Brief History of Israel and the Jewish People

Sedert die dae van Farao bykans 3000 gelede, is die Joodse volk vervolg, uitgemoor, gehaat. Maar tot vandag toe kon geen nasie hulle nog uitwis nie. En toe in 1948 gebeur ’n wonderwerk. God herstel sy volk en ‘n Joodse staat word gebore. Met ’n skamele 600 000 Jode begin hulle ’n land opbou. Mark Twain het gesê dat Israel ‘n dorre, lewelose land is wat niemand wil hê nie. God het egter ’n plan met hulle gehad.

Jesaja 66:8

"Israel is the very embodiment of Jewish continuity: It is the only nation on earth that inhabits the same land, bears the same name, speaks the same language, and worships the same God that it did 3,000 years ago. You dig the soil and you find pottery from Davidic times, coins from Bar Kokhba, and 2,000-year-old scrolls written in a script remarkably like the one that today advertises ice cream at the corner candy store."

The people of Israel (also called the "Jewish People") trace their origin to Abraham, who established the belief that there is only one God, the creator of the universe (see Old Testament). Abraham, his son Yitshak (Isaac), and grandson Jacob (Israel), are referred to as the patriarchs of the Israelites. All three patriarchs lived in the Land of Canaan, that later came to be known as the Land of Israel. They and their wives are buried in the Ma'arat HaMachpela, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron.

The name Israel derives from the name given to Jacob (see Old Testament). His 12 sons were the kernels of 12 tribes that later developed into the Jewish nation. The name Jew derives from Yehuda (Judah) one of the 12 sons of Jacob (Reuben, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Yisachar, Zevulun, Yosef, Binyamin). So, the names Israel, Israeli or Jewish refer to people of the same origin.

The descendants of Abraham crystallized into a nation at about 1300 BCE after their Exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses (Moshe in Hebrew). Soon after the Exodus, Moses transmitted to the people of this new emerging nation, the Torah, and the Ten Commandments. After 40 years in the Sinai desert, Moses led them to the Land of Israel, that is cited in The Bible as the land promised by G-d to the descendants of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The people of modern day Israel share the same language and culture shaped by the Jewish heritage and religion passed through generations starting with the founding father Abraham (ca. 1800 BCE). Thus, Jews have had continuous presence in the land of Israel for the past 3,300 years.
The rule of Israelites in the land of Israel starts with the conquests of Joshua (ca. 1250 BCE). The period from 1000-587 BCE is known as the "Period of the Kings". The most noteworthy kings were King David (1010-970 BCE), who made Jerusalem the Capital of Israel, and his son Solomon (Shlomo, 970-931 BCE), who built the first Temple in Jerusalem as prescribed in the Tanach (Old Testament).

In 587 BCE, Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar's army captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and exiled the Jews to Babylon (modern day Iraq).

The year 587 BCE marks a turning point in the history of the region. From this year onwards, the region was ruled or controlled by a succession of superpower empires of the time in the following order: Babylonian, Persian, Greek Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Empires, Islamic and Christian crusaders, Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire.

Maps of Ancient Empires in the Near East.

Assyrian Empire (746 - 609 BCE)

Babylonian Empire (609 - 539 BCE)

Persian Empire (550 - 330 BCE)

Macedonian Empire (During the reign of Alexander the Great (III) 336 - 323 BCE)
### Foreign Empires that ruled in Israel

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Empire</th>
<th>Major Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>587 BCE</td>
<td>Babylonian</td>
<td>Destruction of the first Temple.</td>
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<tr>
<td>538-333 BCE</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>Return of the exiled Jews from Babylon and construction of the second Temple (520-515 BCE).</td>
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<tr>
<td>333-63 BCE</td>
<td>Hellenistic</td>
<td>Conquest of the region by the army of Alexander the Great (333 BCE). The Greeks generally allowed the Jews to run their state. But, during the rule of the king Antiochus IV, the Temple was desecrated. This brought about the revolt of the Maccabees, who established an independent rule. The related events are celebrated during the Hanukah holiday.</td>
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<td>63 BCE-313 CE</td>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>The Roman army led by Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple at 70 CE. Jewish people were then exiled and dispersed to the Diaspora. In 132, Bar Kokhba organized a revolt against Roman rule, but was killed in a battle in Bethar in Judean Hills. Subsequently the Romans decimated the Jewish community, renamed Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina and Judea as Palaestina to obliterate Jewish identification with the Land of Israel (the word Palestine, and the Arabic word Filastin originate from this Latin name). The remaining Jewish community moved to northern towns in the Galilee. Around 200 CE the Sanhedrin was moved to Tsippori (Zippori, Sephhoris). The Head of Sanhedrin, Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi (Judah the Prince), compiled the Jewish oral law, Mishna.</td>
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<td>313-636 Byzantine</td>
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<td>Dome of the Rock was built by Caliph Abd el-Malik on the grounds of the destroyed Jewish Temple.</td>
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<tr>
<td>636-1099 Arab</td>
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<td>The crusaders came from Europe to capture the Holy Land following an appeal by Pope Urban II, and massacred the non-Christian population. Later Jewish community in Jerusalem expanded by immigration of Jews from Europe.</td>
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<td>1291-1516 Mamluk</td>
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<td>During the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem were rebuilt. Population of the Jewish community in Jerusalem increased.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917-1948 British</td>
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<td>Great Britain recognized the rights of the Jewish people to establish a &quot;national home in Palestine&quot;. Yet they greatly curtailed entry of Jewish refugees into Israel even after World War II. They split Palestine mandate into an Arab state which has become the modern day Jordan, and Israel.</td>
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After the exile by the Romans, the Jewish people migrated to Europe and North Africa. In the Diaspora (scattered outside of the Land of Israel), they established rich cultural and economic lives, and contributed greatly to the societies where they lived. Yet, they continued their national attachments and prayed to return to Israel through centuries. In the first half of the 20th century there were major waves of immigration of Jews back to Israel from Arab countries and from Europe. During the British rule in Palestine, the Jewish people were subject to great violence and massacres directed by Arab civilians or forces of the neighboring Arab states. During World War II, the Nazi regime in Germany decimated about 6 million Jews creating the great tragedy of The Holocaust.
In 1948, Jewish Community in Israel under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion reestablished sovereignty over their ancient homeland. Declaration of independence of the modern State of Israel was announced on the day that the last British forces left Israel (May 14, 1948).

A day after the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, armies of five Arab countries, Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq, invaded Israel. This marked the beginning of the War of Independence. Arab states have jointly waged four full scale wars against Israel:
- 1948 War of Independence
- 1956 Sinai War
- 1967 Six Day War
- 1973 Yom Kippur War

Despite the numerical superiority of the Arab armies, Israel defended itself each time and won. After each war Israeli army withdrew from most of the areas it captured (see maps). This is unprecedented in World history and shows Israel's willingness to reach peace even at the risk of fighting for its very existence each time anew.

This drawing by Dr. Semion Natliashvili depicts the modern ingathering of the Jewish People after 2,000 years of Diaspora.
The center image of the picture shows young and old man attired in prayer shawl and reading from a Torah scroll that has united the Jewish People. The written portion shows Shema Yisrael Adonay Eloheynu Adonay Echad (Hear, Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One).

The Star of David symbolizes the gathering of the Jewish People from all corners of the world including Georgia (country of birth of the artist), Morocco, Russia, America, China, Ethiopia, Europe and other countries joining together in dance and celebration. Other images inside the star symbolize modern Israeli industry, agriculture and military. The images on the margins of the picture symbolize the major threats that the Jewish People faced in Exile starting from the Exodus from Egypt, followed by Romans, Arabs and culminating in the gas-chambers of the Holocaust in Europe.

The Arab Israel Conflict in Maps

Note that with Judea and Samaria Israel is only 40 miles wide. Thus, Israel can be crossed from the Mediterranean coast to the Eastern border at Jordan river within one hour of driving.

For further information and resources see:

- The Crux of WORLD HISTORY - First Chapter: The Birth of the Jewish People by Francisco Gil-White. This is the best revolutionary exposition of the influence of Judaism on World culture in a historical perspective.
  - Arab-Israeli conflict
  - Historical Maps and Atlases
  - Israel Wars and Maps
  - Jewish People
  - Time-Line for the History of Judaism
  - Photographs of Israel from 1800's and early 20th century
  - Historical highlights of the history of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).