Glossary

Names

David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) Israel statesman; born in Plonsk (then Russian Poland), settled in Eretz Israel 1906. Exiled by Turks 1915; went to United States and was active in formation of Jewish battalion, returning to Eretz Israel 1918 as a soldier in Jewish Legion. Among founders of Ahdut ha-Avoda party (1919), which merged with Hapoel ha-Tzair, 1930, into Mapai, which he headed. Secretary-general of Histadruth (1921–33), chairman of Jewish Agency executive (1935–48). Headed group that drew up Biltmore Program 1942. In April 1948 headed People’s Council, which proclaimed the rebirth of the independent Jewish nation—largely on his initiative—on May 14, 1948. First prime minister and minister of defense until 1963.

Theodore Herzel (1860–1904), father of political Zionism, journalist, and founder of the World Zionist Organization, was born in Budapest and received a Juris Doctorate from Vienna in 1884. Spurred by the Dreyfus Case, he began Zionist activities in 1895. In 1896 he wrote the pamphlet “The Jewish State,” explaining his Zionist program. He established the Jewish National Fund and Jewish Colonial Trust, and in 1902 published a utopian novel, Altneuland (“Old-New Land”), in which he described the building of a new Jewish state in Palestine. Herzel died while controversy over the Uganda Scheme (see below) still raged. Buried in Vienna, his body was reinterred on Mt. Herzel in Jerusalem, 1949.

Zeev Jabotinsky (1880–1940), Zionist leader, soldier, orator and writer, was born in Russia, studied law in Rome, and became correspondent of the Odessa newspaper under the penname Altalena. He organized the first self-defense league in Eretz Israel (during the riot of 1920), formed and headed World Zionist Revisionists in 1925, seceded from the Zionist movement (1935), and established a new Zionist organization. He was the ideological leader of the right-wing Revisionist movement (today the Likud party in Israel).

Yitzhak Kenivsky-Kanev (1896–1979), Zionist labor leader, born in Russia and settled in Eretz Israel in 1919. He was one of the founders of Hechalutz (Zionist-pioneer) movement, the founder of the Institute for Social Sciences Research of the Federation of Labor, instrumental in establishing Kupat
Holim and a member of its board of directors for many years. Kenivsky was a leading authority and activist in social security legislation in the pre-state period. He was the founder of the Israel National Security Institute and the power behind Israel Social Security Act (1954).

Golda Meirson-Meir (1898–1978), Israeli prime minister (1969–74), labor leader, born in Kiev, immigrated to the United States in 1906, and settled in Eretz Israel in 1921. She was secretary of the women workers’ council, a member of the Federation of Labor executive committee, a member in the Israeli parliament (1949–74), minister of labor (1949–56), minister of foreign affairs (1956–65), and secretary general.

Yitzhak Max Rubinow (1875–1936), Russian-born economist, physician, and socialist, concluded his medical studies in New York. He was secretary of B’nai B’rith (1929–36), leader of the movement for employee rights and social and health insurance in the United States, and the first director of the Hadassah Medical Unit in Eretz Israel (1918–22).

Moshe Sharret-Shertok (1894–1965), Zionist leader, second prime minister of Israel, born in Ukraine and settled in Eretz Israel in 1906. Head of the Jewish Agency’s political department (1933–48), he was also Israel’s first foreign minister until 1956, and chairman of the executive of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, 1960–65.

Reuven Shenkar (1896–1965), Labor Federation and Hechalutz movement activist, born in Russia and settled in Eretz Israel in 1920. He was a member of the Kupat Holim central committee and the treasurer of the fund for many years.

Dr. Chaim Yaski (1896–1948), Ophthalmologist, medical administrator in Eretz Israel, was born in Kishinev and settled in Eretz Israel in 1919 as director of the Hadassah Medical Organization and Hadassah hospital (1931–48). He was killed by Arabs in the massacre of a Scopus convoy.

Agencies, Movements, and Organizations


Ammamit Sick Fund: today the United Sick Fund (Meuchedet), the third biggest sick fund in Israel. It was established by the Hadassah Medical Organization in 1930 in order to provide medical aid to non-socialist sectors such as landowners and farmers.
Bank Hapoalim (the workers’ bank): Israel’s leading commercial bank, established 1923 by the Federation of Labor.

Eretz Israel: the geographical region of the present State of Israel which has been called in the past one hundred years by several names: the Jerusalem Region during the Ottoman period until 1918; Palestine during the British Mandate years 1918–48; and Eretz Israel (the biblical name of the Holy Land) by the Jewish communities in Israel and abroad. For simplicity, the common name Eretz Israel is used throughout the book, both for the Ottoman and for the British periods.

Histadruth (General federation of Jewish workers in Palestine): a labor organization founded in 1920 that came to embrace almost all Jewish workers in Palestine.

The Jewish Agency: the executive body and representative of World Zionist Organization. Its authority and functions were first to be recognized by the British Mandate over Palestine.

JOINT (JDC): the American Jewish Joint distribution committee, American Jewry’s overseas relief and rehabilitation agency. Established in 1914, it carried out rescue and relief work during and after both world wars, especially for Jews in Eastern and Central Europe.

Knesset Israel: the Jewish community assembly during the British Mandate period.

Law of Return (ḥōk ha-shvūt) is Israeli legislation that allows Jews and those with Jewish parents or grandparents, and spouses of the aforementioned, to settle in Israel and gain citizenship. Passed by the Knesset on July, 5, 1950, the bill and an explanatory note were published June 27, 1950.

Ma’abara (Ma’abarot): Transit settlement or neighborhood for new immigrants to Israel, constructed because of lack of resources in the early days of the state. Ma’abarot were discontinued by 1958.

National Committee: the supreme institution of the organized Jewish community in Eretz Israel and the executive body of the elected assembly. The committee was founded in 1920. Its departments included health, education, welfare services, rabbinate, and political.

Oleh (Olim): a Jew immigrating to Israel.

Solel Boneh: a Histadruth concern for building, public works, and industry. It played large role in development of the State of Israel, and was also active in construction work in other countries.

World Zionist Organization (WZO): the worldwide official organization of Zionist movement founded on the initiative of Herzel in 1897.
Yishuv: the name given the Jewish community in Israel by its people during the Ottoman and the British periods. “Yishuv” means in Hebrew a place or a settlement. This term is used throughout the book as equivalent to the term Jewish community.

Zionism: a movement founded in Europe in 1897, advocating the return of Jews to Zion (Israel), and to working the land as farmers and agricultural workers.

Zionist Congress: the supreme institution and legislature of the World Zionist Organization, which oversees the organization’s institutions. It meets every four years to formulate policy and elect officials. It has approximately 600 delegates, 38 percent Israelis, 29 percent from the United States and 3 percent from the rest of the world.