz's successor. The Old Testament was still his reference; while he admitted that the Bible was full of imaginary tales, he insisted that its historical core was trustworthy. He claimed the contradictions of the text were due to the fact that some parts were written by Judeans and others by Ephraimites. He would always prefer the "truth" of the Bible over actual archaeological evidence.

Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918)

In 1882 the well-known biblical scholar **Julius Wellhausen** published the *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (a book authored by Ernest Renan), which became the most authoritative biblical commentary of its time. Wellhausen summarized a century of research that had attempted to date the composition of different parts of the Bible. He doubted the historicity of some of the biblical stories and stated that certain key passages were written long after the events they described. As he saw it, the Jewish religion had developed in stages, and every layer in the Pentateuch indicated a different date of composition; further, a major part of the Old Testament was written after the return from the Babylonian exile. **This**

33. Nur Masalha, *The Palestinian Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 20–21.

meant that the narrative of the ancient history of the Jews was not the culture of a mighty and superb nation but that of a tiny bloodless sect that had returned from Babylonia. This opened the way to challenging the veracity of the heroic stories about the origin of the Jewish nation.

Jewish Assimilation in Eastern Europe

The majority of the Jews in Europe were in Eastern European countries. **At the end of the nineteenth century, more than five million Jews lived in Russia, ten times as many as in Germany.** They were concentrated in the western part of the empire. **Only about two hundred thousand were permitted to live outside the Pale of Settlement.** The majority of the Russian Jews were without a definite occupation, living hand to mouth. Each morning they gathered in the marketplace or in front of the synagogue, waiting for any kind of work.

In 1840s, the Russian government became involved in Jewish education. There were no Jewish secondary schools, and those who continued their studies went to non-Jewish institutions. The support of the authorities of secular Jewish education encouraged many Jews to publicly express their identification with the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) movement. Although maskilim (educated adherents of the Haskalah) remained a small minority, their influence grew significantly and they became more effective, especially when many of them took up teaching positions in the government schools.

In 1856, under the rule of Alexander II, a new era began in the history of Haskalah. The new regime rescinded many reactionary policies. A series of laws were passed allowing Jews whom the authorities regarded as “useful” to live outside the Pale: **wealthy merchants, skilled craftsmen, and graduates of universities and technical colleges, as well as physicians, pharmacists, and midwives.** The ongoing industrialization and modernization of Russia opened up great opportunities for Jews. Those who mastered the Russian language, and possessed capital and talent, were invited to take part in the development of the Russian economy, which led to further integration and assimilation in the Russian community. A Jewish intelligentsia began to rise in Russia, characterized by their mastery of the Russian language, close acquaintance with Russian literature, and identification with the Russian people and Russian culture.

In the 1860s, as Russia became more industrialized, the poor urban population—Jews and non-Jews alike—suffered from the loss of their traditional sources of livelihood. The Russian government implemented a program of establishing farming communities for the urban poor. About forty thousand Jews moved to these agricultural communes in Ukraine. Subsequently, the French Jewish organization **Alliance**

Israelite Universelle (AIU) purchased farmland in Russia and trained Jews to work on farms there. Between 1881 and 1900, some fifty colonies and training schools for Jewish farmers were established by the AIU and other western Jewish agencies in rural areas of North and South America, including Louisiana, Oregon, and Argentina.³⁴

After the assassination of Alexander II and the accession of Alexander III in 1881, the old restrictions were reimposed, and persecution continued until the 1917 revolution. In April–June of 1881, shortly after the murder of Alexander II, vicious pogroms started in several Russian cities, inside and outside the Pale, and continued through 1883 and 1884. Large numbers of Jews were killed or injured by fanatical mobs, and much of their property was destroyed. The government did little to provide protection. A second wave of pogroms erupted in 1903, reaching a climax in October 1905, when, during twelve days of riots, 810 Jews were killed.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a rising wave of anti-Semitism that swept across the pages of the Russian press. Whereas previously Jews had been accused of self-segregation and lack of education, now educated Jews were accused of pushing their way into key positions in the Russian economy. During this period, Haskalah leaders realized that their movement had reached a dead end, offering no solutions to the Jewish question. So they abandoned the idea of assimilation and advocated for emigration to safer countries as the preferred solution. The question of whether and where to emigrate became the subject of debate among the leaders of the Haskalah movement. The Russian-educated maskilim of Odessa and southern Russia tended to choose America, whereas the traditional Jews of Lithuania and White Russia were attracted to the idea of a Jewish refuge in Palestine.

It is estimated that between 1882 and 1914 about two and a half million Jews left Eastern Europe. The majority of the emigrants ended up on the safe shores of America; a much smaller number settled in Western Europe and Britain.³⁵ The first organized wave of Zionist immigration to Palestine, which became known as the **first Aliyah**, began in 1882. **Although twenty-five thousand immigrants entered Palestine between 1882 and 1903, only five thousand of them survived the hardships and stayed in Palestine. Between 1904 and 1914, during the second wave of immigration (second Aliyah), thirty thousand new Jewish immigrants entered Palestine. Most of them stayed and established collective agricultural settlements known as kibbutzim. They built, on a small scale, a new society based on their European socialist ideals. Chaim Weizmann and the other leaders of the Russian Zionists were behind this project. The immigrants established a new city called Tel Aviv (meaning “hill of spring”). In 1909 they formed a military defense force called the Hashomer (watchmen) to defend the new villages. By 1914 there were approximately eighty-five thousand Jews in Palestine. In the first six months of 1914 alone, six thousand Jews settled**

34. Engel, *Zionism*, 33.

35. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 58–60.

in Palestine. In early 1917, some twelve thousand Jewish settlers were evacuated by the Ottoman authorities on the grounds that they were not Turkish citizens.

Early Eastern European Zionists

Perez Smolenskin (1842–1885)

Perez Smolenskin was the first among the Russian Jewish intellectuals to express his doubts about the chances of improving the lives of Russian Jews through assimilation. He proposed a mass exodus of Russian Jews to safer countries. While the majority of the emigrants believed that America was the ideal destination, **he advocated emigration to Palestine—not as a messianic vision, but as the best solution to an immediate material problem.** He believed that Palestine was a preferable destination compared to North or South America because of its relative proximity to Russia, as well as the lower cost of acquiring land.³⁶ Since the 1850s, Palestine had experienced economic growth; Western businessmen seeking investment opportunities were visiting the country in growing numbers, as were Christian tourists. In 1860, the Russian Orthodox Church built a cathedral, hospital, and hostel for pilgrims outside Jerusalem's walls. In 1870, German missionaries built a hospital, an orphanage, and a school for girls outside the city. German colonists established settlements near Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa. In the 1870s, French missionaries built a large monastery and a convent. In 1880, American and Swedish Christians founded an American colony north of Jerusalem's Damascus Gate.³⁷

Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910)

Lilienblum in his earlier years was one of the sharpest critics of the Talmud, and an advocate of socialism. After the new wave of anti-Semitism, he proposed in his writings the emigration of the Jews of Eastern Europe to Palestine, where they would no longer be strangers:

During the age of faith we were foreigners in Europe because of our religion; now, in the age of nationalism, we are foreign because of our ethnic origins. We are Semites among Aryans, a Palestinian tribe in lands belonging to the peoples of Europe. . . . Why should we go to America, where we will still be foreigners, and not to our ancestral homeland? . . . Palestine can be our salvation forever! . . . Our aim must be to

36. Engel, *Zionism*, 30.

37. Engel, *Zionism*, 31.

*stop being foreigners, and once we return bit by bit to the land of our forebears we shall no longer be so.*³⁸

Leon Pinsker (1821–1891)

Pinsker, born in the Polish town of **Tomaszow Lubelski**, grew up in **Odessa**. He graduated from Odessa University with a degree in law, and from Moscow University with a degree in medicine. He was one of the most prominent leaders of the Haskalah movement. He played a major role in the Society for the Spread of Education among the Jews of Russia. After the pogrom of 1881 he advocated mass Jewish emigration from Russia, and for the remaining nine years of his life he was the most prominent figure of the **Hoveve Zion** movement. In 1882 he published his famous pamphlet titled *Auto-Emancipation*:

The Jews comprise a distinctive element among the nations under which they dwell, and as such can neither assimilate nor be readily digested by any nation. . . . In seeking to fuse with other peoples they deliberately renounced to some extent their own nationality. Yet nowhere did they succeed in obtaining from their fellow-citizens recognition as natives of equal status. . . .

The goal of our present endeavors must be not the “Holy Land” but a land of our own. There we shall take with us the most sacred possessions . . .

Pinsker proposed that the existing societies must convoke a national congress or directorate to represent Jewish interests. **The first task of this national institute would be to find territory, and to acquire a tract of land sufficient for the settlement of several million Jews. This tract might form a small territory in North America, or a sovereign Pashlik in Asiatic Turkey.**

Pinsker relentlessly continued his argument that even though Jews had lived in Europe for generations, they still remained aliens. Even if they were legally emancipated, they would not be socially emancipated and accepted as equals. He insisted that the Russian Jews would have to emigrate unless they wanted to remain parasites and be exposed to constant pressure and persecution. But since no other country was likely to open its gates to a mass immigration, they needed a home of their own.³⁹

Pinsker wrote his pamphlet when he was past sixty. His appeal received wide acceptance from Jewish writers in Russia, but not from the German Jewry. During 1881 and 1882, associations for the promotion of Jewish emigration to Palestine were

38. Engel, *Zionism*, 35.

39. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 72–73.

founded independently in a number of Eastern European cities. **At the beginning there was no coordination among them.** Each group sent emissaries to Palestine to find out what conditions exist there. Between 1882 and 1898, Pinsker devoted great efforts toward these associations. A central organization was established at a conference in Katowice (then Kattowitz) in 1884 attended by thirty-six delegates; the group became known as **Hoveve Zion (Lovers of Zion)**. Pinsker was elected president of the new organization. In 1890, Hoveve Zion was registered in Russia as an association for the promotion of farming and manufacture in Palestine and Syria.

Asher Ginzberg (Ahad Ha'am) (1856–1927)

Asher Ginzberg, a Ukrainian Jew who was the son of a wealthy merchant, studied the typical curriculum of traditional Jewish religious texts while teaching himself modern languages, literature, and philosophy. In 1884, he became active in the Hoveve Zion movement. He criticized the organization for sending settlers to Palestine before arming them with strong, clear national ideology. In 1889, he helped in establishing a society called B'nei Moshe (Children of Moses) made up of young intellectuals who believed in Jewish national cultural values. Writing under the pseudonym "Ahad Ha'am," he published over one hundred essays presenting his ideas. He urged Zionist leaders to turn the Zionist movement from a political to a cultural direction. In 1907 he moved to London to serve as a mentor to the Zionists whose contacts with the British government helped to produce the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

Ginzberg, unlike Lilienblum and Pinsker, did not value Palestine for its potential contribution to Jews' safety but for its "Jewishness": the set of cultural attributes that could justify recognition of Jews as nation. In order to be a true nation, Jews in all countries needed to be united by something more than religion.

After the 1897 congress, Ahad Ha'am stated that Jews did not need an independent state, but only the creation in their native land of a good-sized settlement of Jews working without hindrance in every branch of civilization, from agriculture and handicrafts to science and literature, which would eventually become the center of the nation, contributing to the common stock of humanity a great national culture, the "fruit of a people living by the light of its own spirit."⁴⁰

The Zionist Movement

Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century in Central and Eastern Europe as a national revival movement in response to the persecution of the Jews in Eastern

40. Engel, *Zionism*, 45.

Europe. The Zionists aimed to create a Jewish state in Palestine in order to end the suffering of the Jews and to protect them from the pogroms they were being subjected to in Europe. They were influenced by the European romantic nationalism of the mid-nineteenth century. The Zionist leaders were inspired by the German version of nationalism. They adopted German nationalist principles such as biology, racial purity, historical roots, and a mystical attitude to the land. **Although the Zionist movement was supposed to be secular, it utilized religion to promote its ideology, on the basis that the Jews were the Chosen People of God, and that Yahweh had promised them the land since Abraham, and repeated his promise to his descendants.** Zionism secularized and nationalized Judaism. The Zionist thinkers claimed the biblical territory and reinvented it as the cradle of their new nationalist movement.

The first organized wave of Zionist emigration, which became known as the **first Aliyah**, began in 1882. The most active group of Hoveve Zion was the Bilu, a group of Russian Jews founded by high school and university students in Kharkiv led by **Israel Belkind**. Out of three hundred members, only forty reached Constantinople; of those, only sixteen ultimately arrived in Palestine. At the beginning they worked at **Mikve Israel, the agricultural school** established in 1870 by the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU) with financial support from **Baron Edmond de Rothschild**. The AIU planned the establishment of a small experimental farm project in which fifty to a hundred Russian Jews would spend several months training as farmers at Mikve Israel. They eventually established **Gedera**, an agricultural settlement south of Jaffa.

The Bilu members who established a central office in Constantinople spent a long time trying to obtain an official permit from the Turkish authorities to establish a series of settlements in Palestine. The Turkish government put many obstacles in their way, and in 1893 banned Russian Jews from immigrating into Palestine and purchasing land altogether. These orders were circumvented by registering the land that was bought in the name of Jews from Western Europe and by bribing local officials. In this way a few settlements were established by the early emigrants. Among the first agricultural settlements established during this period were **Rishon le Zion** (First to Zion), founded in July 1882 by Jews who had immigrated from southern Russia; **Zichron Ya'akov** (Ya'akov's Memorial); **Rosh Pina** (Cornerstone), founded in September and December 1882 by separate groups from Rumania; and **Petach Tikva**, (Ray of Hope) north of Jaffa, founded in 1878 by young Jews from Jerusalem who originally came from Hungary, but they had to leave because most of them were affected by malaria. They returned to the deserted site a year later and succeeded in reviving the colony with the help of a reinforcement of Russian immigrants in 1883.

The majority of the colonists were middle-aged religious Orthodox Jews with only basic schooling. They had no agricultural experience, and no effective leadership. The preliminary financial planning for each colony was carried out by the Hoveve Zion society which had established it. The founders assumed that the colonists would be

self-sufficient from the second year of colonization. However, none of those colonies met the expectations, and when the colonists failed to honor their financial commitments, the settlement societies, which were dependent on Jewish philanthropy and donated private capital from their memberships, refused to send more funds. A representative from the colonies met with **Baron Rothschild** in October of 1882 for help. Rothschild agreed to provide the needed funds on the condition that his agents directly supervise and control operations.⁴¹

Baron Rothschild not only funded the settlers, but also sent established agriculturists and experts to help the settlers plan and structure the colonization of the land. By 1890, there were **twelve colonies in various stages of development, hosting 350 households and a total of two thousand people settled on 85,000 dunums (about 21,000 acres).**

Rothschild's involvement in Jewish settlements increased further in the 1890s. Besides the first nine colonies he supported, he supported seven other rural settlements, as well as nine urban communities, through monetary assistance and technical expertise provided by his officials. He introduced modern European knowledge in the realms of agriculture, administration, and technology. Modern farming techniques were taught at the Mikve Israel agricultural school, while tools and equipment were brought from France. A massive injection of capital was directed toward the development of the infrastructure to include well drilling, opening roads, and building structures for health and education. He introduced viticulture and established wine cellars. Baron Rothschild assumed responsibility for the majority of settlement activities until 1900, when the World Zionist Organization took over this responsibility.

The Realization and Growth of Zionism

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) is considered the father of the Zionist movement since its birth in the late nineteenth century, although several Jewish intellectuals, most of them Russian Jews, advocated Zionism prior to the publication of Herzl's pamphlet, *The Jewish State*.

Herzl was born in Budapest, the Hungarian capital, in 1860. In 1878 he enrolled in the law school of the University of Vienna. After he graduated from the law school in 1884, he worked as civil servant in Vienna and Salzburg for a short time, then in 1885 he devoted his life to journalism. In 1891 he was appointed as Paris correspondent for Vienna's finest and most powerful liberal newspaper, the *New Free Press*.

While in Vienna, Herzl underestimated the power of anti-Semitism, and was counting on the process of assimilation of Jews in their communities as the solu-

41. Ran Aaronsohn, *Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000), 64–65.

tion to the Jewish question. However, in Paris he realized that assimilation or even conversion would not be the answer. He studied the condition of the Jews throughout the world and concluded that there was only one solution: **The Jews needed a Jewish territory with an independent Jewish government.** He also felt that he himself was destined to be the leader of a modern Zionist movement whose goal would be the return of the Jewish people to Palestine. **However, he did not exclude other territories as possible locations for the Jewish state.**

Herzl spent the second half of 1895 traveling throughout Europe to gain political and financial support for his plan from Europe's wealthiest Jews, such as the **Rothschild** and **Hirsch** families, but failed to win their endorsement for his ideas. In the face of this failure, he wrote down his ideas in a statement that might reach not only the rich but also the poor—Jewish and non-Jewish alike. During the winter of 1895–1896 he completed a pamphlet titled *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*. It is considered one of the most important documents of Zionist literature. It states, in part:

The Jewish question is a national one, which can only be solved by making it a political world question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers. It is useless for us to be loyal patriots. No one can deny the gravity of the situation of the Jews. Wherever they live in perceptible numbers, they are more or less persecuted. The form of persecution varies according to the countries and social circles in which they occur. . . .

Let all who are willing to join us, fall in behind our banner and fight for our cause with voice and pen and deed. Those Jews who agree with our idea of a state will attach themselves to the society, which will thereby be authorized to confer and treat with Governments in the name of our people. The Society will thus be acknowledged in its relations with Governments as a state-creating power. This acknowledgment will practically create the State. **Should the powers declare themselves willing to admit our sovereignty over a neutral piece of land, and then the Society will enter into negotiations for the possession of this land; here two territories come under consideration: Palestine and Argentine? Shall we choose Palestine or Argentine? We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion.** The Society will determine both these points. Argentine is one of the most fertile countries in the world, extends over a vast area, has a sparse population and mild climate. Palestine is our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvelous potency.

If his majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey.

Herzl's pamphlet received a strong positive response from Jewish working people. **Many Jews, especially those who were assimilated in their communities, feared losing the rights that they had fought for and finally achieved at home.** The ultra-Orthodox Jews, however, opposed the Zionist concept of the Jewish state. **The Jewish tradition and religion clearly instruct Jews to wait for the coming of the promised Messiah at the end of time before they can return to Eretz Israel as a sovereign people in a Jewish theocracy (a modern movement called the Neuturi Karta opposes the existence of Israel on these grounds).**

A small circle of young Zionists rallied behind Herzl after his publication of his pamphlet, mainly members of the Vienna Jewish student organizations. He also received letters of support from Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. Two prominent Jewish leaders, **David Wolffsohn** and **Max Nordau**, joined him at an early stage of his mission. Wolffsohn, born in Lithuania, became a timber merchant in Cologne and was one of the leaders of the German Lovers of Zion. **He urged Herzl to connect with the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, because without their active help, his project would remain no more than a dream.** (Max Nordau, like Herzl, was born in Budapest. In Paris, where Herzl met him, he was known as one of the leading literary essayists. He played a leading role in the Zionist movement in the years between 1896 and the outbreak of the First World War.)

Herzl believed that the Zionists' goal could be achieved only by diplomacy through **appeals to powerful statesmen and politicians and by the wealthy ruling classes.** He initially tried to recruit the Jewish elite in Western Europe. He met with well-established Jewish bankers and industrialists and tried to get their support to back his vision, but he failed. So he changed his plans and directed his efforts toward getting the help and support of the working people. He toured Europe and held meetings in many cities; the gatherings were attended by large crowds. Herzl's success in spreading his Zionist ideology among the working class was astounding.

During the early months of 1897, Herzl convened a committee in Vienna, at which it was decided to call a Zionist congress in Basel, Switzerland. At first, the congress was scheduled to take place in Munich, but the Munich Jewish community did not want to host the meeting. Many Jewish institutions stated that there was no Jewish question. **"Why stir up trouble and supply ammunition to the anti-Semites who had argued all along that the Jews constituted nation apart . . . that they were not and could not be loyal citizens?"**⁴²

42. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 103.

On August 29, 1897, two hundred Zionist delegates from seventeen countries attended the first Zionist congress. **The representatives of the Russian Jewry constituted the strongest contingent in the Basel congress, a total of seventy delegates.** They accepted Herzl as their leader, though not without reservations. The leaders of Hoveve Zion had been expecting great help and support from the Western European Jews, but had received none. Now a Westerner was presenting a plan for the establishment of a Jewish state with aid from the governments of Europe. Before writing *The Jewish State*, Herzl had only the vaguest notion of the activities of Jews in Russia. Furthermore, he did not regard Palestine as the only possible territory for the state.⁴³

In his opening address, Herzl stated the purpose of the congress: **“To lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation”**; at the end of his speech, he outlined the goal of the Zionist movement: for the world to **once again recognize that Jews were people. They had nothing to hide since they would engage in no conspiratorial activities. They needed a strong organization to revive and cherish the Jewish national consciousness and to improve the material conditions of the Jewish people. The merits of sporadic colonization were not to be ignored, but the old, slow methods, without any basis of legal recognition, would not solve the Jewish problem. The only recognized right should be the future basis, not sufferance and toleration.**⁴⁴

Herzl was followed by Nordau, who presented the situation of the Jews in various parts of the world. Laqueur summarizes this speech as follows:

[Nordau pointed out that] **nine-tenths of world Jewry were literally starving, fighting for their bare existence. Western Jewry was no longer subject to legal discrimination but it had been emancipated well before their host peoples had been emotionally prepared to give them equal rights. The emancipated Jew had given up his old Jewish characteristics but he had not become a German or Frenchman. He was deserting his own people because anti-Semitism had made him loathe it, but his French and German compatriots were rejecting him. He had lost the home of the ghetto without obtaining a new home.**⁴⁵

The congress then approved the Zionist Movement Program, articulated as follows:

Zionism seeks to secure for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secure home in Palestine for the Jewish people. For the achievement of its purpose the congress envisages the following methods:

43. Engel, *Zionism*, 49–50.

44. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 104–105.

45. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 105.

1. The programmatic encouragement of the settlement of Palestine with Jewish agricultural workers, laborers and those pursuing their trades.
2. The unification and organization of all Jewry into local and wider groups in accordance with the laws of their respective countries.
3. The strengthening of Jewish self-awareness and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps to obtain the consent of the various governments necessary for the fulfillment of the aims of Zionism.⁴⁶

The initial draft of the Zionist program mentioned only a legally secure home; through lengthy debate, the Russian delegates managed to add, "Encouragement of the settlement of Palestine with Jewish agricultural workers, laborers, and those pursuing other trades." Such concessions to the Hoveve Zion were necessary, because hardly any other Jewish group besides the Russian Jews had rushed to support Herzl. On the contrary, the plans for the congress were met with great opposition. The Association of German Rabbis issued a public declaration calling the efforts of the "so-called Zionists . . . antagonistic to the messianic promises of Judaism." The *London Jewish Chronicle*, the chief organ of British Jewry, likened the congress to a gathering for a Hyde Park demonstration and protested that the Zionists represented no Jews but themselves. Indeed, during the World Zionist Organization's first year of operation it received membership dues from about 65,000 people, around half of 1 per cent of all Jews in the world. Even by 1913, only about 130,000 Jews around the world paid dues to the WZO.⁴⁷

The meeting lasted for three days, during which Zionism emerged as a unified movement with a leader, a program, and an organization. The congress established the WZO to include all Jews who accepted the Zionist program. It was decided that the congress should become the supreme organ of the movement, and that an action committee of twenty-three members was to be elected for dealing with current political questions. Herzl was elected the president of the organization.

The Zionist program conceived in Basel made no mention of the native population of Palestine. However, Herzl's position toward the Palestinians was already formulated, as stated in his diary on June 12, 1895: **The removal of the native population from the "Hebrew Land":**

When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefit to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us.

We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border

46. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 105–106.

47. Engel, *Zionism*, 57, 70.

by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying any employment in our own country.

The property owners will come over our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.

Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us something far more than they are worth.

But we are not going to sell them anything back.⁴⁸

The Zionist movement claimed that the Jewish people were a superior, pure race that had full rights to Palestine. Zionist ideology denied any rights to Palestinians in their land. They saw Palestine as their land occupied by “strangers” and thus in need of repossession—“strangers” meaning everyone not Jewish who had been living in Palestine since the Roman period.

Zionist leaders throughout the history of the Zionist movement have adopted the same position. They have promulgated the idea of “a land without a people for a people without a land,” denying the presence of native population in Palestine. Chaim Weizmann, one of the most prominent leaders of the Zionist movement, stated in 1914:

There is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary, then, than to fit the gem into the ring, to unite this people with this country? The owners of the country [the Turks] must, therefore, be persuaded and convinced that this marriage is advantageous, not only for the [Jewish] people and for the country, but also for themselves.⁴⁹

When Weizmann stated that there were no people in Palestine, he meant that there were no people worth considering. This racist mentality was patently evident in his communication with Arther Ruppin, the head of the colonization department of the Jewish Agency. He wrote to Ruppin: “The British told us that there were some hundred thousand *kushim* [a derogatory term used to refer to a dark-skinned person of African descent] and for those there is no value.”⁵⁰

Moshe Smilansky, one of the leaders of Hovevei Zion, wrote in 1891: “As soon as we have a big settlement here we’ll seize the land, we’ll become strong, and then

48. Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 9.

49. Barnett Litvinoff, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, vol. I, ser. B, paper 24 (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1983), 115–116.

50. Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 5–6.

we'll take care of the Left Bank. We'll expel them from there, too. Let them go back to the Arab countries."⁵¹

Israel Zangwill, a prominent leader of the Zionist movement, stated in April 1905: "Given that Palestine is already twice as thinly populated as the United States, and given that the majority of them are not Jews, we must be prepared to drive them out by the sword as our forefathers did."⁵²

Aaron Aaronsohn, the director of the Palestine Land Development Company, proposed the transfer of the Palestinians to Iraq:

While Palestine must be made a Jewish State, the vast valley of Iraq, which is irrigated by the Euphrates and Tigris, should be restored, through the use of planned irrigation, to be the paradise of the world . . . and furthermore the Arabs of Palestine should be offered lands there.⁵³

Herzl's Diplomatic Missions

During the last eight years of his life, Herzl traveled from one country to another seeking political and economic support for his cause. He knew that he would not succeed in getting strong support from his own people unless he had some success in the diplomatic field. In 1898, he tried to secure the support of Germany for the Zionist project. When he learned about the visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II to Constantinople and Jerusalem, he followed him to Palestine. Herzl managed to meet with the German emperor in Jerusalem in November 1899. He presented to him the Zionist project, hoping that Wilhelm would discuss the idea of a German protectorate in Palestine for the Jews with the sultan. Herzl was later informed that the emperor had expressed benevolent interest in the efforts directed toward the improvement of agriculture in Palestine, as long as these accorded with the welfare of the Turkish empire and fully respected the sovereignty of the sultan.

In May 1901, Arminius Vambery, an Orientalist and freewheeling political agent, arranged for a meeting between Herzl and **Sultan Abdul Hamid**. The meeting took place on June 17, 1901. Herzl stated that the Jews would help Turkey to repay its foreign debt so that it would be able to gather fresh strength. The great powers wanted to keep Turkey weak by preventing its recovery, but Herzl could enlist the help of Jews around the world and promote the country's industrialization. The sultan stressed that he was a great friend of the Jews, and said he would make a public pro-Jewish announcement and give them lasting protection if they sought refuge in his lands. **The sultan's**

51. Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 9.

52. Masalha *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 10.

53. Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 13.

advisers formulated a number of conditions, however: The Jews would establish a syndicate with 30 million pounds to help liquidate the Turkish debt; they would be permitted to settle in Turkey, but would have to become Turkish citizens; above all, there could be no concentrated mass immigration, but only scattered settlements. Herzl countered by proposing the establishment of a land company to take over uncultivated Turkish property in Palestine. The officials informed Herzl that the sultan did not agree. Further, they told Herzl that the sultan expected definite financial proposals within a month. Herzl's attempts to win the support of wealthy Jews in this endeavor were unsuccessful; however, he continued to act as if it were within his power to relieve the sultan of the Turkish debt, estimated at 85 million pounds. Herzl was hoping that if he could secure the money, he would at last receive his charter.

In February 1902 Herzl was asked to return to Constantinople. The Turkish officials complained that nothing concrete had so far emerged. They also affirmed that **the sultan was prepared to open his empire to Jewish refugees on the condition that they would become Ottoman subjects, and that they could establish themselves in all provinces except Palestine**; in return Herzl was to form a syndicate for the consolidation of the Ottoman public debt, and was also to take over the concession for the exploitation of Turkish mines. They explained to him that the sultan could not agree to sponsor the immigration of the Jews to Palestine, as such plan would be extremely unpopular with his subjects. Herzl was again summoned to Constantinople in July 1902 for further discussions; however, this meeting was his final contact with the Ottomans.⁵⁴

In spite of its position, there was little the Ottoman government could do to stop the Zionist colonial project. European consuls intervened on behalf of the Jewish immigrants to renew expired entry permits. Jewish immigrants resorted to bribery to facilitate the purchase of land and the renewal of entry permits. They also circumvented immigration restrictions by entering Palestine through Egypt, and purchasing land in the name of established Jews who were already Ottoman citizens.⁵⁵

Although the Turkish CUP (Committee of Union and Progress), which rose to power between 1908 and 1913, officially adopted the same policy toward Jewish immigration to Palestine as Sultan Abdul Hamid had, it did not enforce it. In a bid to receive financial support from the Zionists, in 1913 the CUP government abolished the immigration laws and permitted land sales. It also shut down three anti-Zionist papers—*al-Karmil* in Haifa, *Filistin* in Jaffa, and *al-Muqtabas* in Damascus—that were constantly exposing the practice of land sale to Zionists.⁵⁶

In 1902, after the failure of his overtures to Turkey, Herzl shifted his diplomatic activities to **Britain**, where public opinion was concerned about Jewish immigration

54. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 111–117.

55. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 73.

56. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 84.

from Eastern Europe. A royal commission was appointed to investigate the effect of the large number of Jews moving toward Central and Western Europe. The British Zionists managed to have Herzl invited as a witness. Lord Rothschild, who was a member of the commission, was concerned about this invitation. A heated exchange between members of the Rothschild family and Herzl took place before Herzl's meeting with the commission. **Lord Rothschild told Herzl that he did not believe in Zionism, and he felt that the Jews would never get Palestine. "Herzl's appearance before the commission, Rothschild argued, could only have two effects: the anti-Semites would be able to say that Dr. Herzl, the expert, maintained that a Jew could never become an Englishman; and if Herzl harped on the bad situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe and their need to emigrate this would lead to restrictive legislation."**⁵⁷ Rothschild and Herzl then agreed to present to the commission the idea of helping the Jews to found a Jewish colony in a British possession—either in the Sinai Peninsula, Egyptian Palestine, or Cyprus. The next day Herzl met **Lord James of Hereford, the chairman of the commission**, and presented this proposal. He was very careful not to say anything which could be used as an argument for restricting immigration to Britain.

In October 1902, Herzl met **Joseph Chamberlain**, the colonial secretary. Chamberlain did not reject the idea of founding a self-governing Jewish colony in the Brook of Egypt (Wadi al-Arish). British public opinion felt that something should be done for Eastern European Jews if they were to be barred from entering England. This subject was brought up in a subsequent meeting between Herzl and Chamberlain, but was dismissed because of the question of water supply. The diversion of water from the Nile for such a colony was thought to be impossible. **In May 1903**, Chamberlain offered Herzl a large area of British-controlled land in East Africa (**Uganda**) that would make an ideal location for a Jewish settlement. It occurred to Chamberlain, an architect of late Victorian imperial expansion, that Jewish migrants might serve an imperial interest by **"populating the interior highlands of the east African Protectorate with non-native settlers who would help securing the space between the Indian Ocean and Egypt."**⁵⁸

Although Herzl rejected this initially, in a moment of despair he decided to give the offer serious consideration, and decided to **submit this proposal to the sixth Zionist congress in August 1903**. The pogrom in the Sian city of Kishinev (see below) was behind his decision to consider this option.⁵⁹

In August 1903, he went to **St. Petersburg** and met with **Plehve, the Russian minister of the interior**. Herzl hoped that the Russian government, which was eager

57. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 119.

58. Engel, *Zionism*, 61.

59. Howard Greenfeld, *A Promise Fulfilled: Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, and the Creation of the State of Israel* (New York: Greenwillow Books, 2005), 49–50.

to get rid of some of the Jews, could be induced to exert pressure on Turkey to absorb some of them in Palestine. Herzl asked Plehve if Russia would intervene and pressure the Turks to allow legal immigration of Jews to Palestine. In his meeting with Plehve, Herzl argued that supporting the Zionist movement would lead to a reduction of the Jewish population in Russia.

One week after Herzl's Russian trip, **in August 1903 the sixth Zionist congress** convened in Basel. Herzl reported on his negotiations in St Petersburg and the British offer to settle the Jewish people in East Africa. He made clear that Uganda was not and could never become Zion. It was just an emergency measure to help those Jews forced to emigrate immediately to prevent their scattering all over the world. **Nordau** described Uganda as a temporary shelter for the hundreds of thousands of Jews who could not as yet enter Palestine. A great number of Western European delegates supported Nordau's views. However, most Russian delegates opposed the offer, asking **why Jews migrating abroad should choose East Africa as their destination instead of the more developed locales with more hospitable climates (like the United States) that were open to them.** The delegates from Kishinev stated that they were unwilling to go anywhere except Palestine. After long debate, Herzl introduced a resolution to send a commission to investigate East Africa, which passed by a vote of 295 to 178.

At the sixth Zionist congress, Herzl declared that the Russian government would not stand in the way of the Zionist movement if its activities remained within a legal framework. Chaim **Weizmann**, one of the main leaders of the Russian Zionists, attacked Herzl for his visit to St Petersburg and his talks with Plehve. **Weizmann stated: "Anti-Semites are incapable of aiding in the creation of a Jewish homeland; their attitude forbids them to do anything which might really help the Jewish people. Pogroms, yes; repressions, yes; emigration, yes; but nothing that might be conducive to the freedom of Jews."**⁶⁰ Only a few months earlier, between April 6 and 8, 1903, a pogrom had taken place in **Kishinev**. About fifty Jews had been killed; many had been wounded, and many women had been raped.

The Russian Zionist **Ussishkin**, who was in Palestine at the time of the congress, published a letter after his return stressing that he did not feel bound by the Uganda resolution. This was open rebellion. The Russian Zionists in their conference in **Kharkov** passed a resolution stating that Herzl had violated the Basel program and demanded that he drop his autocratic methods. This resolution was regarded as an attempt to overthrow the leader. At the meeting of the Action Committee in April 1904, Herzl said he would not go to Uganda, nor would he exert pressure in favor of East Africa. He wanted the Jewish people to make a decision based on the facts.

Herzl presided over the first six congresses and worked hard during his term to implement the Zionist program; however, his efforts were unsuccessful. He did not

60. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 125–126.

live to preside over the seventh Zionist Congress. After a period of rapidly declining health, **he died on July 3, 1904, at the age of forty-four**. All his hectic diplomatic activity had come to nothing.

In 1901, the WZO established the Jewish National Fund (JNF) for the purpose of purchasing land in Palestine. Within two years, the JNF raised enough capital to launch its operations and began buying agricultural land. By 1908, there were twenty-six Jewish settlements comprising 10,000 settlers and 450,000 dunums (110,000 acres) of land.⁶¹

The Russian Zionists, who took control of the Zionist movement after Herzl's death, concentrated their efforts on strengthening the Hoveve Zion settlements. In the decade that followed Herzl's death, the number of Jews entering Palestine and the number of settlements established both increased. Renewed pogroms in Russia in 1903 led to a new wave of emigration to Palestine. During this second wave of immigration **between 1904 and 1914**, which became known as the **Second Aliyah**, over **30,000 new Jewish immigrants entered Palestine. About 8,500 Jews entered Palestine between 1903 and 1907; and another 24,000 joined them between 1908 and 1914**. Most of the new immigrants were secular socialist Jews under age twenty-five; based on their European socialist ideals, they established collective agricultural settlements called **kibbutzim**. The immigrants established a new city called **Tel Aviv (Hill of Spring)**. In 1909, a military defense force called the **Hashomer** (watchmen) was formed to defend the new villages.⁶²

In 1881, the year in which the first wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine began, the Jews numbered about 24,000; the total population was 500,000. The majority were apolitical religious Jews who had no affiliation with Zionism, and most lived in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safad, and Tiberias. By 1914, as a result of the succeeding waves of Jewish immigration, there were 84,600 Jews in Palestine.⁶³

David Wolffsohn (1856–1914)

The seventh Zionist Congress, held in Basel in late July 1905, rejected the Uganda project. A new executive committee was elected with equal representation by both the political and practical groups. **David Wolffsohn** was chosen as the new president of the Zionist Organization. He had been one of Herzl's earliest supporters, and Herzl regarded him as his successor. The Russian Zionists accepted Wolffsohn, as they had no alternative candidate.

Wolffsohn's first mission, besides earning the support of the Russian Zionists, was to get the support of the Rothschilds. He visited Lord Rothschild in Paris and was

61. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 42.

62. Engel, *Zionism*, 63.

63. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 70.

more successful than Herzl in gaining his support. He went twice to Constantinople. The first visit was an attempt to revoke the ban on Jewish immigration. The second visit, in October 1907, coincided with a new Turkish financial crisis that gave rise to the Young Turks Movement and the CUP (see below). A plan was submitted to the Turks under which fifty thousand Jewish families would settle in Palestine, but not in Jerusalem. They were to become Ottoman subjects and serve in the army, but would be exempt from taxation for twenty-five years. Land would be acquired by the Zionist Executive and remain its property.

The political shifts in Turkey aroused hope among the Zionists; however, the Young Turks were no less nationalists than Sultan Abdul Hamid had been. Wolffsohn was doubtful that he would get any good deal from the Young Turks. In March 1909, a coup took place in Constantinople. In June 1909 the Zionists negotiated with Husayn Hilmi Pasha, the grand vizier, but there was no progress. Colonization in Palestine on a large scale was ruled out by the Turks, and the ban on immigration, which had been reimposed, would not be lifted. However, the Turkish-Italian war in 1911 gave the Zionists an opportunity to get some concessions from Turkey. The restrictions on immigration were partly lifted, and it became easier for foreign citizens to buy land in Palestine. During the war, a team of Jewish physicians was dispatched to assist Turkey.

At the ninth Zionist Congress in 1909 in Hamburg, Wolffsohn faced strong opposition from the Russian Zionists due to the way he managed the affairs of the organization. He was criticized for running the movement in way that echoed Herzl's autocratic style. Wolffsohn submitted his resignation; however, the congress failed to agree on an alternative leader, so he was asked to stay in office.

Otto Warburg (1859–1938)

At the tenth Congress, which took place in Basel in August 1911, Professor Otto Warburg, a botanist from a well-known Hamburg banking family, was elected as the president of the Zionist Organization. Warburg was one of the few leaders who did not have a single enemy in the movement. His interest was directed almost solely on colonization and its problems. The Russian Zionists, at last, had succeeded in devoting most of the energy of the Zionist movement toward establishing more settlements in Palestine.

When Herzl died, there was no real hope that the Zionist movement would gain a firm foothold in Palestine before the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The Zionists were further away than ever from achieving their goals. The German and the Russian governments were neither willing nor able to do anything on their behalf. **The “political Zionism” that Herzl had preached died with him, and leadership of the movement passed into the hands of the “practical Zionists,” who had**

maintained all along that only slow and steady colonization would create the Jewish state in Palestine.⁶⁴

Zionism in the First World War

With the spread of the Zionist movement in several countries, the local federations played a greater part in Zionist politics. **The Russian Federation** was the strongest by far; however, it did not play a major role in WZO affairs, as it was under constant attack from the Russian authorities. In addition, many of its most capable members had emigrated to Palestine. In **Germany**, only a small minority of the Jews joined the movement; the majority were content and felt themselves at home in Germany. There was less anti-Semitism in Germany than in France or Austria. In **Britain**, initially, the majority of the community was indifferent or even actively hostile. Wealthy Jews such as the Rothschilds were not willing to embrace the new faith, but they supported the lovers of Zion. The situation changed when the young generation, guided by leaders like **Weizmann**, became active. By 1914, the Zionist Federation of Great Britain had some fifty branches. In America, the first Zionist Congress aroused little interest; only a few groups of Russian immigrants in Chicago joined the Zionist Organization. A breakthrough came during the early years of World War I, when **Louis Brandeis (1856–1941)**, one of the most respected lawyers in the US, became its leader. Brandeis devoted much of his time and energy to the Zionist movement single-handedly making American Zionism a political force. He was a prominent figure, a successful popular lawyer, and a friend and consultant of leading politicians. He was in line for a position in the government when **Woodrow Wilson** formed his first administration in 1913. The president encountered resistance to such an appointment, however, because Brandeis, “the people attorney,” had made many enemies among the rich. Wilson instead nominated him to the Supreme Court. Brandeis’s prestige and his reputation as one of President Wilson’s close advisers made him an asset to Zionist leaders in London. They made full use of this in their dealings with the British government, in which their aim was to induce America to join the war against the central powers as soon as possible. Balfour met Brandeis twice during his visit to Washington in April 1917; in fact, Brandeis was instrumental in obtaining the Balfour Declaration in return for the entry of the United States into the war on the side of the Allies.⁶⁵

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Zionist leaders throughout Europe, with the exception of those in Russia, felt that it was their duty to support their respective home countries. **The German Zionist Federation** announced that it expected all

64. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 131–134.

65. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 138–160, 180.

its young members to volunteer for military service. After the outbreak of the war, the persecution of Jews in Western Russia intensified. Hundreds of thousands were deported. **The greater part of the World Zionist Movement was pro-Germany in World War I, and Zionist leaders believed in the inevitability of German victory.** During the first three years of the war, effective political and economic aid to the Palestinian Jewish community was only possible through Germany's auspices. Berlin during this period was the center of Zionist political activities, which aimed at protecting the Eastern European Jews who came under German rule and protecting the Zionist settlements in Palestine. German diplomatic representatives interceded with the Turkish authorities on behalf of Palestinian Jewry. **Jemal Pasha**, the Turkish commander in Syria, expelled six hundred Jews from Palestine, but German intervention succeeded in stopping further deportation.

Some prominent Zionist leaders were concerned about the open support for Germany by the Zionist movement; they warned against taking a one-sided position and advised neutrality. They argued that close cooperation with Germany jeopardized millions of East European Jews. To keep the WZO neutral, the **Larger Action Committee convened in Copenhagen in December 1914.** The committee decided to open an office there to maintain contact with Zionist organizations in both camps. Weizmann demanded the relocation of the office of the executive committee from Berlin to America during the war. As a compromise, it was decided to transfer some members to Britain and America; this dispersal was necessary in order to pursue political activities in several capitals. It was also agreed that the members who remained in Berlin were authorized to speak for the whole body. It was further decided that the executive could not be party to any negotiation with the government of any country at war with Turkey. It is worth mentioning here that Weizmann was able to negotiate with the British officials because he held no official position in the World Zionist Movement.

Chaim Weizmann

Chaim Weizmann was the main leader of the "practical" (labor) Zionists who had different views in regard to achieving the Zionism goals compared to the "political" Zionists. His views are summarized in this statement:

A state cannot be created by decree, but by the forces of a people and in the course of generations. Even if all the governments of the world gave us a country, it would only be a gift of words. But if the Jewish people will go build Palestine, the Jewish state will become a reality—a fact.

Although no one was more critical of the diplomatic approach than Weizmann, this opponent of political Zionism became the chief Zionist diplomat only a few

years after making the statement above, and obtained the “charter” of which Herzl and Nordau had dreamed. It was one of the many ironies in the history of the Zionist movement.⁶⁶

Weizmann was born in **Motol, a small village in the Pale of Settlement, in what is now Belarus**. Between four and five hundred Russians and fewer than two hundred Jewish families lived in Motol. Chaim was the third of fifteen children; his father, Ozer, a successful timber merchant, was the only Jew ever chosen to be head of Motol. The Weizmanns were devout and observant Jews. Chaim attended a local Jewish school in Motol, where the children studied the Talmud and the Bible. However, he was fortunate to have access to nonreligious subjects such as natural sciences and chemistry; one of his enlightened teachers managed to smuggle secular textbooks to Chaim’s class.

In the early fall of 1885, his father sent him to a Russian school in **Pinsk**, a larger town forty kilometers south of Motol. Pinsk was an active and lively city of thirty thousand inhabitants, the majority of them Jewish. In Pinsk, Chaim was exposed to another world in which he had a chance to develop and absorb new ideas and interests. In Motol, Hebrew had been the language at school, and Yiddish the language at home. **In Pinsk’s nonreligious high school, he learned Russian, and developed a great interest in the sciences. He was also exposed to Zionist ideas.** (There were a number of small Hoveve Zion organizations advocating for the return of the Jews to Palestine in the years before the establishment of the World Zionist Organization in Basel in 1897.) Chaim had been enthusiastic about Zionism since he was eleven years old. The seven years he spent in Pinsk were very important in the development of his life. He wrote: **“Pinsk set the double pattern of my life; it gave me my first bent towards science, and it provided me with my first experiences in Zionism.”**⁶⁷

After graduating from high school in Pinsk in 1892, Weizmann was accepted at one of the finest scientific schools in Germany, **the Charlottenburg Polytechnic** near Berlin. He was immediately recognized as an extraordinarily promising chemistry student. Chaim remained in Berlin for four years, and in 1898 he moved to Switzerland in order to complete his formal education at the **University of Fribourg**. He earned his PhD in 1899; the subject of his thesis was chemical reactions to dye-stuffs, an interest that served him well later in his life. Soon after his graduating from the University of Fribourg, he was appointed a lecturer at the University of Geneva.

During his years in Berlin and Geneva, Weizmann formed friendships with some of the most prominent Russian and German Zionists. As an active Zionist during this period of his life, he revealed himself as a skillful political strategist. When the first Zionist Congress convened in 1897, Weizmann was elected as a permanent

66. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 148.

67. Greenfeld, *A Promise Fulfilled*, 58.

delegate from Pinsk. He was unable to attend for personal and financial reasons, but urged his friends to attend and to present their ideas at the meeting.

He attended the Second Zionist Congress in 1898, and at that time he had the opportunity to meet Herzl. He was somewhat underwhelmed by him, expressing his opinion in these words: **“Though he was impressive, I cannot pretend that I was swept off my feet. There was a genuine greatness about him and a touch of pathos. It seemed to me almost at the beginning that he was undertaking a task of tremendous magnitude without adequate preparation.”**⁶⁸ He criticized Herzl’s aristocratic behavior, which was initially meant to appeal to the wealthy and powerful, accusing him of being an elitist. Weizmann’s approach to the creation of a Jewish state was different from Herzl’s. **He disagreed with Herzl’s dependence on diplomatic and political action as a means of achieving Zionist goals.** Weizmann’s concept of the Jewish state was an entity that had to be built up step by step, brick by brick, and settlement by settlement.⁶⁹ Weizmann was calling for immediate plans to strengthen the Jewish presence in Palestine, which meant developing a practical program of educational, social, and political activities so that the new settlers would be prepared for the time when their place in Palestine would be legally secure.

Weizmann’s next destination was the city of **Manchester**, in northern England. On a visit to London in 1903, he received an offer from William Perkins, a professor of chemistry at the University of Manchester, to join him. Here he established his reputation as a scientist, as he was involved in several research projects and published more than thirty papers. At the same time he devoted time to his Zionist activities throughout England and Scotland, raising money for the immigration of Russian Jews to Palestine. As a scientist, Weizmann built a great reputation, introducing numerous business and commercial applications in his laboratory. At the same time he never lost sight of his goals as a Zionist. He traveled extensively for meetings, lecturing for the Zionist cause. Most importantly, he was able to make friends from all stations of life, from government officials to workers. Weizmann worked hard to establish a **Hebrew university in Jerusalem**. Land was bought on **Mount Scopus** to serve as the site for the school. The Eleventh Zionist Congress in 1913 set up a commission for the creation of the university. It would first consist of a medical school and departments of chemistry and physics.

In **1914**, Weizmann and other scientists received a request from the British War Office to report any discoveries that might aid the war effort. He replied at once, offering the War Office his fermentation process related to the production of synthetic rubber. In **March 1916**, he was summoned to a meeting with the head of the British Admiralty’s gunpowder department. The subject was the acute shortage of acetone, a solvent that was essential to the manufacture of gunpowder. In this meeting, he

68. Greenfeld, *A Promise Fulfilled*, 62.

69. Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 18.

was able to demonstrate that his fermentation process could be instrumental in the production of vast quantities of acetone. In the **middle of 1916**, he resigned from the university and moved to London. Once settled there, he devoted all his attention to his new responsibilities as head of the British Admiralty laboratories. During his years in London, Weizmann took advantage of every opportunity to present the case for a Jewish homeland in Palestine under a British protectorate. Through his government work, he established strong relationships with decision makers in Britain such as **Winston Churchill** and **David Lloyd George**.⁷⁰ Herbert Samuel played an important role in guiding Weizmann in his early activities with British leaders.

Weizmann's strategic vision of the Jewish state in Palestine was based on three principles: First, the Jewish state would become an integral part of the British Commonwealth and would guard Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East. Second, under British auspices, an agreement between Zionism and the Arab National Movement would be reached that would ensure the development of Jewish settlements in Palestine in return for substantial aid in modernizing the Arab world. Zionism would serve as a link between the Arabs and the West. Third, the Arabs of Palestine were a tiny and unimportant fraction of the Arab nation; their opposition to Zionism was generated by the narrow interest of feudal landlords rather than being an expression of genuine nationalism. The opposition would diminish when the masses received the economic benefits that Zionism would bring to Palestine. Some would elect to migrate to wholly Arab countries.⁷¹

70. Greenfeld, *A Promise Fulfilled*, 82–83.

71. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 19.

The Arab National Movement

Arabs have always been conscious of themselves as a distinct ethnic and cultural group. The Arabic language played a major role in the Arab consciousness, and Arabs always took great pride in the admirable composition of the miraculous **Quran**. By virtue of their ethnic feeling, and by virtue of the triumph of Arabic not only as the language of Islam but also as the main vehicle of Islamic civilization in Islam's golden age, the Arabs maintained their sense of ethnic difference. After the Ottoman Turks took over and consolidated their position of dominance within the world of Islam, the Arab feeling of distinctness persisted, but it was not so deep as to rupture the common bond of Islam. The Arabs felt that they belonged to the larger Muslim Ottoman *umma*. They believed that the preservation of the empire was the surest way to protect Islam against the threat of the West.⁷²

During the four centuries of Ottoman rule in the Arab territories, the officials who were sent from Istanbul to administer the provinces recruited local leaders of the communities to assist them in their work. These leaders, known as the **notables**, acted as **intermediaries (brokers)** between the imperial authority and the people in their region. **The role of a notable was to defend social order and to assist the government in securing stability and control of the local communities.** The notables belonged to ranking families in the local religious establishment; they controlled taxes on farms and merchants.

During the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the notables gained their greatest degree of strength. Abdul Hamid, who was hostile to liberalism and to his political opposition, adopted a policy of gaining the support of the Arab notables through expensive gifts and high posts in his bureaucracy and in the army. He surrounded himself with an aristocracy of religious dignitaries, and used the popular ideology of a return to the values and traditions of Islam as a weapon to fight his opponents. The ideology of Islamism that he propagated intimidated the Western powers. Syrian

72. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 59.

Christians were also brought in to serve in high positions of the government. This policy helped Abdul Hamid to secure the loyalty of Arabs and projected an image that his regime did not discriminate against Christian subjects.⁷³ Thus, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century, the dominant ideology in the Arab territories was **Ottomanism**. This ideology held that the unity of the Ottoman Empire was the best way to defend Islam against the steady political, economic, and cultural influence of Europe.⁷⁴ Ottomanism maintained this position until 1918 because the dominant notable families in cities like Damascus, Jerusalem, and Nablus consolidated their power by occupying high posts in the Ottoman government.

The CUP coup of 1908 (see page XX) was not welcomed by the leading local politicians in the Arab territories; on the contrary, the notables were opposed to any change that might affect their position and benefits. Furthermore, most of the population of the Arab territories showed no interest in the reestablishment of the constitution. The Palestinian historian **Ihsan al-Nimr** describes how the people of Nablus went out to the streets demonstrating against the Young Turks and expressing their support for Sultan Abdul Hamid.⁷⁵ **Izzat Darwaza**, another Palestinian historian from Nablus, confirms al-Nimr's observations. Similar reactions prevailed in other Arabic cities such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Mecca, where the general population and the traditional local figures did not welcome the CUP coup. The local notables, fearing the erosion of their social status, began to show their opposition to the Young Turks. The *ulama* religious authorities of Damascus, being apprehensive about the liberal views of the new regime, also began to unite against the revolutionaries. The Syrian population in general, motivated by their conservative religious feelings, were not enthusiastic about the new regime.

Education and the Birth of Arab Nationalism

The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the first call for the independence of all the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of an Arab Empire. This call was made by Mehmed Ali's son, Ibrahim Pasha, after his conquest of Syria in 1832. Mehmed Ali and Ibrahim were then in full possession of an important portion of the Arab world, including Mecca and Madina, Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Ibrahim made no secret of his intention to revive the Arab national consciousness and restore Arab nationhood. It is interesting that the Arab notables of Greater Syria, the leaders of the Arab communities, were the ones who

73. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 50.

74. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 50.

75. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 57.

opposed this call and were actively behind local discontent, unrest, and eventually the revolts against Egyptian rule. They were protecting their position as intermediaries between the Turkish rulers and the Arab population; they were preserving their financial benefits as tax collectors.

Ibrahim Pasha established a wide program of primary schools throughout the country, and placed secondary colleges in certain cities. Large colleges were founded in Damascus, Aleppo, and Antioch; the pupils, who were all Muslims, were boarded, clothed, and taught at the government's expense. The Damascus college had some six hundred pupils, and the one in Aleppo had over four hundred. Because this education included military training, Muslim parents looked with apprehension on Ibrahim's program, and it prompted them to open schools of their own to compete with the Egyptian schools.⁷⁶

Foreign Influence on Education in Syria

During Ibrahim's rule over Syria, **foreign missionaries** increased their activities. Foreign missionaries had settled in Syria as far back as the beginning of the seventeenth century, but most of them had shut down their missions during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. **In 1820, American missionaries** arrived in Syria and began to convert members of the Catholic communities to Protestantism. The changes brought about by Ibrahim's policy of tolerance gave **Jesuits** the chance to return to Syria in 1834 and to revive their activities, and the **American mission** swelled with new arrivals.

The American missionaries gave great attention to the Arabic language, and resolved to make it the teaching language in their schools. They brought a printing press from Malta and began printing enough Arabic books to supply the schools they had founded, and other schools besides their own. **They secured the services of two scholars, Nasif Yazeji and Butrus Bustani, to compose manuals on a variety of subjects for the use of the schools.**⁷⁷ Meanwhile, they were rapidly opening schools in various parts of Syria. By 1860 they had established thirty-three schools attended by approximately one thousand students. **They crowned their work in 1866 when they founded the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut (known as the American University of Beirut, or AUB, after 1919).** The college grew steadily and over time attained university status, and became a great institution destined to play a leading part in the country's future. George Antonius believed that the American missionaries were pioneers in their commitment to the revival of the Arabic literature, which marked the first stirring of the Arab revival. During this period the missionaries'

76. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 41.

77. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 42.

chosen scholars, **Nasif Yazeji and Butrus Bustani**, dominated intellectual life in Syria.

The Seeds of the Arab Awakening

Nasif Yazeji was a Christian born in Lebanon in 1800. He started his education with lessons from the village priest, but his natural curiosity drove him to seek knowledge everywhere. Books were not available in print, so he went after the manuscripts stored in monastic libraries. He had a great capacity for learning, and whenever he encountered a text that seemed to him worthy of close study, he would learn it by heart or copy it out patiently. His exploration of libraries took him into the heart of the lost world of classical Arabic literature. From that moment on, the problem of how to revive the past became his dominant interest. **The beauty of the buried literature awakened the Arab in him, and he became the apostle of its resurrection.**

Nasif's outstanding work was the production of books dealing with the science of Arabic language. The books he wrote that were intended for use in the schools of the American mission were adopted by a far larger circle of teachers and students. **Nasif was a proponent of the revival of the old literature; he entreated Christians and Muslims to unite behind the inheritance they had in common and build up strong foundations for their future. He brought up his twelve children to advocate for Arab national emancipation.**⁷⁸

Butrus Bustani, a Syrian Christian Arab, was born in 1819. At the age of ten he entered **the monastic college of Ain-Waraqqa**, where he was taught Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic that preceded Arabic as the dominant language of the Middle East) and Latin, as well as science; later on, he learned English. **In the 1840s Bustani accepted employment as teacher of Arabic in the training college of Abay and wrote books to be used in schools.** He then spent more than ten years working on a **translation of the Bible**. When he completed this project, he started another major one, the compilation of a **dictionary of the Arabic language**. The 1860 massacres of Christians in Damascus and Lebanon motivated him to establish a weekly journal, *the Clarion of Syria*, devoted to **preaching concord between the different creeds as a means to putting an end to fanatical ideology, and to bring forth new ideals**. Three years later he founded the **National School, which** attracted pupils from all parts of Syria. **Nasif Yazeji** took a position as the principal teacher of Arabic at this school. In 1870, Butrus founded *al-Jenan*, a bimonthly political and literary review, aimed at fighting fanatics and preaching national unity.⁷⁹

In 1848, in the early days of their association with the American mission, **Yazeji and Bustani founded a literary society called the Society of Arts and Sciences. Its**

78. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 45–47.

79. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 47–51.

aim was to foster knowledge among adults by exposing them to Western ideas and culture. Within two years of its foundation, the society had fifty members, of whom the majority were Christian Syrians. In the fifth and last year of the society's existence, Bustani edited and published the papers that had been read at its meetings. This was the first society of its kind ever established in Syria or in any other part of the Arab world with the goal of promoting knowledge. **George Antonius considers this society one of the seeds of the flowering of the Arab National Movement.**

Ten years later, in 1857, Bustani and Yazeji founded another society, the **Syrian Scientific Society, which included members from all Arab creeds—Muslims, Druze, and Christians.** Its 150 members were the leading Arab personalities of the country. **Emir Muhammad Arslan** was its president for several years. The massacres of 1860, which happened in Lebanon between the Druze and Christian Mennonites, caused a setback to its activities, but in 1868 it expanded to include members living in Constantinople and Cairo. **According to Antonius, the society was the first in the 350-year history of the Ottoman domination in which an Arab group of different creeds joined together with their incentive being the progress of their country as a national unit; they were united by their pride in their Arab inheritance.** “The foundation of this society,” says Antonius, “was the first outward manifestation of a collective national consciousness, and its importance in history is that it was the cradle of a new political movement.”⁸⁰

The question of the origins of Arab nationalism has been the subject of wide debate among historians and scholars. **In the view of some, contact with the West through Western missionaries, and the exposure of the Arab intellectuals to Western culture and Western sciences during the time they spent in Europe searching for knowledge, had a significant effect on Arab awakening.** This view holds that the nineteenth-century renaissance (*nahda*) played a major role in the revival of latent Arab nationality, and that the European concept of patriotism appealed to Arab intellectuals and inspired them to bring their country up to the level of the West.

The most widely accepted view is that the Islamic modernism and revivalism movement of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh in the 1880s was the force that the Arabs needed to recover from the state of stagnation and decline. The correct path was to eliminate the corruptions in their heritage and to return to true, pristine Islam. The Muslim Arab reaction to Muhammad Abduh's Islamic modernism was shared by many Christian Arabs. **Butrus al-Bustani, like many Eastern Christians, resented the perceived patronizing arrogance of Anglo-Saxon Protestant missionaries, and warned against borrowing immoral conduct and practices from the West, as did Ahmad Faris al-Shidq and Adib Ishaq.** They did call themselves Arab and took pride in their heritage; they all talked about

80. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 51–54.

fatherland and patriotism, *watan* and *wataniyya*. As early as 1868, **Ibrahim Yazeji (Nasif's son)** was calling for the Arabs to recover their lost ancient vitality and to throw off the yoke of the Turks. He was one of the members of the secret society that worked for this goal in the late 1870s and posted signs calling for rebellion around Beirut (see below).⁸¹

The Growth of the Movement

Sultan Abdul Hamid used harsh measures to suppress opposing voices, including censoring publications, imprisoning opposing writers or driving them into voluntary exile, and even arranging for assassination. Among those exiled who played important roles in the national movement were **Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Yosif Diya Pasha al-Khalidi, Muhammad Rashid Rida, Najib Azuri, and Butrus al-Bustani**. Although Abdul Hamid failed to eliminate the national movement or arrest its growth, he was able to partially and temporarily succeed in reducing its activities significantly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

During the reign of Abdul Hamid, the Arab National Movement was largely inactive except for two short intervals: the first during the early years of his reign, which witnessed the campaign of the Beirut secret society; and the second in the final years, with the activities of Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi and other Arab intellectuals.

Around 1875, two years before Abdul Hamid's accession, five young men who had been educated at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut formed a **secret society**. They were all Christians, but they managed after some time to recruit twenty-two more members of different creeds representing the enlightened elites. The center of their organization was Beirut, with branches in Damascus, Tripoli and Sidon. After three or four years of secret meetings they began posting placards strongly denouncing the oppressive Turkish rule. **The placards called all people to drop their differences and unite against their tyrants under the inspiration of their Arab pride: "By the sword may distant aims be attained; seek with it if you mean to succeed."** In one of their placards they presented their objectives: (1) the grant of independence to Syria in union with Lebanon; (2) the recognition of Arabic as an official language in the country; (3) the removal of censorship and other restrictions on the freedom of expression; and (4) the employment of locally recruited military units in local military service only.⁸²

Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi was a Muslim Arab born in 1849 in Aleppo, Syria, to a well-known Syrian family. His career began in journalism and law. He believed in the destiny of Islam and of the Arab race. He was known to be the defender of the

81. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 84.

82. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 83–84.

weak and the poor. He was influenced by the Islamic revival movement of Jamaludin al-Afghani. However, he had different views from those of al-Afghani; whereas al-Afghani called for the unity of the Muslims under the leadership of a powerful leader regardless of his origin, al-Kawakibi emphasized the role of Arabs in the rise of Islam and the special place to which Arabs were entitled in the fortune of Islam by their language and descent. In his campaign, **al-Kawakibi differentiated between the Arab movement and the general pan-Islamic revival preached by Jamaludin al-Afghani, which then was adapted by Abdul Hamid for his own ends.** The doctrines preached by al-Kawakibi contributed to the gradual transference of the leadership in the Arab National Movement to the Muslim side. His campaign was a plea against sectarian dissension. Muhammad Abduh called him **“the first true intellectual precursor of modern secular Pan-Arabism.”** He was imprisoned for his public writings and speeches attacking Turkish tyranny. On his release in 1898, he left Syria and moved to Egypt.

Another prominent figure who became active in the final years of Abdul Hamid’s reign was a Christian Arab, **Najib Azuri**. In 1904, during his exile in Paris, he founded an Arab party, the declared object of which was to free Syria and Iraq from Turkish domination. Two years later, in cooperation with French writers, he published a monthly review entitled *l’Indépendance Arabe* (**Arab independence**), aimed at disseminating knowledge about the Arab world.⁸³

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw significant expansion of the missionary schools in Syria. The Russian, Italian, and German missions joined the Americans and the French in establishing schools and colleges over the whole country. Most of the missions did not limit their activities to education, but were instruments for political penetration and the acquisition of political power for their countries. Thus the progress of Western education had mixed effects. Although it made Syria the most advanced part of the Arab world, it also caused great harm by emphasizing sectarian divisions, thus eroding the great work of the Arab reformers of Bustani’s generation. The rapid introduction of the modern sciences, with their unfamiliar terminology, hindered the translation of textbooks to Arabic, so the foreign educators decided to teach in a European language. Even the Americans, who had pioneered the revival of the Arabic language, elected in 1880 to make English the medium of instruction in their Syrian Protestant College. This phenomenon had a decisive effect on the future of the national movement. **Muslims, fearing proselytization, preferred to send their children to the state schools or to schools in their community, even though the foreign schools were known to maintain higher academic standards. This indirect attack on the position of the Arabic language contributed to the transfer of the leadership of the national movement from Christian to Muslim hands.**⁸⁴

83. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 95–99.

84. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 91–95.

The reign of the CUP was a turning point in the history of the Arab National Movement. By suppressing the **al-Ikha' al-Arabi society** (see page XX), the CUP forced the Arab leaders to use underground methods. Recent research suggests that, contrary to the common view, the feeling of ethnic separateness on the part of the inner circle of the CUP antedates the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. In their private correspondence in the early years of the twentieth century, **some key members of the CUP used derogatory remarks to describe the Arabs**. They referred to them as “the dogs of the Turkish nation” and considered them to be an inferior ethnic group.⁸⁵ Once in power, the CUP dismissed many of the Arab notables who had been part of Abdul Hamid’s bureaucracy—not because they were close to the old regime and could not be trusted, but because the CUP’s Turkish nationalist ideology dictated the replacement of Arab officials with Turks.

Between 1908 and 1914, a series of societies formed, some public and others secret. One of the two main public societies was **al-Muntada al-Arabi, founded in Constantinople in the summer of 1909** by a group of officials, deputies, writers, and students to serve as a meeting venue for Arab visitors and residents in the capital. This society had an enormous membership running into thousands, of whom the majority were students, and established branches in various towns in Syria and Iraq. The CUP tolerated this society since its objectives were not political. The other important public society was the **“Ottoman Decentralization Party” founded in Cairo toward the end of 1912**. Its founders were men of experience and good standing who held prominent positions in public life. A central committee made up of twenty members and a smaller executive committee of six members, stationed in Cairo, controlled the activities of the society. Branches were established in every town in Syria and Iraq. Within a year, the committee of the Decentralization Party had become the best organized and most authoritative voice of Arab aspirations.⁸⁶

Of the underground societies, the most important was **al-Qahtaniya**, established in 1909. Its objective was to turn the Ottoman Empire into a dual monarchy. The Arab provinces would form a single kingdom with its own parliament and local government, and with Arabic as the language of its institutions. The kingdom was to be part of a **Turko-Arab** empire modeled after the Austro-Hungarian empire. The members of this society, who were chosen with care to ensure trustworthiness, included several Arab officers of high rank in the Turkish army. The leader of this group was **Aziz Ali al-Masri**. It lasted for about a year, then its leaders suspended their activities after they found out that one of the members had betrayed the party.

The other secret society was **al-Fatat**, which was founded in Paris in 1911. The founders were seven young Arabs, all Muslims, who were pursuing higher studies in the French capital. The objects of the society were to work for the independence of

85. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 60.

86. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 108–110.

the Arab countries and to liberate them from Turkish or any other foreign domination. Membership was made subject to a long period of probation. For the first two years, its center was Paris; its membership remained small. As its founders returned home, its base shifted to Beirut in 1913 and in the following year to Damascus. Its membership rose to over two hundred, most of them Muslims, with a few Christians. Al-Fatat continued to be a secret society until the Arab countries gained their liberation from Turkish rule.⁸⁷

In the last days of 1912, opposition to Turkish rule emerged in Beirut, organized by a prominent group who formed themselves into a **Committee of Reform** consisting of eighty-six members of all creeds. They drew up a document for **the establishment of autonomous rule in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire**. It called for the recognition of Arabic as the official language and for its adoption in parliament on an equal footing to Turkish. It called for an end to the practice of conscription of soldiers for peacetime service outside their provinces. About the middle of February 1913, the Committee of Reform announced their demands publicly, giving rise to demonstrations in the provinces of Syria and Iraq. Public meetings were held in Damascus, Aleppo, Acre, Nablus, Baghdad, and Basra. The CUP took harsh measures to suppress the protests, arresting the principal leaders of the committee. The protests and agitation increased and extended to other parts of Syria. The government compromised by releasing the arrested leaders and announced that the reforms would be introduced. In May of 1913, a new Wilayat Law was issued which increased the power of representative bodies in the provinces, but fell short of the committee's demands. The following year the center of agitation shifted to Paris, when **the young founders of al-Fatat** arranged for an Arab congress to convene in Paris. They invited the **Decentralization Party** of Cairo and its affiliated societies, as well as **the Committee of Reform**. The congress held its inaugural meeting on June 18, 1913; twenty-four delegates attended out of total twenty-five invited. The congress lasted for six days, during which four sittings were held, attended by some two hundred Arab listeners. Throughout the proceedings, the speakers emphasized their desire to maintain the integrity of the empire so long as the rights of the Arabs, as partners, were recognized.⁸⁸

When the CUP failed to pressure the French government to prohibit the congress from convening on its soil, they sent their secretary to Paris to negotiate with the heads of the congress. An agreement on the principles was reached with the Arab leaders as the basis for further negotiations. Three Arab leaders came to Constantinople to conclude the final settlement; however, **the CUP leaders never intended to implement what they accepted in Paris**. On August 18, 1913, they issued an ambiguous imperial decree that contained several contradictions and reser-

87. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 110–112.

88. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 114–116.

vations. Emissaries of the CUP approached certain Arab personalities with offers of official appointments, to buy their compliance. On January 4, 1914, five of them—four of whom were strangers to the national movement—accepted nomination as senators. Thus, the Beirut uprising and the Paris congress both failed to convince the CUP to work with the Arab leaders as equal partners.

On February 9, 1914, **Major Aziz Ali al-Masri** was arrested, and rumors began to spread that he was to be tried for treason. Aziz Ali was a well-respected military officer who had entered the military academy in Constantinople and then the staff college, passing out with distinction. In 1904 he was posted to the staff of the Third Army in Macedonia, where he rejoined the CUP and was one of the officers who led the military revolution in 1908; in April 1909, he had taken part in the march on Constantinople. In 1910, he was sent to Yemen on active service, and during the war in Libya he led the Arab resistance against Italian aggression. When he returned to Constantinople in the summer of 1913, he realized that the CUP had no intention of honoring the agreement with the Committee of Reform that had been signed in Paris. At the ministry of war, he found disorder and corruption. He was enraged by the orders by the CUP to transfer the Arab officers, including himself, to outlying provincial garrisons. After witnessing these actions, he resigned his commission in disgust.

Early in 1914 Aziz Ali founded a new secret society made mainly of army officers. Called **al-Ahd (the covenant)**, its objects were the same as those of **al-Qahtaniya**. Since the suspension of al-Qahtaniya, Aziz Ali had been entertaining the idea of reviving it into an association for army officers only. The new society, al-Ahd, had only two civilians (one was **Emir Adel Arslan**). The Iraqi element was strong in its council. It became to soldiers what al-Fatat was for civilians, and although neither society was aware of the existence of the other, each in its field became complementary to each other until 1915, when they established contact in Damascus and pooled their resources together to provoke the Arab revolt.⁸⁹

The arrest of Aziz Ali caused widespread protests in Syria and Egypt as well as in Europe. On April 15, 1914, it was announced that Aziz Ali had been condemned to death, but the sultan had commuted the sentence to fifteen years with hard labor. The protests and agitation continued until April 21, when Aziz Ali was pardoned and released from prison. On the following day he sailed for Egypt, where he received a most enthusiastic welcome. His imprisonment and trial had shaken the Arab world more than any other act of Turkish tyranny.

The catalyst for the emergence of Arab nationalism as a movement seeking political and cultural independence for the Arabs was the rise of Turkish nationalism and the CUP policy of imposing the Turkish language and culture on the

89. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 118–119.

Arabs, as well as the centralization measures that the CUP implemented. The events that followed the Arab Congress in Paris in June 1913, and the measures the CUP implemented contrary to the agreement they had signed with the leaders of the Congress, led the Arab nationalists to conclude that their bid for autonomy had failed, and they must now seek independence.

It is important at this point to acknowledge the fact that the Arab National Movement during this period was a minority movement composed of a relatively small number of intellectuals drawn from upper-class families who could not transmit their ideas to the Arab masses and create a powerful national movement. However, they were able to plant the seeds of a political movement that later fought for complete Arab independence.

The Hashemites' Role in the Arab Revolt

Since the middle of the tenth century, the Hijaz had been autonomous under the rule of the **emir of Mecca**, who was one of the sharifs (descendants of the prophet Muhammad). This role had been continuously occupied by the Hashemites (members of the Bani Hashem). During the Ottoman rule, Mecca and Madina were of great value to the sultan in Istanbul, who claimed the title of the caliphate of Muslims, to bolster his position in the Islamic world. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina was given a special official organization and the religious and educational foundations of Mecca and Madina were greatly increased by the sultan who proudly bore the title "**Protector of the Two Holy Places.**" Because of the power inherent to the office of emir and Husayn's "dangerous capacity for independent thought," however, Sultan Abdul Hamid deemed it prudent to invite **Sharif Husayn ibn Ali** for an "extended visit" in Istanbul. Husayn was captive there for fifteen years.⁹⁰

When the emir of Mecca was deposed by the Young Turk revolution in the summer of 1908, Abdul Hamid appointed Husayn to fill the position. **Husayn, along with his four sons Ali, Abdullah, Faisal, and Zayd, would become major figures in the Arab world in the twentieth century.** Upon his appointment he stressed his loyalty to the Ottoman sultan and the religious sentiment that bound the Hijaz to the empire. He also emphasized the authority of his position and the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz. However, the local CUP party was planning to limit such authority. The CUP delegation greeted him upon his arrival in Jidda with the words: "We have come to welcome the constitutional emir whose rule we hope will leave off the ancient administrative principles . . . and we greet in him the emir who knows the spirit of age and the desired reforms, under the constitution which is the lamp of security."

90. Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1998, rev. ed.), 67–68.

Husayn took the opportunity to state his policy in his reply: **“I have stepped into the place of my predecessors and my fathers on conditions with which Sultan Selim I conferred it upon Abu-Numayy, and verily these are the lands of God in which nothing will ever stand except the Shari’ah of God . . . The constitution of the lands of God is the Shari’ah of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet.”**⁹¹

Husayn’s authority and the power of his position was dependent upon guaranteeing the security of the pilgrimage. It was important for the emir to control the tribes, who tried to raid the pilgrimages; they were also a source of revenue, as they paid tithes to the emir. During the pilgrimage season of December 1908, the tribesmen around Madina made several attacks on the railroad, but were driven off by the Ottoman troops. Two tribes located along the eastern frontier of the Hijaz had been attacking the pilgrims and the lands of other tribes. In the summer of 1909 Husayn forced them to submit, and was then able to take credit for the security of the pilgrimage.

In January 1909, Husayn’s son **Abdullah** accompanied the Syrian pilgrimage party on their return to Damascus and was a guest of the Damascene notable **Ata Pasha al-Rikabi**. At that time he learned of the feelings of Arabism that were then beginning to manifest among the young men of Damascus. As a deputy in the Ottoman parliament, he often came in contact with the chiefs of the Arab nationalists, some of whom asked him to persuade his father to lead the movement. In 1911 the Arab deputies in the Ottoman parliament sent a letter to Husayn through Abdullah dated February 1912, requesting him to lead the Arabs in throwing off the Turkish yoke. Husayn did not respond to the letter.

Although CUP officials in Hijaz continually challenged Husayn’s power between 1908 and 1911, he continued to be a loyal subject of the sultan; when the Turkish government requested his aid in suppressing the revolt of **Sayyid al-Idrisi in Asir**, he led from the Hijaz a force of Turkish troops and Arab irregulars to relieve the Turks besieged in **Abha**. In Asir, however, he witnessed the killing of Arabs and other oppressive acts committed by the Ottoman army. When the Turkish commander refused to accept his advice, Husayn returned to the Hijaz with the Hashemite forces.

After his participation in the war against al-Idrisi, the leadership of the national movement turned away from Husayn, even becoming hostile to him. In the spring of 1912, the leaders of the most important Arab nationalist societies began secret negotiations with some of the independent emirs of Arabia for the purpose of instigating an Arab uprising. **They approached the sheikh of Kuwait, the emirs of Muscat and Muhammarah, Ibn Suud, and Sayyed al-Idrisi at the outset, but not Husayn.** The nationalists seem to have put Husayn in the same category as the Turks, because as late as April 24, 1913, one of the Arab revolutionaries was of the opinion that al-Idrisi should

91. C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 6.

be induced to march on Mecca in conjunction with a general Arab rebellion in Iraq and Syria. From 1912 until the beginning of 1914, Husayn was generally regarded by Arabs and Turks as a supporter of the Ottoman State, and not as an Arab nationalist.⁹²

In October 1912, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece formed the Balkan League and declared war on the Ottoman Empire, defeating the Turks and stripping the empire of nearly all its European provinces. In the wake of this defeat, the Turks intensified the policy of centralization. Toward the end of 1913 a new supervisor (*vali*) for the Hijaz, Wahib Bey, was appointed to replace Munir Pasha, whose relations with Husayn had been cordial. The new *vali* arrived in Hijaz in February of 1914, accompanied by seven battalions of infantry and one of artillery, with instructions to apply the **Law of the Vilayets** and to extend the railroad from Madina to Mecca. Husayn and the Arab tribes of the Hijaz strongly opposed the arrival of the new *vali*. Wahib advised the government to depose Husayn and requested at least two divisions for this purpose. The grand vizier, **Sa'd Halim**, who was a personal friend of Husayn, intervened with the promise to send the emir a warning. When Halim failed to dissuade Husayn, the minister of the interior, **Talat**, arranged to send a division from Smyrna. Again the grand vizier intervened, protesting that such an act would have an adverse effect upon obtaining a desired loan from France. **The crisis was settled in favor of Husayn, and both sides agreed to start immediate discussions.** Husayn's son **Abdullah**, who had left the Hijaz before the arrival of Wahib to attend the coming session of the parliament, spent the time of the crisis in Egypt, but was asked to proceed to the capital immediately. When he arrived in Constantinople, he **presented Husayn's position to the grand vizier and the minister of the interior:** Husayn asked them to maintain the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz as had been granted by Sultan Selim I and requested the abandonment of the plans to extend the railroad to Mecca, as such a project would disturb the longstanding employment of the Bedouin and others who depended on the practice of transport by camel. The tribesmen also were involved in the instruction of the pilgrims in the circumambulations and other duties related to the rituals of the pilgrimage. Talat presented a compromise plan which called for the completion of the railroad to Mecca; in return, the sharif would be given complete control over one-third of the revenues of the railroad in addition to a quarter of a million guineas to spend among the tribes.⁹³

On April, 1914, Abdullah returned to the Hijaz to present the government's offer to his father. Husayn's answer was, **"Are they bribing me?"** Although the government was willing to give up its attempts to apply provincial law in the Hijaz, its insistence on extending the railroad worried the Hashemites, because it would have greatly aided future Turkish efforts to subdue the emir of Mecca by military means. A series

92. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 14–15.

93. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 15–21.

of family councils were held to discuss this problem. Abdullah proposed that they prepare for an uprising in the Hijaz aiming at independence from the Turks, with the aid of the Arab units in the Ottoman army in Syria and Iraq, and that they then work toward the formation of a large independent Arab state. Abdullah's knowledge of the Arab national movement convinced him that a revolt could be successful. The nationalists had confided in Abdullah since 1909, though his father's involvement in the campaign against al-Idrisi had caused Husayn to be alienated from nationalist circles. Finally, however, the actions of Wahib seemed to have brought Abdullah and the nationalists back together.

Husayn decided to present to the government a counterproposal aimed at delaying any action. Abdullah was commissioned to present his father's response to the Turks. **Upon his arrival on July 1, 1914, two days after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo—the event generally considered to be the catalyst for World War I—Abdullah had a meeting with the grand vizier and Talat, and presented his father's proposal: “The emir of Mecca is requesting the formation of a committee under his presidency which would meet with the grand vizier and the sheikh al-Islam or some minister and draw up and agree to certain projects, the execution of which will be prerequisites to the construction of the railroad.”** Talat responded: **“Is this the time for thinking about the building of railroads? . . . We wish you to travel immediately to the Hijaz to raise volunteers, for it is possible that the state will be forced to enter the war.”**⁹⁴ Following his meeting with Halim and Talat, Abdullah had a meeting with Enver, the minister of war. Enver repeated Talat's request for Abdullah to return to the Hijaz and raise volunteers. The emir asked where the Hijazis would be used. When the minister of war said that the Arabs would be used with the regular troops in the Caucasus and Europe, while Turkish forces manned the Egyptian front, Abdullah declared that the volunteers must be employed on the Egyptian front.

When Abdullah returned from Constantinople to Mecca, he informed his father of the discussion with the Turks. In August 1914, Husayn wrote a letter to the **sultan** in which **he advised against entering the war**. He pointed out the difficulties the empire would face as a result of being cut off from her source of supply in Germany. In addition, Basra, Yemen, and the Hijaz would be vulnerable to the pressure of British sea power. Husayn also wrote to the grand vizier that **if the Empire should enter the war, it would be necessary to provide Yeman, Asir, and the Hijaz with three years' stores of supplies, and arms and equipment for both regular troops and volunteers**. After Turkey entered the war, Husayn wired the government requesting money be sent to the three provinces. He received neither supplies nor money even after repeated requests.

94. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 23.

As soon as it became obvious that Turkey was entering the war, Aziz Ali, from his retirement in Cairo, sent a message to the leaders of al-Ahd, asking them not to initiate any hostile activities against the Ottoman Empire until satisfactory guarantees were obtained from the allies in regard to future Arab independence. His fear was that a revolt might only result in the substitution of one domination for another; thus, he urged the al-Ahd's leaders to refrain from making hasty decisions.⁹⁵

Siding with the British

The British interest in the conditions of Arabia had been clear to Abdullah as early as the **spring of 1912**, when **Lord Kitchner, the British agent in Egypt**, called on the emir, who was then in Cairo as the guest of the viceroy of Egypt. Kitchner expressed his government's approval of the improvement in the conditions of the pilgrimage that had taken place since Husayn became emir of Mecca. Two years later, early in **February, 1914**, during the height of the crisis in the Hijaz, Abdullah had a meeting with Kitchner when he was in Cairo on his way to Constantinople. The emir spoke to the British agent at length of the Arabs' desire for independence and inquired whether Britain was willing to assist their national movement in the event of an Arab revolt. **Kitchner's reply was that Great Britain could not interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey, with which it had friendly relations.** In **April 1914**, during his return trip to the Hijaz, Abdullah again stopped in Cairo and met with **Ronald Storrs, Britain's Oriental secretary.** In the course of a lengthy conversation, Abdullah asked Storrs whether Great Britain would send guns to Husayn for use against the Turks. Storrs replied that **his government could not supply arms for use against a friendly power**, and that Britain's interest in the Hijaz was only the safety of the Indian and Egyptian pilgrims.⁹⁶

When the war broke out in **August 1914**, Kitchner was in England on leave, and as he was ready to return to his post in Cairo, he was **appointed secretary of war.** Storrs, who had returned to Egypt, wrote privately to Kitchner asking to be authorized to contact Emir Abdullah. Kitchner responded positively, instructing Storrs to ask Abdullah whether, in the event Turkey entered the war on Germany's side, the sharif would join Great Britain in the war against the Turks. These instructions were issued in the **last week of September, 1914**, about six weeks before the declaration of war on Turkey. Emir Abdullah, who was aware of the strength of the revolutionary feeling in Syria, and was confident that Damascus and Baghdad would respond with enthusiasm to a call to revolt, felt that the proper course would be to find out by negotiations whether there was indeed an absolute guarantee of Arab independence. Faysal, on the other hand, had great reservations. He felt that Kitchner's offer con-

95. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 155–156.

96. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 20.

tained no guarantee for Arab independence, and he also felt that the Arabs were not sufficiently prepared for a revolt.

Sharif Husayn shared Faysal's views on the unpreparedness of the Arabs of the other provinces, but he **could not ignore Abdullah's strong beliefs, so he decided to send emissaries to Syria to discover the state of national feelings and preparedness. At the same time he composed a letter to Storrs for Abdullah to sign, in which he stated his willingness to come to an understanding with Great Britain,** but indicated he was not yet able to depart from the neutrality which his position in Islam bound him to observe. However, he confined his remarks to the Hijaz, carefully avoiding committing the rest of the Arab world, and hinted that **he might find it possible to lead his immediate followers to revolt, in the event that the Turks should bring matters to a head, provided England were to promise effective support.**⁹⁷

At about the same time he received the sharif's letter, Kitchener also received a letter from **Sir John Maxwell, the commander of the British forces in Egypt,** urging Kitchener to approach the Arabs in Mecca and Yemen about joining the war against Turkey. **On October 31, Kitchener telegraphed the British Agency a definite promise to the sharif that if he and his followers were to side with England against Turkey, the British government would guarantee his retention of the dignity of grand sharif with all the rights and privileges pertaining to it, and would defend it against all external aggression. It held out a promise of support to the Arabs in general in their endeavors to secure freedom, on the condition that they would ally themselves to England. It concluded with a hint that, if the sharif were proclaimed caliph, he could count on England's recognition.**⁹⁸ This message was the beginning of negotiations between the sharif of Mecca and Britain aiming at establishing an alliance against the Ottomans, who sided with Germany in the war. The message reached Abdullah on November 16, 1914, shortly after Turkey entered the war. Husayn asked **Abdullah to respond to Kitchener's message.** Abdullah sent the answer to Cairo in which he stressed again **the inability of the sharif, without requisite preparations, to commit to any act of overt hostility against the Turks.** This reply reached Cairo in the early days of December 1914. George Antonius describes this response as being the end of the **first chapter** in the Anglo-Arab conspiracy. The second chapter was to open eight months later, in July 1915, as soon as Husayn had completed his inquiries among Arab leaders and after he had reached an agreement with them.⁹⁹

On November 5, 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany against Russia, Britain, and France. The call for **jihad** was issued in three

97. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 132.

98. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 133.

99. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 134.

stages. The first was the **fatwa on November 7, 1914, rendered by the sheikh al-Islam**, declaring it “a sacred personal duty on all Muslims in the world, including those living under the rule of Great Britain, France, or Russia, to unite against those three enemies of Islam; to take up arms against them and their allies and to refuse in all circumstances, even when threatened with death penalty, to assist the governments of the Entente in their attacks on the Ottoman Empire and its **German and Astro-Hungarian** defenders.” Then came the sultan’s proclamation to the army and fleet, issued **on November 11, 1914**, in which he exhorted them to fight for the liberation of **enslaved Islam** as well as in defense of the threatened empire. Lastly, there was the **manifesto** to the Muslim world, issued on **November 23, 1914**, over the signatures of the sheikh al-Islam and twenty-eight other religious dignitaries. It called upon all the Muslims of the world, whether subjects of the entente powers or not, to obey the injunctions of the Holy Book as interpreted by the sacred fatwa, and participate in the defense of Islam and the holy places.¹⁰⁰

In December 1914, **Ahmed Jemal Pasha, the maritime minister in the Ottoman cabinet, was made the head of the government in Syria and the commander of the Fourth Army**. He was assigned the mission of liberating Egypt. To achieve his goal, he was determined to win the hearts of the Arab population and to inspire them to play an active role in the holy war. Shortly before his arrival to Syria, Turkish officials had raided the French consulates in Beirut and Damascus and seized documents incriminating certain well-known Arab personalities. Jemal Pasha chose to ignore the contents of the documents; he locked them in a drawer and devoted his efforts to preparations for the military campaign against the British in Egypt. Jemal launched his offensive on the Suez Canal on **February 1915**. He was counting on provoking an uprising against the British in Egypt, which did not happen. His attack was repelled, and he had to retreat and return to Damascus, leaving a small force in Sinai.

When Jemal Pasha returned to Damascus, papers were placed before him incriminating a **Maronite priest, Yusuf Hayek**, in the exchange of treasonable correspondence with the president of the French Chamber. Jemal signed the death warrant of the priest, who was publicly **hanged in Damascus on March 22, 1915**. Then Jemal received reports related to the activities of the British and French military intelligence that prompted him to take several measures against the Arab nationalists. On **June 25, 1915, a division of the Fourth Army which was entirely Arab was sent to Gallipoli**. A large number of people were arrested, brought before a military court, interrogated, tortured, and tried. On **August 21, 1915, thirteen of them were sentenced to death, and were hanged in Beirut’s main square**. They came from different parts of Syria; among them was **Muhammad Mihmisani**, a brilliant

100. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 141–142.

graduate of the school of law in Paris and one of the founders of al-Fatat. Forty-five others who were abroad or had escaped received the same sentence in absentia—all of them men of great fame throughout the Arab world. A large number of Muslim and Christian notables were arrested and tried, and many were executed. The first was **Joseph Hani**, hanged in Beirut on **April 5, 1915**. **A month later twenty-one were executed.** Sharif Husayn tried to intervene with telegrams to Jemal, to the grand vizier, and to the sultan. Faysal pleaded with Jemal in person. But their efforts were in vain.¹⁰¹

During this period, Husayn was under pressure from the grand vizier to proclaim the holy war and to send volunteers. Husayn replied with assurances of his loyalty and devotion to the caliphate and his religious enthusiasm for the holy war. As Jemal continued his requests for volunteers for the second campaign against the Suez Canal, Husayn promised to send a force from the Hijaz to assist in the expedition, which was planned for the winter of 1915.¹⁰²

Husayn Backs the Revolt; the McMahon Correspondence

As a result of the general conscription of August 1914, **Ahmad Fawzi Bey al-Bakri** was called to service and assigned to Mecca, where he arrived in the summer of 1914. Fawzi, whose older brother **Nasib** was a member of **al-Fatat**, had been chosen by the nationalist leaders to reveal the existence of the societies to Husayn. Fawzi contacted Husayn in January 1915 and told him of the nationalists' plans, proposing that Husayn assume the leadership of the Arab revolt. It would take the form of a mutiny by the Arab troops stationed in Syria, whose officers were members of **al-Ahd**.¹⁰³

At Jemal's request, Husayn had ordered an Arab force under the command of his son Ali to accompany the Turkish forces under Wahib Bey, the *vali* for the Hijaz. On the way from Mecca to Madina, one of Ali's men discovered a case that had fallen from the baggage of a well-known Hijazi supporter of the CUP. The documents in the case contained **plans to depose Husayn and his family and to end the special position of the Hijaz. Only the outbreak of the war had interfered with the execution of these plans.** Therefore Ali stopped at Madina and returned to Mecca, where he showed the documents to his father. Despite this evidence, Husayn personally was still inclined to seek a solution within the Ottoman Empire. Faysal, who had traveled to Damascus for the purpose of assessing the status of the nationalists in Syria in order to estimate the feasibility of a revolution, was instructed, after com-

101. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 188–189.

102. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 25.

103. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 27.

pleting that mission, to proceed to Constantinople to present Wahib's documents to the grand vizier.

Faysal arrived in Damascus on **March 26, 1915**, and became a guest of **Ata Pasha al-Rikabi**. During the four weeks he spent in Damascus he met with the leaders of **al-Fatat** and **al-Ahd**, who assured him that three of the Arab regular divisions in Syria were ready for the revolution. In the **late part of April 1915**, Faysal proceeded to Constantinople, where he remained for a month. He presented the evidence of Wahib's plans to the sultan, the grand vizier, Talat, and Enver, who condemned Wahib's actions, ordered his transfer, and promised an official inquiry and court martial. However, **the ministers told Faysal that if Husayn made the declaration of jihad, he could count on receiving the fullest satisfaction**. Faysal assured the sultan and the ministers of his family's complete loyalty and promised to lead a Hijazi force in the planned second attack on the Suez Canal. During his stay in Constantinople, Faysal learned about the successful British attack on the Dardanelles, which meant that the conditions were favorable for an Arab revolt. **He also met two generals who advised him, upon returning to the Hijaz, to warn his father not to support the CUP, who were dragging the empire to ruin. Faysal then decided to join the revolutionaries.**¹⁰⁴

While he was in Constantinople, Faysal received from the leaders of **al-Fatat and al-Ahad "The Damascus Protocol"** outlining their terms for an alliance with Britain, to be presented to the British through Husayn:

The recognition by Great Britain of the independence of the Arab countries lying within the following frontiers:

- **NORTH: The line Mersin-Adna to Parallel 37° N and thence along the line Birejik-Ufra-Mardin-Midia (Ibn Umar)-Amadia to the Person frontier;**
- **EAST: The Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf;**
- **SOUTH: The Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden, whose status was to be maintained);**
- **WEST: The Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.**

The abolition of all exceptional privileges granted to foreigners under the Capitulation.

The conclusion of a defensive alliance between Great Britain and the future independent Arab State.

The grant of economic preference to Great Britain.¹⁰⁵

104. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 28–29.

105. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 157–158.

These were the conditions under which the Arab leaders were prepared to support an Arab revolt to be proclaimed by the sharif of Mecca, and to do everything in their power to help the Allied cause.

During the early part of 1915, the British authorities in Egypt were concerned about the threat of jihad. **In June 1915, a declaration was published by Sir Henry McMahon: Great Britain pledged herself to make it a condition of the conclusion of peace that the Arabian Peninsula should be recognized as an independent state exercising full sovereignty over the holy places of Islam, and hinted at the readiness of the British government to welcome the proclamation of an Arab caliphate.** Leaflets were printed and distributed in large quantities throughout Egypt and the Sudan, and smuggled into Syria. The declaration was the result of open conversation that Storrs and Clayton (the director of Military Intelligence in Cairo) had had with Arab leaders in Cairo, **Aziz Ali, and the reformer Sayyed Rashid Rida, instructing them to persuade the Arabs that their future lay in an alliance with England. Aziz Ali and Rida asked for guarantees of Arab independence as condition of a call to Arab revolt.**¹⁰⁶

When Emir Faysal returned from Constantinople to Damascus on May 23, 1915, he found that some of the Arab divisions which were an important components of the planned revolt had been transferred, which clearly had a significant effect on the morale of the revolutionaries. Faysal was eager to return to Mecca to persuade his father to accept the leadership of the revolt and to present to him the Damascus Protocol as the basis for the negotiations of a final agreement with Britain. **Nine of the nationalists had signed a manifesto agreeing to recognize Husayn as king of the Arabs if he obtained an agreement with Britain based on the Damascus Protocol.**¹⁰⁷

On June 20, 1915, Faysal arrived in Mecca, reported to his father the results of his investigations in Constantinople and Damascus, and declared his support for the revolution. Following lengthy discussions among the members of the Hashemite family, they agreed to undertake the leadership of a general uprising by the Arabs and to begin negotiations with the British. They also agreed that the tentative date of the uprising would be June of 1916. Having decided to support revolution, Husayn initiated negotiations with Great Britain by sending an unsigned and undated letter to Sir Henry McMahon, British high commissioner at Cairo.¹⁰⁸ The letter to McMahon stated the Arab terms on which the sharif was prepared, on behalf of the Arab people, to enter into an alliance with Great Britain. Husayn sought to obtain British recognition of an Arab state within the frontiers specified by

106. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 159–160.

107. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 30.

108. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 164; Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 31.

the Damascus Protocol. This letter is regarded as the first note from Husayn to McMahon.

Sir Henry McMahon replied in a letter dated **August 30, 1915**. He reiterated the general assurances previously given to the sharif in October 1914, but avoided the discussion of the terms stated by Husayn's letter of July 14, 1915, claiming that a discussion of these terms seemed to him inopportune because it appeared a waste of time to discuss such things under the stress of war. **He was attempting to win an alliance from the sharif while at the same time denying him the only means by which he could make the alliance effective.** The British at that time were not aware of the relationship between the Hashemites and the Arab nationalists in Syria. They believed that Husayn was speaking for himself, and that he could be won over by a promise to recognize the independence of the Hijaz and to recognize him as caliph. Husayn replied promptly with a **second note dated September 9, 1915**. In sharp contrast to McMahon's evasiveness, Husayn's reply was firm and clear. **He declared that his proposal that included precise frontier had not originated with himself, but had been put forward by "our people" as an essential condition.** He expressed his disappointment and irritation with McMahon for harping on the caliphate as it were all that mattered. He made it clear that he regarded the caliphate as a dead institution. Husayn's response included this statement: *"For our aim, O respected Minister, is to ensure that the conditions which are essential to our future shall be secured on a foundation of reality, and not on highly decorated phrases and titles."*¹⁰⁹ He continued to affirm that the question of frontiers must be treated as fundamental, for it was regarded as such by all people on whose behalf he spoke, including those whom circumstances were compelling to serve their Turkish rulers. **Husayn made clear that the issue of his negotiations depended solely upon whether the British would reject or admit the proposed frontiers.**¹¹⁰

As McMahon was preparing his reply to Husayn's letter, a young Arab officer in the Turkish army had arrived in Cairo early in October as a prisoner of war from the Gallipoli front. It was a Muslim from Iraq named **Muhammad Sharif al-Faruqi**. The information he disclosed to the British had a decisive influence on the attitude of McMahon and his advisers. The officer was well acquainted with the **al-Ahd** organization as well as **al-Fatat**, its civilian sister. He told the British about the real feelings of the Arab nationalists in Syria and Iraq. This was new information for the British officials.

McMahon's reply to Husayn is by far was the most important document in the whole correspondence. It contains the **pledges** which brought the Arabs into the war on the side of the Allies. **McMahon's note, which was dated October 24, 1915, began by stating that since the sharif had represented the matter as fundamental**

109. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 168.

110. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 168.

and urgent, he [McMahon] had been authorized by the British government to give on their behalf certain assurances to the Arabs: Great Britain pledged to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in the area contained within the frontiers proposed by the sharif, with the exception of certain parts of Asia Minor and Syria. A reservation was also made in regard to those territories within the same area in which Great Britain was in treaty relations with various Arab chiefs. The areas which were excluded were specified as follows:

The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.

Subject to that modification, and without prejudice to the treaties concluded between us and certain Arab Chiefs, we accept that limitation.

As for the regions within the proposed frontiers, in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interest of her ally France, I am authorized to give you the following pledges on behalf of the government of Great Britain, and to reply as follows to your note:

*That, subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca.*¹¹¹

McMahon's response contained other stipulations, the most important being related to Britain's special interest in the provinces of Basra and Baghdad, which implied a measure of Anglo-Arab partnership in that part of independent Arab states.

In his third note to McMahon dated November 5, 1915, Husayn consented to the exclusion of the Vilayet of Adana (including the port of Mersin) from the area of Arab independence, but he refused to accept the exclusion of the districts of Damascus, Hama, and Aleppo, on the grounds that, unlike Mersin and Adana, they were purely Arab regions. He also rejected the exclusion of Alexandretta. He accepted the reservation about those Arab chiefs with whom Great Britain had treaty relations, but implied that this included only chiefs in the area around Basra. He accepted the proposed Anglo-Arab partnership in the provinces of Basra and Baghdad which were occupied by Britain with the view that the occupation was a temporary measure.

In their reply to the sharif's third note dated December 13, 1915, on the subject of the exclusions of areas in Syria, the British continued their reservations, not on

111. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 170.

the basis of those areas not being purely Arab, but on the new grounds that French interests were involved. McMahon repeated his request to exclude the areas of the Arabian Peninsula controlled by the Arab chieftains who had treaties with Great Britain. He concluded his reply with an assurance that Great Britain would not assent to peace on any terms that did not provide for the freedom of the Arab peoples.

It is important to point out that the text of the McMahon correspondence does not exclude Palestine from the area in which Great Britain had pledged to recognize and uphold an independent Arab state.¹¹²

It appears that Husayn had not decided upon a definite course of action in the early part of January 1916. He was under constant pressure from Jemal Pasha for Faysal to return to Damascus with the promised contingent. It was decided, therefore, to have Faysal return to Syria in order to dismiss Turkish suspicions. Faysal was accompanied by an escort of about fifty men when he returned to Damascus. He stayed at Jemal's headquarters for the purpose of helping send the equipment for the volunteers in Mecca. Surveying the situation in Syria, Faysal reported to his father that the arrests of nationalists and the transferal of Arab military units from Damascus had left few Arab leaders of the second rank upon whom a revolt could be based. **The weakening of the Arab position in Syria led Husayn to accept some ambiguity in his terms with the British, as he was anxious to secure an agreement so as to begin active preparations for the revolt. This acceptance was relayed to McMahon through a fourth note dated February 18, 1916, in which he stated his willingness to shelve the matter of the coastal Syrian areas for the duration of the war so as to avoid disturbing the concord between France and Great Britain. However, he affirmed his position that he would seize the earliest opportunity after the conclusion of the war to vindicate the Arab claim to all of Syria.** The note ended by informing the British of the Hashemites' plans and requesting specific supplies and funds that would be needed to prepare for revolt to be sent to the Hijaz. On March 10, 1916, McMahon wrote to Husayn accepting his requests and setting forth the arrangements made to deliver these to the sharif.¹¹³

At the beginning of March of 1916, Enver visited Syria, then went to Madina, accompanied by Faysal and Jemal. During their visit to Madina, Faysal presented Enver with a sword of honor on behalf of his father Husayn. Meanwhile, the Turks continued to press the Hashemites to declare holy war and send the volunteers to Sinai. Around the beginning of April, Husayn replied, stating that **the Arab aspirations would have to be satisfied before the volunteers could be sent and the holy war proclaimed. The Arab political demands consisted of the grant of a general amnesty to political prisoners, decentralized regimes in Syria and Iraq, and the recognition of the Emirate of Mecca as hereditary in the house of Husayn, with its traditional status**

112. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 228.

113. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 31–33.

and privileges conferred. When these demands were met, Husayn would send the volunteers to Faysal in Damascus, and he would also send another son to the Iraqi front. **Unless these demands were met, Husayn could do nothing for the empire except pray for victory.** The grand vizier and Enver replied to Husayn, rejecting his demands, and closed the reply with a warning that Husayn would not see his son Faysal again until he had sent the volunteers to the front. Husayn did not give in to the Turkish threat; he replied to the that he could only repeat his previous advice and that Faysal was a guest of the state; moreover, he said the volunteers would not leave Arabia until Faysal came to lead them.

The grand vizier, Jemal Pasha, warned Faysal about his father's actions and advised him to write to Ali to come to Damascus with the volunteers immediately. **This warning was followed by sending a new Turkish force some 3,500 strong to Madina en route to Yemen toward the end of April.** At the same time, he sent rifles to equip the 1,500 volunteers to Madina and not to Mecca. Finally, around March 12, 1916, he sent a threatening wire to Husayn which made it clear that the government was not willing to make any concessions to Husayn and the other Arabs.¹¹⁴

While Faysal was in Damascus, he had secretly been corresponding with his father concerning conditions in Syria and the nationalists' plans. Because of the replacement of the Arab military units in Syria with Turkish units and the arrest and execution of the Syrian nationalists, it was obvious that the rising could not depend principally on Syria, as had been originally planned, but would have to be based entirely on the Hijaz. As Turkish actions became more threatening in the first half of May, it was decided that the break would have to be made soon. At the time of Faysal's departure from Damascus, Jemal instructed the governor of Madina to hold the special forces destined for Yemen in Madina. A short while later Jemal sent **Fakhri Pasha, deputy commander of the Fourth Army, to Madina with instructions to have Faysal and Ali placed under constant surveillance and to arrange plans for the defense of the city with the governor.**¹¹⁵

On May 23, 1916, Abdullah sent a message to McMahan requesting that Storrs come at once to the Arabian coast, as the Hashemites had decided to change the date of the uprising to the early part of June. **The revolt was to begin simultaneously in Madina with Ali and Faysal, in Mecca with Husayn, in al-Ta'if with Abdullah, and in Jidda with Sharif Muhsin.** On June 2, 1916, Ali and Faysal succeeded in slipping away from Madina with the volunteers and began to raise the tribes of the district. Abdullah was doing likewise at the same time, preparing the tribes of al-Ta'if region for the rebellion.

At sunrise on **June 5, 1916,** Ali and Faysal rode out to the tomb of Hamza,¹¹⁶ where the 1,500 recruits raised by the sharif were encamped, and proclaimed the

114. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 34–35.

115. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 37–38.

116. Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammed, was killed in the battle of Uhud in 625.

independence of the Arabs from Turkish rule in the name of the Sharif Husayn. Then they marched with the recruits to join the tribesmen at the appointed place southeast of Madina. **On June 9, Ali and Faysal cut the railroad near Madina. On June 10, 1916, Abdullah proclaimed the beginning of the revolt, and the Arab forces attacked the Turks in the cities of the Hijaz.**

Summary

In examining the relationship between Sharif Husayn and the Ottomans, it is clear that Husayn was a strong believer in Ottomanism. His policies were consistent: he cooperated with the Ottoman government in suppressing al-Idrisi's uprising in Asir against the Turks. Throughout the period between 1908 and the early part of January 1916, he continued to show his loyalty to the sultan, despite all the attempts of the Ottomans to change the autonomous status of the Hijaz—a territory that had been established since the rule of Sultan Selim I. As he became convinced that all his efforts to persuade the Ottoman officials to maintain his autonomy had failed, he concluded his negotiations with Great Britain in early May 1916 and accepted their offer, although it did not meet all his demands.

The revolt does not indicate that Husayn was converted to Arabism completely. His proclamations of rebellion were based not on Arab nationalist ideology, but were rather justified on the basis of traditional Muslim political ideas. In his proclamations, Husayn denounced the anti-Muslim practices of the CUP and the arbitrary tyranny of the Enver-Jemal-Talat clique, who had overseen the executions and terrorism in Syria and other crimes against Islam and the Arabs. Husayn represented the revolt as a religious and national duty, and as a God-given opportunity for the attainment of independence. His proclamation ended with a call for all Muslims throughout the world to follow his example, thereby fulfilling their obligations to him, as sharif of Mecca, and to the cause of Islamic solidarity.¹¹⁷

The Arab revolt was a significant step in the growth of the Arab National Movement. It was the most important step before the end of World War I, even though Arab nationalism as an independent force did not play a large role in bringing about the Arab revolt. The sharif of Mecca adopted and put into effect the political program of Arabism, despite the fact that he did not adhere to its ideology.

117. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 207.

The Colonial Powers in Arab Lands

The Arab Uprising and the First World War

On June 10, 1916, Mecca was occupied by a fraction of the Turkish forces, only about 1,400 men. With the onset of the hot summer, the governor-general and the bulk of the forces had moved to Taif, the summer station of Hijaz. When Sharif Husayn gave the signal at dawn, the several Turkish barracks and garrison posts were simultaneously attacked with rifle fire (the Arab forces had no artillery). After three days, on June 12, the smaller Turkish posts surrendered. The deputy governor-general and his soldiers were quartered in the apartment reserved for prisoners of war and were treated with great courtesy and consideration. The main barracks and the **fort of Jiad**, which were equipped with heavier artillery, resisted for another three weeks until two artillery companies of the Egyptian army in the Sudan arrived in Mecca and started shelling the fort. When they opened a breach in one of its sides, the Arab forces stormed the fort with conspicuous bravery and took it on July 4, 1916 (Ramadan 4). The fort's forces, consisting of thirty officers and 1,120 soldiers, surrendered on **July 9**.

In Jeddah, a force of 3,500 tribesmen led by Sharif Muhsin attempted to enter the city; however, the Turkish garrison of about 1,500 forced them back. The Arabs were forced to change their offensive plan to a siege until they received support from British warships and seaplanes. The ships shelled the external Turkish positions and the seaplanes dropped bombs outside the perimeter of the walled city. These attacks forced the garrison to surrender on **June 16**.

The men under the command of Emir Abdullah advanced toward **Taif**, while another group advanced northward and captured **Rabegh and Yanbo**. **Qunfida** was captured with the help of the British navy. Abdullah decided to impose a siege rather than to take Taif by assault, although he had the Egyptian batteries with him. The siege lasted until **September 21**, when the governor-general surrendered. By that point the revolt had taken six thousand prisoners and seized a fair amount of weaponry.

Although the Arab forces had failed to capture Madina, the immediate military objectives of the revolt were all achieved with the fall of Taif in the later part of September 1916. The following three months were the most difficult period in the history of the revolt. The Turkish garrison in Madina, which held fourteen thousand men well equipped with artillery, was a great threat to the revolt. At one point of the campaign it appeared that this force might try to recapture Mecca. This danger was dispelled in January 1916, when Faysal led an army northward and occupied the port of **Wajh**. This achievement reduced the Turkish forces in Madina to a stationed garrison that was no longer a threat. Raids on the Hijaz railroad became more frequent and more effective. The raiders began by tearing up the line and destroying bridges; then they learned how to blow up trains and engines. They also became able to attack stations and capture garrisons. After Faysal's forces occupied Wajh, Abdullah and Ali were able to establish a tight siege around the city. They intercepted a well-armed Turkish force on its way to Yemen carrying bags of gold. In April they intercepted a convoy of three thousand camels laden with food and clothing, carrying supplies to Ottoman ally **Ibn Rashid**.

Between June and September 1916, several British and French advisers arrived, including **Sir Reginald Wingate**, who was made commander in chief of operations. **Aziz Ali** arrived in Jeddah in September and assumed command of the Arab forces, creating the nucleus of a trained army. But he did not hold his command for long due to friction with the sharif. He was succeeded by **Ja'afar al-Askari**. Meanwhile, the prisoner-of-war camps in Egypt and India produced a new unit whose men participated in the fighting, including **Nuri al-Sa'id** and **Maulud Mukhlis**, members of al-Ahd who served with outstanding distinction in the Arab campaign.

Three weeks after the outbreak of the revolt, the Arab forces numbered between thirty and forty thousand. By the time Wajh was captured, the number had risen to seventy thousand. Although equipment was scarce and discipline lax, these forces were able to accomplish remarkable results: taking six thousand prisoners, locking up a garrison of fourteen thousand Turks in Madina and another of five thousand in Tabuk, intercepting the communications between Damascus and Madina, ending communications between the three Turkish divisions stationed in Asir and Yaman, and denying the Turco-German forces access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The Tribes Unite

On November 2, 1916, it was announced that the Sharif Husayn had been proclaimed king of the Hijaz. An assembly of religious and secular notabilities had gathered together and performed the ceremony of the *bai'a*, the traditional custom accompanied by formal declarations of allegiance.¹¹⁸

118. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 213.

At Wajh, Faysal had extreme difficulty in uniting the different tribes who were at war with each other. Through mediation, gold, and the message of Arab emancipation, Faysal was able to solve this problem. While he was busy with this task, he dispatched emissaries to the chieftains in southern Syria, calling them to join the revolt. Among those who responded to the call was **Auda Abu Tayeh**, the head of the **Huwaitat** confederation, a man of fifty-five who was considered the toughest fighter in the country. Auda promised to devote all his efforts to the cause of fighting the Turks. It was he who proposed capturing Aqaba as the first step toward the march on Damascus. Faysal heeded his suggestion. While Auda was preparing his tribe for war, he commissioned his cousin Sharif Naser, Nasib al-Bakri, and T. E. Lawrence¹¹⁹ to contact the Arab leaders in Damascus, Jabal al-Druze, Palmyra, and Baalbak. Faysal also contacted **Rida Pasha Rikabi**, an Arab general in the Turkish army, and one of the leading members of al-Ahd, and several prominent figures such as the Druze leader **Husayn al-Atrash** and **Nuri Sha'alan**, the chief of the **Ruala** confederation.¹²⁰

Auda assembled five hundred of his tribesmen and started the campaign toward Aqaba. On June 30, 1917, they attacked the railway, blowing up bridges and damaging an entire kilometer of line. On July 2, they attacked the Turkish garrison stationed at **Abul-Ithl**, on the **Ma'an-Aqaba Road**, and four Turkish posts between **Abul-Ithl** and **Aqaba**. On July 6, the Arab forces captured Aqaba. More than six hundred Turks were killed, and over seven hundred taken prisoner. The capture of Aqaba was a turning point in Faysal's Syrian campaign.

In August of 1917, Faysal arrived in Aqaba, which became his military base, replacing his previous one at Wajh. The nucleus of his regular army comprised the Arab units that had been formed in Wajh, to which were subsequently added some six hundred men of the Arab Legion recruited in Egypt from among volunteers in the prisoner-of-war camps. A number of British and French officers arrived to serve as advisers to the Arab command. By the beginning of 1917, the British forces under the command of **Sir Edmund Allenby** reached the confines of Palestine. Allenby, who was quick to grasp the importance of Aqaba, made it known to Faysal that he could count on him for help.¹²¹

For the first six months after the capture of Aqaba, Faysal devoted great effort to making his coalition of tribesmen into a strong fighting army as well as extending the range of his tribal alliances. Faysal's emissaries traveled into the interior of Syria and established communication with the seminomadic populations in the regions on either side of the Jordan. The largest enemy concentration was at **Ma'an**, which became his immediate target.

119. T. E. Lawrence was a British archaeologist who became an officer in the British military and worked in the Middle East as an agent of the British. He worked as an adviser to Faysal in the cause of Arab independence.

120. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 219–221.

121. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 223.

While Faysal was engaged in his military and political preparations, Sharif Naser, Auda, and T. E. Lawrence were carrying out several expeditions, raiding the railway and demolishing the tracks, bridges, and culverts. In one of these attacks, near **Mudawwarah**, about the end of September, they blew up a train, killing seventy Turkish soldiers. Three weeks later, they captured a convoy of supplies bound for Ibn Rashid. In the last days of December, Sharif Naser captured **Jafr al-Darawish** and **Tafila**.

The military campaign was supported by a political one aimed at winning the Arab population of Syria over to the Allied side. The principal weapon of propaganda was the agreement concluded between Sir McMahon and the Sharif Husayn. The Allied cause had become identified with the cause of Arab independence.

As the British forces advanced eastward from the Suez Canal in the summer of 1916, secret emissaries were dispatched to the chiefs of the tribes in southern Palestine. **Chaikh Furaih Abu Meddian**, the chief of the Beersheba tribe, received a signed letter from King Husayn calling upon all Arabs to aid the efforts of the British forces who were working for Arab liberation. Airplanes flew over the Turkish lines, raining copies of King Husayn's letter onto the troops. Delegates headed by Husayn's cousin, **Sharif Abdullah Hamza**, joined the British forces in contacting the chieftains in southern Syria to persuade them to give up serving the Turks and help facilitate the British advance toward Palestine. This campaign was successful enough to force the Turkish forces to evacuate **al-Arish** and **Maghdaba**. Throughout Allenby's advance on Jerusalem in the autumn of 1917, Arabs deserted from the Turkish ranks in large numbers. Some crossed the British lines and gave themselves up, others went to Aqaba to join Faysal's army, and the majority disappeared into the countryside.

The attack launched by General Allenby at the end of October led to the **capture of Jerusalem on December 9, 1917**. The cities of Gaza, Hebron, Jaffa, and Bethlehem had fallen earlier. In Jerusalem, the British forces were welcomed by a population shrunken to half its former size by hunger, exile, and deportation. Even so, when the British command established a recruiting office for volunteers to serve in Faysal's army, many men enlisted. A young member of one of the leading Arab families, **Amin al-Husayni**, led the enlistment movement and took an active part in organizing the forces.¹²²

Arab pressure on Ma'an was tightening, and the attacks on the Hijaz railway were becoming so frequent that traffic on it was reduced to one train a week; the journey from Damascus to Madina now took five days instead of its usual eighteen hours. Retaining Madina for that long was very costly for the Ottoman army, and did not prove to be of great benefit to their military campaign in Arabia, so the Turks decided to evacuate the city.

122. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 229–230.

The Arab revolt was costly for the Ottomans: Turco-Arab engagements killed 4,800 men and wounded another 1,600; beyond this, eight thousand were captured. These figures do not include Arab desertions from the Turkish ranks. In addition, there were garrisons of twelve thousand Turks at Madina, seven thousand at Ma'an and some three thousand at various points on the intervening sections of the railway; these all were immobilized by the action of the Arabs. In all, the number of Turks killed, captured, or contained by the Arab revolt amounted to some 35,000.¹²³

News of the Turks' decision to evacuate Madina reached Faysal about the middle of March 1918. He realized that the Turco-German command intended to secure the safe withdrawal of the Madina garrison and the subsidiary garrisons on the Hijaz railway line and bring them to Ma'an. To counteract this plan, he decided to start an offensive immediately aimed at isolating Ma'an and severing its communication with Madina. He divided his available forces into three columns, and sent them to attack the railway simultaneously in three different sectors. The attacks began in the first week of April: the first column destroyed **the northern** line between Ma'an and Amman; **the southern** column destroyed the line in the south as far as **Mudawwara**; this left the line wrecked beyond repair. The **central** column occupied the outer defenses of Ma'an and demolished the line immediately to the north and south of the city. The Turks launched several attacks at Semna, which was held by the central column, but the Arab forces held ground. **In ten days, Faysal's three columns destroyed over fifty bridges and culverts and three thousand rails and captured 450 prisoners and large supplies of ammunition. Faysal's offensive attacks prevented the Turks from evacuating Madina.**¹²⁴

Apart from the garrisons based in the Ma'an sector, which were known as the **II Corps**, there were three Turkish armies opposing the British and Arab forces on both sides of the Jordan. To the **west**, the British were face-to-face with **the Eighth and the Seventh Turkish Armies under the command of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (the future president of the Kemalist Republic)**, which amounted to a rifle-equipped force of seventeen thousand men. To the **east**, the Arabs were opposed by **the Fourth Army**, which was headquartered in Amman. The Turkish forces opposing the Arabs in the area east of Jordan amounted to **fourteen thousand**, which included the Fourth Army and the Turkish II Corps based in Ma'an. In addition, **there were twelve thousand troops** contained in Madina and on the railway between Madina and Mudawwara. Thus, **to reckon the military value of Faysal's forces, they were engaging approximately the same number of Turkish forces as those confronting the British forces to the west of Jordan.** In addition, the Arab forces were covering the right flank of the British army in Palestine and protecting its long line of communications from Turkish raids in the neighborhood of Hebron and Beersheba. Furthermore, Ali and

123. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 231.

124. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 232.

Abdullah were containing and harassing a large enemy force. In 1917, there were more Turkish troops fighting the Arabs in the Ma'an area and the Hijaz than there were in Palestine to resist the British northward advance.¹²⁵

Liberation from Ottoman Rule

As the summer of 1918 advanced, Allenby was developing a master plan for the final offensive against the Turco-German forces in Syria. Allenby's forces, which amounted to eight infantry and four cavalry divisions, were formed into the **XX Corps** and the **XXI Corps**, plus a **corps of cavalry**. Allenby's plan was to sever the Turkish communications between Damascus and the south before launching his offensive. The vital point in the enemies' communications was **Dar'a, a station on the Hijaz railway**, where the branch line to Haifa split off from the line to Madina. If it succeeded, the isolation of Dar'a would deny the Turks the option of sending reinforcements to Palestine, as well as the ability to pull back their forces safely if the British offensive succeeded. Allenby also predicted that the threat to the railway at Dar'a might cause the Turco-German commander to dispatch some of his reserves from Nazareth area to protect the junction of the railway, thus weakening the resistance to the British advance.¹²⁶

Early in September, Faysal moved his base to **Azraq**, some eighty kilometers east of Amman. The first attack was made on September 16, three days before the start of the British offensive. In accord with Allenby's plan, the railway was cut between Dar'a and Amman, suspending all traffic between the two cities. On the following day, other Arab forces destroyed the railway at points to the north and the west of Dar'a; they were planning to storm the town, but the arrival of strong German reinforcements forced them to halt their attack. Thus the Germans walked into the trap. Meanwhile, the Arabs continued their attacks, hoping to draw off a further contingent from Nazareth area. On September 18, they carried out more demolitions on the railway; as a result, by that evening, Dar'a was isolated on every side. **Early in the morning of September 19, 1918, the British offensive was launched on Palestinian front.**

The Turks expected the British attack would be directed on their left wing to the north, against their Seventh Army based in Nablus, and eastward against their Fourth Army based in Amman. Allenby began his operation by directing his **XX Corps to make a sharp attack against the Seventh Army**. This was only a deceptive attack, however. **The real attack was delivered by the XXI Corps against the Eighth Army, which was holding the ground between the coast and the foothills of Samaria.** It was such a forceful attack that the enemy commander was compelled to retreat in a disorderly fashion, leaving the coastal plain unprotected. This retreat

125. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 233.

126. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 235–236.

gave Allenby the opportunity to advance his cavalry along the gap that became open. **In less than twenty-four hours, a mounted brigade had reached the outskirts of Nazareth. A few hours later another brigade occupied Affuleh, a station on the Haifa-Dar'a-Damascus Railway, and in the afternoon of September 20, a division entered Baisan.** Thus by sunset on the second day, Allenby's forces were holding the three sides of a rectangle within which the entire Turkish Eighth and Seventh Armies were trapped. The Eighth Army was almost completely destroyed, except for small German unit. Of the Seventh Army, only a few scattered battalions were able to retreat toward Dar'a; the only way to escape was east across the Jordan, but the divisions of the XX Corps closed the escape path as they advanced northward toward Nablus and eastward in the direction of Amman. Meanwhile, in the hills beyond Jordan, the Arab forces, having surrounded Dar'a, were closing in on the II Corps in Ma'an.¹²⁷

On September 22, the Turkish Fourth Army stationed in Amman began its retreat on foot, as the railway line to Dar'a had been destroyed. As soon as the Turkish forces began their retreat, a British mounted brigade crossed the Jordan and advanced on Amman, occupying the city on September 25. The British commanding officer remained in Amman to secure the surrender of the Turkish II Corps retreating from Ma'an, which the Arab forces had occupied on September 23. Further north, the Arab forces were closing in on Dar'a, which they occupied on September 27, while other Arab units led by **Auda Abu Tayeh and Nuri Sha'lan** captured **Edra and Ghazaleh**. Meanwhile, the British cavalry crossed the Jordan to the south and north of the Sea of Galilee and started their advance toward Damascus. At the same time the Arab forces were marching toward Damascus and covering the right flank of the advancing British forces. Meanwhile the tribesmen were attacking the retreating Turkish Fourth Army.

The first to arrive the outskirts of Damascus were Sharif Naser and Nuri Sha'lan, who arrived with their forces on the evening of September 30, 1918, after a twenty-four-hour march that included fighting along parts of the seventy-mile journey. A strong contingent was sent to the city the same night to carry the tidings to the population, along with a message to set up an Arab government.

Early, on the following day, October 1, a detachment of British cavalry entered the city, closely followed by the forces of Naser and Sha'lan. Two days later, Allenby who drove from Jerusalem, arrived in Damascus just as **Faysal, accompanied by 1,200 of his men, entered the former capital of the Arab empire on horseback at full gallop. Damascus was in a frenzy of joy as the rebel army entered the city, ending four hundred years of Ottoman domination.**¹²⁸

The notables of Damascus were committed to Ottomanism until the final days of the war; like their counterparts in Palestine, they opposed to the Hashemites. When

127. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 236–237.

128. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 238.

the Ottoman rule collapsed, they had no choice but to adopt the new political ideology. The main concern of the prominent Damascene notables like **Abd al-Rahman al-Yusef**, **Muhammad Fawzi al-Azm**, **Badi' Mu'ayyad al-Azm** and **Muhammad Arif al-Quwatli**, was the reestablishment of their aristocratic position in the new regime. When Emir Faysal's army marched through Damascus on October 1, 1918, those notables gathered at the municipality hall to welcome Faysal.

In Damascus, the Arab nationalists thought that the dream of Arab nationalism was close to being fulfilled. They also thought that by supporting Faysal and his government, their struggle against Zionism would gain more strength. The younger Syrians, Palestinians, and Iraqis—many of them either officers in Faysal's army during the war or members of the Arab nationalist societies—became the real masters of Syria during the twenty-two months of Faysal's regime.

The rest of Syria was liberated from Ottoman rule before the end of October 1918. A British division began the advance northward from Acre on October 3, along the coastal highway. **Tyre** was liberated on the October 4; **Sidon** on October 6; **Beirut** on October 8; and **Tripoli** on October 13. No enemy resistance was encountered, and the troops were received everywhere with demonstrations of welcome.

The advance of the British and Arab forces from Damascus to Aleppo followed an inland course. As the British division was moving along the main road, an Arab brigade was covering its right flank, while the Sharif Naser at the head of force of irregulars went to liberate **Homs** from the east, reaching it on October 15, one day ahead of the British advance column, and found that the Turks had withdrawn. Two days later, Naser's force took **Hama** without opposition.

Stiff resistance was encountered on the outskirts of **Aleppo**, in the form of two Turkish divisions under the command of **Mustafa Kemal Pasha**. A plan was drawn up for an attack by the British cavalry and the Arab regulars on October 26, but during the afternoon of October 25, Arab tribal forces entered the city and fell on the garrison so strongly that its commander was forced to withdraw and to order the retirement of the two divisions guarding Aleppo on the south. On the second day, the British cavalry and the Arab regulars entered the city. On October 29, a detachment of Naser's force occupied the junction at **Muslemian** where the railway from Constantinople divides into Syrian and Iraqi branches. Its occupation marked the northernmost limit of the Allied advance, for, on the following day, Turkey signed the **Madras armistice**.

The liberation of Beirut and Aleppo and almost every other town in Syria gave rise to scenes of rejoicing similar to the ones that the inhabitants of Damascus had shown when Emir Faysal entered their city. The sufferings of the Arabs of Greater Syria during the war years and the horrors that they had to endure are indescribable, especially in Lebanon. More than 350,000 died of starvation; three thousand were sent into detention or exile. Taking into account losses due to military service, Syria's

contribution to the holocaust of the war was almost half a million lives out of a total population of under four million.

The Arab revolt was a boon to the Allied forces in their fight against the Ottomans. The revolt blocked the road to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and prevented Turco-German forces from expanding to the south. As the British prepared to advance into Palestine, they realized—as T. E. Lawrence pointed out—“that more Turkish troops were fighting the Arabs than were fighting [them].”¹²⁹ As shown by Husayn’s correspondence with McMahon, Britain pledged to recognize and uphold an independent Arab state in territories including Syria and Palestine in return for Arab support for Allied forces. These promises were betrayed by Britain, which ultimately turned its back on the Arabs in favor of France, Russia, and Zionism.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement

As soon as Henry McMahon clinched his bargain with Sharif Husayn in February 1916, the British Foreign Office in London opened a conversation with the French government in order to conclude the previous discussions between Great Britain, France, and Russia. The Foreign Office chose to withhold from the French the terms—and perhaps the fact—of the agreement made with the Sharif Husayn. The two governments each delegated a representative to confer and reach a final agreement. **Monsieur F. Georges Picot**, who had served as consul general in Beirut in the years preceding the war, and the British delegate **Sir Mark Sykes**, an Eastern affairs expert, drew up an agreement for the disposal of the Ottoman Empire. They were then instructed to proceed to Petrograd in order to discuss their proposal with the Russian government. Negotiations began about the middle of March 1916, and resulted in a draft agreement. Further discussions took place in April and May of 1916.

In these meetings, the three powers helped themselves to generous slices of the Ottoman Empire. **Russia** took Constantinople and a few kilometers of hinterland on either side of the Bosphorus, as well as a large portion of eastern Anatolia along the Turco-Russian frontier. **France** claimed the greater part of Syria, a considerable portion of Southern Anatolia, and the Mosul district of Iraq. **Great Britain** took a band of territory running from the southernmost extremity of Syria across to Iraq, where it opened out to include Baghdad and Basra and all the territory between the Persian Gulf and the area assigned to France, as well as the ports of Haifa and Acre. The area comprising what is known as Palestine was reserved for a special international regime of its own. **The special provisions made for Palestine were the outcome of a conflict of aims between the three powers. France had pressed for possession**

129. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 215.

of all Syria, including Palestine. Great Britain demurred, insisting that Palestine had an important role in the protection of the Suez Canal and the British colonies in the East. Meanwhile, Russia had schools and convents in Nazareth, Nablus, and Hebron, and so also laid a claim to this territory.¹³⁰

The Sykes-Picot agreement was concluded in May 1916 without the knowledge of Sharif Husayn. It is clear that it was in direct conflict with the terms of Sir Henry McMahon's compact with him.

In May 1917, Mr. Picot arrived in Cairo at the head of a French mission to meet the Arab leaders in Egypt with the aim of furthering French interests in Syria. The discussions between the French mission and the Arab leaders in Cairo aroused Husayn's apprehensions and prompted him to contact Sir Reginald Wingate, who had succeeded McMahon as high commissioner, for assurances as related to the French mission's intentions. At the suggestion of Wingate, Sykes arrived in Jeddah early in May 1917, and met with Husayn to allay his anxieties and to pave the way for a visit by Picot for a special meeting with King Husayn. Lengthy meetings took place between the two delegates and Husayn on May 19 and 20 of 1917. What passed at the meetings has never been fully made public; however, subsequent events showed that the delegates did not even mention the existence of an Anglo-French agreement. King Husayn later stated that the purpose of the discussions in May 1917 was to get the Arabs to recognize a French sphere of influence in the coastal regions of northern Syria—that is to say, Lebanon. Husayn's response was that the furthest he would go was to consult the leaders of the Arab National Movement and try to induce them to consent to a partnership between France and an Arab administration in Lebanon limited to a fixed period of years. During this period, France would aid the administration with a subsidy and promote her interests within the framework of Arab sovereignty.

In November 1917, the Bolshevik party seized power in Russia. One of their first acts was the publication of certain secret documents, among which were the agreement of 1916 with Britain and France. As soon as Jemal Pasha learned of this agreement in the last week of November 1917, he sent a secret emissary to Emir Faysal in Aqaba carrying a letter dated **November 26**. In his letter, **Jemal Pasha revealed the content of the Sykes-Picot agreement** and pointed out that Faysal and his father had been misled by promises of Arab independence into rebelling against the supreme authority of Islam, and that the true intentions of the Allies were to partition the Arab countries and place them under foreign masters. He entreated the Arabs to return to the Ottoman side, **guaranteeing full autonomy to all Arab provinces of the empire and the fulfillment of their nationalist aspirations**. He also invited Faysal to come to Damascus for negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement based on the principles mentioned in his letter. **He ended his message by assuring**

130. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 244–248.

Faysal that the terms of the agreement would be secured not only by the sultan's ratification, but also by a collateral guarantee from the German government. The Turkish government and their German allies published Jemal's offer to Emir Faysal in all newspapers in Syria; copies were sent to Madina and smuggled into Mecca.¹³¹

Faysal forwarded Jemal's letter to his father, who forwarded the whole correspondence to Sir Reginald Wingate in Cairo. Wingate then referred the matter to the Foreign Office in London. The British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, sent a telegram to King Husayn through Wingate, followed up by a formal note from the acting British agent at Jeddah. The note, which is dated February 6, 1918, stated:

Documents found by Bolsheviki in Petrograd Foreign Ministry do not constitute an actually concluded agreement but consist of records of provisional exchanges and conversations between Great Britain, France, and Russia, which were held in the early days of the War, and before the Arab Revolt . . . Jemal Pasha has distorted the original purpose of the understanding between the Powers . . . He has also ignored the fact that the subsequent outbreak and the striking success of the Arab Revolt, as well as the withdrawal of Russia, had created an altogether different situation.

The message sent out in Mr. Balfour's name was a dishonest communication. The note King Husayn received was designed to deceive him, for it not only evaded the issue of a secret Allied agreement, but also implied that no such agreement had been concluded. King Husayn accepted the note at face value and set his mind at rest.¹³²

The Balfour Declaration

The Balfour Declaration is a letter only sixty-seven words long, yet it had far-reaching consequences for all Jewish and Arab peoples, as well as for the entire region. Given its ramifications, it can be said to be among the most important documents of the past two centuries. By supporting the creation of a "Jewish national home," in Palestine, the British set the stage for a Zionist takeover of the whole country of Palestine and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, which is still ongoing.

The Intersection of British and Zionist Interests

Since the beginning of the war, Chaim Weizmann and **Arthur James Balfour** had participated in negotiations aimed at preparing a pro-Zionist document that would

131. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 253–254.

132. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 258.

pledge Britain's strong support for a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Both **Lloyd George** and Balfour were Christian Zionists—that is, devout Christians who believed that the establishment of a Jewish state was a prerequisite to the Second Coming of Christ. **Christian Zionism** emerged in Britain in the nineteenth century, well before the emergence of modern Zionism as a political force in the Jewish world.¹³³ Weizmann had met Balfour in 1905 and explained to him why Britain's offer of East Africa as a Jewish homeland was unacceptable. They met again in 1915 when Balfour became the first lord of the admiralty. Balfour showed great interest and enthusiasm toward the Zionists' goals. His motive was not wholly based on his religious beliefs, however. **Britain's main aim at the end of the war was the control of the prewar territories of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, as these territories represented the key supply routes to India, the crown jewel of the British Empire. The Zionist colonial project of Palestine definitely served Britain's strategic interests. If a million Jews were moved into Palestine within the next fifty or sixty years, it would constitute a barrier separating the Suez Canal from the Black Sea and any hostility which might come from that direction.**¹³⁴

At the end of 1916, the strongly pro-Zionist Lloyd George became Britain's prime minister. He brought to the government men who were known to be pro-Zionists. By 1917, The British appeared to be emerging as the victors in Palestine and were close to capturing it from the Ottomans. In the late summer of that year, Weizmann urged Balfour, who became Britain's foreign minister, to make the British government's commitment to Zionism public.

Zionist leaders in Germany tried to obtain an official declaration in support of Zionism. The news about the contacts between Weizmann and British statesmen were brought to the attention of the German government, but Berlin was not willing to exert greater pressure on its Turkish allies. The news about the talks between the Zionists and the German representatives was noted in London, and was used by Weizmann to persuade the British to hurry up and come out first with their declaration. Neither the German Zionists nor Weizmann revealed any news about their achievements or failures. The British government took the news seriously, and when the talks in the war cabinet dragged on, Balfour announced on October 4, 1917, that a decision had to be made soon, since the German government was making great efforts to gain the support of the Zionist movement.¹³⁵

Weizmann learned of the existence of the Sykes-Picot agreement a year after it was ratified through Sir Mark Sykes, who urged him to demand that the British government abandon the idea of internationalizing Palestine and adopt the concept of British protectorate. In February 1917, a conference took place, attended by Sykes

133. Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–8.

134. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 183.

135. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 171–178.

and Samuel as well as the leading Zionists and two members of the Rothschild family. The meeting decided against the internationalization of Palestine in favor of a British protectorate. In March and April 1917, Weizmann met both Lloyd George and Balfour and gained their support for a British protectorate over Palestine. In June and July, the Zionist leaders drafted the text of a letter supporting their goals to be issued by the British government; according to the draft, Britain was to declare that the **reconstitution of a Jewish state** was one of its essential war aims. The British Foreign Office's draft employed terms such as "asylum" and "refuge" and proposed the establishment of a "sanctuary" for Jewish victims of persecution; this draft was rejected by the Zionists. Eventually, on July 18, Rothschild submitted a compromise proposal mentioning a "National Home of the Jewish People," instead of a Jewish state. The war cabinet debated Rothschild's draft in early August 1917, and resolved to consult President Wilson on this matter; the latter responded with unequivocal support for the Zionist project. In addition, **US Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis** pressured Britain to accept the Balfour Declaration in return for bringing American Jewish support for the war effort. Finally, the cabinet of war meeting of October 31, 1917, approved the text that became known as the Balfour Declaration. **On November 2, 1917**, Lord Balfour included this text in a letter addressed (at Weizmann's suggestion) to Rothschild, president of the British Zionist Federation:

Dear Lord Rothschild,

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour

The Arab Reaction to the Balfour Declaration

The British government ratified the Sykes-Picot agreement with the French in May 1916, concerning the postwar division of the Near East, and concluded lengthy negotiations with the Zionists in November 1917, which culminated in the Balfour Declaration promising them the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. However, in July of 1915, it already had promised the Arabs its support for an independent Arab state, which would include the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. **The Balfour Declaration was published two years after the issuance of Sir Henry McMahon's note of October 24, 1915, and eighteen months after the outbreak of the Arab revolt.** When the news of the declaration reached Egypt, it provoked a wave of protest among the Arab leaders residing in Cairo. The British authorities, aided by strict censorship and active propaganda aimed at allaying Arab apprehensions and preventing the collapse of the revolt, tried to conceal the news. When the news reached King Husayn, he was greatly disturbed by it and requested from the British a definition of the meaning and the scope of the declaration. **Commander Hogarth**, one of the heads of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, arrived in Jeddah in the first week of January 1918 to meet with the king. **Hogarth was instructed by his government to assure Husayn that Jewish settlement in Palestine would only be consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab population.** Husayn's reply was quite explicit: **if the aim of the declaration was to provide a refuge for the Jews from persecution, he would use all his influence to further that aim.** He would also agree to any arrangement that might be suitable for the safeguarding and control of the holy places by the adherents of each of the creeds who had sanctuaries in Palestine. But he made clear that there could be no question of surrendering the Arab claim to sovereignty.¹³⁶

In the months that followed, Husayn sent out messages to his followers in Egypt, as well as to the Arab forces of the revolt informing them that **he was satisfied with the British assurances that the settlement of Jews in Palestine would not conflict with the British pledges of achieving the independence of all Arab territories, including Palestine.** He ordered his sons to do what they could to allay the apprehensions caused by the Balfour Declaration among their followers. He also published an article in his official newspaper, *al-Qibla*, calling the Arab population in Palestine to adhere to the holy books and their traditions that preach the duties of hospitality and tolerance, and urged them to welcome the Jews as brethren and to cooperate with them for the common welfare.

136. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 267–268.

The Declaration to the Seven

In the spring of 1918, when Balfour Declaration was announced and the Sykes-Picot agreement was disclosed, seven Arab leaders stationed in Cairo, who had all been involved in the Arab National Movement and participated in the development of the terms of the Husayn-McMahon compact, drew up a statement in the form of a memorandum to the British government. They presented their views in regard to the two agreements and asked for a clear and comprehensive definition of Great Britain's policy regarding the future of the Arab countries as a whole. The memorandum was handed to the Arab Bureau in Cairo for transmission to London. The authors asked that their identities not be disclosed until the answer might be made public simultaneously. Eventually the group was revealed to include **Rafiq al-Azm; Shaikh Kamel al-Qassab; Mukhtar al-Sulh; Abdul Rahman Shahbander, Khaled Al-Hakim; Fawzi al-Bakri; and Hasan Himadeh**. A British reply was returned by the Foreign Office on June 16, 1918. **The Declaration to the Seven** stated, in part:

His Majesty's Government have considered the Memorial of the Seven with great care. . . . The territories mentioned in the memorial fall into four categories:

- (i) Territories which were free and independent before the outbreak of the war;
- (ii) Territories liberated from Turkish rule by the action of the Arabs themselves;
- (iii) Territories liberated from Turkish rule by the action of the Allied armies;
- (iv) Territories still under Turkish rule.

With regard to **the first two categories**, His Majesty's Government recognise the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs inhabiting those territories, and support them in their struggle for their freedom.

With regard to the **territories occupied by the Allied armies**, His Majesty's Government invite the attention of the memorialists to the proclamations issued by the commander in chief on the occasion of the capture of Baghdad (March 19, 1917) and of Jerusalem (December 9, 1917). These proclamations define the policy of His Majesty's Government towards the inhabitants of these regions, which is that **the future Government of these territories should be based upon the principle**

of the consent of the governed. This policy will always be that of the Majesty's Government.

With regard to the territories in the fourth category, it is the desire of His Majesty's government that the oppressed peoples in those territories should obtain their freedom and independence. His Majesty's Government will continue to work for the achievement of that object.¹³⁷

The Declaration to the Seven was by far the most important statement of policy publicly made by Great Britain in connection with the Arab revolt. Its significance lies in the fact that it confirms England's previous pledges to the Arabs in plainer language than any previous public utterance, and provides an authoritative enunciation of the principles on which those pledges rested.¹³⁸

On October 3, 1918, the Arab flag was hoisted in Beirut by Shukri Pasha al-Ayyubi in the name of Emir Faysal. General Allenby, in response to a request from the French, ordered the flag to be removed. The removal of the flag resulted in a violent reaction in Damascus, and a wave of suspicion and apprehension swept the country. Faysal protested to Allenby, declaring that he could no longer keep the Arab forces in control unless an unequivocal definition of Allied intentions were immediately proclaimed. On November 7, a declaration was issued jointly by Great Britain and France. **The Anglo-French Declaration defined the French and British war aims as the complete and final liberation of the populations living under the Turkish yoke, and the setting up of national governments chosen by the people themselves in the free exercise of the popular will.**¹³⁹

The Postwar Settlement

On the eve of the capitulation, when the Ottomans acknowledged defeat and signed the Armistice of Mondrus, General Allenby reported to the War Office that he had divided Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine into three administrative areas called Occupied Enemy Territories: **OET-North (Lebanon and the Syrian coast)** from Acre to Alexandretta, to be administered by a French officer; **OET-South (Palestine)**, to be administered by a British officer; and **OET-East (Transjordan and the interior of Syria) administered by Emir Faysal**. The chief administrators of these areas were directly responsible to the commander in chief, General Allenby. The commander in chief was responsible to the war cabinet, and his chief political officer received instructions from him and from the Foreign Office.

137. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 433–434.

138. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 270–272.

139. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 274.

French troops landed in Beirut on October 7, 1918, and took up positions in Mount Lebanon. **The French were given control over OET-North in December 1919. The French administrator of OET-North was cut off from his own government and was subordinated to the British general.** Mount Lebanon, the city of Beirut, and the coastal region all the way north to Alexandretta were controlled by the French. In the course of less than two years, the French forces on the Syrian coast expanded from two thousand men to 180,000 in the spring of 1920.

When Faysal's Arab army entered Damascus in the early morning of October 1, 1918, T. E. Lawrence appointed **Shukri Pasha al-Ayubi**, an ex-Ottoman army officer, as acting military governor. On October 5, Faysal proclaimed an independent government in the interior of Syria with the knowledge and recognition of General Allenby. He appointed **Ali Rida Pasha al-Rikabi**, who was a general in the Ottoman army, to the head of his government in Syria. **Both al-Rikabi and al-Ayubi were local Damascene notables** who had shifted to the Sharifian camp toward the end of the war. Faysal's administration passed through three stages; the first one extended between **October 5, 1918, and August 4, 1919**, during which authority was in the hands of the military governor under the supervision of Faysal, who was responsible to the British commander in chief. In the second phase, which lasted between **August 4, 1919 and March 8, 1920**, when Faysal's government declared Syria independent, the general administrators acted as ministers. The third phase, known as the phase of formal independence, **ended in July 25, 1920**, when the French forces overthrew Faysal's government. In this phase, the government was responsible to the **General Syrian Congress, which acted as a constitutional assembly, having first convened on June 3, 1919.**¹⁴⁰

In all three phases, the Arab administration in Syria was a continuation of the Ottoman government system. Faysal, who had been in Europe for lengthy intervals to plead the case for Arab independence, had left the day-to-day government operations in the hands of his confidants, the young Syrian, Palestinian, and Iraqi officers and intellectuals who had taken part in Faysal's war effort. **Actual political control during Faysal's short reign in Damascus lay in the hands of al-Fatat and al-Ahd, who formed a new party, the Arab Independence Party (Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi).** The older generation of Syrian notables who had switched to the new ideology to protect their position within the new regime were upset at having lost their position as the leaders of the country and the prospect of an alien group of young Palestinians and Iraqis, as well as local Syrian newcomers, exercise authority over them.¹⁴¹

Of the three parties mentioned above, al-Fatat was the most influential. On **December 17, 1918**, the founding members of al-Fatat held a meeting in Damascus in coordination with the Beirut branch of the society, passed new bylaws, and

140. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 110–116.

141. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 116–119.

resolved to establish a public political organization, **Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi**. This group was established in early February 1919 to act as a front for al-Fatat and to provide the growing number of members who sought to join al-Fatat with an organization through which they could carry out their political activities in an open fashion. Besides being a member, Faysal provided al-Fatat with financial assistance, which enabled Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi to establish branches in Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. Unlike al-Fatat, Hizb al-Istiqlal maintained a policy of open registration, with membership around 75,000. Though the party was originally devoted to Arab independence and unity, after the war al-Fatat focused more attention on events in Syria, and adopted the principle of pan-Syrian unity.

The Arab nationalists from Palestine were enthusiastic about Faysal's proclamation of his government in Syria. They believed that it represented a crucial step in the realization of the dream of Arab independence, which would help the Palestinians in their struggle against Zionism. Numerous Palestinians played an active role in Faysal's administration: **Sa'id al-Husayni** served as foreign minister in the government of al-Rikabi; **Awni Abd al-Hadi** was a member of the Hijazi delegation at the Paris Peace Conference and later served as Faysal's private secretary; **Muhammad Ali al-Tamimi** was adviser to Emir Zayd; **Ahmad Hilmi Abd al-Baqi** was director of the treasury; and **Mu'in al-Madi** was director of intelligence. Although the Palestinians in Damascus subscribed to Arabism their focus on Palestine overshadowed all other matters.¹⁴²

The Disposition of Arab Territories

Although World War I had begun in Europe in August 1914, Britain did not declare war on the Ottoman Empire until November 5, 1914. Before the formal declaration, Britain had recognized Kuwait as an independent state under British protection. On November 6, a British-Indian military force landed at the southern port of **Fao** and extended its rule to the area around Basra in order to protect the oilfields in nearby Iran. British-Indian laws, police, bureaucracy, and government were applied in this area straight away. In June 1915, the forces placed at Basra advanced toward Baghdad. The far larger Turkish forces drove them back and trapped an entire British division in the town of **Kut**, 160 kilometers south of Baghdad. For four months, the British tried to break the siege, but failed. After losing seven thousand soldiers, the British force of thirteen thousand surrendered. Conquering Iraq would cost nearly four more years and twenty thousand more casualties. It took more than a million British soldiers to protect the Suez Canal, which the Turks attacked in 1915, and to drive the Turks away from the southwestern Iranian oil pipeline, which they cut for three

142. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 119–120.

months in 1915. Finally, after occupying Baghdad in March 1917, they established an Arab state with a local government under a British protectorate.¹⁴³

In the **Hijaz**, **King Husayn** was recognized by the Allied powers as the ruler of what had formerly been a province of the Ottoman Empire and now became an independent Arab state. **Ibn Saud** was also recognized as the sultan of **Najd**, the undisputed master of central Arabia from the Hijaz border in the west to the Persian Gulf in the east, with his capital at **Riyadh**. To the north of Saud's sultanate, stretching as far as the Iraq border, lay the territory of **Shammar**, still under the rule of **Ibn Rashid**, whose power and prestige had been weakened by the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. In the south, the **Idrisi** maintained his rule over the territory of **Asir**; and **Imam Yahya** also maintained his sovereignty over **Yemen**. The positions of the smaller rulers of **Kuwait**, **Masqat**, and the **Hadhramaut** remained unaffected.

While the Arab Peninsula was left to itself, **the northern Arab territories witnessed administrative arrangements described as provisional, subject to final settlement at the Paris Peace Conference**. These measures, although described as being temporary, had contributed to the unrest which led to the issue of the **Anglo-French Declaration of November 7, 1918**. And when Faysal protested the partition of Syria, **General Allenby assured him that the future of Syria would be determined in accordance with the wishes of the population**. The assurances given to Faysal by Allenby, and the ones contained in the Anglo-French Declaration, had persuaded Faysal's followers to cease protesting the administrative partition of Syria. Two weeks later Faysal left for London to press for Arab unity and independence. He also had a mandate from his father, King Husayn, to represent him at the peace conference.

The Paris Peace Conference

The Paris Peace Conference was a set of formal and informal diplomatic meetings that took place from January 1919 and into 1920 after the end of the First World War in which the victorious Allies set the peace terms for the powers they had defeated. The conference involved diplomats from thirty-two countries; the main outcomes were the creation of the League of Nations and agreements with the defeated states. These included the transition of former Ottoman territories into "mandates" passing chiefly into the hands of Britain and France.

In the run-up to the conference, **Emir Faysal arrived in Marseilles on November 26, 1918**, and was met by two French officers of high rank who informed him that the government welcomed him in France as a visitor, but could not regard him as a representative. His visit to France lasted for about two weeks. **On December 10, 1918**,

143. William R. Polk, *Understanding Iraq*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 67–71.

he arrived in London, where he was told that the Sykes-Picot agreement was a hard fact. He was informed that the French government had strong reservations about his appointment as the head of the OET-East administration, and they objected to placing him as the representative of the Hijaz at the peace conference.

At the end of the war, the Sykes-Picot agreement was a subject of intense debate between France and Great Britain. When Faysal arrived in England, **French prime minister Georges Clemenceau** had been in London negotiating with Lloyd George over the terms of the agreement. The British were introducing major changes to the agreement on the basis that Russia had denounced it, while the French were insisting that the agreement was still binding between the two other parties. **Britain viewed the agreement**, in its original text, as being **in conflict with the British interests on two important issues: the assignment of Vilayet Mosul, with its rich oilfields, to France; and placing Palestine under an international administration.** Finding Clemenceau stubbornly resistant to any changes in the terms of the agreement, Lloyd George offered the assignment of a substantial share of Mosul's oil to France. Clemenceau agreed to consider the offer, but returned to Paris without a firm commitment. Two months later, in a note dated February 15, 1919, the offer was formally accepted by the French government.¹⁴⁴

During his stay in London, Faysal was informed of the Anglo-French negotiations, and was subjected to very intense pressure by the British government **to give his consent in principle to the objects of the Balfour Declaration.** They instructed Lawrence to use his influence to induce Faysal to give formal recognition, on behalf of the Arabs, to the aspirations of the Zionists in Palestine. Faysal found himself in a difficult position: the proposals which the British were pressing him to endorse were in conflict with the general sentiments of the northern Arab countries. He tried to obtain specific directions from his father, but all he could elicit from the king was an order to accept nothing less than the fulfillment of the pledges made by Great Britain with regard to Arab independence.

The British pressure on Faysal was more than he could handle, especially as he was also facing the French hostility that he had first tasted when he arrived in Marseilles. He allowed himself to be persuaded that his chances to neutralize the hostility of the French would be greater if he met Britain's demands. **The British wanted him to commit himself to an agreement with the Zionists in anticipation of the decisions of the peace conference. Lawrence convinced him that there was no harm in concluding the proposed agreement with the Zionists as long as the Arab claims of independence were fully recognized.**¹⁴⁵

In Faysal's mind, Jewish settlement and colonization would be welcomed on humanitarian grounds if they adhered to the limitations imposed by a regard for

144. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 281–282.

145. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 284.

the welfare and the political and economic rights of the existing population. King Husayn had accepted such assurances from Hogarth in the spring of 1918, and his acceptance had been conveyed to Faysal in a message he received in confidence at his camp in Aqaba. Later, in the **first week of June 1918, Faysal had met Weizmann in Aqaba, and in the course of that meeting Weizmann had given him assurances that the Zionists had no intention of working for the establishment of a Jewish government in Palestine**, but that all they wished to do was to help in the development of the country without harming the Arab interests. In that frame of mind, Faysal consented to sign the agreement, but made his consent conditional upon the fulfillment by Great Britain of her pledges respecting Arab independence.¹⁴⁶

In mid-January 1919, Faysal returned to France. The French government originally denied him the status of delegate at the peace conference on the basis that the Hijaz was not officially recognized as one of the Allied states. But with intervention from Britain, the Hijaz delegation was granted two seats at the conference. On **January 29, 1919**, Faysal submitted a statement in which he defined the Arab claim to independence. **On February 6, 1919, he addressed the meeting.** In his speech, he stressed the claims of the Arabic-speaking peoples of Asia to independence and unity, laying special emphasis on the cultural, geographical, and economic factors that made them a cohesive people. He mentioned the part played by the Arabs in the war and the sacrifices they had made. He concluded his address by thanking Great Britain and France for the help they had given the Arabs in their struggle for freedom. **In his statement of January 26 and his address of February 6, he emphasized the principle of the consent of the governed as stated in the Anglo-French Declaration, rather than the McMahon pledges.** In the discussion which followed his address, **he proposed the appointment of a commission of inquiry by the peace conference to visit Syria and Palestine to investigate the wishes of the population.**¹⁴⁷

The King–Crane Commission

Faysal's proposal for the appointment of a commission of inquiry appealed to **President Woodrow Wilson and received his immediate support.** Clemenceau received it with hostility, and insisted that the French would not accept a commission of inquiry unless French forces replaced British troops in Syria. The British refused to accept this demand. It was not until March 20 that the proposal was formally debated. Wilson suggested that a commission of inquiry consisting of French, British, Italian, and American members in equal numbers should be appointed to go to Syria and, if needed, to the neighboring territories in order to investigate the facts and report to the peace conference. The suggestion was carried through at that sitting. On March 25,

146. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 282–286.

147. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 286–287.

the proposal was formally adopted and the instructions drawn up by Wilson for the guidance of the commission were approved. Wilson appointed **Dr. Henry C. King**, a well-respected theologian, educator, and author who was president of Oberlin College, and **Mr. Charles R. Crane**, a prominent Democrat who was known for his experience and independence of judgment, as the US members of the commission.¹⁴⁸

The arguments between the British and the French over the commission's value and how to carry out its mission wrecked the original scheme; President Wilson alone held his ground. Certain members of the United States delegations were opposed to the inquiry, as they believed that the peace conference had already enough information. They also believed that the arrival of the commission in Syria might arouse greater hopes than could ultimately be fulfilled.

The two commissioners whom Wilson had selected arrived in Jaffa on June 10, 1919, and spent six weeks visiting Palestine and Syria. They carried out an extensive inquiry, interviewed a large number of delegations in some forty towns and rural centers, and received a total of over 1,800 petitions. **They were back in Paris in the last week of August. On August 28, 1919, they deposited a copy of their report with the secretariat of the United States delegation.**

The King-Crane Report is an outstanding document. It is the only attempt made on behalf of the peace conference to establish the facts relating to Arab aspirations. It was conducted by two men recognized for their open minds and independence of judgment. **The commissioners expressed themselves in favor of the mandatory system for Syria-Palestine and Iraq, but on condition that the mandate be for a limited term and that it should aim at bringing the mandated countries to independent status as rapidly as conditions would allow. They recommended that Iraq be treated as one country and that the unity of Syria (including Palestine) be similarly preserved, subject to the maintenance of Lebanon's autonomy within the framework of Syrian unity.** They found that the Syrians overwhelmingly were in favor of the United States as mandatories, but if the Syrian mandate could not be assumed by the United States it should be assigned to Great Britain—not France. In addition, they admitted that they had started out with a favorable mindset toward the Zionist project, but after examining the situation in Palestine they recommended that Zionist ambitions be limited. The statements made to them by the Jewish representatives had convinced them that **the Zionists were seeking complete disposition of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, and they expressed their opinion that if the Zionist were able to achieve their goals, it would be a gross violation of the rights of the people and of the principles proclaimed by the Allies and by President Wilson.** They felt bound to recommend that the Zionist program be greatly reduced, that Jewish immigration be definitely limited, and that the idea of making Palestine

148. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 288.

into a Jewish commonwealth be abandoned. The report was ignored, and was not acted upon even in Washington, as it reached Wilson while he was on the speaking tour that ended with him having a debilitating stroke. **It was not even published until 1922.**¹⁴⁹ This was by the *New York Times*, which published the entire report on December 3–4, 1922. It introduced the report by saying, in part:

The world is askew today because facts have been concealed or perverted. If, in 1918–1919, the world had seen the international situation, stripped of all camouflage, with every secret treaty opened and every national condition made clear, it would have insisted on a totally different outcome of events.¹⁵⁰

Faysal returned to Damascus in the early part of May 1919 after being away for four months. Now he faced a very difficult mission: reporting to his people his findings at the peace conference in Paris. The Arab leaders in Damascus were restless and anxious, seeking answers regarding the fulfillment of the Arab national aspirations. Faysal adopted a cautious attitude, confiding his concerns and fears only to a small circle of followers. In his public address he attempted to ease public fears by focusing on the inter-Allied commission of inquiry.

Faysal and the Zionists

The opposition of the Arabs to Zionism started in the later part of the nineteenth century with the arrival of Jews to Palestine from Eastern Europe. This opposition developed into a widespread phenomenon over the following two decades, and reached its peak during the first part of the twentieth century between 1908 and 1914. After the establishment of Faysal's administration in Damascus on October 1, 1918, the Palestinian members of the Arab National Movement established the Arab Club, **al-Nadi al-Arabi**, whose mission was organizing active opposition to the Zionist project, in Damascus.

When the Palestinian Arab nationalists learned about the agreement Faysal had signed with Weizman, they started an intensive campaign aimed at preventing Faysal's administration from cooperating with the Zionists. In an attempt to rally public support and to dissuade Faysal from dealing with the Zionists, **Muhammad Izzat Darwaza**, a key member of al-Fatat, wrote articles in the local press calling for action against Zionism. In his articles he ridiculed the idea of the potential for Jewish contributions to Palestine, and pointed out the catastrophic impact of Jewish

149. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 295–297.

150. Thomas Suárez, *Palestine Hijacked: How Zionism Forged an Apartheid State from River to Sea* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2023), 38.

immigration on the country and the threat that Zionism posed to Syria and the Arab world. The Syrian Arab nationalist **Nabih al-Azma** wrote: **“The Arab nation never granted Faysal or any other person such a mandate that runs counter to the aspirations it had expressed on many occasions. Matters that are decisively essential to the life of a nation cannot be dealt with simply on the basis of a document signed by one person or a group of persons.”**¹⁵¹

The Arab nationalists in Damascus realized the extent of the pressure Faysal had been subjected to by the imperial powers that forced him to consent to such an agreement with Weizmann. However, they were not willing to appreciate his position of weakness. Some of them, especially members of al-Ahd, believed that they could confront both France and England. Others became extreme opponents of the Hashemite family, accusing them of betraying the national cause.

The Syrian Congress and the French-Anglo Response

The strong resistance to Faysal’s agreement with the Zionists escalated rapidly, prompting a group of responsible leaders of the recently formed Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi organization to propose the formation of an assembly. Faysal gave support to the movement. Elections were held in the portion of Syria which was under Arab administration (OET-East), but the representatives of Lebanon and Palestine were appointed by the national societies of these two regions. The opening session was convened in Damascus on June 3, attended by sixty-nine out of a total of eighty-five members representing Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. The French authorities prevented the Lebanese representatives from traveling to Damascus.¹⁵²

On July 2, 1919, the First General Syrian Congress passed the following resolutions:

1. Recognition of the independence of Syria, including Palestine, as a sovereign state with Emir Faysal as king; and recognition of the independence of Iraq.
2. Repudiation of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration, and of any plan for the partition of Syria or the creation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.
3. Rejection of the proposed mandatory systems, but acceptance of foreign assistance for a limited period provided it did not conflict with national independence and unity.
4. Rejection of French assistance in any form.¹⁵³

151. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 122.

152. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 293.

153. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 293–294.

In August 1919, Faysal was invited by Lloyd George to visit London again. The tensions in Anglo-French relations over the Arab question were escalating. At the same time, the cost of British garrisons in Syria and Cilicia was mounting. Lloyd George proposed the withdrawal of the British forces from Cilicia and eastern Syria, to be replaced by French troops in Cilicia and Arab troops in eastern Syria. This proposal gave the Arabs exclusive garrisoning of the towns and districts of Aqaba, Amman, Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo. The withdrawal was to begin on November 1, 1919. The proposal reserved the control of the railway and a pipeline between Iraq and the Mediterranean to the British. At the meeting of the peace conference on September 15, Clemenceau accepted the proposal as a temporary measure and reiterated that the French government desired to obtain a mandate for eastern Syria.

Faysal arrived London on September 19, and was informed of what had happened in Paris. After a series of meetings with Lloyd George and other ministers, **Faysal submitted his response in a note dated October 10, stating that the Arabs could not consent to such measures. He reminded the British of the assurances contained in the Declaration to the Seven of June 16, 1918, and the Anglo-French Declaration of November 7, 1918.** The British were embarrassed, as they were aware that their agreement with the French set the grounds for France to occupy eastern Syria in the near future. Lloyd George hoped that a Franco-Arab agreement, if one could be concluded, would relieve them of their embarrassing obligations. Lloyd George asked Faysal to enter into direct negotiations with Clemenceau.

On October 20, 1919, Faysal arrived in Paris, began lengthy negotiations with the French, and after two and a half months, at the beginning of January 1920, the two parties reached a provisional agreement under which France recognized the right of the Syrian nation to independence and unity, but insisted that the Syrian state was to be defended, advised, and represented abroad by France. The agreement with the French stipulated that the occupation by France of Lebanon and the rest of the coastal regions of Syria as far as Alexandretta by France would be respected by the Arab government in the interior. It also stipulated that the Arab state should turn to France for any assistance it might require. Faysal postponed signing the agreement until he could obtain the consent of his people in Damascus.¹⁵⁴

When Faysal returned to Syria on January 14, 1920, he found its leaders in a state of dismay. Mass demonstrations paraded the streets, calling for unity and independence and expressing disapproval of the agreement between Faysal and Clemenceau. Minor clashes led to hostilities between the French and Arab forces in Tripoli, Baalbek, and other locations. Faysal made several attempts to persuade his supporters to accept his agreement with Clemenceau, but to no avail. Al-Fatat and al-Ahd were now not only anti-French but also anti-British. They told Faysal that they were

154. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 124; Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 301.

ready to declare war against both France and England: England planned to hand Palestine over to the Jews; France had already endorsed the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine and wanted to take over Syria.

In the early months of 1920, Faysal managed to convince older Syrian notables who were strong opponents of his family to form a new political party that suited his policy of compromise and moderation. In answer to Faysal's call, **Abd al-Rahman Pasha al-Yusef** and other conservative Damascene notables formed **al-Hizb al-Watani al-Suri (the National Party)**, which sought compromise with the French on the basis of the unsigned Faysal-Clemenceau agreement. Two prominent members of al-Fatat, Ali Rida Pasha al-Rikabi and Nasib Bey al-Bakri, both born to notable landowning Damascene families and both known to be disdainful toward the Palestinian and Iraqi members of al-Fatat, were among the founders of the new party.¹⁵⁵

On March 8, 1920, the General Syrian Congress in Damascus demanded the **complete independence of geographic Syria, refused to recognize the mandate of any power, rejected the Jewish national home policy in Palestine, called for the withdrawal of all foreign armies, and proclaimed Faysal king of Syria.** The French and British governments announced that they would not recognize the proceedings in Damascus as valid, and took steps to convene an early conference of the Supreme Council, inviting Faysal to return to Europe.

San Remo: French Betrayal, Arab Resistance

The Supreme Council of the League of Nations met at San Remo and took its decisions on April 25, 1920. The whole of the Arab rectangle lying between the Mediterranean and the Persian frontier was to be placed under mandatory rule. Syria and Lebanon were to be placed under a single mandate to be entrusted to France; Great Britain was to hold a mandate for Iraq and another for Palestine. A rider was added to the effect that the mandate for Palestine would carry with it an obligation to apply the Balfour Declaration. The San Remo decisions were made public on May 5, 1920.¹⁵⁶

The decisions taken at San Remo were nothing short of betrayal of the specific promises and pledges given to the Arabs, as well as a violation of the general principles proclaimed by the Allies. It was on the strength of those promises and principles that the Arabs had come into the war and made their contributions, leaving the Allies in their debt.

As soon as the San Remo conference announced its decision, the Arab nationalists began to put pressure on Faysal to declare war upon the French. Faysal refused their request. Although his confidence had been shaken by the San Remo decisions,

155. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 136–137.

156. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 305.

still he had some hope for a fair hearing before the conference. In the early part of July 1920, he wrote to the French commissioner general Henri Gouraud to announce his decision to sail to Europe. Gouraud wrote him back informing him that he was about to send him an important communication from his government. **On July 14, 1920, Faysal received an ultimatum on five points that he had to comply with in four days:** the handing over of the Rayyaq-Aleppo Railway to French military control, which amounted to the occupation of Aleppo, Rayyaq, Baalbek, Homs, and Hama; the abolition of conscription and the reduction of the Arab army; an unqualified acceptance of the French mandate; the adoption of the currency imposed by the French administration; and the punishment of persons implicated in acts of anti-French hostility. To the surprise and then the anger of the Arab nationalists, **Faysal accepted all the conditions.**¹⁵⁷

Even though the ultimatum had been accepted by Faysal, the French army advanced on Damascus. As the French were nearing the **Maisalun Pass**, two thousand patriots rushed out in defiance of Faysal's orders and joined the small regular force guarding the pass. The heroic stand of the Arab forces against the airplanes and the superior numbers and equipment of the French forces was the greatest pride of the entire Arab nation. **The young minister of war, Yusef al-Azmeh, was killed leading a handful of the regular Arab forces against the French machine guns.** The bulk of the army garrison of Damascus had already been demobilized by Faysal. The road to Damascus was wide open, and there was no further resistance. When Gouraud reached Damascus, he asked Faysal to leave the country. **On July 28, Faysal left Damascus, taking a train to Dar'a and then to Haifa, then sailing to Italy. He remained in a retreat on the shores of Lake Maggiore until December, when he traveled to London in response to an invitation from the British government.**

The months that followed the decisions of the San Remo Conference witnessed armed uprisings in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. The first of those outbreaks occurred in Palestine at Easter, when the Arab population in Jerusalem, alarmed by activities of the Zionists and the announcements made by the Zionist leaders, attacked the Jews of the city. In Syria, after the entry of the French into Damascus, a series of organized attacks occurred in different parts of the country. In the region between Aleppo and Antioch, a group of leaders succeeded in raising a considerable body of volunteers to fight against the French columns sent out against them. The large reinforcements the French had brought into the country managed to put an end to the armed resistance by the end of 1920.

By far the most serious uprising occurred in Iraq. It was an armed rebellion against the denial of independence and the imposition of the mandatory system. The little town of **al-Qaim** was the main center of resistance. The British government

157. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 306–308.

in London ordered the British forces in Iraq to pull back from the area. The nationalists thought that they had achieved victory. Finally a small group of nationalists, members of the al-Ahd secret society, formed the Northern Iraq Army and tried to capture Mosul in May 1920. Their military campaign did not last for long. The British forces succeeded in putting an end to this operation. Several members of the Northern Iraq Army were arrested, and few managed to escape.¹⁵⁸

The most serious armed resistance by the Iraqis began in July 1920, as a social revolution and evolved into a national revolt. British military commander **General Arnold Wilson** and his staff, who were known among the English as the “**Indian School**,” since all had come to Iraq from service in Britain’s Indian empire, assumed that the Iraqi tribes functioned like the Pathan tribes of India. Wilson and his staff identified local notables who were promoted to be “chiefs,” and gave them authority over their kinsmen. Those new chiefs were given various advantages, including “large doles, subsidies, and no taxation,” along with confirmation of their private ownership of lands that had previously been regarded as communal to tribes. The British assumed that this would give the chiefs a stake in British rule, which would motivate them to control their fellow tribesmen. But what happened was the opposite. Their conduct excited the anger of their fellows. The anger was intensified when the British used force to suppress their agitation. The social unrest then turned into a national revolt. During the holy month of Ramadan, joint Sunni–Shia meetings were held in which the two creeds decided to revolt against British rule. The leaders of the Shia community issued instructions to their followers, particularly among the tribes of the south, to rise up against the British. On June 30, 1920, Iraq blew up in a vast insurrection against the British.¹⁵⁹

By the end of July, when news had come of the French occupation of Damascus, the leaders of the insurgence called for *jihād*, which was first proclaimed in early August in **Najaf** and **Karbala** and later through the whole countryside of the middle and lower Euphrates. In August and September, the rebels were masters everywhere except for the three cities of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. In the countryside, the administration had lost its authority, and control of affairs was assumed by provisional governments proclaimed in various centers by the local leaders.¹⁶⁰

The British had 133,000 troops in Iraq, widely scattered and relatively immobile. The Iraqis began using guerrilla warfare, characterized by hit-and-run tactics. For the next six months, as the British battled against virtually the entire population, they lost 1,654 men and spent more than six times as much as they had spent on the whole of their wartime campaign in the Middle East. The British government was horrified. This was no tribal revolt, but a national war of independence led by respected men of

158. Polk, *Understanding Iraq*, 75.

159. Polk, *Understanding Iraq*, 76–77.

160. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 315.

religion—both Sunnis and Shiites—doctors, teachers, merchants, and journalists. In October, Sir Percy Cox replaced Wilson as civil commissioner. The British decided to declare Iraq as an independent state under guarantee of the League of Nations and subject to the mandate of Great Britain. Cox appointed an elderly Iraqi to be “leader” of the “Descendants of the Prophet” (Naqib al-Ashraf). A provincial Arab government, known as the Council of State, was formed, consisting of Iraqi personalities serving as ministers with British advisers attached to each department. Ultimate control was vested in the hands of Sir Percy Cox.¹⁶¹

On the initiative of **Mr. Winston Churchill, then secretary of state for the colonies**, a conference was called **in Cairo in March 1921**, to examine Britain’s position in the Arab countries and devise measures for remedying it. Decisions were taken at that conference that led to a radical change of policy in Iraq, and to changes of major importance in the part of southern Syria lying to the east of Jordan. The conference, assembled on March 12, was attended by the **high commissioner for Iraq, Sir Percy Cox, and the high commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel**, along with other British officials. The conference recommended that Emir Faysal, based on the earliest understanding arrived at in London between Faysal and Churchill, should proceed to Iraq as a candidate for the throne. The hope was that establishing a government in Iraq would enable the British to reduce their garrison considerably.¹⁶² **However, the people of Iraq had already expressed their desire to have Emir Abdullah as their king; furthermore, neither Husayn nor Abdullah had been told that Britain intended to install Faysal as king of Iraq. This caused a rift between the two brothers. Moreover, the fact that his sons were allowing British priorities to take precedence over Arab ones caused King Husayn great disappointment.**

The regions east of the Jordan River had formed part of the Arab administration set up under Emir Faysal, but had not come under French occupation. Great Britain persuaded France to agree to their inclusion in the area of the British mandate. This area, which became known as Transjordan, was granted to Great Britain in July 1920. The British were busy setting up a civil administration in Palestine proper, and had no intention at that stage of making the territory east of the Jordan into an independent Arab state. A small number of Arabic-speaking British officers were therefore sent to the various centers east of the Jordan with the task of setting up local autonomous administrations and running the country with these as best they might. They were told that it would be a waste of time to request assistance in the form of money or troops, but that any expert advice available would be placed at their disposal. The British officer Alec Seath Kirkbride was assigned to Kerak, the most southern of these centers. Kirkbride described this area as being inhabited by the wildest tribesmen in the country, who had never been subdued completely by the Ottoman government.

161. Polk, *Understanding Iraq*, 77–79.

162. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 315–317.

He invited the tribal elders to form a council of elders to govern themselves, and called the new administration the “National Government of Moab.” The northern administration was sited at Amman; its British adviser was Kirkbride’s younger brother.

In January, 1921, news came to Kirkbride of the arrival of Emir Abdullah at Ma’an, which was still part of the Hijaz, at the head of a force of nearly two thousand men. When his hopes of becoming king of Iraq faded, Abdullah had resigned from the post of minister for foreign affairs of the Hijaz. He then proceeded to recruit a private army and had announced, on arrival at Ma’an, that he intended to expel the French forces from Syria and to take over that kingdom on his own account. Having told the world of his plans, which involved the armed invasion of a territory under British mandate, he sat back and waited to see what Britain would do. Britain took no action, so he decided to advance northward. Kirkbride consulted the high commissioner in Jerusalem, asking for instructions. The reply was not helpful; it said only that it was most unlikely that the emir would advance into territory which was under British control. Kirkbride rode off with the other members of the Council and met Abdullah at the nearest station on the Hijaz railway. Kirkbride introduced himself and welcomed “His Highness” officially to the territory under British control. The emir replied: “Thank you, thank you, I come here with the friendliest sentiments towards the people of this country, whom I regard as my brothers, and towards Great Britain, by whose side we fought to liberate the beloved homeland from its oppressors.” Abdullah then turned to Kirkbride and said, “Am I correct in assuming that you are here to welcome me on behalf of the government of Great Britain?” Kirkbride replied, **“I came with my colleagues here to meet your highness as the Council of Moab; I expect that His Majesty’s Government will send a representative, in due course, who is more senior than myself.”**¹⁶³

Kirkbride summarized the situation as follows: “The National Government of Moab passed away quite painlessly, as did the other autonomous administration in the north. Emir Abdullah set up a central administration at Amman with which to govern the **Emirate of Transjordan.**”¹⁶⁴

On March 24, 1921, Churchill arrived in Jerusalem. Besides discussing the situation in Palestine and the British policy in regard to the mandate and the obligations toward the Zionists, he was interested in the status of Transjordan. Emir Abdullah was invited to Jerusalem to confer with him. A series of conversations took place, attended by Lawrence. A provisional arrangement was made with Abdullah by which he should remain in Transjordan and receive financial assistance from the British government to enable him to maintain an Arab force to be recruited locally for the preservation of order in Transjordan. In regard to his ambitions of ruling

163. Alec Seath Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns: Experiences in the Middle East* (London: John Murray Ltd, 1956), 25–26.

164. Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns*, 27.

over Syria, Churchill agreed that Great Britain should use its good offices to secure the restoration of an Arab administration in Syria with Emir Abdullah at its head. Unfortunately, Churchill's views of Arabs, and Palestinians in particular, were quite prejudiced. He viewed the Jews as a "higher-grade race" compared to the "great hordes of Islam,"¹⁶⁵ and called Palestinians "barbaric hordes who [eat] little but camel dung."¹⁶⁶

165. Mark Curtis, *Secret Affairs: Britain's Collusion with Radical Islam* (London: Serpent's Tail Press, 2010), 18.

166. Aggie Hirst, Diego de Merich, Joe Hoover, and Roberto Roccu, *Global Politics: Myths and Mysteries* (London: Oxford University Press, 2023), 185.

The British Occupation of Palestine

British forces captured Jerusalem from the Ottomans on December 9, 1917. The cities of Gaza, Hebron, Jaffa, and Bethlehem had fallen earlier. General Allenby established a provisional military administration for Palestine in December 1917, which lasted until July 1920, when the victorious allies reached a general agreement over the destinies of the areas of the former Ottoman Empire (**the San Remo Agreement**), long after the end of military operations in early October 1918.

General Allenby delegated the responsibility for the administration of the occupied area of southern Palestine to the **chief political officer** attached to the **Egyptian Expeditionary Force**, **Brigadier-General G. F. Clayton**, head of the famous “**Arab Bureau**” which coordinated political intelligence in the Middle East during World War I. Military governors were appointed in all the major towns of Palestine as they were captured.

The British take Political Control

On the eve of the complete occupation of Palestine in autumn of 1918, the political control was in the hands of older notables, many of them Ottomanists and strong opponents of Sharif Husayn and his sons Faysal, Abdullah, and Ali. Arab nationalists were in the minority and had no political power. After the war, Arab nationalism became the prevailing ideology. The older generation of Palestinian notables, seeing Palestine put under a separate military administration, and alarmed by Britain’s Zionist policy, adopted Palestinian nationalism over Arab nationalism. They chose to focus on Palestine and the Palestinian struggle against Zionism.

Realizing that the British were now the new authority in Palestine, many of the urban notables hoped to land important administrative posts. The mayor of Nablus under the Ottomans, **Omar Zu’ayter**, formed a local government in Nablus upon

British request in the fall of 1918. **Musa Kazim al-Husayni**, accepting appointment as mayor of Jerusalem after the death of his brother **Husayn al-Husayni**, refrained from demonstrating against Zionism after Jerusalem's governor, **Ronald Storrs (who served in that post from 1917 to 1926)**, told him that he must make a choice between politics and the mayoralty. The mufti of Jerusalem, **Kamil al-Husayni**, whose appointment by the Ottomans had been confirmed by the British, refrained from public attacks against Zionism throughout 1918. The general administrator of the Awqaf, **Arif Hikmat al-Nashashibi**, also chose administration over politics when he was asked by Storrs to choose between the two.¹⁶⁷

In April 1918 a full-fledged Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) was formed. **Major General Sir Arthur Money** was appointed chief administrator, while **Clayton** remained as chief political officer, taking his orders from the Foreign Office, being responsible directly to Allenby. The administration contained only a few officials who had served in previous military administrations. Allenby gave his orders to the British officials in Palestine to “maintain as far as possible the Turkish system of government and to utilize the existing machinery.” They were also instructed not to undertake any political propaganda or take part in any political questions; their job was to maintain public order and security.¹⁶⁸

The military government devoted its efforts to import food from Egypt to alleviate the terrible famine which hit the land in late 1917. The currency, which was worthless when the British arrived, was restored by the integration of Palestine into the Egyptian money system. Units of the Royal Engineers piped water into Jerusalem for the first time in history. An efficient, uncorrupt administrative and judicial apparatus replaced the backward, arbitrary Turkish regime.

Britain and the Zionists

As the struggle between Arabs and Zionists intensified, British officials in Palestine were inevitably drawn into situations demanding the exercise of political judgment and political decision. **Money** declared in an official report: “The Jews were, as a class, inferior morally and intellectually to the bulk of the Muslim and Christian inhabitants of the country.”¹⁶⁹ Naturally, then, he opposed the implementation of a pro-Zionist policy in Palestine. **Clayton** shared the views of the high commissioner in Egypt, Sir Reginald Wingate. He felt a certain personal commitment to the Anglo-Arab alliance, which he believed was endangered by British sponsorship of Zionism. As early as **November 28, 1917**, in a telegram to the Foreign Office, Clayton referred to Arab

167. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 106–107.

168. Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government & the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917–1929* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, Basil Blackwell, second edition published in 1991), 18–20.

169. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 22.

dismay at the Balfour Declaration. After the British conquest of Jerusalem, he wrote a private letter to Mark Sykes stating his misgivings regarding Britain's pro-Zionist policy: "I am not fully aware of the weight which Zionists carry, especially in America and Russia, and of the consequent necessity of giving them everything for which they ask . . . We have to consider whether the situation demands out and out support of Zionism at the risk of alienating the Arabs at a critical moment." In a private letter to Wingate in April 1918 he stated: "I am very anxious that the Foreign Office should leave the execution of the policy to us here, in so far as regards Palestine itself, and not rush us. Indeed, as far as I personally am concerned, I do not propose to be rushed and would rather chuck it and let them choose someone else. I cannot conscientiously carry out any line of policy which will go against our pledges to the Arabs, and I can always return to Egypt." He also wrote to the Foreign Office: "The British officials of the Military Administration have been fully informed of the Zionist Program and of the intention of H.M.G. regarding it. It is inevitable, however, that they should experience some difficulties in consequence of the fact that up to date our policy has been directed towards securing Arab sympathy in view of our Arab commitments. It is not easy, therefore to switch over to Zionism all at once in the face of a considerable degree of Arab distrust and suspicion."¹⁷⁰

The views of Money and Clayton represented the general opinion of OETA, which was anti-Zionist and became strongly so as time went on. The accentuation of the Arab-Jewish conflict, the continuation of the British government's pro-Zionist policy, and the failure of the military government to influence London in a contrary direction, all contributed to anti-Zionist feeling among the British in Palestine. The director of military intelligence, after a visit to Palestine, reported: "The British officials and Soldiers in Palestine were unanimous in expressing their dislike of any policy favoring the Jews, and serious fear of the consequences of such a policy."¹⁷¹

In March 1918, Weizmann arrived in the Middle East at the head of the Zionist Commission. The commission had a semi-official status, as it carried the blessing and active cooperation of the British government. The commission's objectives, as officially defined by the British government, were "to carry out, subject to General Allenby's authority, any steps required to give effect to the Government's declaration in favor of establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." The two important functions of the commission were "to form a link between the British authorities and the Jewish population of Palestine" and "to help in establishing friendly relations with the Arabs and other non-Jewish communities."¹⁷²

On the day of his first meeting with Weizmann, Money expressed his suspicions of Zionist motives in his diary. The root cause of British-Zionist discord in Palestine

170. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 23.

171. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 24.

172. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 25.

was disagreement over the nature and significance of Arab opposition to Zionism and over the conclusions to be drawn from it. He wrote:

The Zionists in general tended to regard Arab opposition to Zionism as “artificial agitation” fomented by self-interested, corrupt, and exploitative class of landowning “effendis,” who by nature of religious-nationalist mystification and illicit socioeconomic pressure forced the ignorant fellahin into anti-Zionism which conflicted with the “real” inclinations and interests of the downtrodden peasantry. [In their view,] the true interest of the Palestine Arabs lay in cooperation with the Zionists, since the Zionists alone were capable of developing the country to the benefit of all its inhabitants. In the end, the “feudal” power of the “effendis” must be and would be broken, and then the Arab masses would overcome their present subjugated condition, and, their eyes opened by the beneficent results of Zionist development, they would realize the desirability of co-operation with the Zionists.¹⁷³

Zionists believed the British should prioritize the establishment of the Jewish national home, and this object should be pursued irrespective of any opposition. British officials in the Middle East, however, did not accept that Arab opposition to Zionism was “artificial.” They tended to regard the pro-Zionist policy of the British government as endangering the British position throughout the Muslim world. Consequently, they felt the Zionists should moderate their program and abandon provocative talk of a Jewish state in Palestine, postpone their plans for large-scale immigration and land purchases, display less arrogance in their relations with Arabs, and in general maintain a low profile in Palestine. The British officials in Palestine insisted that the Zionists must come to terms with the Palestinian Arab notable elite and with the Sherifian nationalists before any progress toward the fulfillment of the Zionist design could be contemplated.¹⁷⁴

In Cairo, en route to Palestine, Wingate had warned the commission that the Arabs were nervous and suspicious of Zionist aims. He urged Weizmann to meet with nationalist Syrian notables who were in exile in Cairo. For his part, Weizmann denied that the Zionists wished to establish a Jewish state in Palestine immediately after the war, and emphasized that the Zionists’ immediate objective was “a British Palestine which would act fairly and justly to all groups which inhabit the country.”

In Jerusalem, Storrs held an official reception and a dinner in honor of the Commission that was attended by the city’s leading Muslim and Christian religious and lay dignitaries. At the dinner, Storrs invited Weizmann to clear away “misconceptions

173. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 26.

174. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 26–28.

and misapprehensions” concerning the aims of Zionist policy. Weizmann responded with a speech on the theme of Judeo-Arabic kinship. After Storrs rendered a summary of the speech in Arabic, the mufti of Jerusalem, Kamel al-Husayni, thanked Weizmann for his explanation, and expressed his complete confidence in the useful cooperation of all parties.

On May 8, 1918, the military governor of the Jaffa district arranged for a meeting attended by the heads of the Muslim and Christian communities. Weizmann repeated the speech he had made in Jerusalem, but received a very different response from **Sheikh Ragheb Dajani**, the **Qadi ash Shari’a** (judge of the Muslim religious court), who spoke “on behalf of both Christians and Muslims.” Clayton commented in his report to the Foreign Office: “**There was an undercurrent of antagonism in the Qadi’s reply.**”¹⁷⁵

In the fall of 1918, a memorandum by the **Jaffa Muslim-Christian Association** was submitted to **General Allenby**, in which Allenby was reminded that Britain had entered the war in order to liberate weak nations and grant them autonomy. It went on to say that the Muslims in Palestine, along with their Christian brethren, did not wish to drive anyone away from the country, and desired to live in freedom, safeguarding their own language and rights and the right of those inhabiting their homeland. The memorandum affirmed that the Palestinian Arabs rejected the Zionist project and refuted the Zionists’ claim that the Jews were returning to Palestine after an absence of twenty centuries. They clearly expressed their fear of Jewish domination.¹⁷⁶

Zionist Activism

The first sign of violent conflict appeared on **November 2, 1918**, just three days after the Turkish Armistice was signed. **The Zionist Commission in Jerusalem arranged a grand ceremony to celebrate the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration.** The meeting was held with the approval of Storrs, the military governor, who himself addressed the large crowd. As the Jewish crowd dispersed, some scuffles broke out near the Jaffa gate. Two Palestinian Arabs, a Muslim and a Christian, were arrested, accused of beating a Jew who was carrying a Zionist banner. The following morning, a deputation of all Christian and Muslim sects, headed by the mayor, arrived at the governor’s office and handed a written protest to Storrs. It stated, in part:

The undersigned inhabitants of Jerusalem, speaking for themselves and on behalf of all the Arabs, Muslims, and Christians living in Palestine, beg to state: We have noticed yesterday a large crowd of Jews carrying

175. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 29.

176. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 108.

banners and over running the streets shouting . . . that Palestine . . . which has been inhabited by the Arabs for long ages is now a national home for them. . . . We Arabs, Muslim and Christian, have always sympathized with the persecuted Jews in their misfortunes in other countries. . . . But there is a wide difference between this sympathy and the acceptance of such nation in our country, to be made by them a national home, ruling over us and disposing of our affairs.¹⁷⁷

This incident made it clear to British officials that the Balfour Declaration was both understood and opposed. Anti-Zionism now unified the Muslim and Christian communities; opposition to Zionism became the single most important agent in the growth of **Arab nationalism in Palestine**.¹⁷⁸

On November 8, 1918, the British and French governments issued their joint declaration promising self-determination and national government to the population of the occupied areas of the Ottoman Empire. The declaration was given wide publicity throughout Syria and Palestine. Storrs reported that, on the day following the announcement of the declaration, a large deputation of Muslims and Christians who had received copies of the declaration came to his office, asking whether **the declaration applied to the inhabitants of Palestine, whether they had the right to choose their own future, and if not, why the notices were sent to them at all**. The deputation subsequently arranged reciprocal visits to churches and mosques to demonstrate their solidarity and to declare to the world their acceptance of the Anglo-French Declaration and their desire for a Sharifian government. Later, Storrs learned that the order for the publication in Jerusalem had been issued by mistake. But what had been said could not be unsaid without provoking further unrest.¹⁷⁹ Britain had resorted to various deceptive declarations aimed at assuring the Arabs during the war, and even during the negotiations at the peace conference in 1919.

Arab Opposition to Zionist Activities

The first expression of organized Arab opposition to the Balfour Declaration occurred in the winter of 1918–1919. Following the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, a Christian Muslim Arab Committee was formed in Jerusalem. By the spring of 1919, Muslim-Christian Associations had been formed in several towns with the objects of opposing Zionism and demanding government by al-Husayn bin Ali, the

177. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 32.

178. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 31–32.

179. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 32–33.

sharif of Mecca (and king of the Hijaz). Such groups sprang up in all major towns, comprising members from leading Muslim and Christian notable families.

In December 1918, Money returned to England for four months on leave; while there, he met with **Curzon** in the Foreign Office and presented his views. Curzon endorsed the views of Money and Allenby—i.e., that Britain should slow down the Zionist aspirations, and that a Jewish government in any form would mean an Arab uprising—but he was overruled by Balfour.

Arab unrest reached a climax in early **April 1919**, when the **Jewish festival of Passover** coincided with the **Nabi Musa**, an annual Muslim festival involving traveling from Jerusalem to the supposed tomb of Moses (Nebi Musa) in the Judean desert near Jericho. The military government barred the entrance of Jewish activists to the old city of Jerusalem as a precautionary measure in order to avoid provocations. During that period, the King-Crane Commission was expected to arrive in Palestine, which produced an immediate relaxation of the political atmosphere there. The Muslim-Christian Association and other nationalist groups agreed to present to the commission three basic demands: **First, the unification of Palestine with Syria; second, an independent Arab national government; and third, the repudiation of Zionism and the ideology of the Jewish national home.**

Before the King-Crane Commission arrived in Palestine, **Money** made a final attempt to persuade the British government to change its pro-Zionist policy. In a memorandum to Clayton subsequently forwarded to the Foreign Office, he declared: **“The Palestinians in fact desire Palestine for themselves; and have no intention of allowing their country to be thrown open to hordes of Jews from Eastern and Central Europe.”** He cautioned Britain of the consequences of continued adherence to the Balfour Declaration:

- A. Adherence to the Zionist program by Great Britain alone will inevitably result in Commission receiving an expression of feeling adverse to a British mandate;
- B. Whatever may be the mandatory power, the application of even a moderate Zionist program can only be carried through by force and in opposition to the majority of the population.

Although the memorandum was endorsed by Clayton, it fell on deaf ears in London. Curzon’s reply reminded Money that **Britain was committed to supporting Zionism and that Zionist aspirations had been endorsed by the Italian, French, and US governments.**¹⁸⁰

When the King-Crane Commission arrived in June 1919, the Muslim-Christian Associations and other Palestinian groups in all towns adhered to their three demands.

180. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 40.

The British officials, in their contacts with the commission during its visit to Palestine, expressed almost unanimous opposition to Zionism. At a dinner for the commission on June 16, 1919, Money told one of the technical experts attached to the commission that he believed the Balfour Declaration to have been “a mistake.” As previously noted (page XX), the commission’s report recommended a unified mandate for the entirety of geographic Syria, including Palestine, with the mandate to be handed to the United States—or, failing American acceptance, to Great Britain (rather than France). The report strongly recommended the reduction of the Zionist program, emphasizing that the Arabs of Palestine who had given evidence were hostile to it and the Zionists sought to displace the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine in a gross violation of their rights. But the commission’s report was shelved by the American government, and no notice was taken of it by the British or French. In 1922, President Wilson, on being approached for permission to make its contents known, finally authorized publication.¹⁸¹

In July 1919, Money and Clayton resigned their positions in the OETA. In his resignation letter, Money stated that he was resigning for private reasons; however, in March 1919, he wrote:

I warned both Foreign Office and War Office many times as to what would follow if they encouraged Zionist pretension too far . . . I must confess my own inclination is on the side of the Arabs, though in my position I have to be absolutely impartial, and am if anything impelled by orders from home to assist the Zionists. I don’t mean, however, to be impelled very far in that direction, as it will mean practically a revolution, irrespective of the merits of the case, and if I am pressed further than I consider legitimate or judicious I shall resign.¹⁸²

On May 20, 1919, Money wrote: “I meant try to get out of this country directly; the King-Crane Commission have completed their work here. Twenty-two and half years’ service east of Suez out of thirty-four years’ service, I consider my fair share of Eastern service.” In a letter dated June 9, 1919, he wrote: “I am the more inclined to go since I see every project of the edifice I have built with some labour being pulled down by Messers Balfour, Lloyd George, and their long-nosed friends.”¹⁸³

181. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 295–298.

182. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 48.

183. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 48.

Zionist Influence on the Home Office

The appointment of successors to Money and Clayton provided an opportunity for the Zionists to influence the decision makers to choose new British officials whom they could trust. Colonel Ronald Storrs, who had served as acting chief administrator while Money was on leave, was the obvious choice; however, he did not get the job, as he was not trusted by Weizmann. **Major General Sir Harry Watson** was made chief administrator on a temporary basis until November 1919. **Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen** succeeded Clayton as chief political officer, which pleased the Zionists. In June 1919, Allenby appointed **Colonel B. H. Water-Taylor** chief of staff in charge of OETA; this appointment was intended to balance that of the pro-Zionist Meinertzhagen.

In a memorandum written shortly after his appointment, Watson declared: "I would most emphatically say that unless a very limited program for the Jews' National Home be started in the first instance, the Mandatory Power will not only have to keep for many years a large force of troops in the country, but will lose the lives of many of her sons in a war which will be fought against the principles of the League of Nations."¹⁸⁴ On the other hand, Meinertzhagen declared: "I do not approach Zionism in Palestine with an open mind, but one strongly prejudiced in its favor."

In October 1919, Curzon succeeded pro-Zionist Balfour as foreign secretary. **Although personally opposed to Zionism, Curzon regarded the Balfour Declaration as a binding commitment upon Britain, and therefore did not propose a reversal of British policy.** In December 1919, General Watson was succeeded by **General Louis Bols**. Weizmann was not pleased by this appointment; he wrote to Herbert Samuel: "Bols has not been friendly with us in the past . . . He needs careful handling."¹⁸⁵

In July 1919, **US court justice Louis Brandeis**, who had been instrumental in obtaining the Balfour Declaration in return for bringing the United States into the war on the side of the Allies, visited British Military Headquarters on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. He is reported to have **told General Louis Bols that ordinances of the military authorities should be submitted to the Zionist Commission.** The general's aide-de-camp replied: "For a government to do that would be to derogate its position. As a lawyer you realize this." But Brandeis replied: "It must be understood that the British government is committed to the support of the Zionist cause. Unless this accepted as a guiding principle, I shall report it to the Foreign Office." Apparently, this was too much for General Bols to take. In March 1920, he complained to London, "My own authority and that of every department of my Administration is claimed or impinged upon by the Zionist Commission, and I am definitely of opinion that this

184. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 50.

185. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 58.

state of affairs cannot continue without grave danger to the public peace and to the prejudice of my Administration.”¹⁸⁶

Bols then warned, “It is no use saying to the Muslim and Christian elements of the population that our declaration as to the maintenance of the status quo on our entry into Jerusalem has been observed. . . . It is manifestly impossible to please partisans who critically claim nothing more than a ‘National Home’ but in reality will be satisfied with nothing less than a Jewish state and all that it politically implies.”

Political tensions in Palestine intensified as a result of several factors, including the assumption of the Zionist Commission by **Menachen Ussiskin**, who adopted uncompromising attitude toward OETA and the Arabs. At the same time, there was an increase in Arab nationalist activity, manifested by the meeting of the **First Palestine Arab Congress in Haifa on November 27, 1919**. By early spring 1920, interracial tensions in Palestine were at a breaking point.

The Muslim-Christian Association announced that they intended to hold a demonstration on February 27, 1920. The government decided not to ban it, but on February 25, Storrs met the president of the association, **Aref Pasha Dajani**, and warned him that order must be strictly preserved, and that there was to be no shooting in the air or fireworks. Aref Pasha gave the required assurances. On February 26, the nationalist newspaper *Suriyya al-Janobiyya* printed a call to participate in the demonstration, emphasizing in the strongest terms that it must be peaceful, orderly, and disciplined. The demonstration took place on the following day. Banners were displayed bearing slogans against Zionism. A written statement was presented to Storrs who was cheered when he walked through the crowd.

On March 7, 1920, a second demonstration was held after the General Syrian Congress in Damascus had proclaimed Faysal as king of an independent Greater Syria. As the Muslim-Christian Association was preparing for a third one, General Bols summoned the Arab leadership, including Aref Dajani and the editor of *Suriyya al-Janobiyya* on March 12, and told them that he was issuing a proclamation prohibiting further demonstrations. Bols added that their demands for union with Syria might be more effective if conducted peacefully.

In a series of cables to the Foreign Office, **Bols urged that Britain should recognize Faysal as “overlord” of Palestine**. The proposal was rejected immediately by Curzon. But Allenby and the OETA continued to press the idea. The proposal appears to have arisen in the mind of **Colonel Waters-Taylor**, who had met Faysal in Beirut early in 1920, after the latter’s return from Europe. **Waters-Taylor advised Faysal to insist on an “undivided” Syria, in which Britain would recognize him as “overlord” of the entire Fertile Crescent while maintaining British military administration of Mesopotamia and Palestine**. When Allenby continued to press for

186. Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest: Palestine between 1914–1979* (first rev. ed., Delmar, NY: Caravan Press, 1979), 41.

the adoption of this recognition, **Curzon responded: “We think there must be a misunderstanding . . . How would recognition of Faysal as king be reconcilable with Zionist claims?”**¹⁸⁷

The Zionists were upset by the wide spread of the Arab nationalist activities, and began to feel that they could not rely on the government to protect them. Their fears increased after attacks on settlers in northeast Galilee that resulted in the death of one of their leaders, **Joseph Trumpeldor**. At the end of March 1920, representatives of a “Jewish Self-Defense League” demanded of the British government the right to bear arms to protect the Jewish community during the coming **Nebi Musa** festivals. Storrs, on behalf of the government, rejected their request, but promised to provide the required protection. **Vladimir Jabotinsky** and **Pinhas Rutenberg** began organizing the collection of arms and secret military training. By the end of March, six hundred men were performing drills daily in Jerusalem.¹⁸⁸

On April 2, 1920, Storrs warned the Arab leaders, including **Aref Dajani** and **Jamal al-Husayni**, that there must be no violence during the Nebi Musa religious festival. Aref Dajani instructed the participants in the festival to be peaceful and keep it a religious feast, rather than turning it into national festival.

The Nebi Musa Disturbance

On April 4, 1920, the Nebi Musa procession took place. As usual, it was led by a government band. Pilgrims came from all over Palestine. In Damascus, when the Syrian Congress proclaimed Greater Syria an independent state and Faysal its king, the crowd became excited and turned the religious festival into a national demonstration. The Arab leadership tried hard to fulfill their promise to Storrs to keep the religious procession peaceful, but failed. The Arab rioters began to attack the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem. **During four days of bloodshed, nine people died, five of them Jews; and 244 were wounded, 211 of them Jews.** A few of the rioters were shot by armed Jews on rooftops. When the violence at last subsided on April 8, the Zionist leaders demanded the dismissal of Bols and Storrs. They accused them of being aware of the preparation of what they called a “pogrom,” and claimed that not only had they not tried to prevent it, but had encouraged it. The military government resented the charges made against them by the Zionists, and what they stated to the committee of inquiry, set up to investigate the riots, that they regarded the malignant activities of the Zionist Commission had provoked the Arabs’ hostility. Shortly after the riots, Bols dispatched to Allenby a report denouncing the hostile, critical, and

187. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 61.

188. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 63.

abusive attitude of the Zionists toward the OETA. Bols accordingly urged the immediate abolition of the Zionist Commission.¹⁸⁹

The British military administration in Palestine broke off almost all contact with the Zionist Commission. The acting secretary of the commission, **Max Nurock**, was arrested. The commission's cables and all Zionist publications were subject to censorship. The convening of a "Jewish Constituent Assembly" elected by the Yishuv was prohibited by the authorities. **A military court sentenced Jabotinsky to fifteen years' imprisonment (he was subsequently given amnesty in response to public outcry). Extensive arms searches were conducted in Jerusalem.**¹⁹⁰

At the same time, stringent security precautions were taken by the military government to avoid a recurrence of violence. On April 15, General Bols issued a stern proclamation, which he read to a gathering of the heads of all communities: "I have brought you together today to make sure it is clear to you that in this country there is only one authority and that authority is myself. I am supported by a military force that can crush any disturbance of the peace, and I tell you that in future I shall use these strong forces without restraint."¹⁹¹ **Storrs dismissed the pro-nationalist mayor of Jerusalem, Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husayni, and replaced him with the head of the rival notable family, Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, who was more pliant.** The government halted the Arab nationalist plan to convene a Palestinian Congress at the same time as the projected Jewish Constituent Assembly. **Aref al-Aref and Hajj Amin al-Husayni (who both fled to Syria) were sentenced in their absence to ten years' imprisonment on charges of fomenting the riots.**

Despite these measures, nationalist and anti-Zionist activity continued at a high level, inspired by the apparent success of the Damascus regime's declaration of independence (see page XX). In Jaffa, Arab nationalist slogans were posted on walls. In Nablus, the local Muslim-Christian Association presented the military governor with a protest against Zionism and the impending British mandate. Arabs stoned Orthodox Jews at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Despite Jewish fears that violence might ensue at the Muslim pilgrim festival of **Nebi Saleh at Ramleh** in June 1920, the feast passed peacefully.

The strength of the nationalist movement was affected badly by growing doubts and divisions within Arab ranks. Ragheb Bey Nashashibi's acceptance of the mayoralty in succession to Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husayni highlighted the feud between supporters of the two rival families. Quarrels were reported among nationalist Arabs over whether violence should be employed against Zionism: Kamel Budeiri (longtime Arab independence activist and publisher of the *Al Sabah* newspaper) advocated fur-

189. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 64.

190. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 67–68.

191. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 68.

ther use of force; while Aref al-Aref (journalist, historian, and politician who was mayor of East Jerusalem in the 1950s) opposed it.¹⁹²

The Foreign Office in London was inclined to accept the Zionist allegations that OETA was biased against their cause, and the continued existence of the military administration was called into question. The position of the military government was further undermined by a dispatch to the Foreign Office from **chief political officer Meinertzhagen on April 12, 1920**, in which he **accused senior officials of direct responsibility for the riots**. Meinertzhagen's dispatch led to a fierce protest from Allenby that Meinertzhagen was guilty of insubordination, and that his charges were "nothing less than absurd." Although Meinertzhagen was fired as a result, a copy of his dispatch reached Lloyd George at the end of April just as he arrived at the Inter-Allied Conference at San Remo.

At San Remo, Lloyd George and Balfour decided that Britain had to get rid of OETA and install a British civil administration, even though no peace treaty with Turkey had yet been signed. **The conference formally agreed that Britain would receive the mandate for Palestine. Lloyd George and Balfour decided to appoint Herbert Samuel to head the new government of Palestine.** Samuel was urged to expedite his departure for Palestine. On June 30, 1920, he reached Jerusalem and immediately took over the reins of government from General Bols.

The British Mandate: 1920–1929

On June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations were signed. The concept of the mandatory system was provided in the **Article 22** of the Covenant of the Treaty. This article stated:

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust be embodied in this Covenant. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations . . . and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as mandatories on behalf of the League.

192. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 69–70.

The League of Nations recognized the Arab communities lying between the Mediterranean and the Persian frontier, formerly belonging to the Ottoman Empire, as **“separate nations . . . subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they were able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.”**¹⁹³

In neglecting to consult the Arabs in the preparation of the mandate and the selection of the mandatory, the League failed to recognize the principles stipulated in Article 22 of the Covenant.

On July 24, 1922, Britain submitted to the Council of the League a draft mandate for Palestine. An agreed text was approved by the Council on September 29, 1923. The mandate **included** in the **preamble** a section of the **Balfour Declaration** providing for the establishment of a Jewish national home with safeguards for the “non-Jewish communities” and Jews outside Palestine; in **Article 2**, responsibility “for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home”; in **Article 4**, provision was made for a **“Jewish Agency”** to be recognized as a **“public body for the purpose of advising and cooperating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home”**; and in **Article 11**, the **Administration** was authorized to arrange with the Jewish Agency **“to construct or operate, upon fair and equitable terms, any public works, services and utilities, and to develop any of the natural resources of the country.”**¹⁹⁴ The mandate was drawn up jointly by the British government and the Zionists without regard to the rights of the Arabs. The Zionists believed that they, and they alone, had rights in Palestine and that the presence of Muslims and Christians inhabitants had no value. Numerous articles of the mandatory agreement referred to the Jewish community by name, while the Arabs—comprising 90 percent of the population—were referred to as “the other sections” of the population. **This was the beginning of the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.**¹⁹⁵

Herbert Samuel (1870–1963)

Herbert Samuel was raised as an Orthodox Jew, but abandoned Judaism as an undergraduate at Balliol College, Oxford. Although he rejected the Judaic faith, he never severed his links with the Jewish community. He retained his synagogue membership and gave his children a religious upbringing. He deplored Jewish intermarriage

193. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 40.

194. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 40–41.

195. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 41.

with gentiles; when his daughter's children married out of the faith, he refused to see them or speak to them until shortly before his death.

In 1909, **Samuel became the first Jew to hold cabinet office in England.** In November 1914, after Britain declared war against Turkey, he proposed to Lloyd George the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine under British protection. In early 1915, he circulated two memoranda on Palestine to the cabinet, urging British sponsorship of Zionism. Having impressed Lloyd George and Milner, members of the war cabinet, with his arguments, Samuel was consulted by the cabinet during the final stages of the discussion leading to the Balfour Declaration. Weizmann met Samuel for the first time in December 1914. According to Weizmann, Samuel said: "I believe that a realization of the Zionist dream is possible." He even criticized Weizmann's views as being too modest, and insisted that big things would have to be done in Palestine.

For the following five years Samuel became one of the Zionists' most important allies; during 1918 and 1919 he was one of Weizmann's closet collaborators. In the crucial Anglo-Zionist negotiations of 1918–1919 regarding the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, Samuel acted as a Zionist spokesman. **He was the chairman of the committee that drafted the Zionist Organization's political proposals for submission to the British government and to the peace conference.**

At a rally held in London on the second anniversary of the Balfour Declaration in November 1919, he defined the ultimate aim of Zionism:

The immediate establishment of a complete and purely Jewish State in Palestine would mean placing a majority under the rule of minority; it would therefore be contrary to the first principles of democracy, and would undoubtedly be disapproved by the public opinion of the world. . . . [The real policy of the responsible leaders of Zionism is rather to secure the creation of conditions such that] with the minimum of delay the country may become a purely self-governing Commonwealth under the auspices of an established Jewish majority.¹⁹⁶

In early 1920, Samuel visited Palestine at the request of the Foreign Office to report on financial and administrative conditions there. The political reality of Palestine was profound; the overriding impression he received was of the strength and seriousness of Arab nationalist hostility to Zionism. In **Nablus** he met a deputation of Arabs who told him: **"If the Zionists are going to immigrate into Palestine a terrible revolution will break out; we will do our utmost to oppose Zionism."**¹⁹⁷ Shortly afterward, Samuel met the leaders of the Zionist Commission and forcefully

196. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 76.

197. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 79.

expressed his criticism of the commission's policy toward the Arabs: "**The Zionists have not recognized the force and value of the Arab nationalist movement. . . . It is very real and no bluff.**" By the end of his visit, Samuel's view of the Zionist political outlook was pessimistic, although not without hope. He wrote to Weizmann:

I am afraid that matters have not progressed as favorably as respects Arab-Zionist relations, since you were last in Palestine. . . . The chief and most definite conclusion I have found in Palestine is that the Arab situation has been underestimated. . . . The present [Zionist] commission has the irritating effect of an alien body in living flesh. I fear it is too late now to get the confidence of the Arabs. But the attempt should not be abandoned.¹⁹⁸

However, he remained convinced that there was a prospect of eventually reconciling the Arabs of Palestine to the implementation of the Zionist program. He rejected the view of the military government that the force of Arab opposition to Zionism was such that the British should withhold or curtail their continued support for the Zionists.¹⁹⁹

Samuel realized that pacifying the Arabs through false assurances about the Zionists' intentions would not solve the problem. The Arab fears were real, and the Zionists' actions had clearly been acknowledged by the Arabs. The final goal of Zionism was the transfer of the Arab population of Palestine to other lands. Samuel's own prescription for a political solution was expressed in his report to Curzon at the end of his visit: "Zionist moderation and Zionist explanations are not enough." He believed that the more effective antidote to Arab anti-Zionism lay in finding a method that might satisfy the legitimate parts of Arab demands, while avoiding the hazards which their full acceptance would entail. He begged successive British governments to heed his idea: "**The solution lies in the formation of a loose Confederation of the Arab-speaking States, each of which should be under its own appropriate government. But all of which should be combined together for common and economic purposes.**"²⁰⁰ This scheme would make possible the fulfillment of Zionist political aspirations while ensuring the peaceful integration of the Jewish entity of Palestine into the surrounding region. Unfortunately, he was not heeded.

Samuel's primary purpose in visiting the country had been to scout the land before deciding whether to accept appointment as first head of the civil administration. It appears to have been commonly understood in British and Zionist political

198. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 79.

199. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 78–80.

200. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 80.

circles that Samuel would be appointed to the position. His name had indeed been discussed as a potential governor of Palestine as early as December 1918. Samuel had the impression that there was hostility in British official circles to the appointment of a Jew as governor of Palestine. Generals Money and Watson had in 1919 expressed opposition to the appointment of any Jew, whether Zionist or non-Zionist, as head of the civil administration in Palestine. This view was shared by General Allenby, Congreve, Bols, and Waters-Taylor.

The Nebi Musa riots broke out in Jerusalem four days after Samuel returned to England from Cairo. The riots impelled Lloyd George and his colleagues, at the Allied Conference in San Remo, to install a civil administration in Palestine. Samuel, who had traveled from Egypt to San Remo, was offered the position of head of the new administration by Lloyd George. Samuel told the prime minister: **“I would be ready to undertake any function in Palestine in which it was thought that I could be useful, and [I am] deeply interested in the Zionist idea and would be willing to make any sacrifice to promote its success.** But . . . such an appointment [is] open to the danger that measures, which the non-Jewish population would accept from a British Christian governor, might be objected to if adopted by a Jew.” Lloyd George remained convinced that appointing Samuel was the right solution, but he agreed that Samuel should consult Weizmann and Sokolow, who were also in San Remo. The Zionist leaders urged Samuel to accept the offer. He therefore wrote to Lloyd George and accepted the appointment as the high commissioner of Palestine.

The British officials of the military administration objected strenuously to this move. Allenby wrote in a telegram to Curzon: “As regards effect on the native population I think that appointment of a Jew as first Governor will be highly dangerous. . . . They will regard appointment of a Jew, even if he is a British Jew, as handing the country over at once to a permanent Zionist Administration. . . . I anticipate that when news arrives of appointment of Mr Samuel general movement against Zionists will result, and that we must be prepared for outrages against Jews, murders, raids on Jewish villages, and raids into our territory from east if not wider movement.”

Samuel, however, regarded the appointment as the zenith of his political career. **He accepted the office in Palestine as a supporter of Zionism, with the goal of furthering the realization of the Zionist dream.** He would never have gone to Palestine if there were no Zionist question and if there had been no Balfour Declaration. The extent of his commitment is made clear in a letter written to a relative two weeks before he left for Jerusalem:

What is practicable in Palestine now is one thing. What the present measures will lead to—and are designed to lead to in the future—is another. For the time being there will be no Jewish state, there will be restricted immigration; there will be cautious colonization. In five

years the pace will probably be accelerated and will grow after that progressively in speed. In fifty years there may be a Jewish majority in the population. Then the government will be predominantly Jewish, and in the generation after that there may be that which might properly be a Jewish country with a Jewish state. It is that prospect which rightly evokes such a fine enthusiasm, and it is the hope of realizing that future which makes me ready to sacrifice much in the present.²⁰¹

Samuel's Administration of Palestine

Following the establishment of the British civil administration of Palestine on July 1, 1920, **Herbert Samuel**, who had helped frame the Balfour Declaration, was appointed as the high commissioner. The other British officials appointed included **Norman Bentwich** as attorney general, **Albert Hyamson** as director of immigration, and **Max Nurock** as principal assistant secretary to the government. Samuel selected **Brigadier-General Wyndham Deeds**, who had previously served in Palestine as chief intelligence officer under Clayton, as his first secretary. Deeds, a close friend of Weizmann, was known to be sympathetic to Zionism.

The British mandatory government in Palestine then undertook the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. Britain's main interest in establishing a national home for the Jews in Palestine was of a strategic nature. Palestine was the key buffer state in the British imperial defense of India, Egypt, and the Suez Canal; it was also the principal terminus of the oil pipelines from the Iraqi oil fields of the British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company. A Zionist state in the Middle East would be a guaranty for such interests. To fulfill the promise and to achieve their goal of planting a foreign body in the center of the Arab world, it was essential to follow a detailed plan to facilitate Jewish immigration to Palestine, and to assist the Zionists in acquiring land.²⁰²

While the Jews received Samuel with great enthusiasm, the Arabs were cautious and reserved. Still, in his first encounters with leading Arabs, Samuel left a favorable impression. At an assembly of notables at the Government House in Jerusalem, he read a message from the king of England and delivered an impressive speech. After the ceremony, a number of the guests gathered at the house of Aref Pasha Dajani, who was reported to have declared: "Our work is lost. I am afraid that **Herbert Samuel will win the hearts of all the inhabitants within a month. As it seems, he is of a very honorable family. His influence on the audience is considerable.**"²⁰³

201. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 88.

202. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 16.

203. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 90.

Immediately upon his arrival, Samuel implemented several measures designed to facilitate the establishment of the Jewish national home. **A land ordinance issued in September 1920 permitted Zionists to acquire land. Shortly afterward, one of the most important Zionist land purchases of the mandatory period was completed. The Sursuq family sold over forty thousand acres in Marj Ibn Amer, comprising eighteen villages, to the Palestine Land Development Company (PLDC).** Over the following decade, the heart of the Jewish agricultural settlements, the kibbutzim, were built on this land. **Next, as of September 1, 1920, Palestine became freely and legally open to Jewish immigration;** 16,500 immigrants were permitted to enter Palestine annually. Samuel's administration allowed the elected Jewish assembly, which had been banned by General Bols in May, to convene in October 1920. Jabotinsky and other Jews who had been imprisoned as a result of the April riots were released.²⁰⁴

At the same time, Samuel's administration released all Arabs convicted during the April riots. On August 1, 1920, Samuel traveled to es-Salt in Transjordan. He was welcomed by a large number of sheikhs, who asked that pardons be granted to Aref al-Aref and Hajj Amin al-Husayni (see below). Samuel pardoned them, and the two men returned to Jerusalem. Aref was shortly afterward offered a post in the government, which he accepted. The new civil administration established an advisory council consisting of eleven officials and ten non-officials (four Muslims, three Christians, and three Jews) all nominated by the high commissioner. The first meeting of the council took place on October 6, 1920. Samuel, the president of the council, declared in his opening speech, **"It should be clearly understood that this is to be regarded only as a first step in the development of self-governing institutions."**²⁰⁵

Following the removal of Faysal from Damascus at the end of July 1920 (see page XX), Musa Kazim al-Husayni declared on August 5, 1920: "Now after the latest events in Syria, we have to make a complete change in our plans. **Southern Syria no longer exists; it is Palestine we have to defend.**" In December 1920, the Third Palestine Arab Congress convened at Haifa; the congress affirmed Muslim-Christian unity, condemned Zionism, and elected an executive committee headed by Musa Kazim al-Husayni, which was empowered to act as the permanent representative body of the Palestinian Arabs. (The second Palestine congress was supposed to convene in first half of 1920; however, the mandate authority had barred it from happening). Although the mandate administration did not recognize the congress as a legitimate representative of the Palestinians, Samuel met with the executive committee in formal meetings discussing all affairs related to the Arabs. At the first meeting, on January 16, 1921, Samuel

... explained to the Committee that **the Balfour Declaration consisted of two parts of equal importance. First, that which made provision**

204. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 91.

205. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 92–93.

for the establishment of a Jewish national home, and secondly, that which made provision for the safeguarding of the rights and interests of the existing population. He stated that he regarded it as his duty carry out the second part of the second part of the Declaration no less than the first.²⁰⁶

At the second meeting with the executive committee on February 4, 1921, Samuel read out extracts from the draft of the mandate, and insisted on the committee's acceptance of the mandate as a condition of recognition by the government. The executive committee refused to accept Samuel's request.

In March 1921, the secretary of state for the colonies, **Winston Churchill**, visited Palestine. In Jerusalem on March 28, an Arab deputation headed by Musa Kazim al-Husayni met Churchill and presented a lengthy protest against Zionism, the Balfour Declaration, and the appointment of Herbert Samuel. In reply, Churchill rejected criticism of Samuel, insisted that the Balfour declaration was "manifestly right," asserted that Britain had a right to decide the destiny of Palestine by the virtue of the blood of two thousand British soldiers who had died there, promised the Arabs that they would not be dispossessed, and urged them to cooperate with the Jews to their mutual benefit.

On the same day, Churchill and Samuel had a private conversation with **Emir Abdullah**, who showed his appreciation for British support in Transjordan and suggested that he should be appointed emir over Palestine as well. When Churchill rejected this request, Abdullah asked whether Britain intended to set up a Jewish kingdom in Palestine and turn out the existing Arab population. He complained that the British "appeared to think men could be cut down and transplanted in the same way as trees." Samuel replied that there was no intention either to cut down or to transplant, but merely to plant new trees. Churchill explained that mass Jewish immigration "was not only not contemplated, but would be a very slow process and the rights of the existing population would be strictly preserved."²⁰⁷

During Churchill's visit, **the old mufti of Jerusalem, Kamil al-Husayni, died.** While still on his deathbed, the mufti had recommended the appointment of his nephew Hajj Amin al-Husayni (1897–1974) to replace him as the new mufti. The conflict between the Husayni and Nashashibi families complicated the issue of the appointment of a new mufti and divided the Muslim community. Many of the opponents of the executive committee supported the appointment of Hajj Amin. Several petitions supporting the candidacy of Hajj Amin reached the office of the high commissioner, not only from the Muslim community, but from the Greek Orthodox community as well.

206. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 95.

207. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 98.

Hajj Amin al-Husayni (1895–1974)

The mufti of Jerusalem in the Ottoman era was considered a minor official, subordinate to the sheikh al-Islam in Istanbul; his jurisdiction was restricted to Jerusalem. The British had rewarded Kamil al-Husayni in exchange for his cooperation, giving him the title of grand mufti and extending his jurisdiction to all of Palestine. They had also expanded his authority over the Shari'a court of appeals.

Ottoman regulations required an electoral college to nominate three candidates for mufti, from whom the sheikh al-Islam in Istanbul would choose one. The British attempted to maintain the tradition through a similar process by forming a committee composed of prominent Muslim leaders to hold an election. Four candidates were on the ballot: **Hajj Amin al-Husayni, Husam al-Din Jaralla, Khalil al-Khalidi, and Musa al-Budayri**. The Muslim committee put together by the government met on April 12, 1921 and elected Jaralla, Khalidi, and Budayri. The public was strongly opposed to the selection process, however, and supported Hajj Amin's candidacy. Samuel had expected that Amin would be one of the three chosen by the committee, and was prepared to appoint him for the post. Samuel met Amin twice in April prior to the election to size him up. According to Bentwich, the attorney general:

[Amin declared] his earnest desire to cooperate with the Government, and his belief in the good intentions of the Government towards the Arabs. He gave assurances that the influence of his family and himself would be devoted to maintaining tranquility in Jerusalem and he felt sure that no disturbance need to be feared this year. He said the riots of last year had been spontaneous and unpremeditated. If the government took reasonable precaution, he felt sure they would not be repeated.²⁰⁸

The mandate authority searched for a legal way to appoint Amin. Samuel asked Ronald Storrs, the district governor of Jerusalem, to persuade Raghib al-Nashshibi to ask Jaralla to drop out, which he did. This maneuver enabled Amin to be one of the three candidates. Samuel then appointed him as mufti in May 1921.

Amin al-Husayni played a significant role in the Palestinian National Movement. He was considered by most to be the symbol of the Palestinian Resistance and the leader of the struggle against the British-Zionist colonial project. He was born in Jerusalem in 1895. The Husaynis consider themselves *ashraf* (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad). Amin's great-grandfather, **Muhammad al-Badri**, had traced his origins to **Husayn, son of Ali ibn Abi Talib**, the prophet's cousin, and Fatima, the

208. Philip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 26.

prophet's daughter. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the post of mufti of Jerusalem had been held by Abd al-Qader ibn Karim al-Din al-Husayni, who died leaving no male heir. The post went to other families—the Alamis and the Jarallas. Abd al-Qader's female descendants were able to retain the al-Husayni name. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Husaynis recaptured the office of the mufti, which they held, with few interruptions, well into the twentieth century. Amin's father Tahir succeeded his father Mustafa as mufti of Jerusalem, and when he died in 1908, Mustafa's eldest son, Kamil, replaced him.

Amin attended a local Muslim elementary school (*kuttab*) that emphasized Islamic history, theology, Arabic, and literature. Later he attended a government Turkish school. At age sixteen he was ready for higher education. In 1912 he attended **al-Azhar University** in Cairo, then **Dar al-Da'wa and al-Irshad**, where **Rashid Rida**, the Muslim Arab reformer, mentored him. Rida was a follower of the Islamic reformers Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu. Thus, Amin was introduced to Islamic reform and Arab revival. While in Cairo, Amin helped organize a Palestinian society to oppose Zionism.

In the summer of 1913, he accompanied his mother on the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), whereby he earned the title of al-Hajj; and then went back to Jerusalem. A few months later he joined the military academy in Istanbul. When World War I broke out, he joined the army. Amin's ideology was seemingly a mixture of contradictory views: Ottomanism, Islam, Pan-Arab nationalism, and Palestinian nationalism. His loyalty to the Ottoman state faded after the policy of Turkification, and when he returned from Turkey in February 1917, he helped organize some two thousand Palestinians to fight against the Turks in Transjordan with Emir Faysal's army.

At the end of the war, Hajj Amin devoted his life to the Palestinian cause. In 1918, he was elected president of the **Arab Club (al-Nadi al-Arabi)**. This club was composed of younger generation of educated Husaynis; they were Pan-Arabists whose objective was the unification of Palestine with Syria. Two other organizations—the **Muslim-Christian Association (al-Jam'iyya al-Islamiyya al-Masihyya)** and the **Literary Club (al-Muntada al-Adabi)**—were formed in Jerusalem by other activists: The Muslim-Christian Association represented the older generation of urban elites who sought to preserve their position of leadership through autonomy under the British rule; and the Literary Club consisted of young members of the Nashashibi family, which was anti-British at that time, probably because of the family's connection with the French agents. The three organizations were united on one idea: the Palestinians were the rightful inhabitants of Palestine and had owned the land for at least 1,300 years, and the Zionists had no legitimate claim.

In January 1922, Herbert Samuel established a **Supreme Muslim Council** responsible for Muslim affairs and facilitated the appointment of Hajj Amin as its permanent president. The mufti's power expanded as he was given considerable authority and

control over the Shari'a courts, the hiring and dismissal of court officials, the religious schools and orphanages, and waqf (charitable endowment) boards and funds. Such authority enhanced the mufti's prestige and increased his power throughout Palestine.

The mufti's religious initiatives during the 1920s stimulated an Islamic revival throughout Palestine. He established a Muslim orphanage of 160 girls and boys, supported schools such as Rawdat al-Ma'arif, repaired the Nahawiyya School building within the Haram al-Sharif and established a library and museum there, imported fifty thousand trees to plant on waqf land, expanded welfare and health clinics, and renovated the two mosques in the rectangular area of the Haram, along with numerous local mosques.²⁰⁹

The mufti concentrated his efforts on his religious duties and avoided political activities, which were handled by the leadership of the executive committee. By 1928 he had managed to consolidate his religious power. At the same time he enhanced his political position by verbally attacking Zionism and the British policies, but he was careful to keep his promise to the mandatory government to uphold law and order, and made sure that the Nebi Musa celebration remained peaceful. He refrained from organizing or participating in demonstrations.

Political Strife and the 1922 White Paper

The riots which broke out in Jaffa on May Day (International Labor Day), were a shock to the mandate administration. The violence began when a small group of Jewish communists held a procession in Tel Aviv. The communists collided with a larger procession organized by the Jewish socialist party. The police intervened and drove the communists to an area of sand dunes separating Jaffa from Tel Aviv. Arabs from the neighboring **Menshieh** gathered at the site. The police drew up in a cordon between the Arabs and the Jews. The Arabs turned and started an attack on Jewish shops in the Menshieh, then attacked a hostel where Jewish immigrants were staying; the occupants were beaten to death. This was followed by street fighting. By the end of the day twenty-seven Jews were killed and 104 wounded. Among the Arabs, three were killed and thirty-four wounded. On the following day attacks began on **Petah Tekva, Kfar Saba, and Rehovot**.

Samuel, who recognized the riots as being a setback to his policy, looked for the root of the problem and concluded, based on the deadly attack at the immigrants' hostel, that Jewish immigration was the real cause of the violence. When Samuel was presented with a **demand by Musa Pasha al-Husayni that "Jewish immigration**

209. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 29.

should be stopped so that bloodshed and devastation in the country should come to an end," he took three steps. First, he asked General Allenby, the high commissioner in Egypt, to temporarily accommodate the immigrants who were en route in the Mediterranean at Port Said or Alexandria. Secondly, he asked the Zionist Commission to temporarily suspend immigration. Thirdly, he authorized the British governor of **Ramleh** to inform the crowd of Arab pilgrims at the **Nebi Saleh festival** that immigration had been suspended.

Allenby refused to accommodate the immigrants, and suggested that the three boats be returned to Constantinople. On May 14, 1921, the British authority made a public announcement in Jaffa concerning the suspension of immigration; however, the following day, a ship arrived at the port carrying both Christians and Jews. Only the Christians were allowed to leave the boat.

At the end of May, the **Fourth Palestinian Congress** convened in Jerusalem, where it was agreed that nonviolent political means should be used to try to persuade the British government to concede to the nationalists' demands, and they decided to send a delegation to London to negotiate with the British government.

General Congreve, the commander of British forces in the Middle East, traveled to London to propagate his view that if "all the methods to implement Balfour Declaration" were employed, sooner or later the whole country would be in a state of insurrection and the only way of enforcing the policy would be by military force. In later talks to the Colonial Office officials, Congreve declared that "**he and all his officers were under the impression that HMG were in the hands of the Zionist Organization.**" He also stated, "**Whilst the Army officially is supposed to have no politics . . . in the case of Palestine [the sympathies of Army officers] are rather obviously with the Arabs, who have hitherto appeared to the disinterested observer to have been the victims of the unjust policy forced upon them by the British Government.**" In response to this declaration, Churchill invited the Air Ministry to assume the responsibility for defending Palestine.²¹⁰

On June 3, 1921, Samuel, at a ceremony at the Government House, explained what Balfour Declaration meant:

That the Jews, a people who are scattered throughout the world but whose hearts are always turned to Palestine, would be enabled to found here their home, and that some among them, within the limits that are fixed by the numbers and interests of the present population, should come to Palestine in order to help by their resources and efforts to develop the country, to the advantage of all its inhabitants. If any measures are needed to convince the Muslim and Christian

210. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 106–107.

population that those principles will be observed in practice and that their rights are really safe, such measures will be taken. For the British Government the trustee under the Mandate for the happiness of the people of Palestine, would never impose upon them a policy which the people had reason to think was contrary to their religious, their political, and their economic interests.²¹¹

Another White Paper

On June 13, 1921, Samuel wrote to Churchill: “. . . I cannot exclude from my mind the possibility of further disturbances or even, as my military advisers have warned me, of a general uprising.” He then **proposed the transformation of the Advisory Council into an elected rather than a nominated one**, in the belief that repression alone would increase Arab bitterness. Churchill’s initial reaction to Samuel’s proposal was unfavorable; however, when the Arab delegation set off for London, Samuel wrote to Churchill again: “[The delegation] will ask for the entire abandonment of the Balfour Declaration, but they do not expect to secure this, and you will probably find that they will then be willing to come to an arrangement more or less on the lines indicated in my speech on June 3rd.”

Churchill presented his concerns to the cabinet: “The Zionist policy is profoundly unpopular with all except the Zionists. Both Arabs and Jews are armed and arming, ready to spring at each other’s throats . . . Dr. Weizmann and the Zionists are extremely discontented at the progress made . . . I have done and doing my best to give effect to the pledge given to the Zionists by Mr Balfour . . . I am prepared to continue in this course, if it is the settled resolve of the Cabinet.”²¹² The cabinet failed to reach any settled resolve. The Palestinian delegation rejected any compromise, and demanded a national government, the abolition of the Jewish national home, an immediate halt to immigration, and unity with other Arab states. Various proposals presented by the British government to the delegation were rejected, as they did not include a clear representative assembly.

By November 1921, the talks in London were at an impasse. Churchill then suggested convening a meeting between the Palestinian delegation and Weizmann in the presence of Colonial Office officials. This meeting took place on November 29, 1921, but the outcome was negative. In February 1922, the Colonial Office published a draft of a proposed constitution for Palestine. **The final version of the constitution provided for an elected council that would contain twenty-two members, including at least two Christians and two Jewish members. An important article provided the high commissioner with power to confer with a committee consisting**

211. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 113.

212. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 114.

of half of the elected members of each community on the council on all issues relating to the regulation of immigration. It also included an article that no ordinance might be passed by the assembly which was in any way repugnant to or inconsistent with the mandate. Promulgation of the final version of the Palestinian constitution was delayed, however, because the Council of the League of Nations had not yet passed the mandate of Palestine.

In May 1922, Samuel visited England, and after meeting with the Zionists, the Arabs, and the Colonial Office officials, he drew up a statement policy. After being accepted by Churchill and the cabinet, the statement was published as a **white paper** and approved on July 6, 1922, by the British House of Commons. This 1922 White Paper formed the basis of British policy in Palestine for a nearly a decade. It emphasized the continued British commitment to support Zionism while at the same time seeking to reassure the Arabs of Palestine with respect to the implication of that support. It emphasized:

[The British government has] never at any time contemplated, as appears to be feared by the Arab Delegation, the disappearance or the subordination of the Arab population, language, or culture in Palestine. They would draw attention to the fact that the terms of the [Balfour] Declaration . . . do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine. The thought that His Majesty's Government had committed itself to make Palestine as Jewish as England is English was unfounded. It is also necessary to point out that the Zionist Commission in Palestine, does not possess, and has not desired to possess, any share in the general administration of the country. . . .

When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish peoples as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a free opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance. That is the reason why it is necessary that the existence of a Jewish National Home in Palestine should be internationally guaranteed and that it should be formally recognized to rest

upon historic connection . . . This then, is the interpretation which His Majesty's Government place upon the Declaration of 1917; and, so understood, the Secretary of State is of the opinion that it does not contain or imply anything which need cause either alarm to the Arab population of Palestine or disappointment to the Jews.²¹³

The publication of the 1922 White Paper was followed in quick succession by the passing of the mandate for Palestine by the League of Nations Council in their meeting in London on July 24, 1922, and then by the promulgation of the Palestine Constitution as an Order-in-Council on August 10, 1922. These measures were formally accepted by the Zionists with some informal reservations, but were rejected in total by the Fifth Palestine Arab Congress which met in Nablus in August 1922. Despite the Arab rejection, the government went ahead with an attempt to try to put the constitution into effect.

In preparation for the election, the mandate government began to prepare for a census in order to carry out the registration of electors. Although the government succeeded in completing the census, the attempt to hold elections for the legislative council was a failure, and proved to be a humiliating setback to Samuel's policy. A great campaign was organized by the Palestine Arab Executive Committee urging a boycott of the election. All over Palestine, clergy condemned the election. The Arabic press denounced it in print, and mass meetings took place in all Palestinian towns in support of the boycott.

Deeds toured the countryside in an attempt to persuade the *mukhtars* (elected village officials) to participate in the election. All his efforts failed to gain any support in the countryside. Samuel held a number of meetings with a group of notables who were willing to participate in the election in return for certain concessions. They demanded an agreed annual numerical limit on Jewish immigration, an increase in the number of Arab officials, the appointment of an Arab emir over Palestine, and an increase in the number of Arab members of the legislative council (the additional numbers being nominated by the high commissioner). But the talks broke down because Samuel failed to get the support of the Colonial Office for these proposed concessions. The Zionists tried to encourage Arabs to participate through bribery. Through Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, they succeeded in getting three nominations in Jerusalem: Ragheb's brother, Aref Dajani, and Zaki Nusseibeh.

The result of the elections showed the overwhelming success of the boycott campaign. Only 213 secondary electors out of projected 809 were elected. Of these, seventy-nine were Jews. All nominated by the Arabs were unopposed and were drawn from opponents of the Arab Executive, and in the entire country, a total of

213. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 119–120; Engel, *Zionism*, 88.

only 1,397 votes were cast. Of these 1,172 were Jewish. After the election, several of the elected Arabs withdrew. It was clear that the first stage of the elections had failed. The success of the boycott was welcomed by the Palestine Executive as a great triumph. On the other hand, **Ragheb Bey Nashashibi expressed his disappointment, and in a meeting with the director of the Political Department of the Palestine Zionist Executive, he blamed the government for not taking firm action to ensure the success of the election.**

The failure of the election alarmed Samuel and the Colonial Office. Samuel proposed the revival of the advisory council he had established in October 1920, which was composed of eleven officials and ten non-officials (four Muslims, three Christians, and three Jews), all appointed by the High Commission. Following the riots of May 1921, he tried to revive the advisory council as an elected rather than an appointed body, in an attempt to satisfy public opinion by presenting it as a further step on the road of self-government.

Samuel was encouraged by a letter he had received from Jamal al-Husayni on March 22, 1923, stating that the Palestine Arab Executive was willing to cooperate with the government in all administrative questions that were unconnected to the application of the rejected constitution. Samuel then contacted **Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husayni** and discussed the proposal, stating that the proposed council was not meant to solve the political impasse, but rather to deal with administrative matters like the original one of October 1920. He also invited him to serve on the advisory council. Musa Kazim Pasha declined the invitation, but did not express strong opposition. As a result of such communications with the prominent members of the Arab Executive, Samuel proceeded with his plan to revive the advisory council, and on May 8, 1923, he nominated ten Arabs. All nominees accepted the invitation to serve, and on May 29, the establishment of the council was published. A storm of protest against the council and condemnation of the nominees who agreed to serve broke out immediately. On June 4, 1923 the Palestine Arab Executive adopted a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the Arab members of the council. **The Sixth Palestine Congress**, which met in Jaffa in mid-June 1923, endorsed the Arab Executive's decisions. The nominees began to feel uneasy, and communicated their unease to the government and to the Zionists. **According to the diary of Colonel Frederick Kish, Aref Pasha Dajani and Ragheb Bey said that they would agree to sit on the council in return for 500 British pounds each.** But pressure on the nominees mounted, and in the course of the summer seven out of the ten Arab nominees withdrew. Samuel's plan apparently had collapsed.²¹⁴

214. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 125–126.

New Measures by Samuel

In June 1923 Samuel visited London to confer with the Colonial Office and the new Conservative government. At the same time, another Arab delegation headed by Musa Kazim al-Husayni arrived in London, lobbying for a change in British policy. Immediately after assuming office in November 1922, the new Conservative government decided that there would be no change of policy in Palestine. Samuel met with a Cabinet subcommittee chaired by the secretary of state for the colonies, **the Duke of Devonshire. Curzon, the foreign secretary**, was the most prominent member of the subcommittee. **Curzon proposed the creation of an Arab Agency analogous to the Jewish Agency (Jewish Executive) that the mandate had given the Zionists, with similar rights of consultation with the government. This proposal was endorsed by the subcommittee and by the Cabinet as a whole.** Unlike the Jewish Agency, the Arab Agency was to consist of members nominated by the high commissioner. It was to have the right to confer with the government of Palestine on all matters affecting the interests of the non-Jewish population; specially included in this category was Jewish immigration.²¹⁵

On October 11, 1923, Samuel invited twenty-six notables to the Government House and formally presented them with the Arab Agency proposal. Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husayni, after a brief interval for consideration during which the opponents of the Arab Executive were the most insistent on rejection, spoke for all those present when he declared that they were unable to accept the proposal, as it fell short of the demands of the Arab population. The failure of this proposal was the last of Samuel's attempts to provide constitutional legitimacy for British rule in Palestine.²¹⁶

The colonial secretary, Devonshire, cabled to Samuel:

H.M.G.'s object is to make clear that they have for their part said their last word and that in face of repeated Arab rejection they do not propose to renew their offer. Further overtures, if any, towards cooperation must come not from us but from Arabs. Deplorable impressions of weakness would in my opinion be produced by renewal of our past offers in any form at present juncture.²¹⁷

The Supreme Muslim Council

All the plans proposed by Samuel were intended to induce Palestinian leaders to accept the Balfour Declaration, in order to legitimize the Jewish national home and

215. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 126–129.

216. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 130.

217. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 130.

the British mandate. The failure of his plans led him to resort to different measures aimed at gaining their cooperation with the mandate authority in bringing calm and to control violent reaction of the masses against the British and the Zionists. His policies combined deception and bribery. **The creation of the Supreme Muslim Council** as a semi-autonomous institution was one of the most successful measures. The power given to the mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, was the best expression of Samuel's plan. He presented this institution as being analogous to the Zionist Commission.

The Supreme Muslim Council had been established by the mandate government in the wake of the riots of May 1921 to conciliate the Muslim Arabs and to provide them with a form of autonomy in religious matters. The government transferred all Muslim assets (*awqaf*), as well as the Shari'a courts, to the Muslim leaders of the council. The Council was elected in January 1922 by the secondary Muslim electors to the Ottoman parliament of 1914 who were still alive and resident in Palestine. Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the mufti of Jerusalem, was chosen as president of the council. The election of Hajj Amin as president of the council made him the most powerful political figure in Arab Palestine. The council enjoyed huge powers, including the right to appoint all *qadis* (judges), muftis, and Shari'a and *awqaf* officials. Although it paid the salaries of these officials, the government of Palestine did not interfere in its appointments or dismissals. Such arrangements conferred on Hajj Amin a maximum of power. Samuel's intention, in granting the Council and the mufti such power, was the creation of an **"intermediary between the Muslims and the mandate administration."** He considered this achievement as being one of his great successes. He praised **"the Mufti and his personal friends [who] are always active in times political crisis . . . in preventing people getting too excited and too violent."**²¹⁸

The creation of the Supreme Muslim Council and the autonomy that was granted to the council and its president was not Samuel's sole action aimed at encouraging the Arabs of Palestine to cooperate with the Palestinian government. He also appointed as many Arabs of notable families as possible to positions in government service. In addition, he urged the Colonial Office to restore the elected municipalities in Palestine.

Zionist Institutions Created under Herbert Samuel

The **Zionist Commission** had been established in 1918 during the British military administration in Palestine. It was renamed in 1921 as the **Palestine Jewish Executive**. Article 4 of the mandate recognized the **Jewish Executive** as a **"public body for the purpose of advising and cooperating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish**

218. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 132–133.

National Home.” Article 4 was incorporated in the mandate and finally approved by the League of Nations in July 1922; it provided a legal basis for the activities of the Palestine Zionist Executive as a quasi-government of the Jewish community in Palestine. This Zionist body enjoyed the first loyalty of at least 90 percent of the Jewish population of Palestine. It ran its own school system, its own bank, and its own health service; organized Jewish immigration; and directed Jewish settlements. Its chairman had regular access to the high commissioner and other government officials. In 1922, Samuel proposed that the Colonial Office recognize the Jewish community as having a juridical character, and grant the Zionist Executive wide powers of autonomy, including the right to levy taxation. In 1925, the pro-Zionist secretary of state for the colonies, Leo S. Amery, and his under-secretary, William Ormsby-Gore, approved Samuel’s proposal over the objections of officials in the Colonial Office.

Two other autonomous Zionist institutions were created during Samuel’s term to prepare for the future Jewish state in Palestine: the **Histadrut** and the **Hagana**. The Histadrut (**General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the land of Israel**) was established in December 1920. The second institution, the Hagana—the underground army of the Zionists—exercised its power for the first time during the riots of May 1921. When Churchill learned about it in July 1921, he told Weizmann: “**We won’t mind it , but don’t speak of it.**” In December 1921 a wooden crate burst open accidentally on the docks at Haifa, leading to the seizure of three hundred pistols and seventeen thousand rounds of ammunition which the Hagana had been trying to smuggle into Palestine from Vienna.²¹⁹

219. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 136–138.

The Development of the Jewish National Home

Zionist immigration to Palestine started at the beginning of the 1880s. The entire population of Palestine in 1881 was estimated at 457,000. Palestinian Jews numbered between thirteen thousand and twenty thousand;²²⁰ most of them lived in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safad, and Tiberius. The majority of Jerusalem's inhabitants were Jews, the "old Yishuv," extremely orthodox, devoting their energies to religious scholarship. They subsisted primarily on irregular charitable donations from Jewish communities in other countries.²²¹

The Palestinian Arabs knew of Zionism from 1882, when the immigration of Jews aroused the fears of Arab peasants who lived near the Jewish colonies, and of Arab city dwellers, particularly in Jerusalem and Jaffa. Arab fears intensified after the start of the second wave of immigration in 1903. In the mid-1880s, Zionist immigrants comprised between five hundred and a thousand immigrants. In 1893, the combined population of the nine colonies founded in the 1880s was about two thousand. In 1889, there were more than four thousand settlers in eighteen colonies; and a decade later, in 1908, there were some ten thousand settlers in twenty-six colonies.²²²

The conflict between the settlers and the Arab peasants began with disputes regarding grazing, where the newcomers viewed the incursions of Arab shepherds with their sheep and goats as trespassing and used force to expel them. At times, they rounded up the animals and fined their owners. More serious incidents arose over questions related to land. When villagers defaulted on their debts, the moneylenders would confiscate their land and sell it to the Jews. But in some cases the moneylenders

220. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Israel-Palestine Conflict, 1881–1999* (New York: Knox, 1999), 4.

221. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 4.

222. Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 34.

sold the Jews more land than was actually theirs to sell. When, in 1884, the settlers began working more of what they considered their land, clashes began taking place in the settlements of Peta Tikva, Gedera, and Hadera, among others.²²³

The fellahin were behind the Palestinian struggle against Zionist colonization. Palestinian peasants played a major role in making Zionism a central issue in Palestine's political life. Their resistance to land purchases by Zionists in **Tiberias in 1901–1902 and in Affula in 1910–1911** alerted Palestinian leadership to the great threat of Zionism. The strongest demonstration of such resistance was the armed clash between the peasants of Affula and the settlers of **Merhavia in May 1911**, which arose when the Palestinian peasants discovered that the land they cultivated had been sold from under their feet by the Sursuqs in Beirut.

In urban areas, the situation was not much different. The rapidly growing Jewish population of Jerusalem, Jaffa, and other towns from 1881 onward alarmed the local elites, including merchants and craftsmen who felt threatened by economic competition from Jews. In the decade between 1881 and 1891, the Jewish population of Jerusalem almost doubled, from 13,920 to 25,322. In Jaffa, the Jewish population in 1893 had reached 2,500, having been virtually nonexistent in 1880. In response, on June 24, 1891, the notables of Jerusalem sent a telegram to the Ottoman grand vizier asking him to halt Jewish immigration into Palestine and to bar Jews from purchasing land.²²⁴

In 1899, **Yusef Dia Pasha al-Khalidi** addressed a carefully worded letter in French to **Zak Khan, the chief rabbi of France**, who was a friend of Theodor Herzl. He noted that Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, that it was inhabited by Muslims and Christians, and that its holy places were dear to the hearts of millions of Christians and Muslims around the world. He also pointed out that despite Jewish financial power, Palestine could only be acquired by war. Concluding his letter, al-Khalidi called on the Jews to leave Palestine “in peace.”²²⁵

In 1897, **Muhammad Tahir al-Husayni**, the mufti of Jerusalem, set up a local commission to examine land sales to Jews. Despite the opposition of the Ottoman government of Sultan Abdul Hamid, little could be done to stop Jewish settlement in Palestine. The “capitulations”—a term referring to the legal position of foreign citizens in the Ottoman Empire, giving them special privileges such as the right to worship, special tax status, and exemption from the jurisdiction of the local courts throughout the Ottoman Empire—permitted the Jewish immigrants to seek the protection of their consuls after the expiration of their entry permit. The practice of bribery enabled the Jews to pay Ottoman officials to allow them to stay. In addition, Jews were

223. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism*, 35–36.

224. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 72; Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism*, 38.

225. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 72.

able to enter Palestine through Egypt and purchase land in the names of established Jews who were already Ottoman citizens.²²⁶

After 1908 CUP coup, when press censorship was lifted, thirty-five newspapers were founded in Syria and Palestine. The press was the most effective vehicle for expressing the view of the Palestinians against Zionism. The biweekly publication *Al-Asma'i*, founded in Jaffa in September 1908 by **Hanna Abdullah al-Isa**, opposed Jewish immigration, characterizing the Jews as a threat and criticizing the capitulations. In 1908, **Najib Nassar** founded *al-Karmil*, a weekly paper which he published in Haifa. Alarmed by the land sales to the Jews, *al-Karmil* reran articles from major papers in Beirut and Cairo, in addition to Nassar's own articles criticizing the Zionists' activities in Palestine. Nassar also wrote a book entitled *al-Sahyuniyya* (Zionism). *Al-Mufid* was founded in Beirut in 1909, by **Abd al-Ghani al-Uraysi** and **Fuad Hantas**, both members of al-Fatat. By 1910 *al-Mufid* had become an influential daily throughout Syria, featuring articles written by the best-known spokesmen of the national Arab movement. *Al-Mufid* strongly opposed the sale of Palestinian lands to those suspected of working for the Zionist movement and condemned Arab landlords who sold their land to the Zionists.²²⁷

Ruhi al-Khalidi and **Said al-Husayni**, Palestinian members of the Ottoman parliament, used the parliament as a platform to raise awareness of the Zionist threat and to stop Jewish settlement in Palestine. In his manuscript *Kitab al-Mas'ala al-Sahyuniyya*, Ruhi al-Khalidi presented the ideological and organizational aspects of Zionism and pointed to the increase in Jewish immigration and setting up of Jewish colonies and Jewish colonial institutions, including the Jewish Colonization Association founded by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891, and the schools and vocational centers set up by the **Alliance Israelite Universelle** founded in 1860 in Paris.²²⁸ Many Arab intellectuals in Syria and Cairo voiced their opposition to Zionism.

The British occupation of Palestine in December 1917 was a turning point in the history of the Zionist movement. Between 1882 and 1917, only about 35,000 Zionists managed to settle in Palestine. In 1917, Weizmann obtained the "charter" from Britain that Herzl had failed to obtain from Turkey. The Palestinian resistance was now confronting not only Zionism, but even more Britain, which had adopted the Zionist project as part of its imperial strategic plan for the control of the Middle East. As stated earlier, **Britain aimed to control the Ottoman Middle East territories, which represented the key supply routes to India, the crown jewel of the British Empire. The Zionist colonial project of Palestine definitely served British interests. If a million Jews were moved into Palestine within the next fifty or sixty years, it would constitute a barrier separating the Suez Canal from the Black**

226. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 73.

227. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 84–85.

228. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 82–83.

Sea and any hostility which might come from that direction. For this reason, the British gave considerable support to Jewish settlers in Palestine. In the 1920s, however, especially between 1920 and 1923, the Palestinian Arabs were more formidable as a result of their numerical superiority. During this period the Zionists were almost completely dependent on the British for the survival of their project.

Between 1923 and 1929, the development of the Jewish national home in Palestine was dramatic. After the Balfour Declaration, by mid-1926, 100,000 Jews had entered Palestine as immigrants. The land acquired by the Zionists at least doubled by 1929. Membership of the Histadrut rose from 4,433 at its founding in 1920 to 27,000 in 1930. The number of Jewish agricultural settlements, by 1931, had doubled to 110, and their population had tripled to 38,000. The number of Jewish industrial employees rose from 4,750 in 1920 to 10,968 in 1929. And the Hebrew University of Jerusalem formally opened in 1925.²²⁹

The British mandate government in Palestine, under Samuel and the other high commissioners, undertook the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, assisting the Zionists in their project of colonizing Palestine. To fulfill the promise and to achieve their goal of planting a foreign body in the center of the Arab World, **Britain facilitated the following:**

- **Jewish immigration to Palestine**
- **The acquisition of land**
- **The establishment of various industrial projects by the Zionists and the creation of a separate Jewish economy**
- **The establishment of an independent education system**
- **The establishment of a strong military apparatus**

All these measures led to the establishment of a Jewish state within a state.

Immigration and Land Acquisition

Immigration and land acquisition were the Zionists' main strategies for the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine. One of the early actions of the new civil administration was to enact **the first Immigration Ordinance on August 26, 1920**, fixing a quota of 16,500 for the first year. At the end of World War I, Palestine had a population of about 700,000 persons, of whom 574,000 were Muslims, 70,000 were Christians, and 56,000 were Jews. The Jewish population were mostly Arabs of the

²²⁹ Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 140.

Jewish faith. About 12,000 of these Jews lived on the land as farmers; the rest carried on business in the principal towns, mainly Jerusalem.

Reliable data on the population of Palestine was collected twice during the thirty years of British administration. The first census of the population was taken on October 23, 1922, and the second (and last) on November 18, 1931. After the census of 1931, regular quarterly and annual estimates of the population, classified by religion, were kept by the Palestine Government Department of Statistics. These estimates were obtained by adding to the figures of 1931 the annual increase and net migratory increase in the period between the census of 1931 and the year for which the estimate was prepared. The population of Palestine rose from an estimate of 700,000 persons in 1918 to the figures shown below:

BY RELIGION

	1922 Census	1931 Census	1944 Estimates
Muslims	589,177	759,700	1,061,277
Jews	83,790	174,606	528,702
Christians	71,464	88,907	135,547
Others	77,617	10,101	14,098
Total population by religion	752,048	1,033,314	1,739,624

BY RACE

	1944 Estimates	1946 Estimates	1948 Estimates
Arab Muslims and Christians	1,179,000	1,293,000	1,380,000
Non-Arab Jews	554,000	608,000	700,000
Others	32,000	35,000	35,000
Total population by race	1,765,000	1,936,000	2,115,000

According to these figures, the proportion of Jews to the total population rose from 8 percent in 1918 to about 12 percent in 1922; then about 17 percent in 1931 and about 31 percent in 1944. The large-scale immigration accounted for the rapid rise in the ratio of Jews to the total population.²³⁰

230. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 46–50.

The **third wave** of Jewish immigration increased the number of Jewish settlers by **35,000**, most of them being Russians. The **fourth wave**, between 1924 and 1931, brought another **85,000** immigrants, most of them middle-class Poles. The **fifth wave** of Jewish immigration, between 1932 and 1936, brought to Palestine close to **200,000**. In 1936, the Jews comprised 28 percent of Palestine's population, a significant increase from 17 percent in 1931. **Such a radical change in a period of five years must certainly be recognized as an important cause of the 1936 rebellion.** In the wake of the 1936–1939 Palestine revolt, the British placed a ceiling on new Jewish immigration at 75,000 over five years. Eighty-five percent of the Jewish population remained centered in three major urban centers and the surrounding areas: **Jaffa–Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa.**²³¹

In 1918, the Jews owned only 2 percent of Palestine's land—that is, 162,500 acres out of a total of 6,580,755 acres of land. During the ensuing thirty years, Jewish land purchases brought their total holdings, to 372,925 acres, or 5.67 percent of the total land area of Palestine, on the date of the termination of the mandate in May 1948. However, Palestine's British government estimated in 1946 that the Jews held over 15 percent of the cultivable area of Palestine. Resistance to sale of land to Jews persisted throughout the period of the mandate. Most of the land acquired by Jews between 1918 and 1948 (210,425 acres) was purchased from Lebanese and Syrian absentee landowners living outside Palestine. The area sold by Palestinians during the mandate was only about 100,000 acres, despite the high prices offered and the legislation enacted that was designed to facilitate transfer of land to Jews.²³² The British mandate government classified Palestinian arable land as good, medium, and poor. By 1948, the Zionist state had captured 78 percent of Palestine, including 95 percent of the good soil, 64 percent of the medium soil, and 39 percent of the poor soil.²³³

Laws affecting land disposition, registration, and settlement were issued to hasten Jewish acquisition of Arab land. One of these laws, disguised as a law to protect farmers against eviction by their landlords, did the opposite. Almost all of the large tracts of land were owned by absentee landowners living in Lebanon and Syria. Whereas relations between landlord and tenant had until then been on the best of terms, the new law gave the tenant the impression (encouraged by Jewish land brokers) that he no longer needed to pay his rent, since the law gave him certain “tenancy rights” and protected him against eviction. The landlord, who was placed in the unenviable position of owning land but getting hardly anything out of it, and burdened with taxation beyond his means, found himself in a critical situation. Here the Jewish land broker would step in and offer to buy the land and rid the landlord of his prob-

231. Sameh Farsoun with Christina Zacharia, *Palestine and the Palestinians* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 75–76.

232. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 51.

233. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 80.

lems. In one instance, over 40,000 acres comprising eighteen villages in **Marj ibn Amer** were sold by the Sursoq family to the Palestine Land Development Company (PLDC) for 700,000 British pounds, resulting in the eviction of 688 Arab agricultural families. Of those, 309 families joined the landless classes, while the remainder drifted either into towns and cities or became hired laborers in other villages.²³⁴

Acquisition of state land was another source of the transfer of land to the Zionists. By 1947, approximately 195,000 dunums (nearly 50,000 acres) of state land had been granted or leased to Jewish settlers by the British mandate authorities.²³⁵ **According to Article 6 of the mandate charter, Britain promised to facilitate Jewish settlement on state lands.** The government granted state land for the following settlements: Athlit, Caesarea, Kabbara, and Beisan.

The Zionists followed a strategic political policy in land acquisition. They looked for quantity, location, and contiguity. Accordingly, they tended to purchase land in large, contiguous areas of the inland and coastal plains. Their acquisitions were made not by private individuals but by political agencies of the Zionist movement, such as the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the aforementioned PLDC, the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, and the Jewish Colonization Association. Around 70 percent of all Palestinian land acquired by the Zionists was purchased by the PLDC on behalf of the JNF. Between 1920 and 1927, 82 percent of all land acquired by Zionist organizations was purchased from absentee landlords. Zionist land purchases from non-Palestinian Arab absentee landowners were at their highest in the 1920s. Beginning in the 1930s, land sales by large Palestinian landlords and peasants constituted the greater proportion (89 percent) of the total land purchased by Zionists.²³⁶

Intensive land acquisition by Jews and Zionist organizations occurred during three periods: between 1923 and 1927, an average annual 61,400 dunums (15,172 acres); from 1932 to 1935, an average annual 59,500 dunums (14,702 acres); and from 1942 to 1947, an average annual 61,200 dunums (15,123 acres). While in 1922 Jews owned 751,192 dunums (185,624 acres), representing 3 percent of the land of Palestine, the total area purchased by 1947 was 1.73 million dunums (427,500 acres), representing nearly 24 percent of all arable land and 7 percent of the total surface area of Palestine. The percentage of Jews who lived on the land—that is, on farms—was 19.3 percent; most Jews lived in cities.²³⁷

Palestinian peasant discontent, political activism, and hostility to and violence against the Zionists and the British authorities were highest after periods of high transfer of land, accounting for the 1929 unrest, the 1936–1939 revolt, and the 1947–1948 war.

234. Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, 46–47.

235. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 78.

236. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 78–79.

237. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 80.

These periods also coincide with heavy waves of Jewish immigration into Palestine, particularly the five years before the rebellion of 1936–1939. **By 1945, 52.6 percent of land sales to Jews or Jewish organizations were by non-Palestinian absentee Arab landlords; 24.6 percent were by large Palestinian owners; and 9.4 percent by peasants.**²³⁸

The Zionists managed to purchase more than 420,000 dunums (104,000 acres) before 1917, most of it in four blocks: 1) the eastern parts of the upper and lower Galilee; 2) the Hadera-Zikhron Ya'akov block, on the coastal plain south of Haifa; 3) the Petah Tikva-Kfar Saba block, northeast of Jaffa; and 4) the Judean colonies southeast of Jaffa. Most of this land acquired by the Zionists was owned by absent landlords from neighboring countries.²³⁹

With the beginning of British rule, more land was purchased in the Jezreel Valley from the Sursuq family; 70,000 dunums (17,300 acres) in 1920, 40,000 dunums (10,000 acres) in 1924. A year later, 28,000 more dunums (7,000 acres) of the valley were purchased from the Sursuqs and another Beirut family, the Tuwwinis, in addition to land in Zevulun Valley along Haifa Bay. In 1927, the Zionists purchased 30,000 dunums (7,500 acres) in the Heffer Valley (Wadi al-Hawareth), south of Haifa, from the Tayan family of Lebanon.²⁴⁰

Collaboration and Resistance

The deals made with Palestinian owners of large estates had the most significant effect on the map of Jewish settlements: In 1921, a **Haifa landowner** sold the land on which the Jewish settlement of Yagur was established to the Zionists. In 1924, a **family from Qalqilia** sold the land on which **Magdiel** was established. In 1925, the **sheikh of the Abu-Kishk tribe** sold the land on which **Ramatayan, Ramat ha-Sharon, Bnei Berak, and other settlements** were built. Another piece of **Bnei Berak** was bought from **the mayor of Jaffa and his brother**. In 1928 the city of **Natanya** was built on land purchased from **the sheikh of the village of Umm Khaled**. In 1932, a **family from Tulkarem** sold 10,000 dunums (2,500 acres) on which the settlement of **Even-Yahuda** was established. The same year, **Kefar Yona** was built on land sold by a **Nablus landowner**. In 1933, the settlement of **Qadima** was built on land sold by a **landowner from Qalansawa**. **Two brothers and a third partner** sold 2,000 dunums (500 acres) on which the kibbutzim **Givat Brener, Na'tan, and Gibton** were built. The neighborhood of **Neve Sha'anani in Haifa** was established on land purchased from another sheikh.²⁴¹

238. Kenneth Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 226–227.

239. Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism, 1917–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 31.

240. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 31–32.

241. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 32.

In the two years between June 1934 and August 1936, Jews bought more than 53,000 dunums (13,000 acres) in 2,339 separate land sales. Of those, **forty-one** sales involved plots of more than 500 dunums (120 acres) and **164** involved plots between 100 and 500 dunums (25 to 120 acres). The vast majority (**2,134**) were plots of less than 100 dunums. This means that thousands of Arabs of all backgrounds—poor and rich, Christians and Muslims, city dwellers, Bedouins and villagers—were involved in land sales. The assistance the Zionists received from Arabs was not limited to cooperation in completing the sale, but went further by providing them with vital information about land available for sale.²⁴²

Collaborators assisted the Zionist land acquisitions in many ways. Often influential people in their villages, they provided information about land ownership and locations of documents. They worked as brokers, persuading the owners to sell their land, and sometime they bought the land then sold it to the Zionists. They also assisted in the removal of tenant farmers, marking the land and guarding it. Some of them went far further in serving the Zionists by testifying before **Sir John Hope-Simpson** (who was overseeing a British commission investigating immigration, land settlement, and development issues in Palestine in 1929; **see page XX**), claiming that land acquisition by Jews was beneficial to the Palestinians.²⁴³ One such landowner stated:

I have about five thousand dunums that are no use at all, and I owe money to creditors. If the gates of immigration were open I could hope that in a year or two companies of immigrants would come to buy four thousand dunums of land from me, which will rescue me from debts and allow me to cultivate what is left of my land and in that way I could live happily, me and my descendants after me.

A resident of Anabta, west of Nablus, who was known to have ties with the Hagana's intelligence service (the Shai), testified as to the benefits derived from the sale of two thousand dunums (five hundred acres) in the Heffer Valley to the Zionists. Three more men made similar statements in their testimony before the Hope-Simpson inquiry.

Zionist records describe the kind of service they had received from Palestinian collaborators in achieving their goals of acquiring land. The Zionists acquired land by putting pressure on farmers for economic reasons and persuasion by land brokers. Jewish immigration and land acquisition had aroused opposition in some Arab circles since the 1880s. But the opposition did not involve all parts of the public. In the 1920s, what had previously been vague sense of antagonism to Zionism took on new conceptual framework: "nationalism." A new form of national consciousness

242. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 32.

243. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 33–35.

evolved that cast land sales to the Zionists as “treason and collaboration.” The national leadership raised public consciousness about the danger posed by Zionism. Even before World War I, the press was enlisted in this mission, including Haifa’s *al-Kamel*, edited by Najib Nassar and founded in 1908; the Isa brothers’ *Filastin* published in Jaffa, founded in 1911; and the Jerusalem newspaper *al-Muntada*. An article published in July 1911 by Mustafa Effendi Tamr, a teacher of mathematics at a Jerusalem school, excoriated those selling land:

You are selling the property of your fathers and grandfathers for a pittance to people who will have no pity on you, to those who will act to expel you and expunge your memory from your habitations and disperse you among the nations. This is a crime that will be recorded in your names in history, a black stain and disgrace that your descendants will hear, which will not be expunged even after years and eras have gone by.²⁴⁴

Opposition to land sales was one of the principal focal points around which Arab nationalist ideas in Palestine coalesced. It was adopted by the urban elite, and at the same time created great fears among the rural community, as it meant disposition of the land. The fear intensified among tenant farmers who were removed from land purchased by the Zionists. During British rule, attachment to the land became a central component of national identity.

In the mid-1920s the condemnations of collaborators grew more severe. The land sellers were the “true enemies of the homeland” and “human devils.” After a dozen years of struggle, the faction that rejected land sales had become strong enough that they did not hesitate to attack even influential and prominent settlers by name. In 1925, the Muslim religious authority issued, for the first time, a fatwa forbidding land sales to Jews. This ruling was written by the mufti of Gaza, Hajj Muhammad Said al-Husayni. The importance of the mufti’s statement was that Jews had ceased to be a protected minority whose rights were to be respected by Muslims. Their status had changed because they were seeking to take control of the country. The fatwa did not receive great attention, however, because it did not come from Jerusalem.

In the 1930s, land sales became a central issue in Palestinian political activities. Izzat Darwaza, a writer and educator from Nablus who was the leader of the Istiqlal Party, wrote an article about a land broker (*simsar*, plural *samasirah*) who tried to entice a landowner to sell his holdings. He described the way Zionist institutions worked and the moral deterioration of the *samasirah*. The poet Ibrahim Tuqan of Nablus wrote poems condemning the *samasirah*. Most important, Hajj Amin al-Husayni,

244. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 45.

the mufti of Jerusalem, exercised his religious authority for the first time to issue a fatwa forbidding the sale of land to Jews. The ruling was the beginning of a religious awakening that encompassed the entire country. The fatwa was disseminated by clerics and representatives of the Supreme Muslim Council and read aloud in city and village mosques. Throughout Palestine, public assemblies were held at which the ruling was proclaimed.²⁴⁵

The press and religious establishment worked together to prevent Zionists from acquiring Palestinian land. When the newspaper *al-Jami'ah al-Arabiyyah* learned about the sale of tens of thousands of dunums in the Negev to Jews, it published a call to the heads of the Bedouin tribes there to **“eliminate the phenomenon of land dealings, and to humiliate the *samasirah*, and use all means against them.”** Later the mufti and his staff conducted a series of visits to the sheikhs of the Negev tribes, read the fatwa before them, and had them take an oath on the Quran not to sell any of their land or to provide aid to land sellers. The sheikhs also signed a statement saying that **“the members of a tribe are to shun and scorn any person who is proved to have betrayed the homeland by selling lands or speculating in them or expressing loyalty to the Zionists. They will not shake his hand and will not eat with him.”** The editor of *al-Jami'ah al-Arabiyyah*, who was present at his ceremony, reported that some of the sheiks wept when they signed the petition—presumably these were tears of remorse for involvement in previous land deals.²⁴⁶

In January 1935, the first assembly of Muslim religious scholars (*ulama*) in Palestine convened to discuss land sales. The *ulama* issued an additional religious legal ruling written by unanimous consent (*ijma*) that read:

After study and discussion of the entire matter and support for what was said in these venerable fatwa, we have reached agreement that the seller and speculator and agent in the sale of the land of Palestine to Jews and he who abet them

- First: acts for and causes the removal of Muslims from their lands.**
- Second: prevents the mention of Allah’s name in mosques and works to destroy them.**
- Third: accepts the Jews as rulers, since he abets their victory over the Muslims.**
- Fourth: offends Allah and His messenger and the faithful.**
- Fifth: betrays [*kha'in*] Allah and His messenger and believers.**

245. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 45–48.

246. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 48.

From a study of the irrefutable proofs of rulings in cases such as these that are in the verses of Allah's book, as the Supreme One said: "O believers, do not betray Allah and the Prophet."

And from all above-said, which includes the persons, the utterances, and the fatwa, it transpires that one who sells land to Jews in Palestine, whether he did so directly or through an intermediary, as well as the speculator or agent in this sale and those who knowing facilitate and help them in any way, one may not pray for them [at their death] or bury them in Muslim graves and one should abandon them and ban them and despise them and not become friendly with them or get close to them, even if they are parents or children or brothers or spouses.²⁴⁷

This fatwa applies the traditional religious concept of *khiyana*, or betrayal, to traitors against the national cause. Not long after, a congress of Christian Arab clergymen issued a declaration with a similar wording forbidding the sale of land to Jews. Over time, the press, mufti, and religious establishment, and national poets and intellectuals, succeeded in establishing a norm that selling land to a Jew was an unpardonable religious and national sin.

Britain's obligations under the Palestine mandate extended both east and west of the Jordan River, including the Transjordanian areas inhabited largely by semi-nomads. A year earlier, Churchill had separated Transjordan (80 percent of the mandatory territory) from the Palestine mandate. This became a separate British protectorate; Abdullah, Husayn's son, became its emir. The term "Palestine" was reserved for the lands between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Weizmann and Ben-Gurion declined to confront the British authorities over prohibition of Jewish settlements in Transjordan, while Jabotinsky insisted that Britain should place the full resources of His Majesty's government at the Zionists' disposal for the purpose of creating a Jewish majority and state in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River.

The Jewish Economy and Industry

The Constitution of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, signed in Zurich on August 14, 1929, stated that the title of the land acquired should be taken in the name of the **Jewish National Fund**. The Agency was to promote agricultural colonization based on Jewish labor, and it was deemed a matter of principle that only Jewish labor should

247. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 48–49.

be employed. The lease contracts entered into with the Jewish settlers prohibited hiring or employing non-Jewish labor.

In the first decade of the mandate, different measures were taken by the mandate government to support Jewish industrial ventures. Jewish companies were granted concessions over state lands and natural resources: **the Rutenberg power plant, Dead Sea salt, the Athlit Salt Company, and the Shemen oil and soap company. In 1924, A Jewish refugee from Soviet Georgia opened the Nesher cement factory.** In 1920, the British mandate government granted the Russian Jew **Pinhas Rutenberg** a contract to supply electricity throughout Palestine. Rutenberg was awarded exclusive rights to use the waters of the **Auja basin** to provide power, electric light, and irrigation using any type of energy in the district of Jaffa, and exclusive rights to carry out a grand hydroelectric and irrigation scheme based in the **Jordan and Yarmouk River basins**. The concession also gave Rutenberg's company monopolistic rights over the supply of electric power throughout Palestine and Transjordan (excluding Jerusalem). **The Athlit Salt Company**, a Jewish enterprise, was given exclusive concession to produce salt. The salt was sold at an artificially inflated price, which hurt the Palestinian Arabs in all aspects of life, as salt was not merely a basic daily food necessity, but was also crucial in the manufacture of soap and leather goods.²⁴⁸

The Nesher Cement Company, Shemen (Palestine Oil Industry), and a long list of other Jewish industrial enterprises (specializing in products ranging from silk and textiles to leather tanning, confectionery, false teeth, and umbrellas) received specific customs concessions. The mandate government exempted import duties on the importation of olive oil and sesame seeds to benefit Shemen; at the same time, it raised import duties on salt, jelly, jam, cakes, chocolate, and other products in order to protect Jewish manufacturers.

By 1929, these manufacturing projects provided support for nearly 39 percent of Palestine's Jewish workforce. The growth of the Jewish private industry helped raise the country's absorptive capacity and allowed sixty thousand Jews to enter the country between 1924 and 1929. The immigrants who came during the middle of the decade (**the Fourth Aliyah**) were mainly lower middle-class Jews, and socialism and agricultural labor did not mean much to them. They preferred to settle in the cities. During this period many Jews migrated to Palestine for personal reasons rather than ideological ones; Palestine seemed to offer economic opportunities, especially after the United States introduced tighter restriction on immigration in 1924.

Before 1929, the Zionists were financially dependent on the British mandate, as they lacked the resources to build the foundation for a state. During the early 1920s the British authorities in Palestine carried out several construction projects for military-strategic purposes, including expanding Palestine's highways, railroads,

248. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 82

ports, and communications networks. In the process, the mandate government became one of the country's largest employers of Jewish workers. After 1929, money from external Jewish investments in Palestine enabled the Jewish community to prosper, as middle-class Jews arrived from Central Europe with their own capital. The British, around 1929, allowed the economic system to be divided. In collecting taxes, the mandate government benefited much more from the Jewish community; Jews paid twice as much tax as Palestinians did. **By consenting to the bifurcation of the country's economy, the British helped create a Jewish privileged enclave and enhanced the chances of Zionist success in Palestine.**²⁴⁹

During the Second World War, Palestine became a strategic outpost for the British in the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean region. It served as a base for large land, air, and naval military forces; the terminus of oil pipelines from Iraq; and the site of a key oil refinery. The British devised an economic plan aimed at rapid economic development of all sectors of Palestine's economy that resulted in significant increases in industrial capacity, output, and product variety (including sophisticated military hardware) of goods for the military, Palestine's internal market, and the region. Jewish industries jumped by 200 percent, whereas the Palestinian-owned industries increased by 77 percent. By 1946, the number of industrial enterprises rose to about six thousand; most were Jewish-owned. The share of the Jewish population in both capital investment and value of industrial production was about 85 percent.²⁵⁰

The initial efforts of the Zionist colonial project were directed toward agricultural settlements, but this quickly shifted during the mandate period into the development of an urban and industrial Jewish economy. Industrialization took off in the mid-1920s following the wave of migration of urban middle-class Polish Jews, who were sophisticated in industry. Following this, in the mid-1930s German Jewish immigrants arrived in great numbers into urban centers, ensuring that Jewish industry was well established. According to the *Survey of Palestine*, by 1939, Jews comprised 31 percent of the total population, but Jewish capital investment in industry was 88 percent of total industrial investments, 90 percent of installed horsepower, and 89 percent of total net industrial output, and Jewish workers represented 79 percent of all industrial workers in Palestine. During the mid-1920s, customs regulations were changed to reduce import duties on raw materials and on machinery needed for production.²⁵¹

The socialist Zionist leaders, **Weizmann** and **David Ben-Gurion**, welcomed the new trend of creating an industrial economy, and encouraged the new immigrants to become industrial workers. Not all Zionists accepted this new approach. The most influential challenger was **Vladimir Jabotinsky**, who believed that the Zionist Organization existed only to enhance the physical safety of Jews threatened by the

249. Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, second ed. 2006), 93.

250. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 93–95.

251. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 83.

hostility of non-Jews, and was focused on encouraging the immigration of all Jews to Palestine. Jabotinsky was convinced that the Arabs would fight anything Zionists did in Palestine, for they understood that any Zionist success would reduce their dominance in the country. Therefore, he concluded, the Jewish national home could develop only behind an “iron wall” of combined British and Jewish force. He was certain that Arabs would try to pierce the wall, but he was equally sure that repeated failure to do so would eventually lead them to accept the parity he envisioned.²⁵²

The Autonomous Jewish Educational System

One of the most important Zionist projects for the creation of a Jewish national identity was the establishment of a separate Jewish educational system. Palestine’s educational system for the two communities under the mandate was separate, and unequal in terms of quality, financing, levels, and delivery, especially in the rural areas. **Jerome Farrell**, the assistant director of education in the mandate government, reported:

The natural result of the disparity between the educational facilities offered to Arabs and Jews is to widen the cultural gap between the two races, to prevent social intermixture on equal terms and to tend to reduce the Arabs to a position of permanent inferiority.²⁵³

In the mandate agreement, the British and the League of Nation granted recognition of Hebrew as an official language, along with Arabic and English, even though Jews represented no more than 10 percent of the population of Palestine. The British also gave consent and support (fixed grants-in-aid or block grants from the mandate government) for a separate and exclusive private Jewish school system. Furthermore, the Zionists gained autonomy over the curriculum, which was imbued with Zionist-inspired Jewish nationalism. This system eventually covered kindergarten through secondary schools, as well as vocational schools, technical institutions, and universities.²⁵⁴

The same freedom and financial support with respect to education were not granted to the Palestinian Arabs. By 1946 there were a total of 795 schools for Palestinians, with 118,335 students. A little over half were government schools; the rest were private. By the 1940s about 40 percent of Palestinian schoolchildren attended private schools. Among the rural population, elementary school attendance was only 20 percent, in

252. Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 13–14; for Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” speech, [see page XX](#).

253. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 87.

254. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 87.

contrast to 85 percent in the urban centers. Fewer than half the villages had government elementary schools, often to the fourth grade only; just a tiny fraction (11 percent) were for girls. Educationally speaking, the Palestinian Arabs were disadvantaged compared to the settler-immigrant Jews. Mandate government figures indicate that in 1944 only 32 percent of Palestinian Arab children between five and fourteen years old were enrolled in schools, as opposed to 97 percent for Jewish children in the same age group. British authorities denied the Palestinians the right to teach nationalism. The private and government Palestinian school system helped reduce illiteracy substantially, yet failed to provide the technical or higher education that the Jewish community had access to. Secondary education for urban Palestinians was limited, and unless they attended teacher's school in Jerusalem, Palestinians had to leave the country to go to a university.

Palestinian Collaborating Parties

The Muslim-Christian Associations had played a major role in the Palestinian National Movement since the start of the occupation of Palestine by the British in 1918. The Zionists realized the potential power of the Palestinian nationalists in opposing Zionism and the pro-Zionist policy of the British. The riots of April 1920 and May 1921 alarmed them, prompting the leaders of the Zionist Executive—Chaim Kalvarisky, Fredrick Kish, and Chaim Weizmann—to develop plans to counteract the activities of the Palestinian nationalists.

During Weizmann's visit to Palestine in the spring of 1920, he held a series of meetings with various Palestinians—Bedouin sheikhs in the Beisan Valley and Abu-Ghosh and certain other officials. Following these meetings, he asked the office of the Jewish Elected Assembly, the body responsible for intelligence, to draw up a comprehensive plan for countering Arab opposition to Zionism. Its proposal included the following:

- **Cultivation of an agreement with an official who agreed to open a pro-Zionist Cultural and political club in exchange for 1,000 British pounds.**
- **Creation of an alliance with the influential emirs on the eastern side of the Jordan, based on the assumption that they opposed the Palestinian National Movement led by the urban notables and thus would be natural allies of the Zionists.**
- **Establishment of an alliance with the Bedouin sheikhs in southern Palestine, in order to sever the connections that already existed between them and the Palestinian nationalists.**
- **Purchase of newspapers hostile to Zionism.**

- **Organizing and promoting friendly relations with Arabs, and opening cooperation clubs.**
- **Provocation of dissent between Christian and Muslims.**²⁵⁵

This document sets out the basis for the relationship between the Arab and Jewish communities. It advocated three main strategies. The first was support of opposition forces within the Arab public, with the object of creating an alternative leadership. The second was to deepen fissures within Palestinian society by separating the Bedouin from the rest of the population and fomenting conflict between Christians and Muslims (and Druze). The third strategy was to develop a propaganda machine of newspapers and writers.²⁵⁶

Chaim Margaliot Kalvarisky, the head of the Zionist Executive's Arab department, was behind the establishment of the Muslim National Associations as a counterweight to the Muslim-Christian Associations. The public activities of the Muslim National Associations were limited to petitions to the British authorities, attacking the Palestinian National Movement, and supporting the Zionist immigration to Palestine, the British mandate, and the Balfour Declaration. In July 1921, when a Palestinian delegation set out for London to negotiate with the British government, **Hasan Shukri**, the mayor of Haifa and president of the Muslim National Association, sent a telegram to Britain:

We strongly protest against the attitude of the said delegation concerning the Zionist question. We do not consider the Jewish people as an enemy whose wish is to crush us. On the contrary, we consider the Jews as a brotherly people sharing our joys and troubles and helping us in the construction of our country. We are certain that without Jewish immigration and financial assistance there will be no future development of our country as may be judged from the fact that towns inhabited in part by Jews such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, and Tiberias are making steady progress while Nablus, Acre, and Nathareth where no Jews reside are steadily declining.²⁵⁷

In July 1922, after the ratification of the mandate by the League of Nations, the British planned elections for a legislative council in an attempt to get the Palestinian National Movement to accept the mandate and the Balfour Declaration. The Fifth Palestinian Congress decided to boycott the elections. While the Arab Executive Committee was holding public assemblies all over the country, preaching against

255. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 17.

256. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 27–28.

257. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 15.

elections, the Zionist Executive used the Muslim National Associations to encourage Arab participation in the elections.

In 1924, Colonel Frederick Kish, a retired British intelligence officer who was the head of the Zionist Executive's political department in Palestine, established the Farmers' Parties. This was a loose network of political parties set up by the Zionists to deepen the divide between the fellahin and the urban Arabs. The men involved in these parties were from families with land in the villages, not the fellah class. Although many of the members of the Farmers' Parties were active in the Muslim National Associations, some of them took a leadership role in the new organization. Influential heads of families from Hebron, Jerusalem, and Nablus played an important role in the activities of the Farmers' Parties, exaggerating the number of villages participating in order to gain financial support from the Zionists. But the financial crisis in Eastern Europe in 1926 and 1927 halted the flow of capital to the Jews in Palestine. In the absence of funding, the Farmers' Parties ceased to function almost completely until 1929.²⁵⁸

The Western Wall riots of 1929 (see page XX) prompted the British Colonial Office to appoint the **Shaw Commission** to investigate the immediate causes of the outbreak of violence. In reaction to the appointment of the Commission, the Zionists needed their collaborators to sign petitions similar to those they had submitted in the previous decade, and some did. In their petitions to the high commissioner, they demanded the dismissal of Hajj Amin al-Husayni from all his positions. In addition to the petitions, the Zionists needed people to testify before the Shaw Commission. Many of the collaborators refused to testify out of fear that they would be exposed.

After the riots of 1929, the activities of the Farmers' Parties intensified, especially in the villages of the Jerusalem region. Zionist funds for these activities became available during this period. The Farmers' Party was revived in 'Ayn Karem, the Bani-Hasan subdistrict, and a village convention in was organized in 'Ajjur. The Zionist Executive allocated fifty Palestinian pounds for the delegates' travel expenses on the condition that they pass resolutions against the Arab delegation's trip to London and to announce the establishment of a new Arab Executive Committee separate from the existing one. About five hundred people convened in 'Ajjur on March 27, 1930, many of them heads of the families and villages from the Jerusalem Hills, Mount Hebron, and the coastal plain of Gaza. While the Zionists waited for encouraging reports from their people on site, members of the Arab Executive Committee showed up at 'Ajjur, spoke against dividing the nation, and exposed the planners and organizers of the convention as being paid agents of the Zionists. The assembly broke up, and the attempt to establish alternative leadership ended. Other attempts to revive the Farmers' Parties were made, but failed. After two de-

258. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 20–21.

cade of effort, the Zionists abandoned their strategy of establishing or encouraging collaborating parties.²⁵⁹

As mentioned earlier, the Zionist plan for countering Arab opposition to Zionism was the development of a propaganda machine of newspapers and writers. In early 1920s, two newspapers received financial support from Kalvarisky: *al-Akhbar in Jaffa*, and the *Lisan al-Arab in Jerusalem*. In April 1930, Kalvarisky admitted that the editor of *Lisan al-Arab*, **Ibrahim Najjar**, had not kept his end of the bargain, as he did not stay neutral and criticized the Zionists' actions. Kalvarisky described Najjar as "devious as a snake and a man of talent," but he continued to fund *Lisan al-Arab* out of fear that Najjar would print fierce anti-Zionist propaganda. In addition to buying newspapers, Kalvarisky looked out for writers to publish articles praising Zionism. He succeeded in finding a few Arab mercenary writers who wrote articles portraying Zionism's positive features and idealizing Jewish-Arab relations.²⁶⁰

The Zionist Intelligence Service

The first initiatives to establish an intelligence service that would recruit Arab agents and informers began immediately after the British conquest. **Nili**, one of the early Zionist defense organizations, was assigned the responsibility of establishing the Elected Assembly's Information Service. The office's staff was made up of residents of the *moshavim* (**Zionist farming villages established under Ottoman rule**) who already had built relations with many Arabs. These connections with the Arabs allowed Nili to gather hundreds of intelligence reports. Jews who did not work for the intelligence office but had their own connections with Arabs also gathered information and passed it to the intelligence office. Spies were recruited from among the Arabs to gather information about activities or locate weapons hidden in villages or among people.

In 1929, the United Bureau became responsible for gathering information. Certain mukhtars (village leaders) were agents of recruitment for the Zionist cause. After joining the Zionist Executive in 1933, Ben-Gurion also devoted more attention to the intelligence apparatus.

The Zionist Military Project

The Zionists' military preparations **started as early as 1920**, when the Hagana was established (its name literally means "defense" in Hebrew). The Hagana over time became the strong military arm of the Jewish Agency, the Zionist governing body that developed and implemented the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Orde Wingate, a British

259. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 23–26.

260. Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 28–31.

officer who became enchanted by the Zionist dream, devoted his life to training the members of the Hagana. He succeeded in transforming this paramilitary organization into a regular army. He attached the Hagana troops to the British forces during the Arab revolt. The Hagana also gained valuable military experience in Second World War, when many of its members volunteered for the British war effort. By 1948 the Jewish military forces were well prepared for the mission of ethnic cleansing.²⁶¹

Intelligence activities were an essential element in the preparation for ethnic cleansing. One of the first such activities was the development of **the Village Files project**. The precise details of the topographic location of each village, its access roads, quality of land, water springs, main sources of income, sociopolitical composition, and religious affiliations; the names of the mukhtars; its relationship with other villages; and the ages of individual men between sixteen and fifty were catalogued. After the 1936–1939 revolt, these files recorded a list of everyone who had been involved in the revolt, especially those who allegedly killed Jews. Regular members of the Hagana were involved in information gathering and discovering how to approach the villages in future military operations. They also were interested in recruitment of informants and collaborators.²⁶² This information was later instrumental in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine by Jewish agents.

The Jewish Agency

From the outset, the British mandatory authorities had allowed the Zionist movement to carve out an independent enclave for itself in Palestine as the infrastructure for a future state. In August 1929, the British authorized the establishment of the Jewish Agency to represent, lead, and negotiate on behalf of the Jewish settler community in Palestine in all aspects of British policy. Prior to 1929, the World Zionist Organization had served that function. **Many Jews denied the Zionist assertion that Jews throughout the world constituted a single nation; however, prominent US Jews like Louis Marshall welcomed the creation in Palestine of a cultural center to perpetuate the sacred Jewish literature, the teachings of the Jewish sages, and the tradition of Israel.** Wealthy American Jews such as **Marshall** and **Felix Warburg** assured Weizmann that Jewish Palestine's financial troubles were over. This is why in August 1929, when the Jewish Agency was established, Weizmann declared that the first phase of Jewish work in Palestine had been completed.²⁶³

The Jewish Agency proceeded to develop social, economic, and political agencies and institutions, including military and intelligence units. These organizations were

261. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 15–17.

262. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 17.

263. Engel, *Zionism*, 105–106.

the nucleus of an autonomous Jewish political authority within the Palestine mandate government. In reality, the Zionists had a state within a state.

The Histadrut

The Histadrut (the General Federation of Jewish Labor), which was established in 1920, was one of the most developed Jewish social institutions in Palestine. The Histadrut owned a construction cooperative, consumer and marketing cooperatives, a bank, and credit, insurance, and publishing institutions. The great majority of Jewish workers belonged to the Histadrut, and became one of the largest employers. The Histadrut provided comprehensive health insurance, training, education, placement, and pension programs not only to Jewish workers, but to the entire Jewish settler community, making it the most developed Jewish social institution in Palestine. The Jewish Health Council was established to coordinate all health services, including hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and pharmacies in most of the cities with large Jewish populations.

The British colonial government of Palestine contributed to the creation, protection, and unemployment relief of exclusive Jewish labor. The British facilitated the creation of a two-tier wage structure for Palestinian Arabs and Jews in both the private and public sectors. The wage rate of Jewish workers was as much as three times higher than that of the Palestinians.

The Zionist Movement during the British Mandate

The period between 1923 and 1928 could be described as a period of stagnation for the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement; the 1920s were also an era of disappointment for the Zionists, as they were unable to bring more immigrants to Palestine. The Zionists had hoped to bring large numbers of immigrants during the 1920s; one of the early actions of the new civil administration under Herbert Samuel was to enact **the first Immigration Ordinance on August 26, 1920**, fixing a quota of 16,500 for the first year.

Between 1918 and 1920, some sixty thousand Jews died in pogroms in Europe. As late as mid-1921, more than 200,000 Jews who had fled wartime fighting or postwar hostility remained without homes. **In the same year, the United States enacted an Emergency Quota Act restricting immigration, especially by Eastern European Jews. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Eastern European Jews were hoping to immigrate to Palestine.** The Zionist Organization (ZO) also had to finance basic services for Jewish immigrants, including housing, schools, and healthcare. However the organization was unable to handle more than a thousand immigrants per month, far fewer than the 16,500 families that Herbert Samuel had set as the country's economic absorptive capacity. Between 1919 and 1923 (the period known as the Third Aliyah), immigration ran to about 650 per month.²⁶⁴

During the early 1920s, the mandatory administration carried out multiple projects to improve and expand Palestine's highways, railroads, ports, and communications networks. In this process, it became one of the country's largest employers of Jewish and Arab workers. In addition, the mandate government encouraged private investments aimed at creating strong industrial economy. As a result of these measures, the Zionists were able to bring sixty thousand immigrants to Palestine between 1924

²⁶⁴Engle, *Zionism*, 93.

and 1926. As noted above (page XX), subsequent waves of immigration increased the Jewish population of Palestine to 28 percent.

The leaders of the Zionist project in Palestine worked both with and against the British during the mandate years. They went on to play key roles in the government of the state of Israel, and their actions and policies had far-reaching effects into the future.

Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky (1880–1940)

Vladimir Jabotinsky (see pages XX-XX) was born in 1880, in Odessa-Ukraine, which was part of the Russian empire. He studied in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. He earned his law degree from the University of Rome. He was a talented journalist, a powerful speaker, and an influential leader. He joined the Zionist movement in 1903.

Jabotinsky had a completely different strategy for the Zionist ideology in comparison to Weizmann's strategy. He was **anti-socialist**, a **"bourgeois,"** **presenting himself as the spokesman and advocate of the middle class and their economic interests.** His concept of the Jewish state was different from Weizmann's concept: **"A Jewish state on both sides of Jordan River; and social justice without class struggle."** Rather, Jabotinsky adopted Herzl's strategy: **"A Jewish state as a prerequisite of Jewish mass settlement in Palestine."** He believed that ending the Jewish exile (*galut*) could be effected once a charter for the colonization of Palestine was achieved.²⁶⁵ His plan was for wealthy Jews to buy Palestine from the Turks. In 1903, he had extensive discussions with Vyacheslav von Plehve, Russia's notoriously anti-Semitic minister of the interior, regarding this matter: "If the Russians would intervene with the Turks on behalf of Zionism . . . this would, at the same time, put an end to certain agitation."²⁶⁶ The Russians were concerned about the involvement of the Jews in the revolutionary socialist movement. Herzl, during the Zionist congress meeting in 1903, stated that he had had a secret meeting with Chaim Zhitlovsky, a leading Russian social revolutionary, in which he told him, **"I have just come from von Plehve. I have his positive, binding promise that in fifteen years, at the maximum, he will effectuate for us a charter for Palestine. But this is tied to one condition: the Jewish revolutionaries shall cease their struggle against the Russian government."**²⁶⁷

Jabotinsky was convinced that the Arabs would fight anything the Zionists did in Palestine, for they understood that any Zionist success would reduce their dominance in the country. Therefore, **he concluded, the Jewish national home could**

265. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 98.

266. Raphael Patai, ed., *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl* vol. 4, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 1520–21.

267. Lenni Brenner, *The Iron Wall: Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (London: Zed Books, 1984), 15.

develop only behind an “iron wall” of combined British and Jewish force. He was certain that Arabs would try to pierce the wall, but he was equally sure that repeated failure to do so would eventually lead them to accept the Zionist project.

Jabotinsky disputed the idea that the socialist proletariat ideology was essential for the Jewish national home. Jabotinsky believed that the Zionist Organization existed for a single purpose: to enhance the physical safety of Jews threatened by the hostility of non-Jews among whom they lived. He emphasized that only when Jews became a majority in Palestine and took over the reins of government would the Zionists have accomplished their true mission. He insisted that the ZO must encourage all Jews—capitalists, laborers, and shopkeepers alike—who wanted to come to Palestine, no matter what they might contribute to the economic restructuring of the Jewish people or the augmentation of the country’s absorptive capacity. In regard to the obligations of the mandate government toward the Zionist project, he rejected the Samuel-Churchill interpretation of the mandate, including the separation of Transjordan, and insisted that Britain should place the full resources of His Majesty’s government at the ZO disposal for the purpose of creating a Jewish majority and state in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River.

Clashes between Jabotinsky’s supporters and Weizmann’s advocates, who controlled the Zionist Organization, continued throughout the whole decade. Jabotinsky, who was elected to the ZO Executive in 1920, resigned in 1923, and subsequently organized the opposition Revisionist Party. From 1925 to 1935, Jabotinsky challenged the Weizmann labor alliance for ZO leadership. In 1935 the Revisionist Party left ZO and established the rival New Zionist Organization.

Jabotinsky’s biographers attribute to him the resurrection of Herzl’s “political Zionism.” Jabotinsky followed in Herzl’s footsteps when he negotiated with ruling circles in Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, and other states known for their anti-Jewish policies to formulate a plan for the evacuation of one million Jews from Eastern Europe. Herzl and Jabotinsky failed in their efforts to obtain a political charter. However, the “practical Zionists” under the leadership of Weizmann only succeeded in achieving their goal through obtaining a charter from Britain (i.e., **the Balfour Declaration, and the incorporation of that declaration in the British mandate of Palestine**). This success brought a different meaning to the debate between political and practical Zionism. The main issue of all Zionists then became the best strategies to maximize Jewish immigration into Palestine.

Jabotinsky’s new contribution to Zionist doctrine was the introduction of the concept of militancy to the Zionist movement. He introduced the idea of forming a “Jewish Legion” to fight beside the Allies for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of a “colonizing regime” as a prerequisite of Jewish mass immigration and settlement.

Early in 1915, Jabotinsky met with Jewish refugees in Cairo and proposed setting up a Jewish military unit which would fight the Turks on the side of the British

in Palestine. At that time, a former officer in the Russian army, **Joseph Trumpldor**, joined him in his project. Jabotinsky and Trumpldor approached General Maxwell, who at the time was not considering a military offensive in Palestine, and offered to use such a unit for mule transport at the Turkish front in Gallipoli. Trumpldor assembled 562 men in the Zion Mule Corps that was sent to Gallipoli. Jabotinsky then went to London to persuade the Zionist leadership to cooperate with his “Jewish Legion” idea. Although most of the Zionist leaders declined, he succeeded in 1917 in forming a unit of a few hundred Russian Jews that became known as the 38th Battalion.

While Jabotinsky was recruiting the 38th Battalion, the Zionist labor movement in Palestine—under the leadership of Ben-Gurion, who was also enthusiastic about the “Great Dream” of a Jewish army—were building up the 39th and 40th Battalions. These battalions were composed of Jewish volunteers from the USA, England, and Palestine. The three battalions, comprising almost five thousand men, arrived in Palestine between 1918 and 1919. Jabotinsky was promoting the idea that this force would garrison in Palestine after the war. The British military administration opposed this plan and demobilized the Jewish battalions.²⁶⁸

Jabotinsky continued to advocate for a legal Jewish military force in Palestine, even if such a force were to be under British command. However he failed to obtain British approval. On the other hand, the labor movement started to build up, illegally, the defense force called the Hagana.

Jabotinsky’s involvement in Zionist political activities in Palestine started in 1919, when the three Jewish Legion battalions were formed. **In January 1919, he became a member of the Zionist Commission and head of its political department.** He constantly defied and challenged Weizmann’s leadership. Most of the crucial decisions of the Zionist Organization were taken during heated and passionate debates with Jabotinsky. His goal was to conquer the established Zionist leadership from within the Zionist Commission. **When he failed, he founded the Revisionist Party in 1925, which took its name from the demand that the Palestine mandate be “revised” to include both sides of the Jordan River.** The political program of the Revisionist Party was based on the assumption that it would be possible to get Britain to participate actively in bringing about a Jewish majority in Palestine which would transform the National Home into a Jewish state.²⁶⁹ When this challenge proved unsuccessful, he resigned from the Zionist Organization and founded the **New Zionist Organization (NZO)** in 1935.

Among the aims and principles of the NZO were **the redemption of Israel and its land, the revival of its sovereignty and language; implanting in Jewish life the**

268. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 102.

269. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 105.

sacred treasures of Jewish tradition; a Jewish state on both sides of Jordan; and social justice without class struggle in Palestine.²⁷⁰

Jabotinsky tried to rally social and political forces capable of confronting the Weizmann labor coalition behind the NZO. In spite of his claim that Revisionism would and should unite all social trends in Zionism, his newspaper campaigned against the socialist parties. He supported the middle class, and praised the Jewish merchants and their role in economic progress and national commercial and social development. Jabotinsky declared, "If there is a class in whose hands the future lies, it is we: the bourgeoisie." The Revisionists earned the reputation of being fascists due to the viciousness of their propaganda attacks against socialists and their hatred of the kibbutzim. Furthermore, some members did not conceal their sympathy toward Hitler, who was described the savior of Germany, and Mussolini, considered the political genius of Italy.²⁷¹

World War II and the Nazi Holocaust were the turning point in the conflict between the labor Zionists and the Revisionists. The Revisionists rejoined the Zionist congress in Basel in 1946, and the NZO disappeared from the scene.²⁷²

The Revisionist position toward the Arabs is well described in Jabotinsky's paper, "**The Iron Wall**," which was published for the first time in Russia on November 4, 1923.

Emotionally, my attitude to the Arabs is the same as to all other nations—polite indifference. Politically, my attitude is determined by two principles. **First of all, I consider it utterly impossible to eject the Arabs from Palestine. There will always be two nations in Palestine—which is good enough for me, provided the Jews become the majority. . . .**

But it is quite another question whether it is always possible to realize a peaceful aim by peaceful means. For the answer to this question does not depend on our attitude to the Arabs; but entirely on the attitude of the Arabs to us and to Zionism. . . .

There can be no voluntary agreement between ourselves and the Palestine Arabs. Not now, nor in the prospective future. I say this with such conviction, not because I want to hurt the moderate Zionists. I do not believe that they will be hurt. Except for those who were born blind, they realized long ago that it is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting "Palestine" from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority.

My readers have a general idea of the history of colonization in other countries. I suggest that they consider all the precedents with which

270. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 110.

271. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 111–112.

272. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 113.

they are acquainted, and see whether there is one solitary instance of any colonization being carried on with the consent of the native population. There is no such precedent.

The native populations, civilized or uncivilized, have always stubbornly resisted the colonists, irrespective of whether they were civilized or savage. . . . Every native population, civilized or not, regards its lands as its national home, of which it is the sole master, and it wants to retain that mastery always; it will refuse to admit not only new masters but, even new partners or collaborators. . . .

There is only one thing the Zionists want, and it is that one thing that the Arabs do not want, for that is the way by which the Jews would gradually become the majority, and then a Jewish government would follow automatically, and the future of the Arab minority would depend on the goodwill of the Jews; and a minority status is not a good thing, as the Jews themselves are never tired of pointing out. So there is no "misunderstanding." The Zionists want only one thing, Jewish immigration; and this Jewish immigration is what the Arabs do not want. . . .

To imagine, as our Arabophiles do, that they will voluntarily consent to the realization of Zionism in return for the moral and material conveniences which the Jewish colonist brings with him, is a childish notion, which has at bottom a kind of contempt for the Arab people; it means that they despise the Arab race, which they regard as a corrupt mob that can be bought and sold, and are willing to give up their fatherland for a good railway system. . . .

We cannot offer any adequate compensation to the Palestinian Arabs in return for Palestine. And therefore, there is no likelihood of any voluntary agreement being reached. So that all those who regard such an agreement as a condition sine qua non for Zionism may as well say "non" and withdraw from Zionism.

Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population—behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach. That is our Arab policy; not what we should be, but what it actually is, whether we admit it or not. What need, otherwise, of the Balfour Declaration? Or of the Mandate? Their value to us is that outside Power has undertaken to create in the country such conditions of administration and security that if the native population should desire to hinder our work, they will find it impossible. . . .

In the first place, if anyone objects that this point of view is immoral, I answer: It is not true: either Zionism is moral and just, or it is immoral and unjust. But that is a question that we should have settled before we became Zionists. Actually we have settled that question, and in the affirmative. We hold that Zionism is moral and just. And since it is moral and just, justice must be done, no matter whether Joseph or Simon or Ivan or Achmet agree with it or not. There is no other morality.

In the second place, this does not mean that there cannot be any agreement with the Palestine Arabs. **What is impossible is a voluntary agreement. As long as the Arabs feel that there is the least hope of getting rid of us, they will refuse to give up this hope in return for either kind words or for bread and butter, because they are not a rabble, but a living people. And when a living people yields in matters of such a vital character it is only when there is no longer any hope of getting rid of us, because they can make no breach in the iron wall.** Not till then will they drop their extremist leaders whose watchword is “Never!” And the leadership will pass to the moderate groups, who will approach us with a proposal that we should both agree to mutual concessions.

Then we may expect them to discuss honestly practical questions, such as a guarantee against Arab displacement, or equal rights for Arab citizen, or Arab national integrity. And when that happens, I am convinced that we Jews will be found ready to give them satisfactory guarantees, so that both peoples can live together in peace, like good neighbors. But the only way to obtain such an agreement is the iron wall, which is to say a strong power in Palestine that is not amenable to any Arab pressure. **In other words, the only way to reach an agreement in the future is to abandon all idea of seeking an agreement at present.**²⁷³

Jabotinsky's view of colonialism in Palestine buttressed by the “iron wall” of a strong power was not new; the British had seen the potential for a hedge against a united Arabia around the turn of the century. The homogeneity of the Middle East—the shared culture, language, history, and aspirations of the Arab people—along with its wealth of resources and its lack of geographical barriers presented a threat to colonialist aims in the absence of the Ottoman Empire. There are rumors of an international committee formed in 1907 by **British prime minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to study possible ways to ensure the continuity of European colonial interests.** Allegedly, this committee produced a document that proposed planting a “foreign body . . . in the heart of [the Middle East] to prevent the convergence of its

273. “The Iron Wall,” <http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>, accessed November 17, 2023.

wings in such a way that it could exhaust its powers in never-ending wars.” Supposedly the Campbell-Bannerman document also recommended that the Western powers should promote disintegration, division, and separation in the region; establish artificial political entities that would be under the authority of the imperialist countries; and fight any kind of unity—whether intellectual, religious, or historical—and take practical measures to divide the region’s inhabitants. To achieve this, it was proposed that a “buffer state” be established in Palestine, populated by a strong foreign presence that would be hostile to its neighbors and friendly to European countries and their interests. Though the authenticity of the Campbell-Bannerman document cannot be confirmed, the historic events that followed, including the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot agreement, and the support by the British for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, would seem to corroborate its substance, or at the very least the intent behind it.²⁷⁴ Jabotinsky’s views are part and parcel of the same thinking, and his Revisionists aimed to take advantage of that synchronicity.

Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952)

Chaim Weizmann (see pages XX-XX) was the Zionist movement’s principal statesman during the British mandate. In 1920 he was **elected ZO president; he was the first de facto president of Israel in 1948, and was its first elected president as well, serving from 1949 to 1953.** On August 14, 1929, the British authorized the establishment of the Jewish Agency to represent, lead, and negotiate on behalf of the Jewish settler community in Palestine in all aspects of British policy. **Weizmann, the first president of the agency,** declared that the first phase of Jewish work had been completed and a new one was about to begin.

The birth of the Jewish Agency coincided with the beginning of the violent opposition from Palestine’s Arabs in August 1929, which started only nine days after the announcement of the establishment of the agency. Although the immediate cause of the 1929 Palestinian uprising was the dispute between the Jewish and Muslim communities over the Western Wall, the underlying reason, as the Shaw Commission’s report stated, was the Jewish immigration and land purchases that were depriving Palestinians of their livelihood.

Weizmann’s followers controlled the ZO during the 1920s. In 1931, they teamed up with Ben-Gurion’s Workers’ Party (**Mapai**), and the two groups managed to attract many Fourth Aliyah immigrants into institutions they controlled, especially the **Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish workers).** As mentioned on **page XX,**

274. Mohsen Mohammed Saleh, “Political Analysis: Is the Campbell-Bannerman Document Real or Fake?” Al-Zaytouneh Centre for Studies and Consultations, September 28, 2017. <https://eng.alzaytouna.net/2017/09/28/political-analysis-campbell-bannerman-document-real-fake/>, accessed October 30, 2023.

the Histadrut ran the country's largest labor organization, making it difficult for immigrants seeking jobs to find employment without its assistance. In 1927, the country witnessed an economic decline which affected immigration. Immigration dropped to a very low level in 1927 (2,713 down from 33,8010 in 1925), while almost twice as many left the country as came into it.

Weizmann viewed the Palestinians as an unimportant element; he compared them to the rocks of Judea, as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path. He repeatedly referred to the Palestinians as a "minor problem." His main focus was on the triangle formed by Damascus, Mecca, and Bagdad. Besides his effort to build a strong relationship with Emir Faysal, during the period between 1918 and 1920, Weizmann tried to build relationship with the Syrian (Arab) nationalists. He met with members of the Syrian community in Cairo in 1919. He believed that if he assured the Arabs of his moderation, it would be up to the British to take care of the Palestinian problem. Weizmann believed strongly that Faysal controlled the Palestinians.

However, the Palestinian resistance to the British mandate in the 1920s prompted Weizmann to realize the importance of the Palestinian element. As early as May 1920 he developed a plan aimed at exploiting family feuds, ambitions, and personal rivalries between community leaders, frictions between Bedouins and farmers, and tensions and conflicts between Muslims and Christians and between rural and urban elements. This plan, however, failed to achieve its goals. At the same time, his vision of creating better economic conditions for the Palestinians did not materialize; on the contrary, by 1929 the peasants as well as the urban laborers were in worse circumstances than they had been previously. The British Commission of Enquiry following the disturbances revealed how serious the problem of landlessness among Arab peasants was. In response to the events and to the commission's report, Weizmann recommended the transfer of the Arabs to other countries.

In the 1930s, Weizmann and Ben-Gurion accepted Peel's partition plan, which called for the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine and allowed massive immigration with no restrictions. Both believed that this "small state" was a first step toward colonizing all of Palestine. Weizmann accepted the partition concept as a temporary, expedient solution to serve for a single generation. He believed that Zionist cause was a fight of civilization against the desert, the struggle of progress, efficiency, health, and education against stagnation. He described Arabs as a primitive and backward people who were easily swayed by power, money, and success. They were treacherous and shifty, lacked moral values, and could not be relied upon to take a principled stand.²⁷⁵

The concept of transfer of Palestinians (i.e., ethnic cleansing) was the subject of intense discussion between Weizmann and the British. He offered to raise the

275. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 18–46.

necessary funds for such project. In a private discussion with Britain's prime minister Ramsay MacDonald and Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson, Weizmann suggested a roundtable conference be called with the Arabs to deal with this issue. At no time did he consider negotiating with the Palestinians themselves. Though these suggestions were not implemented, they were indicative of Weizmann's attitude toward Palestinians.

In 1930, the Zionist movement faced a crisis when the Passfield Commission proposed slowing down Jewish immigration and calling for a legislative council. In addition, the Jewish settlements were facing economic difficulties, and the Zionist movement had difficulties recruiting new immigrants. It was at this point that Weizmann, in a tactical retreat, introduced the idea of parity (equality in government between Jews and Arabs despite their actual numbers) as an alternative to representative self-government with an Arab majority. In line with this tactical flexibility, he made a statement in a press interview opposing the demand for Jewish majority in Palestine. This statement was repudiated by the Zionist congress, which led to Weizmann's resignation as president of the World Zionist Organization. His tactical flexibility, however, was an important factor in reversing the Passfield White Paper by MacDonald. The prime minister denied that the government was contemplating any prohibition of the acquisition of additional land by Jews, or of restricting Jewish immigration.

It is important to emphasize the following concepts that dominated Weizmann's thinking:

- **Non-recognition of the existence of the Palestinian national entity.** When Golda Meir was criticized for her widely published pronouncement that "there is no such thing as a Palestinian people," critics failed to note that this was the cornerstone of the Zionist policy, initiated by Weizmann and faithfully carried out by Ben-Gurion and his successors. This policy was pursued despite the tenacity with which the Palestinians asserted their national identity.
- **The concept of transfer of the Palestinians to other countries (ethnic cleansing).** This was also another cornerstone of the Zionist strategy under the leadership of Weizmann. It was not an accident that the idea of transfer was incorporated into the Peel plan for the partition of Palestine in 1937. Weizmann's transfer ideas were discussed directly with the Peel Commission.
- **The concept of the Jewish state as a progressive society to be built on the basis of social justice and democracy.** Weizmann supported the labor movement and its cooperatives and kibbutzim in opposition to capitalist elements in the Zionist movement.

David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973)

David Ben-Gurion, the first de facto prime minister of Israel, was elected prime minister from 1949 to 1953 and again from 1955 to 1963. He was the man who proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel in his “Declaration of the Jewish State” on May 14, 1948.

Ben-Gurion was born in Plonsk, Poland. His political career started at an early age; he founded a Jewish youth club known as **Ezra** in December 1900. In the fall of 1905, he joined the Social-Democratic Jewish Worker’s Party **Poali Zion** and identified himself as a Marxist. He immigrated to Palestine in 1906 at the age of twenty. A month after his arrival, he was elected to the central committee of Poali Zion, as well as the chairmanship of the party’s platform committee. This new party witnessed heated debate between a leftist faction favoring a strictly Marxist platform, emphasizing the “class struggle,” and the opposing nationalist faction headed by Ben-Gurion, emphasizing the Zionist ideology and the “national struggle” alongside the “class struggle.” Ben-Gurion opposed Arab membership in the party and the trade unions it was to establish. He urged the enforcement of the principle of *avodah ivrit* (employing only Jewish workers, not Arabs) in Jewish settlements.

In the fall of 1907, Ben-Gurion left Petah-Tikvah for Galilee. He spent most of the next three years pioneering in Galilean settlements. In the Galilee, he experienced violent conflict between Arabs and Jewish settlers. In 1908, he joined an armed group acting as watchmen at Sejera. In 1909, he volunteered with the Hashomer, a force of volunteers who helped guard isolated Jewish agricultural communities.

In 1912, he began full-time study in law school in Istanbul, which was interrupted in August 1914 by the outbreak of the First World War. During his stay in Istanbul he realized the great value of Ottoman citizenship. Most of the Jews in Palestine were not Ottoman citizens; in fact, more than forty thousand of them held Russian citizenship and could not elect or be elected to legislative or administrative office. His dream was to become a citizen, in order to be elected to the *mejlis* as representative of the Jews. He went far in his dream, as he hoped to become a minister in the Ottoman cabinet.

The outbreak of the war created a new situation. The Ottoman government abolished the capitulations on September 9, 1914 (see page XX). Jamal Pasha was appointed as commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army, a post that made him virtual dictator over Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. Jamal began a policy of arresting, exiling, and deporting Zionist activists, fearing they were collaborating with the enemy. On March 23, 1915, Ben-Gurion and his colleague Yitzhak Ben-Zvi were deported.

Ben-Gurion spent the next three years, between 1915 and 1918, in the United States. This was a critical period of his life, as he was trying to develop his own views toward the Palestinian Arabs. In January 1918, while in the US, Ben-Gurion and

Ben-Zvi published a book titled *Palestine, Past and Present*. In his chapter on population, Ben-Gurion wrote a sub-chapter entitled “The Origin of the Fellah.” Shabtai Teveth summarizes his thesis as follows.

[T]he fellahs had preserved ancient Jewish tradition through the centuries as well as the place-names cited in the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and *The Jewish Wars* of Josephus. . . . [Ben-Gurion] had no doubt that the fellahs were descendants of the country folk who had inhabited the land at the time of the Arab conquest in the seventh century. . . . [he] anticipated their eventual “assimilation” into the Yishuv.²⁷⁶

Ben-Gurion’s firm belief that Jews and fellahs were of the same blood prompted him, in 1920, to tell a visiting delegation of Poali Zion:

[T]he most important economic asset of the native population is the fellahs, the builders of the country and its laborers. . . . Under no circumstances must we touch land belonging to fellahs or worked by them. . . . They must receive help from Jewish settlement institutions, to free themselves from their dead weight of their oppressors, and to keep their land. Only if a fellah leaves his place of settlement should we offer to buy his land, at an appropriate price. [And if an effendi landowner sold land worked by fellahs] we must give the displaced tenants their own plots, and the means to cultivate such tracts more intensively. When this is impossible, the fellahs must receive land somewhere.”²⁷⁷

During their stay in the US, Ben-Gurion and Ben-Zvi were watching the war and attempting to predict the outcome. Initially they believed that Germany and Turkey would win, and they started a recruitment campaign for a “pioneer army” known as Hehalutz. They hoped to raise at least ten thousand volunteers who would proceed to Palestine when called, and there form “Jewish legions to fight for Palestine” on Turkey’s side. This recruitment campaign failed.

In December 1917, the British army under General Allenby invaded Palestine and established a military administration. An Allied victory appeared inevitable. Ben-Gurion admitted to having miscalculated the possible outcome of the war. He also realized the value of the Balfour Declaration to the Zionist program and described it as a miracle: “The greatest state in the world has announced its official recognition

276. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 30–31.

277. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, 31–32.

of the existence of a Hebrew nation, and has committed itself to aid in the establishment of a national home in Palestine.”²⁷⁸ In February 1918, he published an article in New York drawing the boundaries of the future Jewish state. He proposed that **the northern border would extend to the Litani River, to include Acre and Tyre. The eastern extremity of the northern border was to extend to the Oujja Wadi, thirty kilometers south of Damascus. The southern border would run much further to the south beyond the Palestine-Egypt border, to include Wadi al-Arish. Ben-Gurion preferred to regard the southern border as a mobile frontier that would eventually be pushed into the Sinai by the expansion of Jewish settlements. The eastern border was not the Jordan River, but would extend further east to the Syrian Desert; this, too, would be a mobile frontier.**²⁷⁹

In this article, Ben-Gurion described his territorial aspirations for what he called the Jewish “commonwealth,” an ambiguous term that means a state. He had begun to build a political doctrine since 1915, when he emphasized the difference between static and volatile periods in history; during great upheavals, he thought, was a time of unlimited possibilities, and such moments had to be exploited. In the aftermath of the Balfour Declaration, the time had arrived. In November 1917, he wrote: “We have made a sudden leap forward. An arduous road which we had planned to travel slowly and painfully has been shortened and straightened as if by a miracle, and we stand on the threshold of fulfillment.”²⁸⁰

The accelerated changes on the world political scene forced Ben-Gurion to clarify his position on the Palestinian Arabs’ rights. In his view, the rights of the Jews in Palestine were based on two pillars: **the right established by Jewish needs—the solution for any homeless people should and must be a homeland in its historical birthplace—and the right earned by creativity and work, the conviction that a land belongs to those willing and able to develop it. He did not emphasize the claim of the historical rights of a people to the land of its ancient forefathers.**

As for the Arabs, they had rights to those lands on which they lived and which they cultivated. But since they were incapable of reviving the land and restoring it from ruin, and cultivated only 20 percent of the country, the Jews had full rights to settle on the remnant. The Arabs had full rights to an independent economic, cultural, and communal life, but they did not have the right to rule the country. The future sovereignty of the country would be the right of the Jews alone.

In August 1918, Ben-Gurion arrived in Egypt from the US as a volunteer in one of the Jewish battalions. Shortly after his arrival, the battalion was joined by volunteers from Palestine, among them Berl Katznelson. Together they founded the new party **Ahdut Haavodah (United Labor)**, which comprised most of the right wing of Poali

278. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, 33.

279. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, 34–35.

280. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, 35–36.

Zion and the nonpartisan agricultural workers. The official, published aim of the new party was the establishment of a “workers’ commonwealth” in Palestine. The secret aim was the creation of a socialist Jewish state. In 1918 there were only 58,000 Jews in Palestine and Transjordan, and over a million Arabs, so it was too early to demand a state. The Zionists’ first task had to be the creation of a Jewish majority through large-scale immigration and settlement.

In 1920, Ben-Gurion assisted and subsequently became the general secretary of the Histadrut. **In 1930, Hapoel Hatzair and Ahdut Haavodah joined forces to create Mapai, the Zionist labor party, under Ben-Gurion’s leadership.** Ben-Gurion became involved in international Zionist politics in 1933, when he was elected to the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Executive. And in 1935 he became the chairman of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, a post he kept until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

Comparing Ben-Gurion and Weizmann

There were a number of differences between Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, representing variations in emphasis but not in strategy. Ben-Gurion was elected to the Zionist Executive during the most dynamic period of the Zionist movement in Palestine. During the years from 1933 to 1935, immigration was high, promising the achievement of numerical parity with the Arabs in a relatively short time. Weizmann, on the other hand, formulated his basic strategy during a period when Zionism was weak. During the 1920s, the Zionist project was dependent on the moral, financial, and political support of the Zionist movement and leadership abroad, especially in London. In the late 1920s and the 1930s, the center of gravity moved from London to Jerusalem.

Weizmann lived and operated in the circles of the British political elite. He was a statesman without a party, the spokesman for the world Jewry whose unique position was due to his intellect, political insight, charm, and diplomacy. Ben-Gurion was a militant trade unionist and labor politician who rose to prominence through sharp conflicts. He was a power-oriented politician. As the leader of the labor party, he aimed for the leadership of the working class; as the general secretary of the Histadrut, he aimed at establishing the power of the labor movement; and as chairman of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, he prepared the Jews to become the decisive factor in the Zionist movement.²⁸¹

Despite the contrasting personalities of the two Zionist leaders, Ben-Gurion agreed with Weizmann’s basic strategic concepts. Ben-Gurion believed that only through

281. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 136–137.

steady constructive work would the Jews be able to build an economic, political, and military force capable of creating the Jewish state. He also believed that an alliance between the Zionist movement and a great power was vital for its success. Ben-Gurion supported Weizmann's views that cooperating with the British was essential for the achievement of the Zionist goals. In the late 1920s, the labor movement was not represented in the Zionist Executive, and it opposed unconditional cooperation with the mandatory government. The labor Zionist leaders had reservations and criticism regarding Weizmann's position. Ben-Gurion supported Weizmann, and justified and defended Zionist cooperation with Great Britain. However, in the 1940s he realized that Great Britain's power in the Middle East was declining, and saw the emergence of the United States as a global superpower, and so he switched the alignment of the Zionist movement from Great Britain to the United States.

Ben-Gurion also shared Weizmann's opinion of the Arabs:

From the point of view of mentality, social outlook, public spiritedness and many other aspects, there is a marked difference and inequality between the two peoples. There is a difference between a nation living in the twentieth century, and people living in the fifteenth century, some of them in the seventh century. . . .²⁸²

Although we were an Oriental people, we had been Europeanized and we wished to return to Palestine in the geographical sense only. We intended to establish a European culture here, and we were linked to the greatest cultural force in the world.²⁸³

Like Weizmann, Ben-Gurion refused to recognize the Palestinian Arabs as a major party to the Arab-Jewish conflict. Rather, he viewed the problem as a confrontation between the Jewish nation and the Arab nation stretching over a vast territory from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. The ingathering of the Jewish nation into a small patch of Arab territory would not impede the realization of Arab unity in a sovereign state of their own. He stated:

Jewish immigration . . . could not endanger the social, political or national status of the Arabs, who in Eretz Israel constituted only a small part of a large and decisive community in this part of the world. Looking at the issues of the Palestinian Arabs from an overall Arab viewpoint, this was merely a question of a land less than 2% of

282. Testimony to UN Special Commission on Palestine, October 7, 1947.

283. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 132–133; Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders* (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1972), 50.

the total area occupied by the Arabs in the east, and containing 3% of the total number of Arabs in the world.²⁸⁴

Ben-Gurion formed his image of the Palestinian Arabs as an implacable and hostile enemy. His assessment of the Arab revolt of 1936–1939 is summarized in his speech at the Mapai political committee in 1938:

It is a national war declared upon us by the Arabs . . . This is an active resistance by the Palestinians to what they regard as a usurpation of their homeland by the Jews—that’s why they fight. . . . From the time of Sheikh Izz al-din al-Qassam it was clear to me that we were facing a new phenomenon among the Arabs. This is not Nashashibi, not the mufti, not a matter of a political career or money. Sheikh al-Qassam was a zealot ready to sacrifice his life for an ideal. Today we have not one, but hundreds, perhaps thousands [like him] . . . A people which fights against the usurpation of its land will not tire so easily . . . it is easier for them to continue the war and not get tired than it is for us But the fighting is only one aspect of the conflict which is in essence a political one. And politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves The land, the villages, the mountains, the roads are in their hands. The country is theirs, because they inhabit it; whereas we want to come here and settle down, and in their view we want to take their country.²⁸⁵

This accurate assessment of the deep-rooted character of the Arab revolt led him to a more militant position advocating the build up of Jewish military strength to confront the Arabs rather than serious negotiations for a solution. His contacts with the Arabs subsequent to his ascendancy to the Zionist leadership aimed at building up more fear among the Arabs. He believed that such fear might serve as a stimulus and an incentive for a temporary and tactical agreement. To achieve this goal he met with several Arab leaders throughout 1934–1936, **including Auni Abdel Hadi, Musa Alami, George Antonius, and Shakib Arslan**. In these meetings, he demanded that they accept a Jewish state in all of Palestine including Transjordan, and Jewish settlement in Syria and Iraq, in return for Zionist support for the establishment of an Arab federation that would include Palestine.

In a letter to the Jewish Agency Executive in June, 1936, he stated his position: “Only after total despair on the part of the Arabs, as a consequence of our growth in

284. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 135.

285. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 141–142.

the country, may the Arabs finally acquiesce in a Jewish Eretz Israel.” In a speech to the Jewish Agency Executive in October 1939, Ben-Gurion said: **“There is no example in history that a nation opens the gates of its country, because of necessity . . . but because the nation which wants to come in has explained its desire to it. I believe that an agreement will be reached when our power grows.”**²⁸⁶ These statements indicate clearly that Ben-Gurion’s position and views of the Palestinian Arabs were similar to Jabotinsky’s “iron wall” concept.

286. Ben-Gurion, speech to the Mapai Political Committee, June 7, 1938.

The Palestinian National Movement

The concept of a Palestinian national identity grew out of the Arab uprising. It was strengthened by the British occupation and the growth of a Zionist presence in the land.

Palestinian Influence in the Arab Revolt

During the Ottoman rule of Palestine, the notables of the urban elite (A'yan) played a major role in the Ottoman administration. They were members of the governor's council, which provided them formal access to Ottoman power. On their own, they possessed social power in their communities that afforded them access to the ruling authority; this access enhanced their local social position. They took care not to be perceived as an instrument of the central authority, and at the same time were careful not to challenge the authority too strongly to avoid the risk of being deprived of the access to the ruler. **They were the intermediaries between the government and the Palestinian population.** As a result, the notables defended the social order and were loyal to the Ottoman authority. Political stability helped them preserve their positions of influence and power. The Ottomans derived their legitimacy in the eyes of Muslims through the control of the holy cities. During the reign of Sultan Abd al-Hamid, notable families began to send their sons to Ottoman professional schools from which they entered the civil or military service. Joining the Ottoman "aristocracy of service" enhanced their power.

Although the Ottoman reforms of the second half of the nineteenth century (**the Tanzimat; see page XX**) succeeded in strengthening the power of the government in Cairo and Istanbul, they did not work in the outlying provinces like Palestine; on the contrary, the governors needed the notables more than ever because of the opposition which the new policies elicited.

The Young Turks' CUP coup was a turning point in the position of the notables. The Young Turks dismissed many of the notables from their positions in the central government in Istanbul and began the Turkification of the empire. Many of the notables shifted from Ottomanism to Arabism; however, until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, they stressed only the need for reforms within the Ottoman Empire through Arab autonomy and not through secession.

Throughout the war, most of the Palestinian notables took the Ottoman side. When the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany, many dominant Palestinian notables supported the sultan. Even Jamal Pasha's anti-Arab policy and the Arab revolt of 1916 did not change their position. A large number of Arab leaders maintained their loyalty to the Ottoman state despite Jamal's actions. On the contrary, some passed information on the Arab activists in Syria to the Ottoman authorities. As'ad al-Shuqayri was one of the first to report to Jamal Pasha about the revolt that was being planned by Arab nationalists in Syria. The execution, exile, and imprisonment of young Arab nationalists prevented them from making any significant contribution to the Hashemite's revolt.

Palestinian participation in the Arab nationalist societies was significant. Out of the 126 members of the secret societies, a total of twenty-five were Palestinians: thirteen were from Nablus, eight from Jerusalem, one each from Jaffa and Haifa, and two from Gaza. Of the 387 names who sent telegrams in support of the Arab congress held in Paris in June 1913, a total of 139 were Palestinians: forty-four from Nablus and its environs (Nablus was considered the Beirut and Damascus of Palestine). Several Palestinians played a major role in the organization of the Paris congress.

On the eve of the fall of Palestine in the autumn of 1918, political control was in the hands of the older notables. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire meant for these notables that Ottomanism was no longer a viable political ideology, so they turned toward Arab nationalism to protect their position of strength in local society. The younger Syrians, Palestinians, and Iraqis, who had either been officers in Faysal's army during the war or members of the secret societies, became the real masters of Faysal's regime.

As the British took control of Palestine, the older notables turned toward the new master and were ready to accept posts in the new administration. They were not ready to accept Zionism, but they were ready to cooperate with the British. They elected to present petitions against Zionism and the British Zionist policy to the British authority in Palestine. The British military administrators were unenthusiastic about the British Zionist policy in Palestine. As stated earlier, the three chief administrators during the military administration—General Money, Major General Watson, and Major General Bols—warned their government that the Palestinian Arabs were vehemently opposed to Zionism, and that the Zionist program would result in serious conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. The response from London was very clear:

the British colonial strategy was a solid one; the imperial plans of Britain in the Far and the Middle East would not change; and Britain was determined to create not just a national home for the Jews in Palestine, but a Zionist state.

The Arab nationalists from Palestine viewed Faysal's government in Damascus not just as the fulfillment of the dream of Arab independence, but more importantly a great source of strength in their struggle against Zionism. Tens of Palestinians played an active role in Faysal's administration. The most prominent members of this group were **Muhammad Izzat Darwaza**, **Rafiq al-Tamimi**, and **Awni Abd al-Hadi**. **Izzat** occupied several political positions—secretary of al-Fatat, secretary of the Nablus Muslim-Christian Association; secretary of the First Palestinian Arab Congress, which convened in Jerusalem in January 1919; secretary of the General Syrian Congress; and member of the leadership of al-Istiqlal party. **Rafiq al-Tamimi**, who attended al-Mulkiyya school in Istanbul, was awarded a grant by the Ottoman Ministry of Education to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. **Awni Abd al-Hadi**, who also attended al-Mulkiyya school in Istanbul, received a law degree in Paris. The Palestinian group focused most of their attention on the affairs of Palestine. They founded several political organizations in Damascus aimed at rallying support for the struggle against Zionism: **Jam'iyat al-Nahda al-Filastiniyya** (the Palestinian Renaissance Society), **al-Jam'iyya al-Arabiyya al-filistiniyya** (The Palestinian Arab Society) and **Jam'iyyat Fatat Filastin** (The Palestine Youth Society). The primary Palestinian organization in Damascus was **al-Nadi al-Arabi (The Arab Club)**; its main function was to promote the idea of pan-Syrian unity and to convince Faysal to reject any cooperation with the Zionists.²⁸⁷

Spreading Political Ideology

During the British rule of Palestine, the freedom and power held by the notables during Ottoman rule was lost despite the fact that they continued to be accepted by the Palestinian Arabs. During this period, more than forty Arab political associations emerged with a total of more than three thousand members. These associations can be classified into two groups: First was the older politicians, who belonged to the families whose members had been officers or civil servants in the Ottoman Empire; the second was the younger politicians, most of whom also came from influential aristocratic families, but had not been part of the Ottoman imperial bureaucracy.²⁸⁸

The older Palestinian politicians were represented by the **Muslim-Christian Association**. Most of the MCA notables came from the same class, and the same interests influenced their attitudes and behavior. They maintained their old tradition

287. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 146–151.

288. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 157.

of access to authority. They were cautious in expressing their discontent with the British policy. The British, like the Ottomans, needed intermediaries between the mandate authority and the Palestinian population, so the British military officers encouraged the establishment of the MCA. Years after the fact, **Sir Wyndham Deeds** (chief secretary of the Palestine government during the mandate period from 1920 to 1923) claimed to the head of the Arab Department of the Zionist Executive, **Hayyim Kalvarisky**, that the MCA received financial aid from the Palestine government.²⁸⁹

The MCA was merely a loose alliance of notables designed to penetrate society and incorporate new social forces. In the First Palestinian Congress in February 1919, the MCA declared its strong opposition to the Jewish national home and to Jewish Immigration, and stated that it considered Palestine part of Arab Syria. **Its objectives were defined as the preservation of the material and moral rights of the Palestinian people; the advancement of the agricultural, industrial, economic, and commercial conditions of the homeland; the revival of learning; and the education of the new “nationalist generation.”**²⁹⁰

The second group—the younger Palestinian politicians—founded two organizations: **al-Muntada al-Arabi** (the Literary Club) and **al-Nadi al-Arabi** (The Arab Club). **Al-Muntada** was originally founded in Constantinople in the summer of 1909 by Abd al-Karim al-Khalil of Tyre, Lebanon, and by a group of officials, deputies, men of letters, and students to act as a meeting place for Arab visitors and residents in the Ottoman capital. This club had branches in several towns in Syria and Iraq; its membership ran into the thousands. **Jamil al-Husayni** of Jerusalem was one of its most active members. In November 1918, the club reemerged in Jerusalem with a new political program. The club was largely dominated by prominent members of the **al-Nashashibi** family who did not belong to the Ottoman aristocracy of service. The club demanded complete Arab independence and the union of Palestine with Syria. Its active members worked diligently to rally support for Faysal in Palestine throughout 1919 and early 1920. Jerusalem was the center of the club, with several branches in other towns of Palestine.

Al-Nadi al-Arabi was founded by the younger members of **al-Husayni** family. **Muhammad Amin al-Husayni** was one of the prominent leaders of the club. The club was originally set up by Palestinian Arab Nationalists in Damascus as an offshoot of al-Fatat. The Damascus central organization of the club was dominated by Arab nationalists from Nablus. On behalf of the central committee of al-Fatat and al-Nadi al-Arabi in Damascus, **Dr. Hafiz Kanaan** of Nablus maintained contact with the Arab Club in Jerusalem. Muhammad Amin al-Husayni, in his capacity as the president of the club in Jerusalem, met frequently with Kanaan in Nablus and agreed to work within the framework of the instructions of Faysal’s administration in Damascus.

289. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 160.

290. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 162.

Through al-Fatat, Kanaan also rendered financial assistance to the Jerusalem branch of the club. Members of al-Nadi al-Arabi cooperated with al-Muntada in promoting the idea of pan-Syrian unity in Palestine. The two clubs arranged for a joint appearance before the King-Crane Commission in the summer of 1919, and submitted joint petitions demanding unity with Syria to the British military authorities in Palestine.

In Palestine, al-Nadi al-Arabi spread its ideas through mosques, the press, and active mobilization in several Palestine towns and villages. The newspaper *Suryia al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria) was founded in Jerusalem in September 1919 and edited by two members of the club, Muhammad Hasan al-Budayri and Arif al-Arif. The president of the club, Muhammad Amin, campaigned among the Palestinian Arab peasants and city dwellers propagating anti-Zionism and unity with Syria and Palestine. He played a significant role in the demonstrations of the Muslim al-Nabi Musa of April 1920. The club devoted efforts to establishing schools and medical clinics for the poor, and delivered speeches about social and literary topics.

These two clubs were behind the establishment of a secret organization, **Jami'yyat al-Ikha' wal-Afaf (the Association of Brotherhood and Purity)**, whose membership did not exceed two hundred. Set up to carry out violent actions, it lasted for less than a year. Associated with this organization, another society, **al-Fida'iyya** (Self-Sacrificer), was established initially in **Jaffa** in early 1919 and lasted until 1923. Branches of this organization were established in Jerusalem, Gaza, Tulkarm, Lydda, Ramla, Nablus, and Hebron. It was in close contact with Damascus. Every member took the oath upon enlistment that a traitor should be killed by his own friend. According to Zionist and British source material, these organizations were providing their members with small arms, preparing a list of prominent Zionists and their collaborators, and contacting the Bedouins of Transjordan to gain support.²⁹¹

Jerusalem, the most important city in Palestine, derived its importance from being the Holy City. The notables of Jerusalem were the most influential in Palestine. The main notable families of Jerusalem were the Husaynis, the Nashashibis, the Khalidis, the Alamis, and the Jarallas. **The Husaynis and the Nashashibis dominated the political scene in Palestine through the entire mandate era.** Their political ideology was initially the same with minor differences: both chose to cooperate with the mandate government, justifying this conduct as being the most effective strategy to achieve nationalist goals.

The older notables, including the Husaynis and the Nashashibis, had almost the same ideology in regard to their opposition to Zionism, the Balfour Declaration, and the British mandate. They advocated nonviolent means in their opposition to the Zionist policy of the mandate government. They were almost in a state of denial regarding the real strategic goals of Great Britain's plans to establish a Jewish state in

291. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, 170.

Palestine. The main motive of the Balfour Declaration was **“the protection of British imperial interests in India, the Persian Gulf, and the Suez Canal.”** Even those who acknowledged Britain’s true goals continued to believe that the right action was to try to change the British strategy. Some of them certainly collaborated with the British and even with the Zionists.

The relationship of the mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, with the British was completely a different arrangement. From the start, he signed an agreement with Herbert Samuel that he would use his position as the mufti of Jerusalem and the president of the Supreme Muslim Council to maintain peace and to prevent violence. He stood strong behind his promise and fulfilled his duty as an employee of the British mandate government.

Between 1923 and 1928, the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement was in state of stagnation due to the disunity between the different factions of the notables (**mainly the conflict between the two families, the Husaynis and the Nashashibis**). In November 1923, the Nashashibis founded what they claimed to be the **moderate Palestine Arab National Party**. Its leading figure was **the mayor of Jerusalem, Ragheb Bey Nashashibi**, and its permanent characteristic policy was opposition and hostility toward the Husayni family. Its program that was presented to the public featured an **Arab Palestine, a representative government, and an end to Zionism**. **But in fact, the party was prepared to accept the reality of British mandatory rule. Although it was verbally hostile to Zionism (in public), the party enjoyed covert financial support from the Palestine Zionist Executive. Moreover, of those Palestinians who sold land to Jews, the majority were members of the Palestine Arab National Party.**²⁹²

This party was able to broaden its presence in the country by building a coalition of notables opposed to the Palestine Executive and to the Supreme Muslim Council. They gained the support of Sheikh Suleiman Taji al-Faruqi of Ramleh, Sheikh As’ad Shuqayri of Acre, and several wealthy westernized Muslims. They also were able to get the support of prominent Christians such as the editors of the two leading independent Arabic newspapers in Palestine, *Filastin* and *al-Karmel*, which both came to support the new party.

In 1926, Hajj Amin faced a setback at the Supreme Muslim Council when the High Court annulled its elections because of irregularities. The mandate government intervened and saved the day for Hajj Amin by appointing new members from among his supporters. In 1927, Hajj Amin faced another setback when his opponents scored a convincing victory in municipal elections all over the country. From 1924 onward, the Palestinian Executive lost a significant degree of influence in Palestine’s politics, which was reflected during the meeting of the **Seventh Palestine Arab Congress** in

292. Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 220–221.

Jerusalem in 1928. This loss was obvious in the moderation of its resolutions and in the composition of the newly elected executive committee. However, Hajj Amin was able to regain his strong position as the most prominent Muslim leader in Palestine during the events of August 1929 (the Western Wall riots).

The 1929 Palestinian Uprising

In the seventh century, long after the Temple of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans (see page XX), the entire temple compound, including the Western Wall, became the property of a **Muslim trust (waqf)**. Most of Jerusalem's Jews were not Zionists; their presence in the city was of a religious nature. They used to practice some of their religious traditions at the Wall. In 1918, the Zionist leaders began trying to buy the Wall area from the waqf. The Muslim officials of the waqf rejected the offer, feeling that the Zionists were trying to acquire the waqf holdings as a part of their plans to construct a Jewish building within the holy Muslim compound. The Muslims' fears prompted the waqf officials to begin constructing a building within the compound overlooking the Wall. The Zionist leaders appealed to the mandatory authority to stop the work, complaining about the noise and the structural changes to the site. The construction work stopped temporarily and then was resumed in July 1928. **Jabotinsky's followers organized a protest on August 14, 1928**, expanding their activities and bringing many objects to the site. The following day, the Muslims called for a counter-demonstration at the Wall, at which the Jewish religious objects that had been brought by the worshipers to the site were burned. The next week rumors were circulated among the Palestinians that the Zionists intended to destroy the principal Muslim shrine (**al-Aqsa**). In response to these rumors, the Muslims attacked the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem. Over the next five days, the attacks grew in intensity and spread throughout the country, resulting in the deaths of 133 Jews and 116 Arabs.

The British government dispatched an investigating commission headed by **Sir Walter Shaw** in order to determine the cause of the violence. **The Shaw Commission's March 1930 report concluded that Zionist land purchases had created a "landless and discontented class" within the Arab peasantry.** The Commission defined Britain's principal task in Palestine as holding the balance between the two communities, and urged the mandate government to restate its policy so as to remove any impression of favoritism toward Jews.²⁹³

The government in London stopped issuing immigration certificates to Jews, and commissioned an economic adviser, **Sir John Hope-Simpson**, to examine the

293. Engel, *Zionism*, 109.

questions of immigration, land settlement, and development. In October 1930, Hope-Simpson interviewed representatives of 104 Arab villages and found that 30 percent of Arab cultivators had been deprived of their livelihood from agriculture. Substantial growth of the Palestinian Arab population during the decade combined with increased land sales to the Jews had created landless Palestinians. Hope-Simpson described the situation in the rural areas: “Evidence from every possible source tends to support the conclusion that the Arab fellah [peasant] cultivator was in a desperate position. He has no capital for his farm. He is, on the contrary, heavily in debt, he has to pay very heavy taxes, and the rate of interest on his loans is incredibly high.”²⁹⁴

Hope-Simpson concluded his report with a number of specific and general policy proposals. For immediate relief, he recommended ending imprisonment for debt, exemption from taxation for low-income peasants, credit and education for peasantry; and for the longer term, extensive agricultural development programs. He strongly argued, as did the Shaw Commission, for regulation of land transfer and tight restrictions on immigration. He recommended that the policy of the mandate government in regard to Jewish immigration must be determined by unemployment in Palestine overall, not just in the Jewish community. He acknowledged, “It is wrong that a Jew from Poland, Lithuania, or the Yemen should be admitted to fill an existing vacancy, while in Palestine there are already workmen capable of filling that vacancy, who are unable to find employment.”²⁹⁵ The colonial secretary, Lord Sidney Webb Passfield, issued a document which became known as Passfield White Paper, based on the recommendations of Hope-Simpson and the Shaw Commission. In addition, the Passfield White Paper proposed that it was time to develop institutions for self-rule in Palestine.²⁹⁶

The Passfield White Paper came under vigorous attack by the Zionists and pro-Zionists in Britain and Palestine, which overwhelmed the minority government of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and prompted him to reverse the policy changes suggested in the Passfield White Paper. This policy reversal, expressed in a clarification in front of the British House of Commons and in a communication sent to Weizmann (labeled the “black letter” by Palestinians), kept in place the very social, economic, and institutional processes that the British authorities had determined to be the causes of the disturbances in Palestine. These processes picked up momentum in the first five years of the 1930s and led to the greater Palestinian revolt of 1936, which stood not only against the Jewish settlers but also directly against British rule.

294. Hope-Simpson report, 64. The Hope-Simpson report is available at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hope-simpson-report>, with page numbers given in the text. Accessed 10/27/23.

295. Hope-Simpson report, 136.

296. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 102–103.

Meanwhile, Mufti Amin al-Husayni transformed the religious conflict into a political one. His position as the president of the Supreme Muslim Council, being responsible for all waqf property, including the Western Wall, prompted him to defend the Muslims' claim. The mufti believed that the influence of the Zionists in London and United States, which became more obvious after **the establishment of the Jewish Agency in 1929**, could lead to the loss of Muslim control over this important waqf property. In November of 1929, he developed a new strategy aimed at publicizing the issue among the Palestinians and the Arab and Muslim worlds in order to unite them behind this issue and use their collective power to influence British policy.

The mufti claimed that he had fought both the British and the Zionists during the Western Wall controversy because he realized that the British were supporting the Zionist claims. Almost all his statements and actions, from September 23, 1928 until September 1929, indicate that he cooperated with the British during this critical period. When he was asked to suspend renovations at the Wall until the law officers of the Crown reached a decision about the legality of the action, he agreed. He promised the high commissioner to help maintain order, as he believed in Britain's tradition of justice.

The events of 1929 in Palestine were the turning point in the history of the Palestinian resistance. Until then, the leadership of the Palestinian National Movement had been in the hands of the traditional notables who cooperated with the British and advocated nonviolence, limiting their activities to petitions or sending delegations to London. They were interested in protecting their privileges that they earned from the British in return for good behavior. Many of them were employed by the British administration. Hajj Amin, as the mufti of Jerusalem, was an employee who served the high commissioner.

The Palestine Arab Executive adopted a policy of cooperation with the British from the outset. The president of the executive, Amin al-Husayni, continued to cooperate with the British in spite of significant opposition and rejection by the Palestinian masses, even after British prime minister **Ramsay MacDonald had reversed course on the Passfield White Paper**. As the moderate political-diplomatic tactics of the elite Palestinian leaders failed to achieve any gains for the national cause, a new tone of militancy started to dominate newspaper articles, reports, and public speeches challenging the traditional notables' leadership. This militancy gained stronger ground when the British authority hanged three Palestinian heroes—**Muhammad Jamjum, Fu'ad Higazi, and Ata al-Zayr**—who had participated in the August 1929 disturbances. The execution of the three martyrs led to a general strike and a commemorative celebration.

The challenge to the executive leadership manifested itself politically as well as militarily. A new political party called **al-Istiqlal (Independence Party)** was founded in August 1932. This group promoted active opposition to both the

British and the Zionists, and opposed the moderate methods of the executive as ineffective and nonproductive. The leaders of the new party—Akram Zu'ayter, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Izzat Darwaza, and Ahmad al-Shuqayri—were independent, intelligent, articulate men who appealed to the emerging militant youth.

A stronger challenge to the elite leaders came from a secret religious organization led by **Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam**, a man of integrity and eloquence. **Al-Qassam** was born in Syria; he took refuge in Palestine in the early 1920s after being sentenced to death by French colonial authorities for leading the resistance to French occupation. He settled in Haifa among the urban poor and displaced peasants. He founded al-Istiqlal Masjid (Independence Mosque), where he preached his revolution (jihad), attracting workers as well as peasants from nearby villages, buying weapons, and training fighters. He spoke out fiercely against British rule and Zionist colonization, advocating spiritual renewal and political militancy as the appropriate means for defeating these dangers and achieving national goals. In the mid-1920s al-Qassam contacted the mufti of Jerusalem and demanded that waqf money be spend on arms rather than mosque repairs. Amin, who did not believe in military struggle, rejected this demand.

In November 1935, al-Qassam and his men took to the hills of northern Palestine with the aim of raising the countryside in revolt. **Al-Qassam's guerrillas were ambushed in Ya'abad Forest, where the sheikh and three of his followers fell in battle with British forces on November 20, 1935.** The martyrdom of al-Qassam and his men electrified the Palestinian masses. A large number of youths throughout Palestine formed guerrilla bands, calling themselves **Ikhwan al-Qassam** (Brothers of al-Qassam). Indeed, al-Qassam achieved more in death than he did during his fifteen years of preaching.

The Revolt of 1936–1939

On April 15, 1936, **Ikhwan al-Qassam** killed two Jews in a bus ambush; this triggered retaliation by the Hagana, who murdered two Palestinians. These incidents were followed by counterattacks and killings in Jaffa and Tel Aviv; and on April 19, 1936, the Palestinians launched the general strike that evolved into the 1936–1939 revolt.

The strike was declared on April 19, 1936. The decision to strike was taken by committees in **Nablus, Jaffa, Haifa**, and other cities and towns throughout Palestine. The committees were composed of **Istiqlalists, Ikhwan al-Qassam**, and other nationalist groups. The Istiqlalists wanted to widen support for the strike; so they contacted the Palestine Arab Party headed by Jamal al-Husseini, the National Defense Party headed by Raghیب al-Nashashibi, the Reform Party headed by Husayn al-Khalidi, the National Bloc headed by Abd al-Latif Salah, and the Youth Congress headed

by Ya'qub al-Gusayn. The representatives of the above-mentioned parties formed **the Arab Higher Committee (ACH), with Hajj Amin as president.** The Christian community was represented by **Alfred Rock, a Greek Catholic, and Ya'qub Faraj, a Greek Orthodox Christian.** **Awni Abd al-Hadi and Ahmad Hilmi Abdul al-Baqi were elected general secretary and treasurer respectively.** Thus the committee represented all factions: moderates and radicals, Muslims and Christians. **The actual leadership in the first few months was in the hands of young radicals with whom the AHC consulted before making public statements or policy decisions.** The committee declared its determination to achieve three major demands: first, a complete halt to Jewish immigration; second, a prohibition on the transfer of Arab lands to Jews; and third, the establishment of a national government responsible to a **representative council.**

The British response to the strike was extremely harsh, aimed at crushing the civil disobedience. The mandate government enacted regulations authorizing deportation, collective punishment, and search without warrant. Other actions followed: arresting Arab leaders or deporting them to the **Seychelle Islands in the Indian Ocean,** imposing tough curfews, closing down newspapers, bringing reinforcements from Egypt and Malta, and increasing the Jewish police force. The British also permitted the use of Tel Aviv port to replace the Jaffa port, which was crippled by the Arab strike, to receive Jewish immigrants. These harsh measures taken by the British antagonized the Palestinians further, pushing the civil disobedience into full-fledged revolt and armed struggle.

Although Hajj Amin, under public pressure, accepted the Arab Higher Committee's presidency, he did not wholeheartedly adopt the tenets of the revolt. The revolt had a force of its own that he could not control and which, in fact, forced him into a position he was hesitant to adopt. The mufti tried to limit the general strike and to keep it from becoming a violent revolt. During the first few months he vacillated, not knowing which course to take. The high commissioner apparently was aware of the dilemma in which the mufti and other members of the committee had placed themselves. In a letter to the colonial secretary, Hajj Amin expressed his understanding of the behavior of those leaders. He understood their position and the demand of the Palestinian masses that forced them to support the strike. The high commissioner realized that at that moment the notables were powerless and would have to endorse the strike. The British requested an end to the strike from the Arab Higher Committee, proposing in return to appoint a royal commission to look at the Palestinian grievances. Although the Arab Higher Committee rejected the offer, on May 15, 1936, the pro-mufti newspaper *al-Liwa* issued an appeal calling upon the public to avoid violence and to use peaceful means.²⁹⁷

297. Philip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 74–76.

As the revolt became more widespread and violent, the British took harsher actions, including blowing up houses of Palestinians suspected of harboring rebels, attacking and damaging mosques, and imposing fines on villages supporting the rebellion. In response to these measures, the **Arab Higher Committee** repeated its appeal to the Palestinians not to resort to violent actions. At the same time, the committee called on the rulers of the neighboring Arab countries to intervene on their behalf with the British government. Hajj Amin did not want Transjordan's Emir Abdullah to intervene, because of his involvement with the British, the Nashashibis, and the Zionists. However, Abdullah had received a suggestion from **Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency** that the Jews would support Abdullah as the head of the Palestinians if he recognized the Zionists' interests in Palestine. In addition, **Nuri al-Sa'id of Iraq and Ibn al-Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia** sent an appeal to the Higher Committee to end the general strike and the rebellion, because "We rely on the good intentions of our friend Great Britain, who has declared that she will do justice." The committee accepted the appeal.²⁹⁸

The British then appointed a royal commission called the **Peel Commission** to investigate the reasons behind the uprising. **It arrived in Palestine on November 11, 1936, and published its report on July 7, 1937.** This commission concluded that the cause of the revolt was the Arab fear of the establishment of the Jewish national home and their desire for national independence. It recommended the abolishment of the mandate except in a "corridor" surrounding Jerusalem, stretching to the Mediterranean coast at Jaffa. It also recommended a **partition plan**, creating a **Jewish state** in the mid-west and north of Palestine; and an **Arab state** in the south and mid-east. The part allotted to the Palestinians was to be united with Transjordan, under the rule of Emir Abdullah. The Peel Commission recommended the exchange of population, which would affect 225,000 Arabs and 1,250 Jews, even if such an exchange took the form of compulsory transfer.²⁹⁹

On July 8, 1937, the Higher Committee sent a long memorandum to the British government in response to the Peel Commission's proposal. The memorandum, signed by the mufti, **demanding the cessation of immigration and of land sales to Jews, and the establishment of a national democratic government, with a treaty agreement safeguarding Britain's interest in Palestine and protecting all legitimate rights of the Jews.** The mandate authority viewed the mufti's response as a deviation from his usual cooperative behavior, and on July 17, 1937, **Wauchope, the British high commissioner**, sent the police to **arrest the mufti** while he was attending a committee meeting. Warned in advance (perhaps by a British friend), he escaped through a back door to the Haram al-Sharif. (He stayed in the Haram, conducting his duties as the head of the Higher Committee, until the night of October 14,

298. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 79–80.

299. Suárez, *Palestine Hijacked*, 50–51.

1937, when he climbed down the walls of the Haram, was driven to Jaffa, and fled to Lebanon.)³⁰⁰

Violence resumed in late July and August 1937. The mufti, who was still in the Haram, appealed to the Palestinians to refrain from violent action. **But in September 1937, L. Y. Andrews, the district commissioner of Galilee, was murdered by Palestinian extremists.** The mandate authority's reaction was very harsh. The Arab Higher Committee was declared illegal, and two hundred leaders were arrested and deported to the Seychelles. The rebellion escalated in October, after Mufti Hajj Amin left Palestine. A rebel headquarters known as al-Lajna al-Markaziyya li-l-Jihad was set up at Damascus, administered by Izzat Darwaza under the guidance of the mufti. The role of the committee in Damascus was not to control the rebels' activities in Palestine, but to coordinate between the rebels and the exiled political leadership. Another important function of the Damascus committee was the dissemination of information about revolutionary activities. The local rebel leaders were completely independent.³⁰¹

The revolt was autonomous and spontaneously organized in the countryside. The rebels organized themselves into **guerrilla bands (*fasa'il*)** of a few men with a leader (***qa'id***). Guerrilla *fasa'il* often used hit-and-run tactics, at night and usually in their local areas. Later on, and after the arrival of Fawzi al-Qawuqji, a military man of Syrian heritage, the guerrillas operated under a regional or national command structure. They became more effective upon integration into a nationally coordinated structure. Often, however, they responded spontaneously when British troops advanced on or encircled neighboring villages. The local guerrilla bands had the advantage of small size and knowledge of the terrain to escape and hide among their people.

Recruitment of fighters varied from voluntary enrollment to selection by family (***hamula***) to selection by village elders. Taking care of the ***tha'ir* (rebel)** was the responsibility of the whole family; they collected money to purchase his rifle and provide for all his needs. Peasant families contributed men, money, food, and shelter enthusiastically. The rebels gained control of much of the countryside. They developed systems of taxation for supplies and armaments. Rebels also had their own courts to settle disputes among villagers, as well as to rule in civil conflicts and criminal cases.

The revolt intensified and reached its climax in the summer of 1938. Major Palestinian cities, including Jerusalem, joined the rebellion. This development prompted the British to launch an all-out campaign to crush the revolt. They had two divisions, squadrons of airplanes, the police force, the Transjordan frontier forces, and six thousand Jewish auxiliaries. British forces outnumbered the Palestinians ten to one. The British utilized other tactics, such as encouraging and assisting disaffected notables and their peasant clients to establish local counterrevolutionary groups called "peace bands." These groups were used as informers or fighting forces to battle the rebels.

300. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 81–82.

301. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 82–83.

During the revolt years, the Arab community suffered nearly twenty thousand casualties (5,032 dead and 14,760 wounded). About 110 were hanged. And by the end of 1939, the Palestinian people became exhausted; the harsh measures utilized by the British at last succeeded in suppressing the revolt. The Palestinian parties were made illegal, Palestinian leaders were detained, thousands of activists and fighters were put in prisons or concentration camps, and the community was disarmed.

In May 1939, the British government issued a **White Paper** that declared its opposition to Palestine becoming a Jewish state. It stated that Jewish immigration would be limited to 75,000 over the next five years and that land sales would be strictly regulated, and affirmed that an independent Palestinian state would be established over the next ten years, with interim steps toward self-government. The implementation of the 1939 White Paper's policies was not conditional on Palestinian or Zionist acceptance; in fact, the provisions concerning immigration and land transfer were implemented.

The Mufti in Exile

Mufti al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni tried to lead the Palestinian National Movement from his exile in Lebanon, and to resume the armed struggle. However, Palestinian society was economically devastated, and had been politically and militarily crushed as a result of the harsh British policies. The French in Lebanon restricted Hajj Amin's political activities, and he was under virtual house arrest. The French were pressuring him to announce his support for the Allies. Under such pressure, he had no choice but to escape to Iraq. He arrived in Baghdad via Syria on October 13, 1939.

In Baghdad, the Iraqi politicians, including the pro-British prime minister **Nuri al-Sa'id**, welcomed him. The British asked the Iraqi prime minister to obtain a promise from the mufti not to get involved in politics. He pledged not to interfere in Iraqi politics, but his pledge did not include, in his mind, political activities on behalf of Palestine and the Arab nationalism.

The Iraqi public regarded the mufti as the leading Arab nationalist. He spent the first few months establishing personal relationships with the political and military elite. The Iraqi people resented the politicians who were collaborating with the British, especially Nuri al-Sa'id. Complete independence and an end to British control over Iraq was on the mind of all Iraqis, as were the Palestine question and the British atrocities against the Palestinians. Between November 1939 and June 1940, thirty Arabs were condemned to death in Palestine in secret British trials. **Nuri al-Sa'id refused a request from the mufti to intercede with the British to spare the life of a rebel.** The mufti became furious, telling an Iraqi friend that the Arab nation would be threatened with ruin if people like Nuri were to direct its affairs.

Nuri was unpopular; in fact, many considered him a traitor.³⁰² He resigned and was replaced by Rashid Ali al-Kilani in March 1940. Al-Kilani needed the support of the “Golden Square,” a Pan-Arab anti-colonialist group of four officers who had been an important factor in Iraq politics since the late 1930s. The mufti invited the colonels, with whom he had considerable influence, to his house and convinced them to support al-Kilani.

In July 1940, the Iraqi government made an attempt at conciliation between the British and the mufti. A firm proposal was drawn up in which the mufti accepted the White Paper of 1939 as the basis for settlement of the Palestine problem. In return for British implementation of the White Paper—which restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine to 75,000 over a five-year period, restricted land purchases, and pledged independence for Palestine, with an Arab majority, after ten years—the mufti agreed to support the British war effort, and the Iraqis would supply two divisions to fight with the British forces. **Winston Churchill rejected this proposal; at the same time, he accepted the Zionist request to organize a Jewish brigade in Palestine.**³⁰³

These events prompted the mufti to prepare for a revolt against Britain and France. A secret Arab committee composed of leaders from Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan was established. Their goal was to achieve independence through rebellion and then to unite the liberated Arab countries into an Arab nation. Mufti Amin then conducted negotiations with the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) between July 1940 and April 1941, aimed at receiving material and diplomatic support for the revolt.

The mufti, by the late 1940s, was considered the most influential and respected man in Iraq. The British considered kidnapping or killing him. Churchill approved his assassination in early November 1940. General Percival Wavell, head of the Middle East Command, ordered the release, from a Palestine jail, of **David Raziel, a leader of the outlawed underground Zionist organization Irgun, and a few of his companions, and assigned them mission of going to Iraq and assassinate the mufti.** However, a German plane killed this terrorist group on May 20, 1941, before they could carry out their mission.

On April 1, 1941, a military coup led by the four colonels of the Golden Square established a new regime in Baghdad and named al-Kilani as prime minister. The British responded by sending reinforcement troops from India, Palestine, and Transjordan. After a month of fighting, the British forces crushed the Iraqi forces. The four colonels were captured and hanged by the pro-British government of Nuri al-Sa’id. The mufti and his colleagues managed to escape from Baghdad on the night of May 29, 1941, arriving in Iran, where Riza Shah gave them political asylum. In June–July of 1941, Britain and Russia invaded Iran, and Riza Shah abdicated in favor of his son Muhammad Riza,

302. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 91–92.

303. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 93.

who agreed to cooperate with the British. Hajj Amin remained in hiding in Tehran for several weeks. Then, on September 23, 1941, he managed to escape to Italy via Turkey and Bulgaria.

The mufti met with Mussolini in Rome in October, 1941, where he outlined the Arab aspirations: full independence for all parts of the Arab world and the rescue of Palestine from British imperialism and Zionism. He was encouraged by Mussolini's response; however, he was hoping for a public declaration to follow the private conversation. After two days in Italy, he left for Berlin to speak with Hitler, meeting him on November 28, 1941. Again he stated the Arab national aspirations and requested a public declaration from Hitler stating unequivocal support for the Arab cause. Hitler firmly opposed such a declaration; instead, a secret agreement was reached wherein Germany and Italy were ready to "grant to the Arab countries in the Near East, now suffering under British oppression, every possible aid in their fight for liberation; to recognize their sovereignty and independence; to agree to their federation if this is desired by the interested parties; as well as to the abolition of the Jewish National Homeland in Palestine."³⁰⁴

After the defeat of Germany in 1945, the mufti left Austria for Paris, where he was placed under "residential surveillance." He later managed to escape to Egypt, where King Faruq granted him protection and hospitality. He continued to support the cause of Arab independence until his death in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1974.

Husayn bin Ali and His Sons

Husayn bin Ali, formerly the sharif and emir of Mecca and king of the Hijaz, became alienated from the British, in spite of his critical support for the Allies during the First World War, because of his resistance to Zionism and his refusal to endorse the Balfour Declaration. The British not only stood by as the Hijaz was attacked by Ibn Saud from the east, but also began lending support to the Saudis. Husayn was forced to abdicate to his son Ali, and was eventually exiled to Cyprus by the British, who imprisoned him there; shortly afterward, the Hijaz was annexed by the Saudis. Ali spent the rest of his life in Iraq.

Husayn was deeply disappointed by the willingness of his sons Faysal and Abdullah to collaborate with both the British and the Zionists, especially when they accepted Britain's policies in exchange for the kingships of Iraq and Transjordan respectively. He never reconciled with Faysal, but in his old age, as he became infirm, he returned to Amman to live with Abdullah. He died in 1931 and was buried as a caliph in the al-Aqsa mosque compound.³⁰⁵

304. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 103.

305. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 80–90.

Faysal remained king of Iraq until he died of a heart attack in 1938. He was succeeded by his son, and Iraq remained under Hashemite rule until the monarchy was overthrown in 1958.

The Hashemite line remains today with the monarchs of Jordan, who are descended from Husayn's son Abdullah. Abdullah was briefly succeeded by his son Talal, then by his grandson Hussein, who ruled under the guardianship of Glubb Pasha until he became of age. Abdullah was assassinated at Al-Aqsa Mosque by a Palestinian nationalist in 1951, and was buried there next to his father.

1940–1947 and the Partition Plan

The Palestinian National Movement suffered a major setback between 1940 and 1947, after the collapse of the three-year rebellion, as a result of harsh British policies. Palestinian society was economically devastated, politically and militarily defeated, and psychologically crushed. In 1940, of the three major Palestinian political groups—the Nashashibis, Istiqlalists, and the Husaynis—the only faction that survived were the Nashashibis. However, their relationship with the British and the Zionists minimized their role and diminished their influence in the Palestinian community. In 1942, the Istiqlalists and the Husaynis reorganized their parties: the Arab Higher Front of the Istiqlalists, and the Arab Higher Committee of the Husaynis were established in an effort to revitalize the Palestinian National Movement. Through 1944 and 1945, all attempts to unite or coordinate the activities of both parties failed.

Representatives of seven Arab states—Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Yemen—met in Alexandria between September 25 and October 7, 1944, to establish the **Arab League**. The Palestine question was an important factor behind the establishment of this organization. A special resolution on Palestine was declared at the end of the meeting, stating: **“Palestine constitutes an important part of the Arab world, and the rights of the Arabs cannot be touched without prejudice to peace and stability in the Arab world.”**

The Arab League Council met in Bludan, Syria between June 8 and 12, 1946. The Palestine question was the main issue on the agenda. The council forced the two Palestinian parties to form a leadership committee composed of five members representing the two groups, headed by Hajj Amin. In January 1947, the mufti added five more members, four of whom were loyalists and yes men.

In contrast to the weak and disorganized Arab community, the Jewish community in the 1940s was stronger economically, more organized politically, and significantly stronger militarily. The Zionist movement was able to mount a vigorous diplomatic, and political campaign against the policies of the White Paper. **On May 11, 1942, a Zionist conference convened at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, where a new**

Zionist program was announced. The conference not only announced its opposition to the 1939 White Paper and demanded open immigration into Palestine, but went much further, **calling for a Jewish state in all Palestine.** The Zionists firmly declared their intention to end Arab existence in Palestine. The Biltmore Convention was the first official indication of the Zionist ethnic cleansing plan; the Zionists were open about their intention to transfer the Palestinian Arab population out of Palestine. Prior to 1942, they had been very careful in discussing these plans.³⁰⁶

In 1937, **Ben-Gurion**, in response to the Peel Commission's partition proposal, addressed the Zionist Executive: **"After the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the state, we will abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine,"** He wrote to his family during the same period: **"A Jewish state is not the end but the beginning . . . we shall organize a sophisticated defense force—an elite army. And then I am sure that we will not be prevented from settling in other parts of the country."**³⁰⁷ He also wrote to his son: **"The Arabs will have to go, but one needs an opportune moment for making it happen, such as war."**³⁰⁸

On December 13, 1938, **Moshe Sharett**, Ben-Gurion's second in command, in a lecture to employees of the Zionist Organization in Jerusalem, talking about the purchase of 2,500 dunums (six hundred acres) of land in the Baysan Valley, stated: **"There is a tribe that resides west of the river; the purchase of their land will include paying the tribe to move east of the river; by this we will reduce the number of Arabs in Palestine."**³⁰⁹ In 1940, **Yousef Weitz**, the director of the Jewish National Fund, wrote: **"It is our right to transfer the Arabs . . . The Arabs should go."**³¹⁰

Shortly after the Biltmore Convention, the Zionists carried out an intensive campaign in the United States, targeting the members of Congress. **At the end of World War II, sixty-two senators and eighty-one congressmen wrote President Roosevelt supporting the Zionists' rights to Palestine. In January 1944, the US Congress, in a joint resolution, endorsed the Biltmore program.** And by August 1945, President Truman called on the British prime minister to allow 100,000 European Jews to immigrate to Palestine.³¹¹

The involvement of US in the future of the Middle East started officially with the formation of the Anglo-American committee of inquiry in 1946 (Morrison Grady Committee). The committee adopted the American position, calling on the mandate government for the immediate acceptance of 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe into Palestine.

During World War II, Jews in Palestine volunteered in large numbers to serve in the British army, serving mainly in North Africa. Although the mandate government

306. Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 23–24.

307. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 22.

308. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Publications Ltd., 2007), 23.

309. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 24.

310. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 23.

311. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 109–110.

implemented the White Paper policies regarding Jewish immigration and land transfer, the Zionists continued to coordinate and cooperate with the British. Some of the Zionist leaders in Palestine were advocating opposing the British, but in September 1939, Ben-Gurion issued a call for Jews to support the British in the war: **“We must assist the British army as though there were no White Paper; and we must oppose the White Paper as though there were no world war.”**³¹²

The Stern Gang (also called Lehi), a Jewish terrorist organization, attempted to form an alliance with the Nazis in exchange for their help in establishing a Jewish state and allowing the Jews of Europe to immigrate to Palestine. Such contacts with the Nazis prompted them to start military activities against British forces in Palestine in 1941.³¹³ The Jews in Palestine did not welcome this military campaign; on the contrary, the terrorists became isolated and outcast.³¹⁴ However, near the end of the war, in February 1944, the Irgun, under the leadership of Menachim Begin, ended the wartime truce with the British and started blowing up British offices related to immigration and tax collection. In November, the Stern Gang assassinated Lord Moyne, the British minister of state in the Middle East and an outspoken critic of political Zionism, outside his home in Cairo. After the war, in October 1945, the Hagana entered an alliance with the Irgun and ceased cooperation with the British. The whole Jewish military joined together in the campaign against the British, which gradually intensified and reached its climax in 1946 with the bombing of the King David Hotel by the Irgun, which killed ninety-one people. The British responded to this terror campaign with restraint, in complete contrast to their response to the Palestinian revolt. Between August 1945 and September 1947, only thirty-seven Jewish terrorists were killed. Even in the aftermath of the hotel bombing, members of the Jewish Agency were only detained for a little over three months.³¹⁵ Though Lord Moyne’s killers were hanged, when their bodies were returned to Israel by Egypt in 1975, they were received as heroes, and commemorated on postage stamps.³¹⁶

Ben-Gurion led the Zionist movement from the mid-1920s into the 1960s. The 22nd Zionist Congress, in 1946, entrusted Ben-Gurion with the defense portfolio, giving him complete control over all security issues of the Jewish community in Palestine. In the final days of August 1946, he gathered together the leadership of the Zionist movement in a hotel in Paris, the Royal Monue, to formulate a plan to take over all of Palestine. He accepted the principle of partition; however, he demanded a large chunk of Palestine—80 to 90 percent of mandatory Palestine. A few months later the Jewish Agency translated Ben-Gurion’s **“large chunk of Palestine”** into a

312. Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, 195.

313. Klaus Polken, “The Secret Contacts: Zionism and Nazi Germany, 1933–1941,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3/4 (Spring–Summer 1976), 54–82.

314. Suárez, *Palestine Hijacked*, 61.

315. Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 110.

316. Suárez, *Palestine Hijacked*, 110.

map showing a Jewish state that anticipated almost to the last dot pre-1967 Israel; i.e., Palestine without the West Bank and Gaza strip.³¹⁷

During the deliberations in Paris, the Zionist leaders never considered the possibility of any resistance from the Palestinian Arab population. The Zionist leadership was aware of the total collapse of the Palestinian resistance. The desperate situation of the indigenous population of Palestine was obvious. The British mandatory authorities were the only ones standing between them and the plan of declaring their state. The struggle against the British resolved itself when the British decided, in February 1947, to transfer the Palestine question to UN.³¹⁸

On February 7, 1947, the British government announced its intent to terminate the mandate for Palestine; and on April 2, 1947, formally asked the United Nations to make recommendations regarding the future government of Palestine. On May 15, 1947, the UN appointed the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). On August, 31, 1947 (UNSCOP) released its report, which included the unanimous recommendation to terminate the mandate and to grant Palestine independence at the earliest possible date. A majority of the committee members recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states, with Jerusalem to be placed under international administration. On September 23, 1947, the General Assembly established an ad hoc committee on the Palestinian question to consider the UNSCOP report. The ad hoc committee made a number of boundary changes to the UNSCOP recommendations. On November 26, 1947, the General Assembly vote was postponed, as the United States was still campaigning to secure the necessary two-thirds majority of the valid votes (not counting abstaining and absent members) needed to approve the partition plan. In the end, the United States government, through applying pressure and threats, succeeded in securing the needed votes for the approval of Partition Resolution 181. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted thirty-three to thirteen, with ten abstentions and one absence, in favor of Resolution 181.

The Jewish Agency and the mainstream Zionist leaders accepted the partition resolution with jubilation, while the Revisionist Zionists (Irgun and Stern leaders) rejected it. Begin, the Irgun's leader stated, "**The bisection of our homeland is illegal.**" The mainstream Zionist leadership acceptance of the partition resolution, however, was a tactical acceptance; acceptance of partition did not mean acceptance of the boundaries of the Jewish state as stated in the resolution. Between the UN vote on November 29, 1947, and the declaration of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, a number of developments enabled the Zionists to acquire more land and to expel the Palestinians from the Jewish state.³¹⁹

317. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 26.

318. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 26.

319. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 31.

On December 3, 1947, David Ben-Gurion declared before the Histadrut Executive:

In the area allotted to the Jewish state there are not more than 520,000 Jews and about 350,000 non-Jews, mostly Arabs. . . . Such a composition does not provide a stable basis for a Jewish state . . . [it] does not even give us absolute assurance that control will remain in the hand of the Jewish majority.

. . . though Jerusalem under the partition plan was not designated as the capital of the Jewish National State, it must be, not only a great and expanding center of the Jewish settlement, but also the center of all Jewish national and international institutions . . . We know there are no final settlements in history, there are no eternal boundaries, and are no final political claims, and undoubtedly many changes and revisions will yet occur in the world.³²⁰

The Palestinians rejected the partition resolution, as they saw it as illegal and immoral. Walid Khalidi articulated the Palestinian position as follows: “**The native people of Palestine, like the native people of every other country in the Arab world, Asia, Africa, America, and Europe, refused to divide the land with a settler community.**”³²¹ The resolution incorporated the most fertile land in the proposed Jewish state. Nearly all the citrus land, 80 percent of the cereal land, and 40 percent of Palestinian industry would fall within the borders of the Jewish state. The designated Jewish state also included four hundred out of more than a thousand Palestinian villages.³²²

The injustice of the partition resolution was egregious: it handed the Jews, who owned less than 6 percent of the total land area of Palestine and constituted no more than one-third of the population, more than half of its overall territory. The most immoral aspect of Resolution 181 was that it included no mechanism to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.³²³ Resolution 181 was an assured recipe for the tragedy that began to unfold the day after it was adopted. On 42 percent of the land, 818,000 Palestinians were to have a state that included 10,000 Jews, while the state for the Jews was to stretch over 56 percent of the land that 499,000 Jews were to share with 438,000 Palestinians. The UN members who voted in favor of the partition resolution contributed to the crime of ethnic cleansing that was about to take place.³²⁴

320. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 31–32.


321. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 33–34.

322. Walid Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians 1876–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984), 305–306.

323. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 34–35.

324. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 35.

PALESTINE PARTITION PLAN 1946

-  Palestinian state
-  Israeli state
-  International jurisdiction



Conspiring with Emir Abdullah

Transjordan had been excepted from the British mandate in 1923, but placed under British supervision. In 1928, Transjordan and Britain concluded an agreement that gave Britain control of the country's foreign policy, finances, and armed forces, and stipulated that a constitution be established. The Transjordan army—the Arab Legion—included a desert force of Bedouins organized by British officer John Bagot Glubb (known as “Glubb Pasha”), who later commanded the entire legion. In the Transjordan Colonial Office, Churchill was the British colonial secretary and T. E. Lawrence his chief adviser. To the chagrin of his father, King Husayn of the Hijaz, Emir Abdullah worked willingly with the British in exchange for recognition of Transjordan. For the British, the existence of Transjordan established a buffer zone between Palestine and the Saudi-ruled regions to the east; furthermore, as a purely Arab state, it was a place that could accommodate Palestinians if the Jewish presence in the country eventually pushed them out.³²⁵ And indeed, the Zionists had no intention of accepting the limits of the partition resolution. Their real intention was to take over most of Palestine and to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state through a secret agreement with Abdullah, whose annexation of the territory allotted for a Palestinian state was to be the first step in his dream of a Greater Syria.³²⁶

Abdullah accepted the Jewish national home idea early on, even in the 1920s. He was in no position to antagonize Britain; at the same time, he sought financial help from the Zionists. In the early 1930s, he told the Jewish Telegraph Agency, “The Jews of the world will find me to be a new Lord Balfour, and even more than this; Balfour gave the Jews a country that was not his; I promise a country that is mine.”³²⁷ And in early August 1946 he met secretly with Eliyahu Sasson, the head of the Arab department of the Jewish Agency, where he stated his plan to expand Transjordan by annexing the Arab sector of Palestine as a first step, to be followed by the annexation of Syria. Abdullah asked Sasson to bring, in the next meeting, the first ten-thousand-pound payment of a total sum of forty thousand pounds for expenses during the Syrian parliamentary election, and to set up a new representative body in Palestine replacing the Higher Committee.³²⁸

In August 1947, Umar Sidqi Dajani, a Palestinian Arab leader close to Abdullah, traveled to Europe at the expense of the Jewish Agency to present to UNSCOP members Abdullah's position in support of partition and proposing the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine. On November 17, Abdullah himself met, on the northern border, with Golda Meir, Ezra Danin, and Elyaho Sasson. According to Danin and

325. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 80–90, 114, 120.

326. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 39.

327. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 114.

328. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 116.

Sasson, Abdullah assured Meir that he would not attack the partitioned Jewish state, but that he would annex Arab Palestine. In April 1948, Abdullah had another meeting with an Israeli representative, and once again it was agreed that Abdullah would control Arab Palestine if he did not interfere with efforts to set up a Jewish state.³²⁹

Britain Withdraws

The British government did not endorse the partition plan, and was among the abstaining members of the General Assembly. During the deliberations in the UN, the British government “did not feel able to implement” any agreement unless it was acceptable to both the Arabs and the Jews, and asked the General Assembly to provide an alternative implementing authority if that proved the case. Britain ultimately announced that it would accept the partition plan, but refused to implement the plan by force, arguing it was not acceptable to either side. And on December 11, 1947, Britain announced that the mandate would end at midnight on May 14, 1948, and that it would completely withdraw its forces and administration by August 1, 1948. They assumed no responsibility for the preservation of law and order. **When they decided to withdraw completely on May 14, they notified only the Jewish Agency, excluding the Arabs, who were caught by surprise.**

On May 14, 1948, the Zionists declared the state of Israel.

Eleven minutes later, the United States recognized the state of Israel.

329. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 39.

The 1947–1948 War and the Nakba: Ethnic Cleansing

Background to the Nakba

An important link to the British announcement that it would end its mandate on May 15 was the Arab countries' decision to enter Palestine to preserve what was left of the territory allotted to Palestine under UN Partition Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947. It is critical to understand that the urgency of the combined Zionist militias was motivated by the need to acquire as much territory as possible before the end of the mandate, by means of expulsion and transfer.

Before this book attempts to document the Palestinian Nakba, a review of the definition of ethnic cleansing is necessary. As defined by the Jewish historian **Ilan Pappé**,

Ethnic cleansing is an effort to render an ethnically mixed country homogenous by expelling a particular group of people and turning them into refugees while demolishing the homes they were driven from. There may well be a master plan, but most of the troops engaged in ethnic cleansing do not need direct orders: they know beforehand what is expected of them. Massacres accompany the operations, but where they occur they are not part of a genocidal plan: they are a key tactic to accelerate the flight of the population earmarked for expulsion. Later on, the expelled are then erased from the country's official and popular history and excised from its collective memory.³³⁰

330. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 3.

The **Hutchison Encyclopedia** defines ethnic cleansing as expulsion by force in order to homogenize the ethnically mixed population of a particular region or territory. The purpose of expulsion is to cause the evacuation of as many residences as possible, by all means at the expeller's disposal, including nonviolent ones. **The US State Department** also accepts this definition of ethnic cleansing. Its experts add that part of the essence of ethnic cleansing is the eradication, by all means available, of a region's history. **The UN's Council for Human Rights (UNCHR)** employs a similar definition. It links a state or regime's desire to impose ethnic rule on a mixed area with the use of acts of expulsion and other violent means. It also includes "**separation of men from women, detention of men, explosion of houses, and subsequently repopulating the remaining houses with another ethnic group.**"³³¹

Nur Masalha, in his book *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, shows clearly how deeply rooted the concept of transfer was, and is, in Zionist political thought. As one of the Zionist movement's most liberal thinkers, Leon Motzkin, put it in 1917:

Our thought is colonization of Palestine has to go in two directions: Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel and the resettlement of the Arabs of Eretz Israel in areas outside their country, the transfer of so many Arabs seen at first unacceptable economically, but is nonetheless practical. It does not require too much money to resettle a Palestinian village on another land.³³²

Expulsion of the Palestinian population from their country, and de-Arabisation of Palestine, constituted an essential part of the Zionist colonial project. So it was natural to start preparations for ethnic cleansing as early as **the first settlements were built**. The Zionist leadership was interested in settling the Jewish immigrants in the countryside. Most of the settler colonies were isolated islands in rural Palestine amidst the surrounding Palestinian villages. They were built like military garrisons rather than villages. The idea of Jewish statehood was from the beginning associated with militarism and an army, to protect the colonies against the possible resistance of the residents of nearby villages, and for the future plans of the transfer and expulsion of the Palestinians from their homes.

In 1946, the 22nd Zionist Congress entrusted **Ben-Gurion** with the defense portfolio. From that moment on, he functioned as prime minister as well as defense minister. In this capacity, Ben-Gurion created an outfit called the Consultancy, composed of a combination of **security figures and specialists on Arab affairs**, to advise him on issues of security, strategies, and policy planning toward the Arab

331. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 2.

332. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 7–8; Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

world in general and the Palestinians in particular.³³³ From the moment in December 1947 when the British announced their intention to terminate the mandate on May 15 of the following year Ben-Gurion recognized the unique historical opportunity to make the dream of an exclusively Jewish state come true. Several issues faced him at that time. **The first issue was the boundaries of the Jewish state; what constituted a feasible viable state in geographical terms. He determined the territory of the future state according to the location of the most remote and isolated Jewish settlements. All the land between these colonies had to become Jewish—in other words, all of Palestine.**

After World War II, Prince Abdullah, son of Sharif Husayn of Mecca, had reached an agreement in principle with the Jewish Agency over how to divide post-mandatory Palestine between them. Serious negotiations started after UN Resolution 181 was adopted on November 29, 1947, for final agreement. As there were very few Jewish colonies in the area Abdullah wanted to acquire (**today's West Bank**), the Zionists were willing to give up this part of Palestine. The fact that the Zionist leadership was committed to their collusion with Abdullah meant that they anticipated their future state to include over 80 percent of mandatory Palestine; Transjordan was to annex the remaining 20 per cent.³³⁴ Ben-Gurion believed that such an agreement with Abdullah would neutralize the strongest army in the Arab world in the future military conflict, and thus guaranteed that the ethnic cleansing operation could go ahead unhindered. **However, Ben-Gurion accepted this agreement as a temporary measure; he did not believe in final borders for the Jewish state.**

The second issue that concerned Ben-Gurion and the Consultancy was building an adequate Jewish military capability to ensure a successful ethnic cleansing operation. The Consultancy utilized all possible means to build a highly competent professional army. By the end of 1947, the Jewish armed forces had reached the highest levels of readiness for their mission of ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

The third and most critical issue for the Zionist leadership was putting in place a concrete plan that would enable the Zionist occupation of at least 80 percent of Palestine, expulsion of the Palestinian population, and the destruction of Arab villages, as part of erasing Palestinian culture and history. This plan was composed of three main elements: a military war plan, a psychological warfare plan, and a diplomatic political plan.

The Zionist military war plan was based on two-phased strategy. The objectives of the first phase were terrorizing and intimidating the Palestinians, and protecting the isolated Jewish settlements; this was based on “**Plan Gimmel**” or **Plan C**. The second phase, based on “**Plan Dalet**” or **Plan D**, was the all-out offensive to conquer and hold territory given to the Jews by the UN, in addition to areas to be occupied

333. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 37–38.

334. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 43.

outside these borders, and to expel the Palestinian inhabitants of these territories, estimated at one million. **Yigal Yadin**, the future chief of staff of the Hagana Jewish militia (which would evolve into the Israeli army), prepared the nucleus of Plan Dalet in 1944, when he was head of planning in the underground. He worked on it further in the summer of 1947. The plan was to take control of the key points in the country and on the roads **before the British left**.

The first phase, **Plan C**, was developed after the British announced their intentions to end the mandate. It called for:

- **Killing the Palestinian political leadership**
- **Killing Palestinian activists and their financial supporters**
- **Killing Palestinians who acted against Jews**
- **Killing Palestinian officers and officials in the mandatory system**
- **Damaging Palestinian transportation**
- **Damaging the sources of Palestinian livelihood: water wells, mills, etc.**
- **Attacking nearby Palestinian villages likely to assist in future attacks**
- **Attacking Palestinian clubs, coffee houses, meeting places, etc.**

In addition, Plan C stated that all data required for the performance of these actions could be found in the Village Files ([see page XX](#)): lists of leaders, activists, “potential human targets,” the precise layout of villages, and so on. The implementation of Plan C started in early December 1947, following the adoption of Resolution 181 by the UN.³³⁵

“**Plan D**” was approved by the Zionist leadership on March 10, 1948, and went into effect at the beginning of April 1948.³³⁶ It contained direct references both to the geographic parameters of the future Jewish state (around 80 percent of Palestine) and the fate of the one million Palestinians living within that space. Military orders were issued to the units on the ground with detailed description of the methods to be employed: large-scale intimidation; laying siege to and bombarding villages and population centers; setting fire to homes, property, and goods; demolition; and finally planting mines among the rubble to prevent any of the expelled inhabitants from returning. The country was divided into zones according to the number of the Hagana brigades. Each brigade commander received a list of the villages or neighborhoods that had to be occupied, destroyed, and expunged of inhabitants, with exact dates.³³⁷

The first Jewish military organization in Palestine was the **Hagana**, which had been established in 1920 to protect the colonies. During the Palestinian revolt,

335. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 28.

336. Jon and David Kimche, *A Clash of Destinies: The Arab-Jewish War and the Founding of the State of Israel* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1960), 92.

337. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, xii.

Hagana members had joined the British forces in the attacks against Arab villages and participated in the punitive missions against the Palestinian civilians. In World War II, many Hagana members had volunteered in the British army, thus gaining valuable experience.

In addition to the Hagana, two extremist underground military organizations operated in Palestine: the **Irgun**, which had split from the Hagana in 1931, and the **Stern Gang (Lehi)**, which split from the Irgun in 1941. These two organizations, together with the Hagana, united into one military army during the 1948 war.

Special commando units, the **Palmach**, had been founded in 1941 to assist the British army in the war against the Nazis in case the latter reached Palestine. In 1948, these units played a major role in many of the savage cleansing operations in the north and the center of Palestine.

The Hagana also had an intelligence unit that had been founded in 1933. This is the unit that supervised the vital process of building the **Village Files**. It also was responsible for setting up the network of spies and collaborators inside the rural hinterland that helped identify the thousands of Palestinians who were later executed on the spot or imprisoned for long periods once the ethnic cleansing had started.³³⁸

In the ethnic cleansing operations that followed, the **Hagana, the Palmach, and the Irgun** were the forces that actually occupied the villages. Soon after their occupation, villages were transferred into the hands of less combat-oriented troops, the **Field Guard**, which was the logistical arm of the Jewish forces, established in 1939.

In December 1947, the Jewish fighting force stood at around fifty thousand; around thirty thousand of these were fighting troops, and the rest were auxiliaries who lived in various settlements.³³⁹ The Zionists' recruitment and training programs were so efficient that by the end of the summer their army stood at eighty thousand troops.

The newly founded army, with the help of the Jewish Communist party, received a large shipment of heavy arms from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Samuel Mikunis, the secretary-general of the Israeli Communist party, traveled to Eastern Europe in early 1948 to assist in the arms purchase deals. He visited Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia. The Czechs provided the Zionists with the following arsenal:

- 30 Messerschmitt planes
- 30 nine-ton tanks
- field-guns and anti-aircraft weapons
- flamethrowers and anti-tank weapons
- 5,000 rifles

338. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 45–46.

339. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 44.

- 1,200 machine guns
- 12 million rounds of ammunition

The first shipment arrived on March 31, 1948; the second shipment arrived on May 12; and the third shipment arrived May 14. Between May 1948 and February 1949, Israel received additional arms from Czechoslovakia: 43 million rounds of 7.92-mm, 350,000 rounds of 13-mm, and 150,000 rounds of 20-mm ammunition; 1,500 rifles; 3,000 light and 200 heavy machine guns; and 10,000 bombs ranging in size from three to seventy kilograms.

The Zionist weapon factories in Palestine were producing a hundred submachine guns per day (which increased to two hundred per day by the end of the first week of April), and 400,000 rounds of 9-mm ammunition per month. Moreover, these factories started producing flamethrowers, PIATS (anti-tank guns), Davidka heavy mortars that tossed a shell containing sixty pounds of TNT, two- and three-inch mortars and their ammunition, and Mills grenades.³⁴⁰ The flamethrower project was part of a larger unit developing biological weapons under the directorship of **Ephraim Katzir**, who became the president of Israel from 1973 to 1978. In the 1980s it was revealed that Israel possessed nuclear weapons.

The Zionists' diplomatic and political campaigns succeeded in securing worldwide support for their colonial project. Not only did the US and Western Europe endorse their plans, but the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe backed them up as well, endorsing their aspirations for a Jewish state in Palestine. At the UN Special General Assembly in the summer of 1947, Andrei Gromyko declared the Soviet Union in favor of the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.³⁴¹

The war events can be divided into two periods: First, the events between December 1947 and May 1948, which were henceforth known as the civil war, in which local Palestinian fighters and the Arab Liberation Army (ALA) faced the Jewish military forces; and second, the events of the war after the declaration of the state of Israel, where the regular Arab armies faced the Jewish military forces.

The Civil War: December 1947–May 1948

The first phase of the Jewish military operations started in early December 1947. During this phase and through March 1948, special units of the Hagana would enter defenseless villages close to midnight, firing at random; they would stay there for a few

340. Walid Khalidi, "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988), 14.

341. Walid Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), 745.

hours, shooting at anyone who dared leave their house, and then depart. Threatening leaflets were distributed in the Palestinian villages as well as in Syrian and Lebanese villages on Palestine's border, warning the population: **"If the war is taken to your place, it will cause massive expulsion. In this war there will be merciless killing, no compassion. If you are not participating in this war, you will not have to leave your houses and villages."**

Later on, in December 1947, the military operations advanced to include blowing up houses, as happened in the assault on **the village of Khisas**. On December 18, 1947, Palmach forces under the command of **Yigal Allon** attacked this peaceful village located on the banks of Hula Lake. The Jewish troops started blowing up houses in the dead of night while the occupants were still fast asleep. Fifteen villagers, including five children, were killed in the attack on Khisas.

This new strategy was aimed at the urban communities of Palestine; Haifa was chosen as the first target. The main Jewish quarter of the city was located in the mountainous area overlooking the city. **In early December 1947, the 75,000 Palestinians of Haifa were subjected to a campaign of terror jointly executed by the Irgun and Hagana forces.** Barrels full of explosives and huge steel bowls were rolled down into the Arab residential areas and then ignited. The Palestinian residents who came running out of their homes were sprayed with machine-gun fire. A special unit of the Hagana disguised as Palestinians brought cars loaded with explosives to Palestinian garages to be repaired. The detonation of these cars resulted in massive destruction and great loss of life. **The Irgun, in coordination with the Hagana, attacked Palestinian workers in Haifa's refineries with hand grenades.**³⁴²

In late December 1947, the Hagana forces in Haifa assaulted **Wadi Rushmiyya**, one of the city's Arab neighborhoods. They blew up houses and expelled the people. The British, despite their heavy presence in the city, looked the other way instead of maintaining law and order.³⁴³ That same night, the Hagana assaulted the village of **Balad al-Shaykh**, the burial place of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, the most honored and respected charismatic Palestinian leader of the 1930s. The attack lasted three hours, during which houses were destroyed and over sixty Palestinians massacred. Again, the British elected not to intervene.³⁴⁴ Two weeks later, in January 1948, the Palmach attacked another Palestinian neighborhood in Haifa: **Hawassa**, the poorest quarter in town, where about five thousand Palestinians lived. Their huts were blown up, forcing all the inhabitants to flee in panic.³⁴⁵ **It is worth mentioning at this point that fifteen thousand of Haifa's Palestinian elite left the city as the result of**

342. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 59.

343. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 59.

344. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 59.

345. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 60.

this campaign of terror and intimidation, putting an extra burden on the more impoverished parts of the city.

Early in January 1948, the Consultancy had a long seminar where the green light was given to the field commanders to a whole series of lethal attacks on Arab villages. Ben-Gurion demanded that these attacks should include targets in the south in addition to the northern targets. Specifically he gave orders to attack the **town of Beersheba**, targeting al-Hajj Salameh ibn Said, the deputy mayor of the city who in the past had refused to collaborate with the Zionist plans for settlement in the area. A new term was used after the seminar to describe the new mission: **“aggressive defense.”** Yigal Yadin, the future chief of staff of the Israeli army, stated: “We should paralyze the Arab transport and their economy, harass them in their villages and cities, and demoralize them.”³⁴⁶

The “aggressive defense” strategy was implemented in the western highlands of the Jerusalem area. The village of **Lifta** was the first target in this operation. Lifta was famous historically, as it had been the center of the rebellion against the Egyptian rule of Ibrahim Pasha. It was a very prosperous community with attractive buildings, including a small shopping center, restaurants, and coffee houses. **The Stern Gang attacked the village, destroying many buildings and shooting at the coffee houses at random.** This assault terrorized the inhabitants and forced them to flee. The Hagana came back two weeks later to blow up the rest of the houses and to expel all the people who were still there.³⁴⁷

Similar techniques were used against several villages in Galilee during the month of February. **Sa’sa**; a tranquil village located on the slopes of Palestine’s highest mountain, Jabel Jermak, was attacked on February 15, 1948. Yigal Allon gave clear and specific instructions: **“You have to blow up twenty houses and kill as many villagers as possible.”** The Jewish troops took the main street of the village and systematically blew up one house after another while families were still sleeping inside. They demolished thirty-five houses and killed between sixty and eighty Palestinians, among them several children.³⁴⁸

Despite the mining of residential areas and repeated nighttime raids on villages carried out in accordance with Plan C, between December 1947 and March 1948 the Arabs of Palestine held their ground. Of the four hundred villages that would fall between 1948 and 1949, only ten had been captured by Zionist forces by March 1, 1948.³⁴⁹ The refusal of Palestinians to leave their towns and villages frustrated the Zionist leadership; most, if not all, who did leave were the elite and wealthy notables. The Zionists were also concerned about the success of the Plan C operation, as they could

346. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 64.

347. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 66.

348. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 77–78.

349. Khalidi, *Plan Dalet*, 16.

not maintain contact with all their settlements, especially the isolated ones. Jaysh al-Jihad, under the command of Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, had been able to block the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway. Ben-Gurion and his close associates nonetheless were confident that the Jewish forces would be able to implement Plan D.

This period was the riskiest time for the Zionists during the entire war of 1948, especially when President Truman reversed the American attitude to partition in mid-March. On March 19, 1948, **Warren Austen**, the American ambassador to the United Nations, addressed the Security Council with a sensational request: all efforts to implement partition should be suspended; the General Assembly was to be convened in special session to work out a plan for temporary trusteeship.³⁵⁰

The Zionist organizations in the United States launched a strong political and diplomatic campaign against this new US policy and succeeded in extracting a promise from President Truman to continue US support of the partition plan. The UN General Assembly convened in April 1948, and the partition resolution was not reversed. The Zionist leadership also launched a propaganda campaign warning the Jews in Palestine and abroad of an imminent second Holocaust. Ben-Gurion appealed to the Jews to join the armed forces, stating: “This is a war aimed at destroying and eliminating the Jewish community.” He portrayed the Palestinians as Nazis and the war as a second Holocaust. Moshe Sharett, the acting Jewish foreign minister, was directing this campaign abroad to rally support from foreign countries, especially the US.

On August 8, 1947, Ben-Gurion told the Zionist Actions Committee in Zurich: “The aim of Arab attacks on Zionism is not robbery, terror, or stopping the growth of the Zionist enterprise, but the total destruction of the Yishuv. It is not political adversaries who will stand before us, but the pupils and even teachers of Hitler, who claim there is only one way to solve the Jewish question, one way only—total annihilation.”³⁵¹

Yigal Yadin, the chief of staff of the Hagana, met with all the intelligence officers in March 1948 after the approval of Plan D. The purpose of the meeting was to account for the gap between the public announcement of the imminent second Holocaust and the fact that the Jewish forces were clearly able to implement their ethnic cleansing plan. He proudly told his audiences: “Today we have all the arms we need; they are already aboard ships, and the British are leaving, and the whole situation at the fronts will change.” April 1948 became the turning point in the war in which the fighting shifted from sporadic attacks against the Palestinian civilian population to the systemic mega-operation of expulsion.³⁵²

The second phase of the military operations started in early April 1948. The most urgent task of this phase was to occupy the main Palestinian cities and the

350. Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 740–741.

351. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 98.

352. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 84–85.

surrounding villages and to expel the Palestinian population by May 15, thus creating a new status quo in the country that would be beyond the means of the regular Arab armies to reverse. The events that unfolded later proved that there was collusion between the Zionists and the British, as well as between the Zionists and Abdullah. The British were acting as a shield protecting the Jewish forces as they rushed to take over the Palestinian urban centers and the countryside.³⁵³

The rural hills on the western slopes of the Jerusalem mountains was the first area chosen for putting Plan D into action. On the first day of April the Palmach forces received their orders for the **Nachshon Operation**: “To capture, occupy, and destroy the Palestinian villages along the Jaffa–Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road; and to expel the inhabitants so that they would become an economic liability for the Arab forces.”³⁵⁴ This operation failed initially, as the Palestinian fighters under the command of **Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni** put up more resistance than the Zionists expected. A second attempt succeeded in taking over the village of **Al-Qastal (Castel)**, on April 9, 1948; the charismatic Palestinian commander Abdul-Qader al-Husayni was killed in that battle.

On the same day Qastal fell, the most savage massacre was committed in the village of **Deir Yasin**. This village had signed a non-aggression pact with the Hagana as early as 1942. Because of this prior agreement, the Hagana decided to send the Irgun and Stern Gang troops for the mission. As these troops burst into the village, they sprayed the houses with machine-gun fire, killing many of the inhabitants. The remaining villagers were then gathered in one place, and many were murdered in cold blood. Many women were raped before being killed. A total of 245 Palestinian civilians were massacred, among them thirty babies.³⁵⁵

Fahim Zaydan, who was twelve years old at the time, recalled how he saw his family murdered in front of his eyes:

They took us out one after the other; shot an old man and when one of his daughters cried, she was shot too. Then they called my brother Muhammad and shot him in front of us, and when my mother yelled, bending over him—carrying my little sister Hudra in her hands, breastfeeding her—they shot her too.³⁵⁶

Zaydan himself was shot while standing in a row of children the Jewish soldiers had lined up against a wall, which they had then sprayed with bullets, “just for the fun of it,” before they left. He was lucky to survive his wounds.³⁵⁷

353. Khalidi, *Plan Dalet*, 15–16.

354. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 88.

355. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 90–91.

356. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 90.

357. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 90.

Jacques de Reynier, head of the delegation of the International Red Cross in Palestine in 1948, drove into the village of Deir Yasin on April 10, 1948, the day after the massacre. He was met by a detachment of Irgun fighters:

All of them were young, some even adolescents, men and women armed to the teeth: revolvers, machine-guns, hand-grenades, and also large cutlasses in their hands, most of them still blood-stained. A beautiful young girl, with criminal eyes, showed me hers still dripping with blood; she displayed it like a trophy.”³⁵⁸

The Irgun commander explained, in a familiar phrase, that they were engaged in a “cleanup” operation.

De Reynier, the Red Cross delegate, walked into the village:

Altogether more than 250 men women and children had been butchered to death. The survivors, at the point of hysterical collapse from shock and grief, recorded their hideous experience for the British authorities: “Families had been lined up and shot down in a barrage of machine-gun fire; young girls raped; a pregnant mother was first slaughtered and then had her stomach cut open by her murderer with a butcher’s knife; a girl who tried to remove the unborn child from the woman’s womb was shot down. Some of the Irgun fighters slashed their victims to pieces with cutlasses. All this was meticulously recorded by the British authorities . . . [who were told that] “Women had bracelets torn from their arms and rings from their fingers, and part of some of the women’s ears were severed in order to remove earrings.”³⁵⁹

The Jerusalem commander of the Hagana, Shaltiel, had approved the assault on Deir Yasin by the Irgun. He wrote to the Irgun commander in Jerusalem: “I wish to point out that the capture of Deir Yasin and holding it is one stage in our general plan. I have no objection to you carrying out the operation provided you are able to hold the village.”³⁶⁰

Menachim Begin was later to assess the consequences of their barbarism:

Arabs throughout the country, induced to believe wild tales of “Irgun butchery,” were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for

358. Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 763.

359. Jonathan Dimbley, *The Palestinians* (London: Quartet Books, 1979), 79.

360. Dimbley, *The Palestinians*, 80.

their lives. This mass flight soon developed into a maddened uncontrollable stampede.³⁶¹

The Deir Yasin massacre was an advanced stage in the ethnic cleansing operations. Massacres that accompany military operations are not necessarily part of a genocidal plan; they are mainly a key tactic to accelerate the flight of the population earmarked for expulsion. The ruthlessness of the attack on Deir Yasin drove fear and panic into the Arab population and led to the flight of Palestinian civilians from their homes all over the country. Deir Yasin is considered by most historians to have been the direct reason for the flight of the Arabs from Haifa on April 21 and from Jaffa on May 4.

Deir Yasin was not the only massacre committed by the Zionists in Palestine. Two savage massacres were committed after the declaration of the state of Israel: the massacre of Tantura, north of Tel Aviv, committed on May 22, 1948, by the Alexandroni Brigade; and the massacre of Duweima, near Hebron, on October 29, 1948, by former Irgun members. The Palmach forces under the command of Yigal Allon committed many massacres between December 1947 and May 1948: **Khisas in the upper eastern Galilee on December 18, 1947; Balad al-Shaykh east of Haifa on December 31, 1947; Sa'sa on the slopes of Jabel Jermak in northern Palestine on February 14–15, 1948; and Ayn al-Zaytun near Safad, Nasr al-Din near Tiberias, and Tirat Haifa near Haifa in May 1948.**

Shortly after the Deir Yasin massacre, the Hagana forces attacked four nearby villages: Qalunya, Saris, Beit Surik, and Biddu. Taking only an hour or so in each village, the Hagana units blew up the houses and expelled the people. Operation Nachshon resulted in the expulsion of ten to fifteen thousand Arab villagers.³⁶²

The ethnic cleansing of the major urban centers was preceded by the control of the surrounding villages. Ben-Gurion's strategy was to **destroy the urban communities economically, not to fight house to house inside the cities and towns.** As Simha Flapan points out, his purpose was "an economic war aimed at destroying Arab transport, commerce, and the supply of foods and raw materials to the urban population; psychological warfare, ranging from 'friendly warnings' to outright intimidation and exploitation of panic caused by underground terrorism; and finally, and most decisively, the destruction of the surrounding villages and the eviction of their inhabitants."³⁶³ This strategy led to the collapse and surrender of Haifa, Jaffa, Tiberias, Safad, Acre, Baysan, Lydda, Ramleh, and Beersheba. Deprived of transportation, food, and raw materials, the urban communities underwent a process of disintegration, chaos, and deprivation that forced them to surrender.³⁶⁴

361. Dimbley, *The Palestinians*, 80.

362. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 91.

363. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 90.

364. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 92.

Eastern Galilee Operations

As soon as **Operation Nahshon** was concluded on April 13, **Operation Jephtha** was started; its goal was to clear eastern Galilee. The Hagana forces started their assault on **Tiberias** on April 13, after they gained control of the surrounding countryside. They were situated in the hills overlooking the ancient city on the Sea of Galilee, where six thousand Jews and five thousand Arabs, as well as their forebears, had coexisted in peace for centuries.³⁶⁵ The city's Palestinian population was subjected to daily heavy bombardments. Barrel bombs were rolled down from the hills, terrifying the inhabitants, to force them to flee. The terrified Arabs appealed to the British to protect them. The British delayed their departure from the city to allow the civilians to leave. King Abdullah of Transjordan sent thirty trucks to evacuate women and children, as he feared a massacre like the one that had taken place at Deir Yasin just a few days earlier. Residents of Tiberias were loaded in the trucks, forced to leave behind all their belongings. By the evening of April 18, all of the Arabs were gone, and the town was completely in Jewish hands.³⁶⁶

During and after the battle, the Jewish residents and soldiers looted the town. A UN Belgian officer, **Captain F. Marchal**, noted that Zionist troops had sacked and desecrated Christian religious establishments in the town, including the **Holy Place convent**. The Jews realized that in Palestine, where religion was taken seriously, the desecration of churches, mosques, and other religious buildings and monuments would serve to terrorize the population and convince them of the necessity to flee.³⁶⁷

After the capture of Tiberias, the Palmach forces moved up the road toward Safad. They cleared all the villages along the Tiberias–Safad highway, expelling their inhabitants. When the Jewish army captured **al-Rama**, a Christian village, a Jewish soldier stood on top of a building and shouted, “**All Druze may return to their homes.**” Then he addressed the other Arabs: “**You must leave for Lebanon. Anyone who dares to take any belongings will be shot.**” Young men were taken as prisoners of war; a parish priest later testified that the Jews had kidnapped forty men.³⁶⁸

When it became clear that the Jews had the upper hand in the war, some of the ethnic minorities in the country ceased supporting the Palestinian camp and joined the Jewish forces. The first and most important of these minorities was **the Druze**. In early April 1948, five hundred Druze deserted the ALA and joined the Jewish forces. The Druze troops went on to carry out the ethnic cleansing of the Galilee. The Druze battalion's defection helped the Hagana forces to capture Acre with relative ease.

365. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 92.

366. Michael Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe: the 1948 Expulsion of a People from their Homeland* (London: Quartet Books, 1987), 107–108.

367. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 108.

368. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 110.

The Druze emerged as an offshoot of the Ismailis, who are a splinter group of Shia Islam. The Druze in Palestine as a minority had suffered abuses at the hands of Sunni Muslims during the mandate period. During the 1936 revolt, vigorous Zionists efforts succeeded in convincing the Druze leadership to stay neutral. The friendly relations of the Druze leaders with the Jews and their refusal to support the revolt—and their possible collaboration with the British—angered some revolt commanders. In August 1939, the rebels assaulted the Druze community at Shafa Amr. This attack pushed the Druze to further collaboration with the British. **Only recently has a younger Druze generation begun to rebel against the Druze elders and spiritual leaders. Faraj Khnayfus, the son of Saleh Khnayfus, an important Druze leader of Shafa Amr, is one of the younger generation of Druze. Faraj spent three years in jail for refusing to serve in the Israeli army; he is also a member of the left-nationalist organization Abna al-Balad.**³⁶⁹

The ethnic cleansing of the countryside in eastern Galilee followed the same methods and techniques laid out in Plan Dalet: occupation of villages, demolition of houses, execution of fighters and activists, and expulsion of the Palestinian civilians. In some of the villages that were close to the urban centers, savage massacres were committed in order to precipitate the flight of the populations of nearby cities and towns. This was the case of the village of **Nasr al-Din near Tiberias, Ayn al-Zaytun near Safad, and Tirat Haifa near Haifa**. In these villages, all men between ten and fifty were executed.

The Ayn al-Zaytun massacre was one of the most egregious and best known of these incidents. The village of **Ayn al-Zaytun** was located a mile west of Safad. It took its name from a mountain stream that ran through the village. Any invader wishing to control Safad and the surrounding valley would need to occupy Ayn al-Zaytun. Furthermore, the village was also known for its opposition to the settlers in the area. **Operation Matateh (broom)** provided the Palmach forces a chance not only to cleanse the village in accordance with Plan Dalet, but also to settle old accounts. Palmach forces under the command of Moshe Kalman, who had in the past supervised savage attacks on Khisas and Sa'sa in the same district, attacked the village in the early morning of May 2, 1948. The soldiers threw hand grenades and used the primitive Davidka “drainpipe” mortar, which made a huge sound designed to frighten the Arab villagers. The armed men of Ayn al-Zaytun were no match for the well-trained Palmach soldiers, so they began to retreat, allowing the Jewish forces to control the village.

The villagers were herded into the village center. They brought in a hooded informer who identified those whose names appeared on the intelligence officer's list. The men selected were then taken to another location and shot dead. **A young teen-**

369. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 114–115; Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Pass* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 90–94.

ager, Yusuf Ahmad Hajjar, suddenly stood up and told his captors: “Our village has been captured. We have surrendered and we expect to be treated humanely.” The Palmach commander slapped him on the face and then ordered him, by way of punishment, to choose thirty-seven teenage boys at random. While the rest of the villagers were forced into the storage room of the mosque, **the teenagers were shot with their hands tied behind their backs.** In his book *The Palestinians: History and Present*, Hans Lebrecht offers another glimpse of the atrocities: “**The village had been totally destroyed, and among the debris there were many bodies. In particular, we found many bodies of women, children, and babies near the local mosque.**”³⁷⁰ The military documents reported that all in all, including the executions, seventy people had been shot. **Netiva Ben-Yehuda was a member of the Palmach** and was in the village when the execution happened. She tells the story in a fictionalized way. Her story offers a chilling detailed description of the way the men were shot, giving the number executed as several hundred. The surviving women and children of Ayn al-Zaytun were forced out of the village after being stripped of all their belongings.³⁷¹ (The story of Ayn al-Zaytun formed the basis of the novel *Bab al-Shams* by Elias Khoury. Netiva Ben-Yehuda also chronicled the events in the village in her novel *Between the Knots*. *Bab al-Shams* was made into a film, a French-Egyptian coproduction.)

The next target in eastern Galilee was Safad. After the British evacuated the city on April 16, 1948, the Arab militia controlled the city. In Safad there were 9,500 Arabs and 2,400 Jews. Most of the Jewish population were ultra Orthodox Jews who were not enthusiastic about political Zionism. The Palmach forces realized that capturing Safad appeared to be a very difficult task, so they followed their strategy of isolating the city by capturing the surrounding rural area. The fall of Ayn al-Zaytun, however, left the city besieged from the south and north. On May 10, 1948, Yigal Allon ordered his troops to start the attack on the city with heavy mortar bombardment. **The Transjordan troops under the command of Sari Fnaish left Safad on the eve of the Palmach attack on orders from King Abdullah, who preferred to see Jews in Safad rather than his rival, the mufti,** who was in the process of setting up a Palestinian government in Safad. The ALA commanders, including Adib Shishakli, were not in Safad when the Palmach launched their attack. According to a member of the local militia, Osama al-Naqib: “**When rumors spread that the ALA had begun to withdraw, the people began to flee in panic.**”

The Palmach forces utilized their usual psychological warfare. The loudspeakers announced that the population should leave town, as the Jews were about to use the atom bomb. Safad had been a major center of 1936 revolt. Because of this previous animosity, the prisoners captured during the fighting were tortured during

370. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 112.

371. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 110–112; Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 111–113.

interrogation and then executed. The Palmach troops expelled most of the population save a hundred old people, who were allowed to stay on, but on June 5, they were expelled to Lebanon.³⁷²

While the Palmach forces were carrying out their cleansing operations north of Tiberias in the Hula valley, the Golani Brigade was assigned to the **Baysan Valley** south of Tiberias. The Zionist plan aimed at the evacuation of the entire Baysan Valley except for the town of Baysan itself. This followed their strategy of isolating the urban centers by controlling the countryside. But on May 5, 1948, after most of the valley was “**purified of Arabs,**” the Golani Brigade began a siege of Baysan itself.

On May 11, they captured the high ground near Baysan and controlled the approaches to the city, then started the shelling. The heavy bombardments, including from the air, affected the morale of Baysan residents. The Jews gave the Arabs ten hours to surrender, offering safe passage to those who wished to leave. Many people left for the Jordan valley. The road was full of people anxious to cross over the river into Transjordan. The next day, the town surrendered.

Father Naim Ateek, the founder of the Christian ecumenical liberation movement Sabeel, describes what happened in Baysan in May:

When the soldiers occupied our town in 1948, our simple and unpretentious life was disrupted. Some members of both the Muslim and Christian communities fled their homes, horrified when news of what the Jewish soldiers had done in Deir Yasin reached them. . . . Many friends tried to convince my father to leave. . . .

Our town was occupied on May 12; 1948. . . . We lived under occupation for fourteen days. On May 26, the military governor sent for the leading men of town; at military headquarters, he informed them quite simply and coldly that Baysan must be evacuated by all of its inhabitants within a few hours. . . .

I remember vividly my father’s return from headquarters to give us the bad news. “We have been given no choice. We must go.” . . . My father asked us to carry with us whatever was lightweight yet valuable or important. The military orders were that we should all meet at the center of town in front of the courthouse, not far from my father’s shop. . . .

As people gathered at the center of town, the soldiers separated us into two groups, Muslims and Christians. The Muslims were sent across the Jordan River to Transjordan. The Christians were taken on buses, driven to the outskirts of Nazareth, and dropped off there,

372. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 113–114; Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 97–98.

since Nazareth had not yet been occupied by the Zionists. Within a few hours, our family had become refugees, driven out of Baysan forever.³⁷³

The ethnic cleansing campaign in eastern Galilee started in mid-March 1948 and aimed at complete control of Marj ibn Amir. The Jewish forces captured tens of villages and expelled thousands of Palestinians. The Jewish troops followed a plan of wiping the villages off the face of earth, erasing the history of Palestine; these techniques continued through the 1950s. After capturing Safad and Baysan, these operations seemed to slow down and appeared to be restricted, especially the area close to Nazareth all the way to Afula. The intelligence officers in charge of the operations in this area were concerned about the fate of the collaborating clans in these villages. **Palti Sela, the intelligence officer, wanted to exempt the Zu'bi clan from expulsion.** The villages that had a large share of Zu'bis were left intact, except for the village of Sirin, as it had only few of the clan. Palti later regretted what he did, as the Zu'bis in the end proved not that cooperative and reinforced their Palestinian identity after 1948.³⁷⁴

The village of **Sirin** lay near Baysan on land that had nominally been under the Ottoman sultan's title but was traditionally cultivated by Palestinian farmers. The village was built around the burial place (*maqam*) of a Muslim holy man named Shaykh ibn Sirin. Its houses were made of black volcanic stones. The land was rugged, but the residents had turned it into a small paradise. Their animals carried water from nearby springs three kilometers away. Sirin was noted as a fine example of the collective system of land sharing. The land belonged to the village as a whole, and the size of the family determined its share of the crops. The village was promised immunity by the Jewish Agency because the main family, the Zu'bi, belonged to a collaborative clan. The head of the clan, Mubarak al-Haj al-Zu'bi, was sure that his seven hundred villagers would be exempt from the fate of the nearby villages. The villagers did not put a fight when it was occupied on May 12. The Jewish troops gathered the inhabitants, Muslims and Christians, together and ordered them to cross the Jordan River to the other side. They then demolished the mosque, the church, and the monastery, together with all the houses. Soon all the trees in the orchards had withered away and died. Says Pappé, "Today, a cactus hedge surrounds the rubble that was Sirin. Jews never succeeded in repeating the success of the Palestinians in holding on to the tough soil in the valley, but the springs in the vicinity are still there—an eerie sight, as they serve no one."³⁷⁵

373. Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989) 9–10.

374. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 107–114.

375. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 105–106.

The history of collaboration with the Zionists did not spare Sirin. Only two villages in the Jerusalem area were spared: **Abu Ghawsh and Nabi Samuil**. The mukhtars of both villages had developed a special relationship with the Stern Gang. The Hagana wanted to demolish them, but the Stern Gang rescued them. This was a rare exception.³⁷⁶

Operations in Haifa and Western Galilee

The attack on **Haifa** in April 1948 was the beginning of the conquest of Western Galilee. As mentioned earlier, the Jewish campaign of terrorization of Haifa began in December 1947 and went on for several months; it intensified in early April 1948. As the fighting became more intense, **Major General Hugh Stockwell**, the British commander of northern Palestine, decided to remove his forces from the residential and business areas of the city and concentrate his troops near the dock facilities that were essential for the British evacuation from Palestine. He also decided to make an effort to bring about a rapid decision in the fighting. Siding with the Jews, in his opinion, was the best way of bringing hostilities to a speedy conclusion. So on April 18, 1948, he informed the Jewish authorities in Haifa that in two days the British forces would be removed from the buffer zone between the two communities. The Arabs were not given the same notice.³⁷⁷ The Zionists then assembled, from all over the country, a strike force in the Jewish quarter overlooking the Arab sections of the city. Menachem Begin, in his book *The Revolt*, reports: **"The British commander in Haifa announced the evacuation of his forces in April. The Hagana knew the date and mobilized its forces for the decisive clash. At the request of the Hagana . . . Irgun units . . . also went into action, and were ordered to capture a fortified enemy building dominating Hehalutz Street, the main artery of Hadar Harcarmel."**³⁷⁸

At 11:30 a.m. on April 21, 1948, General Stockwell invited Captain Izzedin, commander of the Arab National Guard, to his headquarters and handed him a note indicating the British plan to withdraw their forces from the city and to be stationed in the harbor. As Stockwell was handing the note to Izzedin, the British forces had already completed their withdrawal and the Hagana's Carmeli Brigade had already occupied the vacated strong tactical points along the line of demarcation between the Jewish and Arab zones. When Captain Izzedin received the note, he was furious; immediately after the interview, that same day, he left the country with no notice.³⁷⁹

376. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 91.

377. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 63.

378. Begin, *The Revolt*, 165.

379. Jon Kimche, *Seven Fallen Pillars: The Middle East from 1945 to 1952* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), 229.

The Arab quarters in Haifa were, from east to west: Halisa, Wadi Rushmiyya, Burj, the old town, and Wadi Nasnas, all of which lay below Hadar Harcarmel and between the Jewish quarter and the harbor. Wadi Nasnas and a section of the old town were situated between two Jewish quarters. **The British blocked the roads to Jaffa in the south and Nazareth in the north, preventing access by reinforcements from neighboring Arab communities.** Thus the Arabs of Haifa, entirely cut off from the outside world, were at the mercy of the Jewish forces pushing them toward the harbor. As the British were withdrawing from their positions, they advised the Arab leaders that it would be better for their people to leave the city.

The Jewish forces utilized their usual psychological warfare techniques to spread fear and panic among the Palestinian population, while they were waiting for sun-down to start their final assault. **Leo Heiman, a Hagana officer,** described some of these techniques. The Hagana brought up jeeps with loudspeakers that broadcast recorded **“horror sounds”** such as **“shrieks, wails, and anguished moans of Arab women, the wail of sirens and the clang of fire-alarm bells, interrupted by a sepulchral voice calling out in Arabic: ‘Save your souls, all ye faithful! Flee for your lives.’”**³⁸⁰ Hagana loudspeakers warned the Arabs that the Jews were using poison gas. At 6:30 p.m., shelling with heavy machine guns and mortars started, while the psychological warfare continued. In spite of these techniques, the four columns of Jewish forces were moving extremely slowly, fighting from house to house. Fighting continued from the early evening of April 21 through the entire night and into the evening hours of April 22. **Mordechai Maklef, the operations officer who later became the Israeli chief of staff, orchestrated the cleansing campaign.** His orders to the troops were plain and simple: **“Kill any Arab you encounter; torch all inflammable objects, and force doors open with explosives.”**³⁸¹

On April 22, 1948, confusion and panic spread among the refugees who fled from the path of the advancing Jewish columns toward the old town. An eyewitness, **Isam Taha,** describes the scene in the old town: **“We suddenly heard that the British army in the harbor area was prepared to protect all who took refuge there. Thus we all streamed towards the harbor, hundreds of people pushed against one another. The surging crowds trampled many children, women, and old men. At the harbor entrance, British policemen helped to carry our children. But there was a wild rush for the boats, and many people were drowned in the process.”** By the evening hours, the Jewish columns controlled the city. The state of confusion and panic reached its climax and there was a virtual mass stampede for the sea. While the Arabs were in full flight, they were engaged by the Zionist troops, which killed and injured many of them.³⁸²

380. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 64.

381. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 95.

382. Walid Khalidi, “Selected Documents on the 1948 War,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXVII, no. 3 (spring 1988), 89; Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 92–96.

A group of notables calling themselves the Arab Emergency Committee asked Stockwell to arrange for a meeting with the Jewish leaders. The meeting took place at 4 p.m. on April 22, 1948. The Jews demanded complete Hagana control of Haifa, the surrender of all weapons, and an immediate curfew in the Arab section of the city. The Arab committee asked for more time, as the Jews demanded they sign the surrender document immediately. The meeting was adjourned until 7 p.m. The committee tried to get a response from Damascus, but failed. **Brossmead, the British ambassador in Damascus**, later recounted that he had a meeting on April 22 with President Quwatli, who showed him a batch of telegrams that he had received from Haifa. Quwatli did not know what to reply. He told Brossmead, "I do not know what instructions to send. What do you suggest?" The ambassador advised Quwatli not to take any action, so he did not respond.³⁸³

Despite Jewish promises that there would be no reprisal if they signed the truce, the Arab leaders in Haifa did not sign, but requested British assistance with the evacuation of the civilians who wished to leave the city. Most of the Arab population had already fled. Although the Jews were anxious to rid themselves of the remaining Palestinians, some feared the international reaction if the entire city was emptied of Arabs. **According to the American consul, Aubrey Lippincott, the Jewish leaders also wanted some Arabs to remain in Haifa to operate the port facilities that were essential to the Zionist war effort.** The Jewish Agency tried to convince the remaining Arabs to stay, as they believed that they needed every Jew for the army. Despite these efforts, the British evacuated about six thousand more civilians. For three days, the harbor area was crowded with Arab men, women, and children sleeping in the rain without cover. Some of them were barefoot and some women did not have enough clothes. Only about four thousand Arabs remained in the city out of a community that had once numbered seventy thousand.³⁸⁴

On May 1, 1948, as Ben-Gurion visited Haifa, he exclaimed as he saw some Arabs leaving the city, "**What a beautiful sight.**" Soon after, the Zionist leader spoke to a group of Jewish notables in the city, telling them, "It is not our duty to see to it that the Arabs return." When Ben-Gurion asked to see **Abba Khoussi, the chief Mapai functionary in the city**, he was told that he was busy trying to convince the remaining Arabs in Haifa to stay. **The prime minister asked, "Doesn't he have anything better to do?"** With Ben-Gurion having made his views clear, the short-lived Zionist effort to persuade the Arabs to stay in Haifa ceased.³⁸⁵

The Jewish soldiers committed massive destruction in the Arab neighborhood and were engaged in looting of homes and businesses. **The American consul in Haifa reported to Washington:**

383. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 69.

384. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 74.

385. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 76.

Considerable Jewish looting in evacuated Arab areas. Two churches desecrated. Clinics stripped of equipment and furnishing demolished. Hagana claims that looting stopped with imprisonment of forty Jewish looters. Constant visitors to consulate, among them nuns and priests, claim looting continues.³⁸⁶

The Hagana forces took the offensive in western Galilee after they captured Haifa. The Carmeli brigade targeted the countryside around Acre first, as they had done in previous attacks against the other urban centers. The refugees from areas captured by Jewish forces, especially Haifa, doubled the population of Acre. Most people in Acre had experienced the Jewish terror as they fled from Haifa and the surrounding villages. Acre suffered from shortages of food, sanitary facilities, and medical supplies. These problems were exacerbated during the siege of the city that began on April 28, 1948, after the cleansing operations in the countryside.

Acre was subjected to a heavy mortar barrage for several days. British observers reported that the Jewish forces had cut the aqueduct supplying the city with water; almost immediately afterward, there was a typhoid outbreak. Presumably, typhoid germs were injected into the water supply north of the city. The Carmeli Brigade also used loudspeakers to spread fear and panic and to urge civilians to flee. By the time the Hagana forces took the city on May 18, 1948, most of the fifty thousand residents and refugees were already gone. The four thousand Arabs who remained were subjected to a reign of terror. The Israeli army conducted systematic looting, with soldiers carrying off furniture, clothes, and any other property that could be used by the new Jewish immigrants who were settling in the city. The UN French observer Lieutenant Petite reported that the Jews murdered at least a hundred Arab civilians, many of them residents of the new city who refused to move into the “Arab ghetto” in the old city. A typical story is what Mohammed Fayeze Soufi told: he was relocated in the portion of the old city that had not been demolished. “When he and friends went back to their homes in the new section of town to get food, they were stopped by Jewish soldiers who . . . forced them to drink cyanide. Mohammed faked swallowing the poison, but his friends were not so lucky. After half an hour, three of the Arabs died.”³⁸⁷

An attempt to poison the water supply in Gaza on May 27 failed. The Egyptians caught two Jewish soldiers trying to inject typhoid and dysentery viruses into Gaza’s wells. After a military trial, the Egyptians executed them, with no official protestation from the Jewish authorities.³⁸⁸

386. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 69.

387. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 119.

388. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 101.

Jerusalem and Jaffa

The partition plan of UN Resolution 181 had designated Jerusalem an international city. In spite of this, the western Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, where the wealthier Palestinians had built their homes, were shelled, attacked, and occupied in April 1948. Eight Palestinian neighborhoods and thirty-nine villages were ethnically cleansed in the greater Jerusalem area, their population transferred to the eastern sections of the city. Loudspeaker vans were used to frighten the Arab population. American missionary Berta Vestin reported that the loudspeaker messages in Arabic said things like, “Unless you leave your homes, the fate of Deir Yasin will be your fate.” This agrees with the account of pro-Zionist author Harry Levi, who recalls the loudspeakers exhorting, “The road to Jericho is open! Fly from Jerusalem before you are all killed.”³⁸⁹ The Hagana raided the Shaykh Badr area at night, cutting telephone and electric wires, throwing hand grenades, and firing into the air. Eventually the residents were driven out. The Hagana also targeted the Katamon district, a Christian Arab neighborhood. The Semiramis Hotel, a well-known landmark of the district, was dynamited. Twenty-six people were killed, including a Spanish diplomat and numerous women and children. According to Sami Hadawi, “The next morning, the inhabitants of Katamon fled. Some returned to move their furniture away. Then a systematic blowing up of homes occurred.” Soon afterward, looting started. Many of the residents were killed; this was verified by a Red Cross doctor who loaded two trucks with decaying bodies. Thousands of residents of Katamon, Upper and Lower Baka, Musrara, Shaykh Jarrah, Nabi Dahoud, and El-Tor fled to the old city. The British troops who were still in Palestine at that time did not intervene.³⁹⁰

The Shaykh Jarrah neighborhood, where the leading notable families such as the Husaynis, the Nashashibis, and the Khalidis lived, was attacked on April 24, 1948. The Hagana forces succeeded in blowing up twenty houses. Finally, the Jordanian Arab Legion’s involvement in the middle of May changed the picture and the ethnic cleansing in this section stopped.

The terror campaign against Jaffa started in early January 1948. Both Hagana and Irgun forces were involved. There was an unwritten agreement between Jaffa and Tel Aviv that the two towns would be divided by a strip of no-man’s land along the coast, which enabled an uneasy coexistence. The Hagana forces violated this pact: “[They started] killing people without provocation, near the water wells, within the no-man’s land, robbing the Arabs, abusing them, dismantling wells, confiscating assets, and shooting for the sake of intimidation.”³⁹¹

389. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 97.

390. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 95–101.

391. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 65.

The Stern Gang terrorists used different methods. Two terrorists parked a large truck loaded with oranges in the center of the city in January 1948. The truck contained a large load of explosives beneath the orange boxes. When the explosives were detonated, many buildings were destroyed, including a feeding center for children, many of whom were among the over one hundred casualties. This incident was a serious blow to the morale of the people of Jaffa.³⁹²

The terror campaign escalated in February, the harvest season of Jaffa's famous oranges; the citrus groves were attacked and the farmers were denied their crops. By early 1948, the economy of Jaffa had deteriorated; factories closed down, public transport came to a standstill, and the famous Jaffa orange industry was wiped out. The wealthier people fled the city.

The greater Jaffa area included twenty-four villages. By the end of March 1948, the Jewish operations had destroyed the entire countryside of Jaffa and Tel Aviv. These operations were in line with the Zionist strategy of strangulating Jaffa economically. Throughout Palestine the Zionists followed a policy of occupying villages near urban centers and expelling their inhabitants. The rural populations sometimes were subjected to massacres in a campaign of terror designed to prepare the ground for a more successful takeover of the cities.

The city of Jaffa possessed the largest defense force available to any locality: a total of 1,600 volunteers. Among the defendants was an extraordinary unit of fifty Muslims from Bosnia as well as members of the second generation of the Templars, German colonists who had come in the mid-nineteenth century as religious missionaries. The local Palestinian fighters were under the command of Hassan Salameh, who had been appointed by the mufti. In early February, eighty ALA fighters under the command of an Iraqi officer, **Abdul Wahab al-Shaykh Ali**, arrived in Jaffa. On February 22, 1948, another company of ALA troops arrived under the command of **Adel Najm al-Din**, who replaced Abdul Wahab.

The Hagana forces' military plan to take over Jaffa aimed at surrounding and isolating the city, thus avoiding direct attack on the Arab positions. The Irgun, however was anxious to win an impressive victory, to gain more support from the Jewish population of Tel Aviv. The Irgun leaders, then, decided to launch an assault ahead of the Hagana. They started their assault on April 26; two days later they launched their second attack, using explosives in addition to the shelling, blowing up buildings row by row. At the same time, the Hagana troops launched their operations following their own plan of attacking the city from north and south, first capturing the surrounding villages and expelling their inhabitants. The heavy bombardment of the civilian areas of the city by both Irgun and Hagana forces for three weeks created a state of fear and panic among Jaffa's residents. Many Arabs were under the impression that the

392. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 83–84.

minute the Jews entered town, the inhabitants would be slaughtered. Thus the exodus of Jaffa's civilians started as soon as the Irgun attack had begun. In response to these events, the British commander in Jaffa sent a message to the Irgun and Hagana: "Unless you stop mortaring Jaffa, I shall shell Tel Aviv." The Jews continued their assault, which prompted the British to shell Tel Aviv, forcing a cease-fire. According to General Murray, the British commander, the cease-fire did not bring calm to the city; on the contrary, within hours the whole population was pouring out of the city on to the road heading south as fast as their legs could carry them.³⁹³

The attackers—both Hagana and Irgun—looted the city. Everything that was movable was carried from Jaffa: furniture, carpets, pictures, crockery, jewelry, and cutlery. What could not be taken away was smashed. Windows, pianos, fittings, and lamps went in an orgy of destruction.³⁹⁴ The Jewish soldiers desecrated Christian churches in Jaffa. **Father Deleque, a Catholic cleric**, said of the soldiers, "They broke down the doors of my church and robbed many precious and sacred objects. Then they threw the statues of Christ down into a nearby garden."³⁹⁵

Adel Najm al-Din, the ALA commander, left the city by sea to Lebanon with his men on May 2, 1948. Michael al-Issa, who replaced him, left Jaffa on May 6, 1948. Thousands of civilians followed his men as they fled the city.³⁹⁶ Many of the civilians attempted to escape by sea. Any type of craft was used, including rowing boats, sailing boats, and motorboats, as well as larger vessels. Many people were drowned; babies fell overboard as mothers had to choose which offspring to save. Many of those who attempted to sail to Gaza or Beirut in small boats were lost at sea. Their bodies were washed up along the coast of Palestine.³⁹⁷

On May 3, 1948, an Arab emergency committee was formed for the purpose of salvaging whatever was possible from the deteriorating situation. On May 13, 1948, the committee signed an agreement in Tel Aviv after consulting with King Abdullah and the secretary-general of the Arab League. The Hagana, under the agreement, pledged to abide by the Geneva Conventions. This agreement stipulated that anyone who had left Jaffa and wanted to return could only do so "provided that the Hagana command shall be satisfied that the applicant shall not constitute a danger to public security." This provision was used to keep thousands of Jaffa residents from returning to their homes. As a matter of fact, thousands of Jaffa residents fled soon after the Hagana took over the city on May 14, 1948. The total population of Jaffa was down to three thousand, out of an original Arab population of seventy thousand.³⁹⁸

393. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 87.

394. Jon Kimche, *Seven Fallen Pillars: The Middle East from 1945 to 1952* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), 234.

395. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 91.

396. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 88.

397. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 90.

398. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 92.

In early April 1948, the Consultancy had decided to destroy and expel the inhabitants from all the villages on the Tel Aviv–Haifa road, the Jenin–Haifa road, and the Jerusalem–Jaffa road. Between March 30 and May 15, two hundred villages were occupied and their inhabitants expelled. Another ninety were wiped out between May 15 and June 11, 1948, when the first truce came into effect. By June 1, 1948, approximately 391,000 Palestinians had fled from their homes.³⁹⁹

An Agreement between Emir Abdullah and the Zionists

Soon after Abdullah had established his rule in Transjordan in 1921, he initiated contacts with the Zionists. Recognizing the strength of the forces behind the Zionist movement prompted him to negotiate with the Zionist leaders for the purpose of building an alliance which would help both parties. During the initial negotiations, he proposed the establishment of a Semitic kingdom under his rule that would encompass both Palestine and Transjordan. This idea received support from a few Jewish intellectuals such as Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, and Jacob Haas, but the leaders of the Jewish Labour Party, who were in complete control of the Jewish political institutions in Palestine, rejected the idea.⁴⁰⁰

As mentioned earlier, Abdullah was not the first member of the Hashemite family to establish strong relations with the Zionist movement. Emir Faysal had discussed the possibility of cooperation between the Arab and Jewish national movements with Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann; their first meeting was in June of 1918. Their negotiations during that meeting and subsequent occasions resulted in a signed agreement on **January 3, 1919** (see page XX).

The first meeting between Emir Abdullah and Chaim Weizmann took place in London in 1922. Abdullah offered to support the Balfour Declaration if the Zionists accepted him as the ruler of Palestine. The offer was politely brushed aside by Weizmann, but the relationship between the two parties was affirmed; and thus that meeting marked the beginning of an alliance between Transjordan and the Zionist movement. The Labour Zionists, under the leadership of Weizmann, wanted good relations with Abdullah, but they had no wish to be his subjects. The Revisionists, under the leadership of Jabotinsky, were never reconciled to the exclusion of Transjordan from Balfour Declaration. Both the Revisionists and the Labour Zionists rejected the exclusion of Transjordan from the terms of the British mandate of Palestine. Both were intending to reverse the verdict of **Churchill's 1922 White Paper** (see page XX), whether through political, military, or economic means. Ben-Gurion defined

399. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 120.

400. Sir Alec Kirkbride, *From the Wings: Amman Memoirs, 1947–1951* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1976), 3.

his movement's ultimate goal as the independence of the Jewish people in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan. He was strongly attached to the territories east of the Jordan River. The eastern border of what he called the "Jewish Commonwealth" was the Syrian Desert.⁴⁰¹

A number of Jewish businessmen and entrepreneurs approached Abdullah in the early years with projects that promised to contribute to the development of the emirate and to Abdullah's personal wealth. In 1927 Pinhas Rutenberg was granted the concession to set up a hydroelectric power plant in Naharayim, at the confluence of the Yarmouk and Jordan rivers. In 1929 Moshe Novomeysky, a Jewish mining engineer from Siberia, obtained the concession to exploit the enormous chemical resources of the Dead Sea.⁴⁰²

In 1924, **Colonel Fredrick Kish**, the chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, met with Emir Abdullah and his father King Husayn of Hijaz, the head of the Hashemite family, in Amman. Both Abdullah and his father told Kish that they would welcome the presence of Jews not only in Palestine but in other Arab countries, provided the rights of the Arabs were secured. In August 1926, Abdullah made a passionate bid for Jewish involvement in the development of Transjordan:

Palestine is one unit. The division between Palestine and Transjordan is artificial and wasteful. We, the Arabs and Jews, can come to terms and live in peace in the whole country, but you will have difficulty reaching an understanding with the Palestine Arabs. You must make an alliance with us, the Arabs of Iraq, Transjordan, and Arabia. We are poor and you are rich. Please come to Transjordan. I guarantee your safety. Together we will work for the benefit of the country.⁴⁰³

Kish visited Amman again in February 1931 and met the aged King Husayn, who had by then lost his kingdom of Hijaz to Ibn Saud, and Emir Abdullah. Emir Abdullah told Kish that they recognized and appreciated the Jewish connection with Palestine, which was even mentioned in the Koran. **Hassan Khaled Pash**, the prime minister of Transjordan, stated that he saw no objection to Arabs and Jews from Palestine participating in the development of Transjordan.

In August 1931, **Chaim Arlozoroff** replaced Colonel Kish as the political secretary of the Jewish Agency Executive. Arlozoroff initiated a new policy aimed at establishing Jewish settlements in Transjordan. He also was considering the east of the Jordan River as the destination for the Palestinians displaced as a result of Jewish im-

401. Avi Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition: King Abdullah, the Zionists, and Palestine 1921–1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42–44.

402. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 44.

403. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 46.

migration to Palestine. In March 1932, Arlozoroff and **Moshe Sharett** visited Emir Abdullah in his palace in Amman. Arlozoroff argued that economic development of Transjordan could not proceed without a close link with Palestine; economic cooperation between the countries would lead in time to political unity. Abdullah replied that he himself was not afraid of the Jews, and that his outlook was broader than that of the man in the street who regarded the Jew as he would a ghost.

In 1931, Emir Abdullah transferred ownership of seventy thousand dunums (seventeen thousand acres) of state land located in **Ghaur al-Kibd**, on the east of the Jordan, to himself personally. The land was situated in the central Jordan valley between the Allenby Bridge and the town of Salt. In 1933, an agreement was reached between Emir Abdullah and the Palestine Land Development Company granting the Zionist company a six-month option to lease the seventy thousand dunums for five hundred British pounds. The emir offered an option allowing the Zionist company a thirty-three-year lease period, renewable for two similar periods for an annual rent of two thousand British pounds plus 5 percent of the profits made in the process of cultivation. In 1935 Abdullah received a lump sum of 3,500 British pounds for a four-year extension of the option. Although the whole deal was kept secret by both parties, news of it was leaked to the press.⁴⁰⁴

Sheikhs of Jordanian tribes were interested in similar deals. The first sheikh was **Mithqal Pasha al-Faiz**, the head of the **Beni Sakhr** tribe, and **Rufayfan Pasha al-Majali**, head of the **Majali** tribe. The British authorities pressed for the enactment of a law restricting the sale or lease of land to foreigners. But the Permanent Mandate Commission of the League of Nations pointed out that the mandate could not prevent the emir or the sheikh from permitting their land to be colonized voluntarily. The Transjordan legislative council affirmed its support for an open-door policy for the Jews. **The British, however, won the battle with the enactment of the Nationality Law, which prohibited the leasing of land to non-citizens, thus closing to the Jews the gateway to the Arabian Peninsula that the Transjordan ruler and tribal chiefs were united in wishing to keep open.**⁴⁰⁵

Throughout World War II Abdullah maintained close and friendly contact with the Zionists, using **Muhammad al-Unsi** as his principal go-between. Until his death in 1946, al-Unsi, who reached the position of minister of the interior and deputy prime minister, served in this capacity. Al-Unsi's contact in the Jewish Agency was **Elias Sasson**, who had been the head of the Arab section of the agency's political department since 1937. Sasson was the most outstanding Arabist on the staff of the Jewish Agency. As a young man during Turkish rule, he had been an active member of the Arab National Club in Damascus. Emir Faysal, recognizing his talent, asked him to publish an Arab newspaper, *Al-Hayat*, to spread a message of understanding

404. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 48–49.

405. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 50–51.

and cooperation between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East. The newspaper was closed down by the French when they occupied Damascus. Following the collapse of Faysal's regime in Syria, Sasson moved to Palestine, where he transferred his public activities from the Arab National Movement to the Zionist movement.⁴⁰⁶

The Zionist conference held at the **Biltmore Hotel** in New York in May 1942 passed a resolution urging the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine after the Second World War. On August 5, 1946, in Paris, the expanded Jewish Agency voted by a large majority to support the establishment of a viable Jewish state in an adequate part of Palestine. This meant the acceptance of partition and a retreat from the Biltmore resolution for a Jewish state over the entire area west of the Jordan River. It was assumed by the participants that the Arab part of Palestine would be annexed to Transjordan and would be ruled by Abdullah. Even Ben-Gurion accepted the plan for the establishment of two independent states, "Judea" and "Abdallia," Abdullah's state, which would incorporate the hilly area west of the Jordan River with its large Arab population and compensate "Judea" with an uninhabited stretch of land to the east of the river.⁴⁰⁷

Soon after the Paris resolution, Sasson visited Cairo and met with **Egypt's prime minister, Ismail Sidqi**. He was able to persuade Sidqi to support the partition plan as being the best solution to the Palestinian problem. He emphasized the fact that the British would not evacuate Egypt as long as the Palestinian problem remained unsolved. Sidqi accepted the plan, provided that another Arab country accepted it. On August 12, 1946, Sasson visited Abdullah in the king's winter palace in **Shuneh**, east of the Allenby Bridge, and presented to him the Jewish Agency's Paris resolution. The king declared himself a supporter of partition and the annexation of the Arab part to Transjordan. When Sasson asked Abdullah whether he would continue to maintain this position, Abdullah replied that it depended on reaching an understanding between themselves. Avi Shlaim explains Abdullah's objectives:

His aim was to enlarge Transjordan's borders and to create one strong and unified Hashemite kingdom which would conclude alliances with Britain and Turkey and guard the British line of defense in the Middle East. Execution of the plan was to proceed in stages: (a) partition of Palestine and joining the Arab part to Transjordan; (b) the merger of Syria with Transjordan; (c) linking the enlarged Transjordan in a federation with Iraq; and (d) linking the Jewish part of Palestine in a federation or alliance with the Transjordanian-Iraqi federation.⁴⁰⁸

406. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 67–68.

407. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 66–69.

408. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 70.

Abdullah asked Sasson to return again in a week's time to discuss with him an action plan which he was preparing. He urged him to bring back on his return the Jewish Agency's final answer to three questions: First, which plan would be acceptable to them? Second, were they willing to suppress all terrorist activity against the British and to try mend their relations with them? Third, were they prepared to back Abdullah sincerely and with all their might in implementing his far-reaching plan? **Abdullah then asked Sasson to bring him ten thousand British pounds as a first payment. Over the next four or five months he needed 25,000 British pounds to spend on the elections in Syria to secure the election of a parliament and the appointment of a government that would help him carry out the second stage of his plan, the unification of Syria with Transjordan.** Sasson, on his return to Shuneh after a week, he brought to Abdullah only five thousand British pounds. The meetings in Shuneh were useful in identifying the common ground between Abdullah and the Zionists and in providing a basis for future cooperation between the two parties.⁴⁰⁹

As it became apparent that the partition plan would be approved by the United Nations, Abdullah arranged for a meeting with **Golda Myerson** (who later changed her name to Meir), the head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. In the meeting that took place on November 10, 1947, Abdullah told Golda Meir of his intention to annex the part of Palestine allotted to the Arabs under the terms of the partition plan to Transjordan. He assured Golda Meir that Jordan would never attack the Jews. He described **Hajj Amin al-Husayni**, the mufti of Jerusalem, as being their common enemy. Both parties agreed to meet again after the approval of the partition resolution. The promised second meeting did not take place until just before the outbreak of hostilities between the Zionists and the Arab nations, but contact was maintained during the intervening period through third parties. When rumors were circulated that the Jordanian government had decided to join other Arab states in an invasion of Palestine, designed to seize the entire country, Abdullah sent Meir a message assuring her that his original promise still held good.⁴¹⁰

The Arab League War Plan

In contrast to the organized, disciplined approach of the Zionists in developing a war plan in 1946 and early 1947, the Palestinians and the Arab League were extremely disorganized and fractured. The Palestinian political and military systems were totally disintegrated, and the Arab world was in utter disarray.

The Arab League political committee met in Saoufer, Lebanon, in September 1947, and passed a resolution to establish a technical committee and to provide the

409. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 70.

410. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 5.

Palestinians funds, materiel, and manpower. **General Isma'il Safwat**, a former Iraqi chief of staff and a key figure of the technical committee, reported that **the Zionists could quickly field twenty thousand well-trained and well-armed troops who had at their disposal forty thousand trained reserves and more recruits from Europe and the United States, as well as good lines of communication and well-defended settlements. In addition, they had mobile commando troops and an arms industry. He warned of "very grave developments that [would be] to the advantage of the Zionists unless the Arabs promptly mobilized their utmost forces and efforts to counter Zionist intentions."**⁴¹¹

The Arab Higher Committee was able to reorganize two paramilitary groups, **al-Futuwa** and **al-Najjada**, into one unit comprising several thousand men. Consequently, the mufti established **Jaysh al-Jihad al-Muqaddas (the Army of the Sacred Struggle) under the command of Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni.**

President Quwatli of Syria, the head of the Technical Committee, **appointed General Taha Hashimi**, a former chief of staff and a former prime minister of Iraq, to oversee the recruitment of three thousand Arab recruits for the **Arab Liberation Army (ALA)** under the command of **Fawzi al-Qawuqji**. The Technical Committee of the League was in complete control of the ALA. Qawuqji was following the instructions and orders of Taha Hashimi, the head of the Technical Committee, and reporting to the Arab League with no obligation to the Arab Higher Committee (AHC).

The Arab League policy was aimed at squeezing the mufti out. This situation was reflected in the relationship between the ALA and the fighting force of the AHC (**Sacred Struggle**) under the command of **Abd al-Qader al-Husayni**. The Palestinian fighters were suspicious of Qawuqji and would not recognize him as their commander in chief. This rivalry climaxed in Qawuqji's refusal to aid Abd al-Qader in the decisive battle of Qastal with the Hagana in April 1948.⁴¹² Thus the civil war in Palestine, from November 1947 until the termination of the mandate in May of 1948, was characterized by the complete absence of any overall strategy among the Palestinian fighting units.

The mufti, on the other hand, did not share Safwat's assessment. He and his colleagues repeatedly argued that **the Palestinians simply needed money and arms to defeat the Zionist forces.**⁴¹³ He dismissed the idea of mobilizing Arab regular armed forces, as he was concerned about Abdullah's intentions in view of his known collaboration with the Zionists.

The Arab League, since its establishment in October 1944, had assumed that it could confront Zionism by political means. The UN partition resolution came as a shock for the Arabs, but they were convinced it would ultimately be revoked. Hope

411. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 125.

412. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, 131–132.

413. Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 126.

was revived in March and April 1948 when the United States considered replacing it with a trusteeship. **Some Arab diplomats in London and New York signaled to their capitals that the political battle against partition had already been won.** The Zionist leadership also was not preoccupied with the possibility of an Arab military option. A Jewish Agency study in March 1948 stated that the Arab chiefs of staff warned their governments against the invasion of Palestine, as well as any lengthy war, because of the internal situation in most of the Arab countries. The Zionist leadership viewed the Arab states as **backward, unstable, conflict-ridden, and ruled by corrupt leaders who held the reins of power through manipulation, intrigue, and bribery.**⁴¹⁴

Conflicts and power struggles among the Arab states, rather than a vision of unity and clear direction, dominated the Arab League politics and conduct. The Arab states were divided into two camps: the Hashemites in Iraq and Transjordan in one camp, and Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia in the other. Abdullah of Transjordan, driven by his personal ambition to become the king of Greater Syria, was willing to collaborate and serve any and all powers that could help him to attain his goals. He supported the partition plan and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in return for the Zionists' support of his plans to annex the Arab part of Palestine. **The Arab leaders were aware of his meetings and negotiations with the Zionists;** as a result, suspicion and fear separated Abdullah from the rest of the Arab states. The divisiveness and internal rivalries among the Arab leaders prevented them from formulating a unified strategy.

At its meeting in **Bludan** in 1946, the Arab League adopted a secret recommendation calling for economic sanctions against Britain and the United States as a lever for political pressure. **But at the Sauofer meeting of September 16–19, 1947, the League failed to implement this secret resolution, as Saudi Arabia blocked the move.** A month later the League met in **Aley** to discuss the military option. Egypt refused to join the technical committee that was intended to take general command of the Arab forces. The first meeting of the Arab chiefs of staff to work out a plan for military intervention took place on April 30, 1948, only two weeks before the end of the mandate. **This meeting was prompted by the serious events of April, including the Deir Yasin massacre; the fall of many Palestinian cities, including Tiberius and Haifa; the collapse of the Palestinian forces; the failure of the Arab Liberation Army (ALA); and the mass flight of refugees.**

The Zionist leaders were aware of the deep split in the Arab world and the reluctance to go to war. Representatives of the Jewish Agency met with Abdullah, Azzam Pasha, and the Egyptian prime ministers on multiple occasions before and after May 1948. Ben-Gurion, who was committed to the Biltmore program calling for a Jewish

414. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 302.

state in all of Palestine, hoped that an alliance with Abdullah would facilitate the transfer of the Palestinian Arab population to Transjordan, the settlement of Jews in the entirety of Palestine, and, in the distant future, land purchases and colonization in Transjordan. **Moshe Sharett was pursuing a signed agreement with Jordan that would influence the UNSCOP recommendations. Ben-Gurion, on the other hand, opposed such an agreement, as it would mean the fixing of final borders.**

The Arab regular armies were not combat trained, and they were not prepared for the war. They lacked the experience of Jewish soldiers who had served in the Allied armies during World War II. The Arab armies, especially the Egyptian and Iraqi forces, were ill-equipped for long lines of communication and prolonged warfare. Most importantly, they lacked a unified command structure or a coordinated plan of operation. Finally, the psychological aspect played a decisive role. For the Jews, it was a war for survival, a matter of life and death; winning the war would guarantee a secure future in Palestine. On May 13, 1948, George C. Marshall, the US secretary of state, circulated a letter to US diplomatic offices describing the situation in the Middle East:

Internal weakness in various Arab countries make it difficult for them to act. The whole government structure in Iraq is endangered by political and economic disorders and the Iraqi government cannot . . . afford to send more than the handful of troops it has already dispatched. Egypt has suffered recently from strikes and disorders. Its army has insufficient equipment because of its refusal of British aid, and what it has, is needed for police duty at home. Syria has neither arms nor army worthy of name and has not been able to organize one since the French left three years ago. Lebanon has no real army, while Saudi Arabia has a small army which is barely sufficient to keep tribes in order.⁴¹⁵

The best fighting force in the Arab world was the **Arab Legion of Transjordan**. It consisted of six thousand men, of whom only 4,500 were available for combat. Of its forty thousand men, the Egyptians had concentrated fifteen thousand in two brigades in El Arish in Sinai. They were not prepared for war. Some four to five thousand men of the main Egyptian forces, supported by aircraft and tanks, comprised a substantial force. The second Egyptian brigade, mainly made up of volunteers from the Muslim Brotherhood, moved into purely Arab held areas to contest Abdullah's control of the West Bank. The Syrians would commit three to four thousand men—half their army—to Galilee. Iraqi offered a mechanical brigade of three thousand men for the

415. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 318–319.

north. Lebanon had smaller detachment. The Arab Legion's plan was to secure its position in the West Bank and not to advance to the sea area near Tel Aviv, but to commit its main forces to Jerusalem. The Egyptians divided their forces; rather than advancing on Tel Aviv, they sent one part toward Jerusalem to deny Abdullah control.⁴¹⁶

The leading elements of **Arab Liberation Army** crossed from Syria to Palestine in December 1947, and were followed at intervals by the main body. The ALA commander, **Fawzi al-Qawuqji**, was the last to arrive in Palestine via Amman in February 1948. It was planned that the ALA should seize and hold positions of strategic importance until the regular Arab armies entered Palestine on May 15, 1948. Having established his position on Palestinian soil, however, Fawzi could not content himself with waiting in the role assigned to him. He started a series of attacks on Jewish settlements, all unsuccessful. The first attack was directed against a village of Orthodox Jews in the Jordan Valley called **Tirat Zvi**. His forces were forced to retreat after heavy losses among his men. The second target was the settlement of **Mishmar ha Emek** in the Plain of Esdralon. He was forced to withdraw his forces in a hurry to avoid being captured by Jewish reinforcements sent into action by adjacent settlements. The third attack was against the **Nebi Samwil** ridge just northwest of Jerusalem. He had to withdraw his forces when they were threatened with an air strike by the British Air Force.

By mid-May, the Palestinian and Arab volunteer forces had been decimated. And as hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into safer areas of Palestine and into neighboring Arab countries, the Arab League ordered the regular armies into battle. **The numbers, equipment, and firepower of those regular armies were less than half of what the Technical Committee of the Arab League had recommended.** Abdullah demanded that he be allowed to lead the Arab armies and then used his position to wreck the invasion plan that had been developed by the Arab League's military experts. **He ordered his British-commanded Arab Legion to secure only the part of Palestine allotted to the Arab state, in accordance with his agreement with the Zionists.**

The Arab Legion Operations

At noon on the dot on **May 15, 1948**, the long column of Jordanian troops crossed the border in the direction of Jericho. The Arab Legion then amounted to about 4,500 men: four Bedouin mechanized regiments, seven infantry companies, and two four-gunned batteries of twenty-five-pound artillery. There were no combatant aircraft in the Legion.

416. Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, 326–327.

Jerusalem had not been allotted to the Arabs under the partition resolution, but had been earmarked for internationalization. The defense of the Arab quarters of Jerusalem was left to the irregular formations. In the north of the country, the Iraqi detachment moved across the Jordan River at Jist al-Majami and took positions around Nablus. The Iraqi Air Force at Mafraq had two flights of obsolete Gladiator fighters and a flight of Anson light bombers. Further to the north, the Lebanese and the Syrian armies made little more than demonstrations of force along their frontiers with Palestine. The Syrians managed to get as far as the abandoned camp of the Transjordan Frontier Force near Semakh, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The ALA took up position in Samaria, between the zones held by the Iraqi Army and the Arab Legion. The Egyptians, who put the largest Arab contingent into the field, marched up from Sinai to Gaza, stretching their advances as far to the north as Bethlehem by May 22, 1948.⁴¹⁷

Urgent appeals for help from the inhabitants of Jerusalem prompted King Abdullah to give orders to the British commander of the Arab Legion, **John Glubb (known as “Glubb Pasha”)**, to defend the city. The Arab Legion moved one company of about hundred men followed by further reinforcements, which tipped the scales enough to prevent the collapse of the defenders of the city. The king had made a decision to depart from the original plan to confine the Jordanian control of only to the portion allotted to the Arabs by the partition resolution. The force of public opinion on the subject of Jerusalem, the third most holy shrine of Islam, was too intense for help against the Israeli offensive to be withheld, whatever the consequences of intervention. It was also an important consideration to King Abdullah personally due to the presence of the tomb of his father, King Husayn ibn Ali, at one of the gates of Haram esh Sherif in Jerusalem.

The front line in Jerusalem was established, with the old city and the eastern and northern quarters left in the hands of the Arabs. The Jewish quarter in the old city fell during the fighting prior to the first truce, and some fifteen hundred Jewish prisoners were taken by the Arab Legion. Only fighting men and others of military age were sent to the internment camp that had been set up for them at Mafraq on the edge of the desert. The rest were delivered across the lines into Israeli territory.

Once the positions of the Arab Legion and the Israeli forces inside Jerusalem were stabilized before the commencement of the first truce, the Israeli forces developed a plan to establish road communications between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. At the same time, the Arab Legion developed its own plan to prevent the Israelis from achieving that objective by controlling the Latrun region, through which the main road from the coast to the highlands passed. The Jordanian commanders were concerned about the ability of the Arab Legion to protect Latrun and to hold on their positions in

417. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 28–30.

this region. They expected that the Israelis' next move would be to capture al-Lydd and Ramleh before starting their offensive against the Jordanians at Latrun. Glubb Pasha was convinced that his army would not be able to provide the necessary troops for the protection of the two cities and at the same time maintain its hold on Latrun. The inhabitants of both cities had assumed that the Legion forces would defend their cities as they had in East Jerusalem and the Latrun area. But they were wrong: Glubb Pasha had decided to leave the people of the cities resist the Israeli attack on their own.⁴¹⁸

The people of al-Lydd and Ramleh begged the Jordanian command to send an adequate garrison of regular troops. Their pleas were met during the truce by the arrival of two hundred Bedouin volunteers from Jordan and an infantry company of about a hundred men. It was clear to everybody that these reinforcements would not be able to secure the safety of the two towns. Sending this inadequate force was meant to appease the inhabitants, but was not a serious effort to secure the towns. The Bedouin volunteers had no military training, and were definitely unqualified for the mission assigned to them. They had a wonderful time for as long as the truce lasted; they were lodged and fed at the expense of the municipalities.

On July 10, 1948, Ben-Gurion appointed **Yigal Allon** as the commander of the attack against Lydda and Ramleh, and **Yitzhak Rabin** as his second in command. Allon began his offensive by ordering the bombardment of al-Lydd from the air—it was the first city to be attacked this way. This was followed by a direct attack on the city's center. As soon as the Israeli attack started, the tribesmen fired most of their ammunition and then retreated and faded away. The infantry company, whose commander had been ordered to avoid loss of personnel, also withdrew under cover of the night. The soldiers made their way back on foot to their companions at Latrun.⁴¹⁹

Deserted by both the volunteers and the Legionaries, the men of al-Lydd, armed only with some old rifles, took shelter in the Dahamish mosque in the city center. After a few hours of fighting they surrendered, only to be massacred inside the mosque by the Israeli forces. In the mosque and in the streets nearby, the Jewish troops went on rampage of murder: 426 men, women, and children were killed (146 bodies were found inside the mosque). On July 14, 1948, the Jewish soldiers went from house to house taking people outside, and marched about fifty thousand of them outside the city toward the West Bank. More than half of these were already refugees from nearby villages. **Spiro Munayar**, who had lived all his life in Lydda and was an eyewitness on that terrible day in July, wrote:

During the night the soldiers began going into houses in the areas they had occupied, rounding up the population and expelling them from the city. Some were told to go to Kharruba and Barfilyya, while

418. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 43–44.

419. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 46.

other soldiers said: “Go to King Abdullah, to Ramallah.” The streets filled with people setting out for indeterminate destinations. . . .

The occupying soldiers had set up roadblocks on all the roads leading east and were searching the refugees, particularly the women, stealing their gold jewelry from their necks, wrists, and fingers and whatever was hidden in their clothes, as well as money and everything else that was precious and light enough to carry.⁴²⁰

The same sights were observed by the few foreign journalists who were in the town that day. Keith Wheeler of the *Chicago Sun Times* wrote: “Practically everything in their [the Israeli forces’] way died; riddled corpses lay by the roadside.” Kenneth Bilby of the *New York Herald Tribune* reported seeing the corpses of Arab men, women, and even children strewn about in the wake of the ruthlessly attack. The *London Economist* described the horrific scenes that took place when inhabitants were forced to start marching after their houses had been looted, their family members murdered, and their city wrecked: “The Arab refugees were systematically stripped of all their belongings before they were sent on their trek to the frontier. Household belongings, stores, clothing, all had to be left behind.”⁴²¹

Ramleh, with its seventeen thousand inhabitants, was attacked on July 12, 1948, but its final occupation was completed after the Israelis had taken al-Lydd. The city had been the target of terrorist attacks by Jewish forces in the past; the first one had taken place on February 18, 1948, when the Irgun had planted a bomb in one of its markets, killing many people. Terrified by the news coming from al-Lydd, the city notables reached an agreement with the Israeli army that allowed the people to stay. However, the Israeli units entered the city on July 14, 1948, and immediately began a search-and-arrest operation in which they rounded up three thousand people, transferring them to a prison camp nearby. On the same day, they started looting the city.⁴²²

The Arab Legion, which had abandoned al-Lydd and Ramleh, defended the Latrun area tenaciously. The Legion also successfully repelled Israeli attacks on the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem in July, especially on Sheikh Jarrah.

While the cease-fire negotiations were going on, a major battle was fought between the Israeli forces and the Iraqi Army. The battle was for the control of the triangle: Jenin in the north, Nablus in the east, and Tulkarem in the west. The Israelis were concerned about the advance of the Iraqi forces along the Tulkarem–Natanya road to within only ten kilometers off the Mediterranean coast. To defend Israel’s narrow waistline, the Israeli command ordered its largest offensive operation of the

420. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 167–168.

421. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 168.

422. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 168–169.

war. Three brigades were assigned for this operation: The **Golani** and **Carmel** brigades on the northern flank of the Iraqi Army in Jenin and a diversionary attack on Tulkarem from the south by the **Alexandroni Brigade**. Between June 1 and 3, Moshe Carmel, the commander of the northern front, captured Jenin, but the Alexandroni failed to attack Tulkarem. All the power of the Iraqi forces was then turned against the northern Israeli forces, inflicting heavy casualties on them and forcing their retreat and withdrawal from Jenin.⁴²³

According to the Iraqi chief of staff, **Salih Saib al-Juburi**, the Arab armies' war plan called for the Arab Legion to send one infantry regiment to Nablus and an armored regiment to Ramallah. The failure of the Arab Legion to carry out the mission assigned to it exposed the Iraqi Army to Israeli attacks and prevented the Iraqis from advancing to the Mediterranean coast. The Arab invasion plan also called for the Arab Legion to send a force to Jenin and from there to proceed to attack Afuleh. The failure of the Arab Legion to carry out its part of the war plan prompted **Nur al-Din Mahmud**, the head of all the Arab armies, to go to Ramallah to meet with Glubb in a vain attempt to discover the reasons for the Arab Legion's inactions. On May 20, 1949, Juburi, Glubb, and senior Egyptian, Syrian, and Lebanese officers met with King Abdullah, Abd al-Allah, and Azzam Pasha in the king's palace in Amman. Juburi concluded that Glubb was not going to carry out the Arab war plan, but would follow the British government's instructions. At the time, Juburi had no knowledge of the secret meeting between Bevin, Glubb, and Abul Huda, but when he learned about it after the war, it confirmed his suspicions that Glubb's direction of the operations of the Arab Legion in 1948 conformed to a plan that had previously been settled in London.⁴²⁴

The Egyptians had their forces spread along a line running across the maritime plain from Isdud, on the coast, through Falluja to Beit Jibreen in the foothills and thence up to Bethlehem. Behind this line lay a number of Jewish settlements which had been bypassed and which had successfully resisted subsequent attacks by the Egyptian troops. During the truce, the Israelis sent caravans, under the supervision of United Nations Observers, carrying supplies to their settlements in the south. On October 15, 1948, one of the Israeli convoys was sent forward to the Egyptian lines without the prescribed United Nations escort, and when the Egyptian lines fired at them, the Israelis launched a major attack on the Egyptian troops. The Egyptian formations were taken by surprise. Numerically, the two armies were about the same strength, but the Egyptians were dispersed at length while the Israelis were concentrated on one point of attack and were able to burst through the defense without difficulty. The Israelis managed to split the Egyptian forces into two halves. On the plain, all the territory in Palestine was lost except a small enclave around the town of

423. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 190–191.

424. Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 191–192.

Falluja, where a number of survivors, about 2,500, held out. The Egyptian garrisons at Hebron and Bethlehem were cut off from the main body of their army, which had retreated to the south into Sinai.⁴²⁵

The defeat of the Egyptian army left the southern wing of the Jordanian forces in imminent danger of an Israeli advance on Hebron. On October 28, 1948, the anticipated attack against Hebron materialized. However, the Arab Legion fought the Israeli forces between Beit Hebron and Beit Jibrin and forced them to retreat. Following this military engagement between the Israeli forces and the Arab Legion, a meeting took place in Jerusalem, under United Nations auspices, between Moche Dayan and Abdullah el Tel where a cease-fire agreement was reached.⁴²⁶

On December 1, 1948, the Jordanian government convened a congress of Palestinian leaders at Jericho, where a resolution passed unanimously, in favor of the union of Palestine with the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. This decision was accepted by the Transjordanian parliament.⁴²⁷

The Galilee Operations

At the beginning of June, Ben-Gurion gave the orders to march into the upper Galilee all the way to the border of Lebanon. The Lebanese army was composed of five thousand men, of which two thousand were stationed on the border. They were supported by two thousand Arab Liberation Army (ALA) volunteers, most stationed around the city of Nazareth; the rest were scattered in small groups among the dozens of villages in the area. In the absence of any regular Arab troops, Galilee was wide open for Israeli assault. The villages were able to resist the advancing Jewish troops on their own. The desperate courage of the Palestinian villages was what motivated the brutality of Jewish forces when they were able to break their resistance. The Israeli soldiers resorted to executions and any other means that might speed up the expulsion.

One of the first villages to be captured was the village of Mi'ar. The writer **Muhammad Ali Taha** was seventeen years old when the Israeli soldiers entered the village on June 20, 1948. He stood watching at sunset, as the approaching Israeli troops began shooting indiscriminately at the villagers still busy in the fields collecting their dura. When they got tired of the killing spree, the soldiers began destroying the houses. People later returned to Mi'ar and continued living there until mid-July, when Israeli troops re-occupied it and expelled them for good. Forty people were killed in the Israel attack on June 20, 1948.⁴²⁸

425. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 60–62.

426. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 62–65.

427. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 67–68.

428. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 150.

The pace of occupying and cleansing villages in the **lower and eastern Galilee** was faster than in any phase of the operations that had gone before. By June 29, 1948, large villages with a significant ALA presence were targeted. Within less than ten days they had all been taken and the majority of their inhabitants expelled. Only a few were not evacuated. Among these were the villages of Majd al-Krum and Mghar. In Marj al-Krum, mass evictions started, and after half the village inhabitants were expelled, a row suddenly erupted between the intelligence officers, resulting in some being allowed to return from the trail of forced exile. The name of the village was once Majd Allah, “the Glory of God”; it had been changed to “Glorious Olive Groves” after the trees around the village became famous. At the center of the village was a well whose water explains the abundance of the plantations and orchards around it. Some of the houses looked as if they had been there from time immemorial, surrounded by the olive trees on the south and vast tracts of cultivated land on the east and west. Today Marj al-Krum is hemmed in by Israel’s discriminatory policy which prevents its natural expansion. **Since 1948, this village has had the strongest cadre of nationalists in Palestine.** The villagers have left the rubble of the demolished houses standing to commemorate the resilience and heroism of its inhabitants.⁴²⁹

In July, the Israeli troops took many of the pockets that had been left in the previous two months. Several villages on the coastal road that had held out courageously—Ayn Ghazal, Jaba, Ayn Hawd, Tirat Haifa, Kfar lam, and Ijzim—fell, as did the city of Nazareth and a number of the villages around it.

UN Mediation Efforts

In May, the secretary-general of the UN appointed **Count Folke Bernadotte** as its official mediator in Palestine. Bernadotte, a cousin of the king of Sweden, was the chairman of the Swedish Red Cross. In this role during the Second World War, he had negotiated directly with Heinrich Himmler, succeeding in saving some thirty thousand prisoners of war from Nazi concentration camps, including at least ten thousand Jews.⁴³⁰ He was considered a person of unimpeachable character, and was accepted, grudgingly, by both Arabs and Israelis as an unbiased, objective negotiator (at least initially; later, Israel claimed that he was an agent of the British and accused him of bias toward the Arabs).

On May 30, the UN informed Bernadotte of a Security Council resolution calling for a four-week cease-fire. Bernadotte succeeded in implementing a suspension of hostilities between Israel and the Arab League to commence on **June 11, 1948.**⁴³¹

429. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 151.

430. Ralph Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte: His Life and Work* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Co., 1950), 167.

431. Sune O Persson, *Mediation & Assassination: Count Bernadotte’s Mission to Palestine in 1948* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), 131.

During the truce, Bernadotte produced his first plan outlining a settlement to the Palestinian problem. This proposed a union or federation between Jordan and Israel. Each state would continue to administer its internal affairs independently of the other, but would cooperate on foreign policy, defense, and economics. It was suggested that the Arabs should take the Negev in exchange for western Galilee, that Jerusalem should be an Arab city, and that there should be free zones at the Haifa port and the Lydda airport.

Bernadotte's first plan was rejected by the representatives of the Arab League in Cairo, on the grounds that it prioritized Zionist demands over those of Arabs.⁴³² It was rejected by Israel as it infringed on the sovereignty and independence of its state, and because it relegated Jerusalem to Arab rule. Bernadotte had to rework the entire framework of his proposal. He tried to prolong the truce for an indefinite period, but this was rejected by the Arab League, who could not accept the demilitarization of Jerusalem.⁴³³ The Jews, for their part, responded to the request for an extended truce by seizing the strongholds of Ramleh and Lydda.⁴³⁴ Accepting failure, Bernadotte ordered the evacuation of UN observers from Palestine, and hostilities resumed.

However, he received a request for a meeting from Transjordan. Speaking through his foreign minister, Abdullah indicated that he had been surprised by the response of the other Arab leaders, and that he was willing to continue talks based on Bernadotte's proposals. He urged Bernadotte to encourage the UN Security Council to pressure the Arab states to comply with a cease-fire order, even applying sanctions if necessary. Apparently this was because Abdullah knew that the military capacity of the other states was weakening.⁴³⁵ Bernadotte took his suggestions to the Security Council, and after heated debate, the UN approved a resolution ordering a **second, indefinite truce, effective within twenty-four hours, empowering the Truce Commission "to take any necessary steps" to bring it about.** It also instructed the mediator to continue demilitarizing Jerusalem in order to ensure access to the holy sites there, and to supervise the observance of the truce. The Arabs, represented by **Azzam Pasha**, the secretary-general of the Arab League, agreed to the truce on the condition that Jewish immigration be halted and 300,000 Arab refugees be enabled to return to their homes in Palestine. The Israelis accepted this as well. **The second cease-fire became effective on July 18.** A cadre of international truce observers was installed, and the truce held, although many violations were observed.

432. Persson, *Mediation & Assassination*, 148–150.

433. Persson, *Mediation & Assassination*, 157–158.

434. Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte*, 215.

435. Persson, *Mediation & Assassination*, 158–60.

The Ten Days' War

During the ten days of fighting between the two truces, the Israelis' position hardened. The first targets of the Israeli forces were the pockets within the Galilee around Acre and Nazareth. On July 6, three brigades—Carmel, the Golani, and Brigade Seven—received orders to violate the first truce, and to continue the cleansing operations. The operations in and around Nazareth were carried out rapidly, and large villages not taken in May were quickly captured.

Operation Palm Tree completed the takeover of western Galilee. Three villages were left intact: Kfar Yassif, Iblin, and the town of **Shafa'Amr**. These were mixed villages, with Christian, Muslim, and Druze residents. Many families had deserted these villages; the Israelis allowed them to be repopulated by refugees from other villages they had destroyed. As a result of these population movements inside Galilee, Shafa'Amr became a huge town, swollen by the streams of refugees entering it in the wake of the May to July operations in the surrounding areas. It was occupied on July 16, 1948, but was left alone; no one was expelled. This was an exceptional decision.⁴³⁶

The attack on **Nazareth** started on July 9, 1948, the day after the first truce ended. When the mortar bombardment on the city began, the people anticipated forced eviction and decided they would prefer to leave. Madlul Bek, the commander of the five hundred Arab Liberation Army troops in the city, ordered them to stay. Telegrams between him and commanders of the Arab armies, which Israel intercepted, reveal that he and other ALA officers were ordered to try to stop expulsion by all means. When the shelling intensified, he was unable to stop the city's inhabitants from departing. On July 16, 1948, he surrendered. However, Ben-Gurion did not wish the city of Nazareth to be depopulated for the simple reason that he knew the eyes of the Christian world were fixed on the city. The supreme commander of the operation, Moshe Karmil, ordered the total eviction of all the people who had stayed behind (sixteen thousand, of whom ten thousand were Christians). Ben-Gurion instructed Karmil to retract his order and let the people stay. However, not all those allowed to stay were spared. Some of the people were expelled or arrested on the first day of the occupation, as the intelligence officers began searching the city from house to house and seizing people according to a prepared list of suspects. A similar process took place in the villages around Nazareth.⁴³⁷

One pocket of resistance—six villages along the coast of south Haifa—held out. Of the six villages in this area, three fell before the first truce and the other three were captured after the truce. The village of **Ayn Hawd** was an unusual case that captured the hearts of many in the area. The main clan in the village, **the Abu al-Hija**, were thought to have special healing powers; people frequently came from the

436. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 159.

437. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 170–171.

coast toward the Carmel mountains where the village was situated to visit them. In May, Ayn Hawd was attacked and the five families making up the Abu al-Hija clan were able to save the village. But on July 16, the Israelis captured it. The original villagers were expelled and the Hebrew inhabitants renamed the village Ein Hod. Certain members of the Israeli unit that occupied the town, seeing its beauty, decided not to destroy it. They later returned and settled there, turning it into an artists' colony that hosted some of Israel's best-known artists, musicians, and writers. One of the five families of Abu al-Hija found refuge in the countryside a few kilometers to the east and settled there. Stubbornly and courageously, they refused to move, and gradually created a new village under the name of Ayn Hawd. In the 1950s, the Abu al-Hija built new cement houses inside the forest that envelops their village. The Israeli government refused to recognize them as a legal settlement until 2005, when a relatively liberal-minded minister of the interior granted them semi-recognition.⁴³⁸

Bernadotte's Second Plan and Assassination

Meanwhile, Bernadotte continued his negotiations, the most difficult points of which were the demilitarization of the Haifa port, which was essential to the supply of oil out of the Middle East; the demilitarization of Jerusalem, because of its importance to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and the disposition of Palestinian Arab refugees. On the first point, the US, supported by the British, refused to allow the demilitarization of Haifa, but exerted pressure on the UN to allow the Zionists to restart operation of the refineries.⁴³⁹ On the second point, Bernadotte pled with the UN to send material support, particularly from the US, to aid in the demilitarization of Jerusalem, which he felt was the key to bringing peace to the region. The US turned down his request for six thousand troops, and in the absence of armed UN guards, fighting in Jerusalem remained active. With respect to the third point, members of the Arab League pressed Bernadotte to return Palestinian refugees to their homes, particularly in Jaffa and Haifa. The possibility was rejected out of hand by Israeli foreign minister Shertok. Visiting the refugee camps in Ramallah and Lydda, Bernadotte found the conditions appalling, and appealed to the UN and other international organizations for relief measures.⁴⁴⁰ Receiving reports of massacres and mass displacements in Ein Ghazal, Ijizim, and Jaba from truce supervisors, Bernadotte ordered Israel to allow the inhabitants of those villages to return forthwith, and to rehabilitate them.⁴⁴¹

On **September 16**, Bernadotte submitted a report on the situation in Palestine to the UN secretary-general, urging them (over US opposition) to place the Palestine

438. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 162–163.

439. Persson, 174–175.

440. Persson, 184–185.

441. Persson, 185.

question on the General Assembly's agenda. He also proposed a second plan for settling the region. This second plan differed from his first on several key points:

- The state of Israel was recognized as a sovereign nation, with control of its own foreign policy, defense, immigration, etc.
- The status of Jaffa was, by omission, accepted as part of the state of Israel.
- The city of Jerusalem was to be placed under UN control, in accordance with the UN resolution of November 29, 1947.
- Arab Palestine should comprise the entire Negev; its fate was to be decided by the Arab states, in consultation with its inhabitants, though it was still recommended to merge it with Transjordan.
- The Jewish state was to comprise all of the Galilee, which encompasses some 20 percent of mandatory Palestine, including Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Nazareth, and Safed. **Furthermore, Arab refugees should be given the right to return to this area, or be compensated for the loss of their property if they chose not to go back.**
- The port of Haifa, in Israeli territory, should be a free port, with access by Arab nations; the airport at Lydda should likewise be free.
- Lydda and Ramla, which Israeli forces had occupied during the Ten Days' War, should be returned to Arab control.⁴⁴²

After Bernadotte submitted his second plan, Israel's foreign minister, **Shertok**, accused the mediator of bias toward the Arab side. Indeed, the plan did not favor Israel, but was based on Bernadotte's observations of the historical context and events of the conflict. On September 17, 1948, the day after he submitted his proposal to UN secretary-general Trygve Lie, **he was assassinated by four members of the Stern Gang, in a plot masterminded by Yitzhak Shamir** (who would go on to become prime minister of Israel from 1983 to 1984 and again from 1986 to 1992). Unfortunately, Count Bernadotte's peace plan died with him.⁴⁴³

Armistice

After Bernadotte's assassination, the UN appointed **Dr. Ralph Bunche**, who had been Bernadotte's deputy, as acting mediator to Palestine.

On October 28, 1948, the Israelis advanced north in Galilee and forced the ALA forces to retreat to Lebanon. Fighting on the Lebanese front was over for the duration of the war.

442. Persson, 201–202.

443. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 38–39.

On February 24, 1949, an armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel was signed at Rhodes, terminating the state of war between the two countries. According to this agreement, Israel had to agree to Egyptian military presence in the Gaza Strip, to the release of the Egyptian brigade from Falluja, and to the demilitarization of El Abuja. The agreement secured Israel's control over the northern Negev and the capture of the southern Negev. **It should be noted that the armistice did not include recognition of Israel as a state** (Egypt recognized Israel in 1978 under Sadat; Jordan finally recognized Israel in 1994; and the Palestine Liberation Organization recognized it at Oslo in 1993).

Negotiations between Lebanon and Israel began on March 1, 1949, at Ras al-Naqura. When the talks began, the Israeli army was occupying a narrow strip of Lebanese territory containing fourteen villages. The Israelis tried to link the withdrawal from the villages with the withdrawal of the Syrians from points on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. The Lebanese rejected the Israeli conditions, and in the end, Israel abandoned them. An armistice agreement between the two countries was signed on March 23, 1949.

The negotiations between Transjordan and Israel were more complicated. The first issue was the extreme southern part of the Negev, which was held by a small detachment of the Arab Legion. For Jordan, the possession of Aqaba was essential, as its port held the only direct access to the world outside. The Jordanians invoked the terms of the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty of Alliance which entitled them to British protection from attacks on territory belonging to Jordan proper. In response, a battalion of British infantry was sent to the port, joined by a frigate of the Royal Navy. The Israeli attack to capture southern Negev had started on March 7, 1949, and by the end of the month had reached the shore of the Gulf of Aqaba. No attempt was made to cross into Jordanian territory at Aqaba, which was in the hands of the British.⁴⁴⁴

The second issue was related to the announcement by the Iraqi government of its intention to withdraw its troops and its declaration that they were not going to sign any agreement with Israel. The Israelis made an agreement to the Arab Legion to take over the Iraqi positions subject to the surrender of a strip of rich cultivable land, an area of some four hundred square kilometers. They threatened an all-out assault if Transjordan rejected their offer. When Britain and the US refused to intervene, Transjordan accepted Israel's conditions. After settling this issue, Transjordan and Israel signed an armistice agreement on April 3, 1949.⁴⁴⁵

The negotiations between Syria and Israel were the most protracted, lasting nearly four months. The Syrians rejected all attempts to push them back across the Jordan. The course of the negotiations was affected by the military coup of **Husni al-Zaim**. Although al-Zaim had promised his co-conspirators a fight to the end against Zionism,

444. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 93.

445. Kirkbride, *From the Wings*, 93–94.

once he took power, he offered to meet Ben-Gurion in person to conclude a peace settlement rather than an armistice agreement, with an exchange of ambassadors, open borders, and normal economic relations. Three weeks later, Husni al-Zaim was overthrown. On **July 20, 1949**, the armistice agreement between the two parties was signed.

After the Nakba

During the twenty-five years of the British mandate over Palestine, the Zionist movement succeeded in building the infrastructure of its future state in Palestine. The mandate government provided the Zionists with all the help they needed to achieve their goals. The British facilitated the immigration of Jews to Palestine, and took all possible measures to allow them to acquire land to establish their settlements. The mandate government provided the settlers with the protection and the security that allowed them to build a strong, well-trained, well-equipped army. This volume has presented in full detail the different stages that the Zionist movement went through to lay down the foundations of their future state with the aid of the British colonial authority.

The partition resolution that was adopted by the United Nations in November 1947 was the result of concentrated efforts by all the Allied colonial powers who had won the Second World War. The Zionist colonial project in Palestine was the project of these imperial world powers, and its goal was to control the Middle East and beyond. The United States became the leader of imperialism at the end of World War II, and the partition resolution paved the way toward a successful military campaign to capture most of Palestine. Although the resolution called for the establishment of a Jewish state over 55 percent of Palestine, the military campaign aimed at capturing 80 percent. This decision had already been made by the Zionists in the early 1940s at the Biltmore Convention. The remaining 20 percent was to be allocated to the client state of Jordan. The powers had made a decision not to have an Arab Palestinian state.

The Palestinians had to pay a very heavy price in order for the Zionists to establish their state. **Eighty percent of the Palestinian population was forced out of their cities, towns, and villages; a total of 750,000 became refugees; many were forced to cross the borders of Palestine to settle in neighboring countries.** The Zionists committed serious war crimes in which thousands—fighters and civilians alike—were executed. There were horrific massacres throughout Palestine. Hundreds of villages were erased, libraries and museums were removed, and properties were looted. This was al-Nakba, the Catastrophe.

The Palestinian Resistance Movement was no match for the Zionist military forces. The Zionists refer to the 1947–1948 conflict as the Independence War. They characterize it as a glorious victory against several Arab armies and a Palestinian militia. In reality, however, the Arab states' armies combined were fewer in number than

the Zionist forces, and were poorly equipped. Furthermore, most of the Arab states involved were client-states of the imperial powers who were behind the Zionists' colonial project; they were not able to make independent decisions. The strongest of those armies was the Jordanian army, **which allowed itself to be neutralized in the war in return for a reward: the 20 percent of Palestine to be annexed to East Jordan.**

Waves of refugees flooded the cities of what became known as the **West Bank** during the period between December 1947 and the summer of 1948. Temporary shelters in schools were established for the refugees; tents were erected at the outskirts of almost every city. The West Bank, which was under the control of the Jordanian and Iraqi armies, was considered a safe zone, although these cities did not escape the terror of the air raids of the Israeli planes, which were dropping their bombs on civilians as part of the Zionists' tactics to generate fear and cause more people to flee from the country. Hundreds of thousands had to cross the borders to find safe refuge in East Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and even further toward Iraq. Refugees from 144 cities, towns, and villages emptied by the Zionists ended up in **Gaza**, a small coastal city on the Mediterranean, in an area just forty kilometers long and ten kilometers wide, making it the most densely populated area in the world.

Transfer, Refugees, and the Right of Return

The exodus of the Palestinian people in 1948, which created the refugee problem, has its roots in the ideology of the Zionist movement and the early planning, at its inception, for the transfer (i.e., expulsion) of the Arab Palestinians. The Zionist mantra for Israel was "A land without a people for a people without a land." The land did, in fact, have people in it, as the originators of Zionism, like Jabotinsky and Herzl, were aware. On June 12, 1895, as he considered the transition from "a society of Jews" to statehood, Herzl wrote:

When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us.

We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country.

The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 9.

The first mention of compulsory population transfer by outside authorities was in the Peel Commission report, included at the behest of the Zionist lobby. “If . . . it is clear that a substantial amount of land could be made available for the resettlement of Arabs living in the Jewish area, the most strenuous efforts should be made to obtain an agreement for the transfer of land and population.”

The historic opportunity to enact the Zionist transfer strategy came with **UN Resolution 181**, passed on **November 29, 1947**; as detailed earlier in this book, the Zionist forces began carrying out Plan Dalet which resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. This was long before the Arab armies intervened to stop the exodus of Palestinians into their countries and to save as much of the territories allotted to Palestinians as possible from being occupied by the Jewish militias. By June 1, 1948, approximately 370,000 Palestinians had fled from their homes.⁴⁴⁷ In his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Benny Morris chronicles the Zionist crimes that emptied the villages and cities of Palestine.⁴⁴⁸

In the wake of the 1948 war, the Palestine Conciliation Commission made valiant efforts to forge a peace agreement, but the Arabs refused to participate in a general peace conference until Israel complied with UN Resolution 194, which provided for the return of all refugees who desired repatriation. The Israelis stalled, refusing to consider an American proposal for the repatriation of 250,000 refugees. (This infuriated Truman, but his administration was too dependent on the American Jewish community to put serious pressure on Israel.) In the end, the Arab nations dropped their stipulation, and the Lausanne Peace Conference proceeded. However, though negotiations dragged on for months, there was never a possibility for the return of even a token number of refugees. **Over a ten-year period, only about eight thousand Palestinians were allowed to return to Israeli territory as part of a family reunification plan.**⁴⁴⁹

The United Nations and the Creation of Agencies to Help Refugees

In 1948, following the assassination of Count Bernadotte, the UN established a relief agency to provide aid for Palestinian refugees and to coordinate the assistance donated by NGOs and other UN agencies. In December of 1949, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 302, establishing the **UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)**, which was established to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees specifically

447. Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 179.

448. It must be noted that later, in an astonishing about-face, Morris argued for the necessity of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in an interview with *Ha'aretz* in 2004. “Even the American democracy could not be created without the annihilation of the Indians . . .” (Ari Shavit, “Survival of the Fittest,” *Haaretz Magazine*, January 9, 2004). See also Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel–Palestine Conflict* (New York: Verso, 1995), xxix.

449. Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, 184–189.

pending the implementation of Resolution 194 and a just and lasting solution to their plight (the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, UNHCR, is mandated to resettle or otherwise solve the problem of refugees). As a humanitarian organization, UNRWA has no authority to seek durable solutions for those displaced from their homes in Palestine. As the UNRWA website states:

It is worth noting that the protracted situation in which Palestine refugees live is not unique. Resettlement requires the consent not only of refugees, but also of the receiving state. UNHCR estimates that 78 percent of all refugees under its mandate—16 million refugees—were in protracted refugee situations in 2019. According to UNHCR data, of the 20.7 million refugees under UNHCR protection in 2020, less than 2 percent of refugees (251,000) were repatriated to their country of origin. Far fewer were resettled in a third country (34,400) or naturalized as citizens in their country of asylum (33,746). The vast majority remained refugees pending a solution to their plight.

The Right of Return

Considered a basic human right under Article 13 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this principle guarantees any person the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his own country. Refugees in diaspora, no matter where they are, still hold on to the dream of having the right to return or be compensated for their lost homeland.⁴⁵⁰

The issue of Palestinian refugees was one of Bernadotte's chief concerns, and a matter of grave concern of all the Arab states as well. He said, "It would be an offense against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and, indeed, at least offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries."⁴⁵¹

The Arab nations' position was that, as Israel had created the refugee problem, it alone should be held responsible for solving it. They lobbied for UN resolutions like Resolution 194 that would give the refugees the choice between returning to their homes or being compensated by Israel for the loss of their property, and this was the position held by all the Arab nations. Israel, however, did not accept these resolutions, blaming the Arabs for starting the war. It refused to cooperate with international agencies to solve the refugee problem unless the refugees were settled outside Israel's

450. Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 47–48.

451. Persson, *Mediation & Assassination*, 197.

borders. This unresolved issue has caused innumerable conflicts and skirmishes in the years since the 1948 war. **It remains one of the most contentious issues in negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel.**⁴⁵²

Israel's Nationality Law provides that all Jewish immigrants are entitled to Israeli citizenship by way of return or being born there. Arabs who lived in Palestine, however, are excluded from this law. They are entitled to citizenship under a separate and more stringent set of rules that many Arabs failed to meet.⁴⁵³ As Edward Said points out, **"These two exclusionary categories systematically and juridically make it impossible, on any grounds whatsoever, for the Arab Palestinian to return, be compensated for his property, or live in Israel as a citizen equal before the law with a Jewish Israeli."**⁴⁵⁴

Palestinians in Israel

By the end of the 1948 war, about 150,000 Palestinian Arabs—comprising **about 10 percent of all Palestinians**—remained in the territory that became Israel and became citizens of Israel living within the Green Line. They are concentrated in three parts of the country: about 60 percent live in Galilee, a region that includes all of northern Israel, from the Lebanese border to down to a line between Haifa and Tel Aviv. About 20 percent live in the Triangle, a region adjacent to the Green Line and parallel to the coast between Haifa and Tel Aviv. About 10 percent live in the southern region of Al-Naqab. The remaining 10 percent live in the mixed cities of the coastal plain, such as Acre, Haifa, Lida, Ramleh, and Yaffa. Their religious affiliation falls in three distinct groups: 75 percent are Muslims who live in Arab communities all over the country; 14 percent are Christians, almost all living in Galilee. They are divided into many denominations, including Catholic, Orthodox, Maronite, Protestant, and Armenian. The remaining 11 percent are Druze, living exclusively in Galilee.⁴⁵⁵

The Palestinians who remained in Israel were not socially representative of the Palestinian people. Those who were left were mainly living in rural areas, and were the poorest and most disadvantaged; the middle and upper classes, representing the social, political, and cultural leadership, had been forced out of Palestine and were not allowed back. **A fifth of the Palestinians left in Israel were internal refugees who had been evicted from their villages and towns.** Israeli laws later defined them as "absentees." They lost all their land and possessions, becoming dependent

452. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 52–53.

453. Nadim N. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 50–51.

454. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 49.

455. As'ad Ghanem, *The Palestinian-Arab Minority in Israel, 1948–2000: A Political Study* (Albany: State University of New York), 1–2.

on the state for goods and services; they had no way of opposing the political structures and regulations that were applied to them.⁴⁵⁶

Shortly after its establishment, Israel created laws for the specific purpose of expropriating land or transferring it from Arabs to Jewish citizens or to the state. More than 90 percent of the land in Israel is owned either by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) or the state, and is regulated by the government. The charter of the JNF states that Palestinian lands expropriated by Israel can only be used for the benefit of the Jewish people. Thus, dispossessed Arab owners could not buy or even lease what had once been their property.⁴⁵⁷

UN Resolution 181 called on the future Jewish and Arab states to “guarantee to all persons equal and nondiscriminatory rights in civil, political, economic, and religious matters and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion, language, speech and publication, education, assembly, and association.” Israel agreed to the provisions of this resolution when it was established, and the Basic Principles of the Government Program, approved by the Knesset in 1959, enacted the rights of Arabs in Israel, including civic equality before the law and entitlement to government assistance in education, health, and social welfare. Thus, technically, Arabs in Israel enjoy democratic rights—they have freedom of assembly for protest, and vote and elect representation in government. However, in practice, they do not enjoy full equality. Because the Israeli constitution recognizes Israel as “the state of the Jewish people,” non-Jews are prevented from claiming the state as equally theirs.⁴⁵⁸

With time, Israeli Arabs made strides in education, civil organization, economic standards, political participation and standards of living, in spite of the restrictions on land ownership and their status as second-class citizens. However, their national identity remains consistently central, and is stronger than their civic identity. Thus they developed their collective self-identification as “**Palestinians in Israel**,” as they feel they are citizens of Israel in name only.⁴⁵⁹

The All-Palestine Government

On July 8, 1948, the Political Committee of the Arab League established a temporary civil administration in Palestine directly responsible to the League. At the next meeting of the Political Committee of the League, held in Alexandria, Egypt, from September 6 to 16, 1948, a proposal for transforming the temporary civil administra-

456. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens*, 82.

457. Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, 82–83.

458. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens*, 44–47.

459. Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens*, 112, 150.

tion into a government of all Palestine was debated. Despite Transjordan, Iraqi, and Egyptian reservations, the proposal passed. On September 22, 1948, the Arab Higher Committee announced the establishment of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza under the chairmanship of **Ahmad Hilmi Abd al-Baqi**.

King Abdullah of Transjordan opposed the establishment of the new government, claiming that it had been established against the will of the Palestinians. To counter these accusations, the All-Palestine Government decided to convene a Palestinian National Council in Gaza on September 30, to which 150 representatives from the chambers of commerce, trade unions, political parties, local councils, and national committees were invited. Mufti Amin al-Husayni arrived in Gaza in secret on September 28, 1948. The streets of Gaza were crowded when he and Ahmed Hilmi entered the city, accompanied by motorcycles and armored cars. The Palestine National Council convened on September 30, 1948, and elected the mufti president of the council. A Palestine declaration of independence was issued on October 1, 1948, which included the following: “Based on the natural and historical right of the Palestine Arab People for freedom and independence . . . [we declare] the total independence of all of Palestine . . . and the establishment of an independent, democratic state whose inhabitants will exercise their liberties and rights.” The council passed a vote of confidence in the government, confirming Ahmad Hilmi as prime minister. With him were ten other ministers comprising the government: Jamal al-Husayni, Raja’i al-Husayni, Michael Abcarius, Anwar Nusayba, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Akram Zu’aytir, Dr. Husayn al-Khalidi, Ali Hasna, Yousef Sahyun, and Amin Aqil.

Within days of the declaration of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza, the Egyptian prime minister ordered the mufti back to Cairo. He was escorted out of Gaza by military police and was put under police surveillance. Later on, Ahmed Hilmi and the members of his cabinet were forced by the Egyptian government to leave Gaza and move to Cairo, where they were unable to perform their duties. Within weeks, these educated and talented professionals had been offered positions in various Arab countries. The All-Palestine Government became nothing but a subsidiary arm of the Arab League.⁴⁶⁰

Conclusion

This book, which began as a short history of Palestine, has turned out to be a ten-thousand-year account of the country starting from the time hunters became farmers until the year 1948, the year of the Nakba, the Catastrophe.

The history of Palestine is long and rich. Our country was the center of the ancient

⁴⁶⁰.Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 133–134.

world and the birthplace of ancient civilizations and of two monotheistic religions. Migrations from the west, east, north, and south took place over thousands of years. The immigrants assimilated with the original inhabitants of the land and enriched it. Besides peaceful immigration, waves of invaders came and went over time; inevitably, some stayed and became absorbed into the Palestinian culture and civilization and contributed to its development.

They adopted different religions and yet integrated with one another to make a rich culture of peace and harmony. All those who endured the invasions, floods, famines, and droughts that passed over the land through the centuries were Palestinian. Those who tilled the land, died for it, were buried in its soil generation after generation, who faced armies and conquerors and prevailed to build their homes there—all were Palestinian. No single ethnic, tribal, or religious entity can lay sole claim to this land; they are us, and we are them. We are all Palestinian.

Throughout all these years of history, Palestinians have shown how deeply they resent tyranny and occupation. Over and over, they have opposed their occupiers and finally won in the end. In the present day, we are facing a vicious enemy—the Zionist settler-colonial project, which intends to remove us from the land with the support of the imperial powers of the West. But history teaches us a great lesson: like all the invaders of the past, the new invaders will fail. The Zionist invaders will leave; as always, some will remain and assimilate with the Palestinians, the culture will grow and be enriched, and tyranny will be defeated.

As long as we protect our identity and stay strong against this invasion and remain on the road of steadfastness and resistance, we will prevail, and our people will continue to contribute to human civilization and progress.

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