

A History of Palestine and Israel

Tuesdays, Jan. 10, 17, 24, 31; Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28; Mar. 7, 14
8:00-9:30pm EST/ 7:00-8:30pm CST/ 6:00-7:30pm MST/ 5:00-6:30pm PST

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Jerusalem/Yerushalayim/al-Quds
Western Wall/Temple Mount/Dome of the Rock
al-Buraq, al-Haram al-Sharif/ha-Kotel ha-Ma'aravi, Har ha-Bayit

Why did Jews in Eastern Europe come to embrace Zionism in the late-19th century? What was *Eretz Yisrael/Filastin* (the Land of Israel/Palestine) like before the beginnings of modern Zionist settlement? Was it inevitable that the revival of a Jewish national community in *Eretz Yisrael* would entail a confrontation with the previously existing Palestinian Arab community? How did a movement among a small minority of Jews become the normative outlook for most late 20th century Jews? What kind of Jewish state was established in 1948? Why did it find itself in repeated wars with its Arab neighbors? Why haven't efforts to resolve the conflict since the first peace agreement – the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty – succeeded? Will Israel “forever live by the sword,” as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said?

Logistical Matters and Expectations

This class will not be able to address even all the important questions about Israel/Palestine. Nor does it presume to offer definitive answers. All points of view are welcome and will be respected. Come with an open heart and mind.

Each week we will begin with a brief presentation of the historical context. However, the heart of the class is discussions framed by the weekly readings. If we have time at the end of each session, we'll have free-form discussion.

The goal of the class is not to pour information into your heads. It is to expand our conceptual horizons and stimulate critical thinking in Jewish spaces. This can only be a collective endeavor. About one-third of our time will be devoted to discussing the readings and related topics. It will make most sense to do the readings in the listed order. **Please do the readings before each class.**

Discussion of controversial and complex topics is best done when people see each other, face to face. To help facilitate a fruitful discussion, **please keep your video on during class.**

When you register for the class your email will be added to those who can access this Google Drive, which has most of the readings

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qZOowPCH7ioIk6jUY77XlnM8LnH7VNUk>

If the file does not display in an easy reading position, click on the print icon, and you will be able to rotate the print view. Some readings and videos are available on the Internet. You will only be able to access those readings and videos directly by using this version of the syllabus. Click on the URL next to them to go there. If you have tech issues, please contact: Lang Schmitt at office@shamayim.org. Lang typically works 9am-5pm Central, Mon-Fri. He will not be joining us during class.

Schedule of Class Sessions

Week 1 (Jan. 10) Introduction, Expectations, Beginnings of Zionism

Questions to Guide Your Reading

- 1) What are the core tenets of Zionism?
- 2) Why did the idea of a Jewish state emerge in late-19th century Europe?
- 3) Is there a difference between Jewish and Christian Zionism?

Readings

Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (1896), 3 p. (excerpt)

Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948*, 21-57

Hilton Obenzinger, "In the Shadow of 'God's Sun-Dial': The Construction of American Christian Zionism and the Blackstone Memorial," *Stanford Humanities Review* 5 (no.1, 1995), 18 p.

We will watch in class (feel free to preview) "1913: Seeds of Conflict" (to 15:32)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3e6CN9uMIU>

Week 2 (Jan. 17) Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period

Questions to Guide Your Reading

- 1) What was Palestine like in the late Ottoman era? Who lived there?
- 2) How did Arabs and Jews relate to each other?
- 3) When did Palestinian Arab national consciousness emerge?

Reading

Watch the rest of "1913: Seeds of Conflict"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3e6CN9uMIU>

Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, 145-75

Week 3 (Jan. 24) Zionists Encounter Palestine

Questions to Guide Your Reading

- 1) What are the differences and commonalities among the forms of Zionism espoused by Herzl (and his successor, Chaim Weizmann), the Labor Zionists (Hacohen), Ahad ha-'Am, and the Revisionists (Jabotinsky)?
- 2) How did the different Zionist currents see Palestine and the Palestinian Arabs? Where is Ari Shavit on this spectrum?

Reading

Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land*, 3 to end of 1st paragraph on 44

David Hacohen, speech to Secretariat of Mapai, Nov. 15, 1969

Ahad ha-'Am, excerpt from "Truth from Eretz Israel" in *Prophets Outcast*, 31-33

Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)"

<http://www.marxists.de/middleeast/ironwall/ironwall.htm>

Week 4 (Jan. 31) Great Britain and the Palestine Mandate

Questions to Guide Your Reading

- 1) What is the difference between the proposed Zionist draft of the Balfour Declaration and the document that was eventually issued?
- 2) The British made three sets of promises during World War I: 1) to the Arab Hashemite family (Husayn-McMahon correspondence); 2) to the French (Sykes-Picot Agreement); and to the Zionists (Balfour Declaration). Were they contradictory? Did Balfour think they were? Does it matter today?
- 3) What happened in Hebron in 1929? Is this a legitimate basis for post-1967 settlers to establish themselves there? What do we make of Agnon's conclusion (Segev, 327) after the Hebron 1929 events?
- 4) Why did the 1936-39 Arab Revolt fail?
- 5) Why did the Irgun (Etzel in the Hebrew acronym) use violence against civilians? Should we call that terrorism? Does it matter?

Reading

"The Balfour Declaration," in Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 92-93

Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 109-21

Balfour Memorandum on Syria, Palestine & Mesopotamia (1919), in Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest*, 201-210

Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete*, 314-27

Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, 105-24

B. Michael, " Hamas and the Irgun? How dare I compare the two..." *Haaretz*, May 2, 2016

Week 5 (Feb. 7) – 1948: Nakba/War of Liberation

Questions to guide your reading

- 1) What was the role of Zionist force in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem? What terminology should we use to describe what happened?
- 2) What was the Arab role in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem? What terminology should we use to describe it?
- 3) Why did some labor Zionist leaders think transfer was "moral"?

Reading (on next page)

Benny Morris, "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts its Past," in *Making Israel*, Benny Morris, ed., 11-27 (**the link accesses the entire book**)
[https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2015/SAN277/um/59355238/Morris_2007 - Making Israel.pdf?lang=en](https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2015/SAN277/um/59355238/Morris_2007_-_Making_Israel.pdf?lang=en)

Benny Morris, "Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948," in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine*, 39-48

Ari Shavit, "Lydda, 1948," in *My Promised Land*, 99-132

Recommended

Shabtai Teveth, "Charging Israel with Original Sin," *Commentary*, Sept. 1989, 24-33
<https://www.commentary.org/articles/shabtai-teveth/charging-israel-with-original-sin/>

Norman Finkelstein, "Born of War, Not by Design" in *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 51-87

Peretz Kidron, "Truth Whereby Nations Live," in Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims*, 85-96

Ilan Pappé, "The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36 (Autumn 2006): 6-20

Adam Raz, "Classified Docs Reveal Massacres of Palestinians in '48 – and What Israeli Leaders Knew," *Haaretz*, Dec. 9, 2021 (11p pdf)

Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, 26-46, 59-61, 212-30

Week 6 (Feb. 14) – "Beautiful Israel"?

Questions to Guide Your Readings

- 1) Is Dayan's eulogy for Roi Rotberg the "defining speech of Zionism" as the headline in *The Times of Israel* proclaims? If so, what does this mean?
- 2) Is the Israeli media's reporting on Qibya different from the U.S. media's reporting on Iraq's WMD in the runup to the 2003 invasion of Iraq or the reporting on Vietnam in the 1960s? Why do the media do this?
- 3) Was Kufr Qassem a "tragic accident" or an extreme incident that reveals underlying attitudes and policies?
- 4) "Facing the Forests" appeared in 1963 when we might expect a celebratory and optimistic mood in Israel (victories in two wars, absorbing over a million new immigrants, overcoming the economic austerity of the early 1950s). What explains the bleak mood of the text?
- 5) How do specific elements of the plot and character development comment on A.B. Yehoshua's view of contemporary Israel: the PhD student can't complete his dissertation; he is studying the Crusades; the forest and its fate; the Arab is mute?

Reading (on next page)

A.B. Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests," in *The Continuing Silence of a Poet*, 203-236

Moshe Dayan, "Eulogy for Roi Rotberg" (1956),
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/when-moshe-dayan-delivered-the-defining-speech-of-zionism/>
(more on next page)

+972, "How the Israeli media covers massacres: Lessons from 1953," Oct. 28, 2014,
<https://www.972mag.com/how-the-media-covers-massacres-lessons-from-1950/>

Adel Manna, "The Massacre of Kufr Qassem," in Nadim N. Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury (eds.), *The Palestinians in Israel*, 75-81
<https://www.mada-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/english.indd.pdf> **(the link accesses the entire book)**

Week 7 (Feb. 21) - Palestinians and the PLO

Questions to Guide Your Readings

- 1) Why were the Palestinian and Arab forces defeated in 1948?
- 2) What were the long-term consequences of this defeat?
- 3) What was the attraction of armed struggle for Palestinians in the 1960s?

Reading

Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, 125-81 **(the link accesses the entire book)**
[https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/771224/mod_resource/content/1/The%20Iron%20Cage The%20Story%20of%20the%20Palestinian%20Struggle%20for%20Statehood.pdf](https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/771224/mod_resource/content/1/The%20Iron%20Cage%20The%20Story%20of%20the%20Palestinian%20Struggle%20for%20Statehood.pdf)

Recommended

Yezid Sayigh, "Armed Struggle and State Formation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, (no. 4, Summer 1997):17-32

Week 8 (Feb. 28) – The 1967 War

Questions to Guide Your Readings

- 1) Why did the 1967 War break out?
- 2) Why do you think Abba Eban felt it necessary to lie about who shot first? Does it matter?
- 3) How important were the pre-1967 expansionist Israeli political forces? Did they affect post-war Israeli policy? Or was the settlement project motivated by security concerns?

Reading

Abba Eban, "The Six Days War," (speech to the UN) in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), *The Israeli-Arab Reader*, pp. 207-29

Norman Finkelstein, "To Live or Perish: Abba Eban Reconstructs the June 1967 War," *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 123-49

"A Brief History of Annexation: A Joint Israel Commission Resource for Study and Discussions"

<https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/brief-history-annexation-jic-resource-study-and-discussions/> (read the pdf; everything else on the web page is optional; It's shorter than the nominal 20 pages because of the maps.)

Recommended

Guy Laron, *The Six Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East*

_____, "The Historians' War Over the Six-Day War," *The Nation*, June 5, 2017,

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/historians-war-six-day-war/>

Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East*

Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*

Week 9 (Mar.7) – The Occupation, the 1st Intifada, and the Oslo Process

Questions to Guide Your Reading

- 1) Why do you think Dan Almagor waited until 1988 to express sympathy for Palestinian national aspirations? What do his poems tell us about the relationship between leftist Israeli Jews and Palestinians?
- 2) Why did Israel and the Palestinians sign the Oslo Declaration of Principles?
- 3) Has the United States been an honest broker in the post-Oslo negotiations?
- 4) Was there ever a reasonable chance that the Oslo process would lead to peace?

Reading

Dan Almagor, "Suddenly I Can't Hold My Head Up," *Middle East Report* 157

<https://merip.org/1989/03/suddenly-i-cant-hold-my-head-up/>

Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Arab-Israeli Tragedy*, 172-202

Deborah Sontag, "And Yet So Far: Quest for Mideast Peace: How and Why It Failed," *New York Times*, July 26, 2001 (12 p.)

Recommended

Shlomo Ben-Ami and Norman Finkelstein on *Democracy Now*, Feb. 14, 2006 (5:12 to 38:15)

http://www.democracynow.org/2006/2/14/norman_finkelstein_on_the_no_t_so

Week 10 (Mar. 14) – Reprise: How did we get here?

Reading

Nathan Thrall, “A Day in the Life of Abed Salama” *New York Review of Books*, March 19, 2021. (You can hear Nathan Thrall talking about this article at https://www.democracynow.org/2021/5/13/nathan_thrall_on_a_day_in)
Dahlia Scheindlin, “The Logic behind Israel’s Democratic Erosion,” *Century International*, May 29, 2019, <https://tcf.org/content/report/logic-behind-israels-democratic-erosion/>

Some General Overviews

Phyllis Bennis, *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer* (Olive Branch Press, 2019)
James Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* 4th ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2021)
Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Jewish Publication Society, 1997)
Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine* (Metropolitan Books, 2020)
Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (Vintage, 2001)
Joe Sacco, *Palestine: A Nation Occupied* (Fantagraphics, 2001)
Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)
Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (Brandeis University Press, 2014)
Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, (Norton, 2014)
Daniel Sokatch, *Can We Talk About Israel? A Guide for the Curious, Confused, and Conflicted* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021)
Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2016)

Books on Topics We Won’t Adequately Cover

Nahla Abdo-Zubi, *Women in Israel: Race, Gender and Citizenship* (Zed Books, 2011)
Suad Amiry, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries* (Anchor Books, 2004)
Sa’ed Atshan, *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique* (Stanford University Press, 2020)
Orit Bashkin, *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* (Stanford University Press, 2013)

Sophie Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine: Peacebuilding, Resistance, and Survival* (University of Illinois Press, 2018)

Penina Eilberg-Schwartz with Sulaiman Khatib, *In this Place Together: A Palestinian's Journey to Collective Liberation* (Beacon Press, 2021)

Sara Roy, *Unsilencing Gaza: Reflections on Resistance* (Pluto Press, 2021)

Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford University Press, 2013)

Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East* (Metropolitan Books, 2005)

Tom Segev, *A State at Any Cost: The Life of David Ben-Gurion* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2019)

Anita Shapira, *Ben-Gurion: Father of Modern Israel* (Yale University Press, 2014)

Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* (Profile Books, 2007)