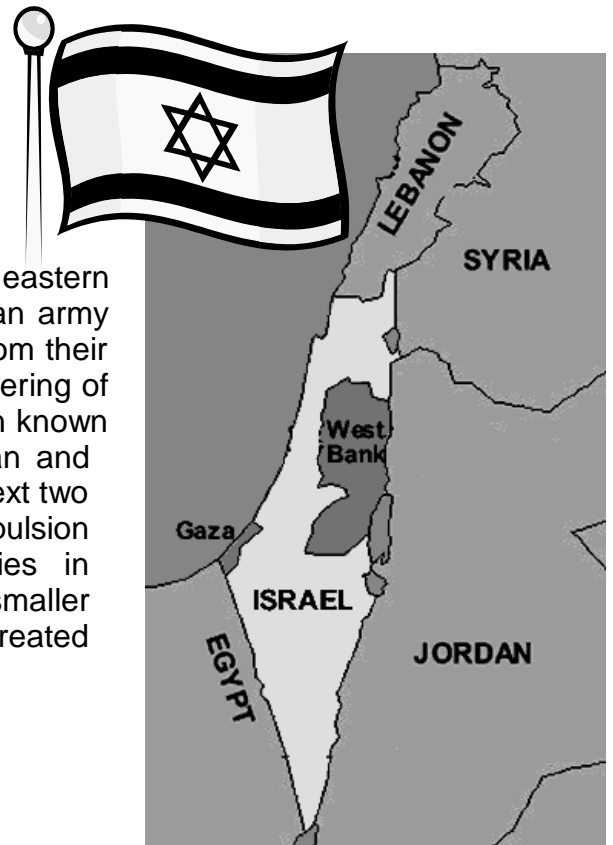


The Creation of Israel

Part I: Jews Face Hardship

Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham, lived on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea until AD70 until the Roman army forced them to leave. This removal of the Jewish people from their land began the Jewish Diaspora. **The Diaspora** is the scattering of Jews from their original homeland. This homeland has been known

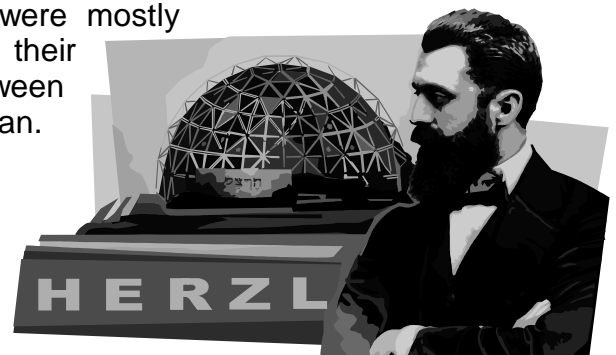
many names throughout history, from Canaan and Israel to Zion and Palestine. For almost the next two thousand years after the Roman expulsion (*removal*), the Jews lived as minorities in different lands. A **minority group** is a smaller group of people who differs from and is treated differently than the general population.



Through the centuries, the Jewish minority groups were often unwelcome guests in their new countries. As outsiders, these Jews faced **anti-Semitism**, or hatred and discrimination towards Jewish people. During the 1800s Jews faced **pogroms**, or organized massacres, particularly in Russia and Eastern Europe. The worse case of anti-Semitism was the German **Holocaust**, carried out by Hitler's Nazi party in the 1930-40s. During the Holocaust, people who did not fit Hitler's view of the perfect German race faced extermination. In time, the Nazis adopted a policy of **genocide**, the purposeful and organized extermination of a group of people based on their race, religion, or culture. The concentration camps became death camps with gas chambers for mass killings. Altogether, as many as six million Jews and five million others perished in what became known as the Holocaust.

Because of the mistreatment Jews faced, Jewish writer Theodor Herzl formed the ideas of Zionism in the late 1890s. **Zion** is a term Jews used to talk about their ancient homeland of Israel, often referred to as "the Promised Land". According to the Torah, God promised the Land of Israel as an everlasting possession to the descendants of the Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hence the name "the Promised Land". Zionists felt that the only way the Jewish minority could be safe from mistreatment by other groups would be to recreate a Jewish state in the home of their ancestors, in the land they were "promised" by God. Thus **Zionism** became an international movement for the creation of the modern state of Israel as a Jewish homeland. During the time of Theodor Herzl and the beginning of the Zionist movement in the 19th Century, the ancient homeland of the Jews was officially known as Palestine. One problem for Jews wanting to return to their ancient homeland was that it was populated by Arab-speaking people who were mostly Muslim. These Arab Palestinians had no desire to see their homeland become a Jewish state. Thus the conflict between Jews and Arabs over Palestine (later known as Israel) began.

Part II: The Arab-Israeli Conflicts



At the end of World War I in 1918, the Ottoman Empire had collapsed. By 1920, the British took control of former Ottoman territory, including Palestine. The British called their new territory the **British Mandate of Palestine**. By this time though, many Jews had responded to the Zionist movement and had settled on land their ancestors had called home. Soon violence and conflicts over land broke out between the Jewish settlers and the local Muslim, Arab-speaking people known as **Palestinians**.

At the end of World War II in 1945, representatives of fifty countries formed the **United Nations** to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." By 1947, the UN had agreed to divide Palestine – one part for Jews and another for Arabs. The Jews accepted the plan, the Arabs did not. Despite Arab complaints, in 1948 the United Nations created the modern state of **Israel** as a homeland for Jews. Six Arab states (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia) immediately invaded Israel to show their support for their fellow Arab-speaking Palestinians. This **1948 Arab-Israeli War** was the first in a series of wars fought between the State of Israel and its Arab neighbors in the long-running Arab-Israeli conflict. For Jewish Israelis, the war marks the successful establishment of the Israeli state, but for Palestinian Arabs it signifies the beginning of the events referred to as "**al Nakba**" ("the Catastrophe"), a term used to describe the fleeing or expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian residents from the newly created state of Israel.

When the state of Israel was created, about 700,000 Palestinian Arabs left their homes in the area. They fled to other Arab countries or settled in camps set up by the UN. In 1964, some Palestinian people formed the **Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)**. The PLO sought to win back Palestinian territory and refused to recognize Israel's right to exist.

Conflict continued between Arab Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. After a second war in 1967 known as the **Six Day War**, Israel occupied former Arab-Palestinian lands along the **West Bank** of the Jordan River, near the city of Gaza (now known as the **Gaza Strip**), the **Golan Heights** (in northern Israel near Syria), and the **Sinai Peninsula** (bordering Egypt).

In 1979, Egyptian President **Anwar Sadat** became the first Arab leader to agree to a peace treaty with Israel. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and the long dispute between the nations of Israel and Egypt ended. Many Arabs saw Sadat as a traitor for making an agreement with Israel. Five years later, Sadat was assassinated by Egyptians who did not believe he should have agreed to peace with Israel.

Finally in 1993, with the aid of U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israel and the PLO signed an agreement known as the **Oslo Accords**. The PLO recognized Israel's right to exist. As result, Israel returned land to the Palestinians. Since then, Israel has returned most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Palestinians, leaving Israel and the Golan Heights as the only territory it still holds from the Arab-Israeli wars. Despite their agreements, conflict still continues today between Arabs and Jews over the lands known both as Palestine and Israel.

Israel, 1967

