

# The Return to the Land of Israel

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Dor Hemshech



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## Introduction 3

### **Chapter I: Palestine Jewry (1777–1831)**

- Background 7
- The East European Immigration (i) Hasidim 10
- The East European Immigration (ii) The *Perushim* 15
- The Sephardic and West-Central European Immigration 18
- Halukkah* – The *Yishuv*'s Economic Support System 19
- Summary 22

### **Chapter II: The Egyptian Interlude (1831–1840)**

- The Conquest of Palestine 1831–1832 25
- Egyptian Rule and the *Yishuv*
  - (i) European "Protection" 28
  - (ii) Trends in Immigration 30
  - (iii) Facing the Ravages of Man and Nature 31
  - (iv) Beginnings of Philanthropic Activity 33

### **Chapter III: On the Threshold of a New Era (1840–1882)**

- Political Reversal, Reform and Internal Stagnancy 37
- The *Yishuv* Under Ottoman Reform 40
  - (i) Jerusalem – The Heart of the *Yishuv* (1840–1882) 41
  - (ii) Urban developments in the *Yishuv* 47
  - (iii) The Winds of Change 50

### **Chapter IV: The Break with the Past – The New *Yishuv* (1882–1917)**

- The Political Framework – From Sultans to Balfour 53
- The *Yishuv* (1882–1917) – An Overview 61
- The First Aliyah – Ideology and Settlement 67
- The Controversy Between New and Old 75
- The Second Aliyah – The Roots of the Labor Movement 81
- New Ventures and Growth 87
- In the Shadow of World War I 93

**Chapter V: On the Road to Statehood (1917–1948)**

Thirty Years of Struggle and Turmoil – An Overview 99

The British Mandate – The Political Framework 100

Palestine Under the British: A Period of Progress 116

The Jewish National Home in Eretz-Israel (1917–1948) – Guidelines 121

Political and Social Organization of the *Yishuv* 130

A Bird's Eye View of the Cultural and Educational Life of the *Yishuv* 136

Defence, Underground and Security – The *Yishuv's* Military Side 139

Conclusion 145

## Preface

This brief study of the Jewish community (*Yishuv*) in Palestine from the end of the eighteenth century until the establishment of the State of Israel is mainly concerned with the various Jewish migrations to Palestine. We have tried to show the underlying motivations of these immigrants, their successes and failures, and their distinct orientation within the *Yishuv*. However, in a period which saw the fall of several once powerful empires where Jews were concentrated, and witnessed major upheavals in the life of the Jewish community in the Diaspora, the background to the developments in the *Yishuv* become part and parcel of its history. Although only highlights of these dramatic changes are treated, they serve as a guide to viewing the migrations (*Aliyot*) to Palestine within the prism of general historical developments and particular transformations in the Jewish community. Each and every one of the migrations deserves a much broader analysis than the scope of this work could provide, but hopefully the reader will find in this approach an overall view of the Jewish return to Palestine in the last generations – for therein lies the background to the State of Israel.

Richard I. Cohen

Jerusalem, 5746/1986

# Introduction

Throughout the long period of exile, the Jewish people maintained an everlasting connection with its historic motherland, Eretz-Israel (The Land of Israel). Though dispersed among several continents and involved in the daily activities of other neighbouring societies, Jews prayed for a return to Zion and yearned for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. But Palestine remained throughout the centuries a source of conflict and vision for other religions as well, and they periodically conquered her and dominated the cultural and religious atmosphere of the country. Jews were often downtrodden, even in Palestine, yet a persistent community continued to live there uninterruptedly while others occasionally immigrated and rejuvenated the Jewish nucleus. Seeking to fulfill their religious obligation, Jews in the Diaspora often lent support to their brethren in Eretz-Israel who struggled through difficult times and tyrannic rulers. Thus, Palestine in the Middle Ages never became the center of Jewish life as in the Hasmonean period but preserved the unique contact with Jews in the Diaspora.

From 1517 until 1917, Palestine was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and from 1917 until the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 it was part of the waning British Empire. The long Ottoman rule had different aspects to it: during the first century and a half, when the Empire prospered and expanded its territory and wealth, Eretz-Israel and its Jewish community (the *Yishuv*) flourished. The

transformation of Safed, perched atop the hills of Galilee, into a vibrant center of mystics, learning, and industry was only one example of the heyday of the Empire. But the downfall of the powerful dynasty, which began in the late seventeenth century, had an immediate impact upon the peripheral areas of the Empire, like Palestine. Internal security was severely weakened in the eighteenth century and rival factions took the law into their own hands, disregarding the Sultan's directives. A small Jewish community of less than six thousand was often caught between these elements and hardly eked out its basic existence. The accepted pattern – dependence upon outside Jewish sources – became more pronounced and intensified. However, from the seventies of that century until the 'first *Aliyah*' in 1882, the *Yishuv* underwent a major demographic development, multiplying its population four times over and establishing new centers of Jewish life. A product in part of the renewed interest in Palestine by major European powers and the short lived Egyptian rule (1831-1840), the waves of immigration fortified the traditional elements in the community and initiated new mechanisms of support. As dramatic as it was, this development did not change the course of the *Yishuv*, that of a traditional community bent on religious learning and study, subsisting on the financial assistance from Jews in the Diaspora. The upheaval in the *Yishuv's* self-perception came in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a result of the Jewish nationalist movement, whose cradle was the "lovers of Zion" in Russia and whose goal was immigration (*Aliyah*) to Eretz-Israel to establish self-contained agricultural settlements. Within three decades, the map of Jewish Palestine was completely revolutionized. On the eve of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, almost ninety thousand Jews resided in tens of new settlements outside the perimeters of the historic "holy cities" (Jerusalem, Tiberias, Hebron, Safed). A new dynamic element motivated by a secular Zionist ideology had penetrated the *Yishuv's* one-dimensional framework and produced a clash of interests between the traditional and the new community.

Constituting twelve percent of Palestine in 1914, the *Yishuv* had become the avant-garde in a changing society, which underwent

tremendous hardship during World War I. Severely depleted by starvation, expulsion and emigration, the *Yishuv* welcomed the British conquest of Palestine in December 1917, especially as it followed the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917. The next three decades under British rule were to witness the rise of the Jewish nationalist movement to the forefront of the Palestinian society, and the emergence of those organizational structures that played a leading factor in turning the *Yishuv* into a "state-on-the-way." A period of uncomparable development within Palestine, those years unleashed a persistent opposition to Zionist goals from the Arab nationalist movement. Once again, Palestine became the scene of growing disputes which deteriorated during several periods to widespread terrorist activity. However, European Jewry turned more and more to Palestine as a refuge from the threatening international scene. With the rise of National-Socialism in Germany, the increasing anti-Semitism in Poland and the severe limitations on immigration to the United States, the Zionist movement pressured the British government to forego its restrictive immigration policy to Palestine. Nonetheless, fearing Arab reprisals, the British published in 1939 a White Paper to regulate Jewish immigration. The new orientation of British policy came at a traumatic moment for the Jewish people, the most traumatic in its history since the destruction of the Temple: the Holocaust of European Jewry. As Jews of Europe faced the Nazi drive to annihilate them, the *Yishuv* encountered the steadfast Arab antagonism to Zionist goals and a British Mandate less inclined to accommodate Zionist aspirations. The *Yishuv* itself was split in its attitudes to these formidable tendencies. But when the war came to an end and the astounding tragedy of European Jewry became known, a determined struggle was launched against the British to bring about their evacuation from Palestine. A Jewish State had become the desire of a growing portion of the Jewish world, the natural outgrowth of decades of determined Zionist policy. The post-war international atmosphere was now amenable to this vision and the United Nations granted its approval and supported the establishment of a Jewish state. On 15 May 1948, with the evacuation of the British civilian and military administration, the



## INTRODUCTION

State of Israel was established. A new era in the beleaguered history of the Jewish people had begun.

The last one hundred and seventy years of Jewish history in Eretz-Israel were marked by major upheavals in the life of the Jewish people and the nations of the world. Traditional Jewish society continued to manifest its longing for Zion but it was no longer alone; the exit from the ghetto had released a myriad of Jewish responses, among them the Zionist nationalist movement. However, without the rising tide of European nationalism and the crumbling of three powerful multi-national empires (the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian) the fulfillment of the Zionist dream would certainly have been postponed. These one hundred and seventy years of Jewish history in Eretz-Israel thus inculcated the major trends and ideologies of the period, but above all manifested an unparalleled and remarkable feat – the return of a people to live in its historic homeland and to speak the tongue of its biblical ancestors.

## **Chapter I:**

### **Palestine Jewry (1777-1831)**

#### *Background*

Bureaucratic and administrative bedlam reigned supreme in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Palestine, bringing the country and its population to a most destitute state. The declining Ottoman Empire took its toll, leaving the country insecure before rivalling internal factions. Bedouins, tribes and Arab peasants (fellahin) were engaged in constant conflict, raiding each other's homes and fields and wreaking havoc in cities and towns. Long-term struggles between towns (e.g. between Hebron and Bethlehem) ensued while the Ottoman administration observed the developments, at a loss to intervene. Moreover, the economic depression was unrelenting, encumbered by recurrent natural disasters which resulted in many deaths. No more than 250,000 people lived on both sides of the Jordan, with Jerusalem and Acre each housing almost 10,000 residents. Palestine seemed like the opposite of a Promised Land: unruly types figured prominently, making daily life prone to theft, murder, and looting. For the non-Muslim minorities the plight was even greater, as they were regarded by the Muslim majority as second class citizens, who were constantly levied with special taxes and encumbered with a host of hindrances.

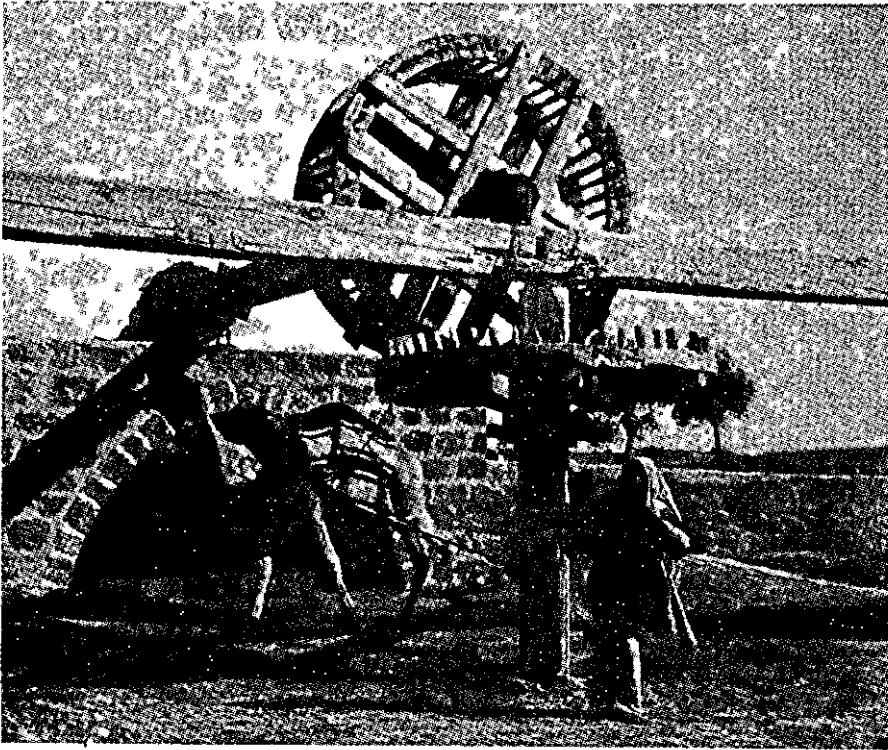
Jewish and Christian sects had enjoyed since the middle of the

century the umbrella of a Bedouin sheikh, Zāhir al-Omar, who from 1740 ruled over most of the Galilee and by 1770 controlled most of the country. Zāhir sought to develop the regions under his rule by encouraging Jewish settlement in the Galilee (Tiberias, Peki'in, Yasif, and Shepharam), assisting Greek Orthodox immigration from Cyprus and by easing the economic burden of the minorities. But as a local upstart who lived by the sword, Zāhir was hated by the Sultans in Istanbul who finally succeeded in disposing of him in 1775. The Ottomans appointed Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzār ("the Butcher") as ruler over Palestine, and he transferred the capital to Acre, from where he administered the country until 1804. Once again, Palestine and its minorities were thrust back to pure Ottoman rule with all its corruption and abuse. The Jewish community was somewhat shielded from the authoritarian and cruel methods of al-Jazzār.

Apparently no more than 6,000 strong, the Jewish community was mostly of Sephardic origin and concentrated in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed and Tiberias. The extreme poverty of these enclaves convinced leading members of the Istanbul Jewish community to establish a special committee, known as "Vaad Pekidei Eretz-Israel in Istanbul" (the Committee of Offices for Eretz-Israel in Istanbul, 1727). Originally designed to supervise the distribution and use of funds and to facilitate the payment of the heavy debts burdening the Jerusalem community, the Committee eventually became the dominant factor in the administration of the internal affairs in Palestine. It spread its philanthropic activities to include all of the holy cities, intervened with the Sultan to improve the financial and physical conditions of the community, but also became the arbiter of its internal affairs. Chief Rabbis, heads of yeshivot and community officials were all appointed by the Istanbul Committee, which tried to determine even the course of the community's growth. Their efforts did not go unrewarded. Jerusalem, which had floundered in the early part of the century, was resuscitated. Yeshivot again flourished, attracting students from abroad while halachic works were composed and published with the help of the Istanbul Committee in the Ottoman Empire. In Hebron, a few hundred Sephardi Jews struggled to



Fellahin working the land in traditional methods



withstand the consistent pressure from their creditors and were it not for the support of the Committee, they would have been forced to abandon the city. The Jewish settlements in the Galilee, spurred on by Zāhir al-Omar, were a source of optimism. In Tiberias and environ a new center of Jewish life evolved from the 1740's. Under the inspired leadership of Rabbi Hayyim Abulafia, a rabbi from Smyrna, a major rebuilding project was begun to induce *aliyah* to the city, since he claimed that the Divine Presence is in Tiberias and redemption will begin from here. The initial fervor indeed brought new settlers, both from abroad and Safed, but R. Hayyim's death (1744) hampered its continued progress. Nevertheless, an important inroad had been made to extend the map of Jewish life into the Galilee, allowing for future Jewish immigration.



**Abulafia, Hayyim Ben Moses**  
(c. 1660-1744)

Stemming from the distinguished Abulafia family, Hayyim was born in Hebron and in his thirties was sent on a mission to Salonika. He served as rabbi of Smyrna from 1721-1740, when he moved to Tiberias and took part in the rebuilding of the city. A prolific author, Abulafia wrote many commentaries on the Bible.

In the urban Sephardic communities, and especially in Jerusalem, the leadership consisted of *Hachamim* and economically compatible individuals of a homogeneous cultural background. The leadership maintained a close contact with their native communities in the Empire and dispatched emissaries for collecting funds from the Diaspora. The Ashkenazim were only a small insignificant minority in the *Yishuv* in general, and in Jerusalem in particular. Basically they accepted the Sephardic pre-eminence, their traditions and modes of living. This situation was to change in the next years with the advent of immigrants from Eastern Europe, who would bring with them an insular support structure and a different ideological basis.

All in all, at the end of Zāhir's rule and the beginning of al-Jazzār's, the state of the community was not an impressive one. Safed was in shambles due to the destructive earthquake of 1759, while the bleak economic condition continued to plague the other concentrations. The Istanbul Committee had been successful in keeping the *Yishuv* at bay and even to invigorate it, but Palestinian Jewry still lacked internal resources and internal security to ward off the constant political and economic developments.

### *The East European Immigration – (i) Hasidim*

The "Old *Yishuv*" is the name often used to denote the Jewish community which developed from the latter part of the eighteenth century until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its characteristics and outstanding features are related to the immigration to Eretz-Israel from Eastern Europe which took serious proportions from the 1770's. Most significantly, the immigration brought about a heterogeneous Jewish society which replaced the almost total domination of the Sephardic community. The East European element, previously of little import, grew steadily, creating new patterns of life less dependent upon the Sephardic communities.

From the 1770's, East European born Jews began to form a separate existence in Eretz-Israel. Rather than assimilate into the pre-existing context, the *olim* (immigrants) created special frameworks for unique communal life. The Hasidim were the first to go in this direction. This religious movement, whose teachings stem from

Jewish mysticism (kabbalah), evolved in Eastern Europe in mid-eighteenth century around the charismatic figure of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov (Besht). A spiritual movement, the Hasidim emphasized happiness in prayer and believed that God could be worshipped in a myriad of ways. Known for his tales and special medicinal prescriptions, the Besht was a nomadic figure who influenced his followers more by the power of his personality than by the breadth of his knowledge. The Besht never made *aliyah*, but several of his disciples, harbouring a strong messianic fervor, immigrated to Eretz-Israel in accordance with their vision. During the Besht's lifetime (d. 1760), Hasidic *aliyah* was minimal. However, his brother-in-law and follower, R. Abraham Gershon of Kutov, a learned Jew and a mystic, reached the shores of Palestine in 1747 and settled in Hebron. R. Gershon urged the Besht to join him but was reconciled to his remaining in the Diaspora. A trickle of Hasidim from Galicia and Volhynia followed R. Gershon; most noteworthy was a group of some thirty, headed by R. Simcha of Zalosc, which settled in Tiberias in 1764. They too beseeched their fellow Hasidim to end their settlement in the Diaspora and to refuse to listen to those who speak ill of the Holy Land. But their call remained unanswered until a substantial group of Hasidim embarked for Eretz-Israel in 1777.

Three disciples of the Besht's successor, the Maggid of Mezritch, traveled through Poland, Ukraine, Podolia and Romania in 1777 encouraging Hasidim to join them to sail to Eretz-Israel. R. Menahem-Mendel of Vitebsk, R. Abraham of Kalisk, and R. Israel of Polotzk were all central figures in the Hasidic movement in White Russia and their prominence lent great prestige to the entourage. Communities contributed money to help cover the expenses of the voyage and assist the immigrants settlement. Not only Hasidim joined the wave. On the way from the north to the Black Sea, hundreds of impoverished Jews with no contact whatever with Hasidim utilized the opportunity to escape their trying conditions. Recent persecutions of Jews in Poland combined with a decaying economic basis prompted these Jews to look to Eretz-Israel as a salvation. Their participation was frowned upon by the Hasidic leaders, who feared their drain on the resources prepared for the Hasidic settle-

**Dov Baer (The Maggid of Mezritch) (d. 1772)**

Educated in the distinguished yeshivah of R. Jacob Joshua Falk, the *Maggid* later became a preacher in Korets and Rovno. Later he moved to Mezritch in Volhynia, the center of Hasidism. Both a talmudic scholar and an erudite Kabbalist, the Maggid became the recognized leader of the Hasidic movement after the Baal Shem Tov died in 1760. He was responsible for disseminating the movement to the Ukraine, Lithuania and Poznanian, and for the evolution of new Hasidic leaders.

**Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk  
(1730-1788)**

A disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, Menachem Mendel was a central Hasidic leader in the areas of Belorussia, Lithuania, and later in Eretz-Israel. After his abortive attempt to meet with the Gaon of Vilna and bring about an end to the tension between Hasidim and Mitnagdim, Menachem left Minsk and settled in Gorodok (Vitebsk) and later in 1777 joined the Hasidic *aliyah* to Eretz-Israel. There he became a leader of the hasidic community, though he maintained his position as spiritual head of the Hasidim in Belorussia via correspondence.

**Nachman of Bratzlav  
(1772-1811)**

The great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, R. Nachman was a controversial hasidic leader during his lifetime and since his death his teachings have been a constant source of conflicting interpretation. Reared in a hasidic atmosphere in Medziboz, R. Nachman quickly developed into a leader, sought after by Hasidim. In 1798 R. Nachman spent a few months in Eretz-Israel visiting various cities. He spent eight years in Bratzlav (1802-1810) where his mystical teachings and uncommon behavior continued to raise spirited controversy. *Inter alia*, it was his theory of the *Zaddik*, that only one true one existed, and it was he, Nachman, who was destined to be the Messiah that was a cause for much controversy.

Indeed, many of them became opponents to the Hasidim after their arrival in Eretz-Israel. But the Hasidic core of a few hundred was in essence motivated by an elitist religious consciousness. Seeing in their *aliyah* a mission of all of Israel by studying and praying in the Holy Land, the Hasidim prepared the way for further waves of immigration. Yet they did not cut off their religious and social connection with the Golah (Diaspora). Hasidim continued to be spiritually associated to their *Zaddik* (Rebbe) abroad, rarely switching allegiance to the *Zaddikim* who emigrated. Moreover, and this was no small matter, their financial support was tied up territorially and ideologically with the particular Hasidic court in the Diaspora.

Several hundred, more simple folk than Hasidim, finally reached the coast of Acre in September 1777. They constituted the largest Jewish convoy since the turn of the century and thereby opened a new page in the history of the Jewish community in Eretz-Israel. Preferring the former mystical center of Safed over Jerusalem, the *olim* encountered a small Jewish community, which did not exceed a few hundred. But being an elitist group with special practices, the Hasidim soon found themselves at odds with both the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim in Safed. Various efforts to mediate between them failed and within a few years the Hasidim began to leave Safed and settle in other areas of the Galilee. Tiberias became the new center of Hasidism in Eretz-Israel, bolstering the city's Jewish community to nearly four hundred. The internecine disputes which characterized the last years of Zāhir's rule and curbed Tiberias's growth were now part of the past and enabled the Hasidic penetration. Initially R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk was received with open arms by the Sephardic community but the welcome was short-lived. The Hasidic community quickly came into conflict with the Sephardic leadership over religious practice and was forced to find different residences in Tiberias, incurring numerous debts. Nonetheless, under Menachem Mendel's leadership (d. 1788), Tiberias maintained its epithet as the Hasidic center. In fact, even ten years later (1798-1799), when R. Nachman of Bratzlav made his famous trip to Eretz-Israel and sojourned with Hasidim in Tiberias, it was clear that this was the most consolidated group of Hasidim. R. Menahem Mendel had laid

the groundwork for this development. He was instrumental in organizing the emissaries of the Diaspora to collect funds for the Hasidic settlements in Tiberias, Safed, and the non-urban Galilee enclaves, thereby solidifying them and establishing a new avenue of support for the *Yishuv*, outside the purview of the Istanbul Committee and beyond the Sephardic influence. The assistance came in particular from White Russia, the original homeland of most of the Hasidic immigrants in the 1770's.

Whereas Menahem Mendel was able to keep the dispersed Hasidic community united, his successor R. Abraham of Kalisk encountered insurmountable difficulties which eventually split the movement in Eretz-Israel. In essence, the division in Eretz-Israel was a fragment and off-shoot of the fundamental disruption of Hasidic unity in Eastern Europe. The movement successfully spread into new areas – Podolia, Volhynia, Galicia, and Bukovina – and Hasidim became attached to different courts, due to common background and adherence to a particular *Zaddik*. Not one leader could speak for all the Hasidim and contradicting philosophies created antagonism between their respective advocates. Such was the case with R. Abraham and R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady (Rashaz), the founder of the Habad wing of Hasidism. Presenting a more rationalistic approach to worshipping God, R. Shneur in his *Ha-Tania* (1796) broke with the commonly held concept of “simple belief,” feeling and ecstasy that R. Abraham preached. R. Abraham critically received *Ha-Tania* and dismissed all rationalistic interpretations of Hasidism. Moreover, their ideological feud was exacerbated by a controversy over the mechanism of support for the Hasidic communities in Eretz-Israel. In the early 1790's, Hasidic *olim* from Podolia and Volhynia organized separately to collect funds for their settlement. R. Abraham, who feared the loss of funds from these regions, sought to avoid the partisan collection, but at the same time, he was engaged in his critique of the Rashaz and of the organization of his Hasidim in White Russia. Moreover, R. Abraham opposed Rashaz's meddling in the financial collections for Eretz-Israel and his arbitrary allocations and in 1803 demanded that he relinquish his involvement and leave it completely to the emissaries from Eretz-Israel. R. Abra-

#### **Abraham Ben Alexander Katz of Kalisk (1741–1810)**

A hasidic leader in Poland and Eretz-Israel, Abraham emigrated in 1777 to Eretz-Israel. He became the head of the hasidic movement in Eretz-Israel after the death of Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk (d. 1788). Compendia of his sayings and letters were published in Hebrew after his death.

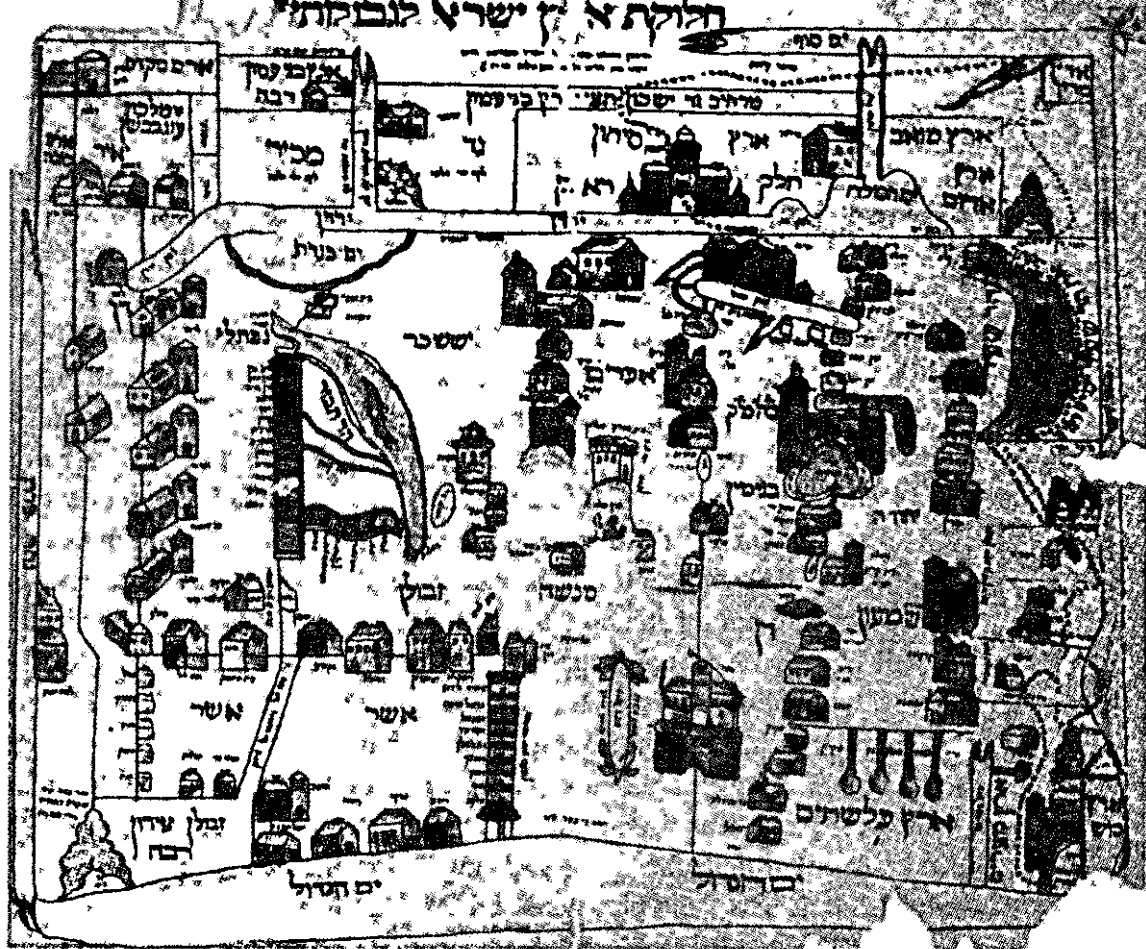
#### **Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745–1813)**

The RASHAZ, the founder of Habad Hasidism, studied with the Maggid of Mezritch and became one of his closest students. In the seventies and eighties he accumulated a large following and in 1788 was appointed the hasidic leader of Reisen. In 1796, he published his understanding of Hasidism (*Tanya*) which brought a new element to the hasidic movement. His methodical approach incorporated constant study and never-ending spiritual quest and he looked upon the *Zaddik* as an unusually gifted human being. In 1798 the RASHAZ was imprisoned in St. Petersburg on the charge of treason against the state, but ultimately released in 1801. His rising star and new expositions of Hasidism opened the movement to much internal conflict.



ham's Hasidim refused to be subservient to Habad. The discord gathered steam. Rashaz refused to rescind and the entire Hasidic movement became embroiled in the controversy. A rupture in the Palestinian arm of the movement was inevitable along territorial and ideological lines. Rashaz continued to organize the fund collecting in Lithuania and White Russia, siphoning it off to his followers in Eretz-Israel, while R. Abraham benefitted from the support of Hasidim in the Ukraine and Volhynia. Habad Hasidim were forced to live separately from other Hasidim and many of them moved to Safed, and in 1819 they established the first Ashkenazic community in Hebron – and what was to be the center of Habad Hasidim in Eretz-Israel until the riots of 1929.

Looking at these and other developments in the Hasidic immigration to and settlement in Eretz-Israel from 1777 through the first decades of the 19th century, certain important characteristics emerged, worthy of emphasis. Firstly, through the different *aliyot*, the Jewish concentration in certain cities in the Galilee was fortified and an Ashkenazic community was established in formerly Sephardic controlled cities – Hebron and Jerusalem. A new element in the *Yishuv* was introduced. However, the ties between Hasidim and Eastern Europe persisted to be the formulative force, reflecting directly on other outcomes of these *aliyot*. Secondly, Eretz-Israel had not become the center of Hasidic life but rather remained a mere extension of the dynamic trends in Eastern Europe. Hasidim in Eretz-Israel continued to be attached to their Rebbe abroad while there hardly existed Hasidim in Eastern Europe who were identified with a Rebbe who had immigrated to Eretz-Israel. Thirdly, the passionate ideological impetus which inspired the initial elitist core of Hasidim dissipated in the later waves of immigration. Not only was the spiritual motivation lacking in the latter groups but also a cohesive unifying factor. In this case too, the strongholds of Hasidim in Tiberias, Safed, and later in Jerusalem, were distinguished by a heterogeneous mosaic of Hasidic communities, mirroring the diffusive nature of the Hasidic courts in Eastern Europe. Fourthly, the Hasidic community in Palestine was plagued by weak leadership after R. Abraham of Kalisk's death in 1810. It took over two



Division of Eretz-Israel  
according to the tribes.  
Attributed to R. Elijah of Vilna,  
1802

decades before a comparable personality, in the likes of R. Abraham Dov Baer of Ovruch, a mystic and scholar from Czernoble, replaced him and headed the community through the trying days in Safed in the 1830's. Finally, as we have seen, the Hasidic *aliyah* based itself on the generation of special financial support from their communities in the mother country. This allowed them to subsist independently of the Sephardim and was to become the pattern employed by their protagonists – the disciples of the Vilna Gaon, the *Perushim*.

**Abraham Dov Baer of Ovruch (d. 1840)**

### *The Eastern European Immigration – (ii) The Perushim*

The second immigration to leave its imprint on the old *Yishuv* arrived in Eretz-Israel some thirty years after the first major Hasidic *aliyah*. This time it was their opponents, the followers of their

After being a major hasidic leader in the Ukraine, he went to Eretz-Israel in 1831 and settled in Safed. There he became a leader of the local Hasidim.

**Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman**  
(Vilna Gaon: acronym  
HA-GRA) (1720-1797).

Stemming from a family of well-known rabbis, the Vilna Gaon showed from a young age uncommon learning and in the city of Vilna (Lithuania) he was considered a child prodigy. Ascetic and diligent, the Gaon grew to be a giant in talmudic studies, while furthering his interest in the natural sciences and Kabbalah. The major spiritual opponent to Hasidism, the Gaon feared its deprecation of *talmidei hachamim* and innovative customs. Under his spiritual direction, the first excommunication of the Hasidim (1772) was agreed upon. He seemingly set out for Eretz-Israel in 1783 but never reached its shores. He left behind him the image of the *Mitnagged* (the opponent), who brought together unique intellectual capabilities and utter reverence for the traditional teachings.

**Menahem Mendel of Shklov** (d. 1827)

Born in Shklov, Menachem Mendel was one of the Gaon of Vilna's outstanding students and was responsible for bringing to press several of his master's works. In 1808 he immigrated to Eretz-Israel, settled in Safed and became one of the leaders of the *Perushim* community. After the plague of 1812 and rivalry with the Hasidim in Safed, he decided to move to Jerusalem (1816) and re-establish there the Ashkenazic community. His writings deal especially with mysticism and Kabbalah.

PALESTINE JEWRY (1777-1831)

distinguished nemesis, R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna. Though legends attribute to the Gaon a constant desire to immigrate to Palestine, like those surrounding the Besht, the Gaon, too, continued to guide his students in the Diaspora. Seemingly he planted in his close disciples a deep love for Eretz-Israel and taught that *aliyah* contained the seeds of the "beginning of redemption." During his lifetime only one of his disciples, R. Azriel of Shklov tried to strike roots in Jerusalem and adapt the Gaon's system of learning and observance to Palestine, but his stay in Eretz-Israel was curtailed. Only a decade after the Gaon's death (1796) were more serious attempts made to organize a significant *aliyah*. Possibly it can be linked to the efforts undertaken at this time by the Gaon's followers to hold back the tide of Hasidic dispersion. These were the years when Yeshivat Volozhin was established by the Gaon's protégé, R. Hayyim of Volozhin, to strengthen his teacher's system of learning and to create a spiritual center for the opponents (*mitnagdim*) of Hasidism. The *aliyah* to Eretz-Israel was of an elitist character. The Holy Land was viewed superior to all others and studying Torah there was the pinnacle of all study. In this spirit, the first "Perushim" (literally, "the dissidents" as the Gaon's followers were later connotated) saw their *aliyah*: "to raise the strength of the Torah." Yet other issues were also involved. Messianic motivations connected to the Gaon's mystical studies intertwined with active opposition to the Hasidic movement in the *aliyah* of the *Perushim*. But also the deteriorating status of Russian Jewry took its toll. Jews were being expelled from villages and, as in the case of the Hasidic *aliyah*, the economic motive figured in their decision to emigrate.

Prior to their emigration, the *Perushim* prepared the financial basis for their settlement. Emissaries were sent through Eastern Europe to guarantee a separate support system and the prestigious Vilna community was also galvanized for this purpose. R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov, a distinguished *talmid hacham* and a prominent student of the Gaon, reached Eretz-Israel in 1808, where he found in Tiberias and Safed Ashkenazic Jews who were not identified with the Hasidic movement. Though a very small group with no possibility of establishing their own "house of study" (*beit-midrash*), Menahem

Mendel resolved to settle in Safed where the Hasidic influence was less pronounced. Also Suleiman Pasha's financial wizard, R. Hayyim Farhi, took Safed under his wing and promised his protection. The following year, two convoys with more than a hundred people, including leading disciples of the Gaon, reached Safed. This was a formative group with dynamic figures who would strive to spread the *Perushim* influence, even to Jerusalem. Troubled by continuous economic difficulties, emissaries were often sent abroad to the centers of the Gaon's influence. There too, critical decisions relating to the nature of the *Perushim* community in Eretz-Israel were made by the dominant personalities abroad, like R. Hayyim of Volozhin.

Among the *Perushim* who arrived in 1805 was R. Israel of Shklov who quickly emerged as the moving force of the community. His dynamism in arranging the framework for supporting the *Perushim* in heavily populated Jewish areas of White Russia and Lithuania was only matched by his ability to negotiate with local Palestinian authorities, Arab neighbours, Sephardim and Hasidim to further the interests of the *Perushim*. Indeed, through his efforts the *Perushim* grew to 600 in Safed by 1820 and became the dominant element in the community. However, R. Israel's authority and the primacy of the *Perushim* kehillah in Safed was challenged by the emergence of a new center in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem had been almost off bounds for Ashkenazic Jews in the 18th century since the heavy debts accumulated by the entourage of R. Jehuda He-hasid at the beginning of the century. Fearing altercations with the local Arab residents and the Turkish authorities, the Sephardim and Hasidim did not encourage the *Perushim* to settle in Jerusalem. R. Israel of Shklov was himself hesitant. But after various epidemics in Safed, R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov resolved in 1816 to move to Jerusalem. Not even a *minyan* (ten male Jews) of *Perushim* were on hand, but R. Menahem began to publicize the resettlement of the holy city and strove to free the *Perushim* community from its bond to Safed. Through his efforts, and in less than a decade, Jerusalem's *Perushim* community consisted of almost 150 Jews, about a quarter of the Safed community. Two financial agreements alleviated their situation and facilitated the growth. Firstly, an

#### Farhi, Hayyim (1760–1819)

Hayyim Farhi continued his Damascus family tradition of bankers and high financiers, serving Ah'mad al-Jazzār Pasha, the governor of the province of Sidon. Later he became the governor under Suleiman Pasha and was granted authority over the city of Acre, and thereby helped develop its Jewish community. Though he favored and supported the Hasidic settlements in Tiberias and Safed, he opposed the *Perushim* attempts to begin their community in Jerusalem. With Suleiman Pasha's death (1818), Farhi supported his successor 'Abdallah Pasha, who avariciously turned against him and brought about his execution in 1820.

#### Israel of Shklov (1770–1839)

A major figure in the *Perushim* immigration to Eretz-Israel, R. Israel was born in Shklov and studied in Vilna with the Gaon. He headed the second major *Perushim* entourage to Eretz-Israel (1809) and settled in Safed. R. Israel was against settling the *Perushim* in Jerusalem and remained in Safed. There he was a central figure in the rebuilding of its *Perushim* community after the earthquake in 1836. However in 1837 he moved to Jerusalem and immediately became a leader of its *Perushim* community though he opposed opening a new Ashkenazic center in the Hurva of R. Judah He-hasid.

emissary of the *Perushim* successfully negotiated in Istanbul a *firman*, whereby the former debts of the Ashkenazim were declared null and void. Although it still took several years before former areas of Jerusalem were returned to the Ashkenazic community, a major step forward was thus achieved to encourage *aliyah*. Secondly, in 1823 an agreement was reached between the two communities in Eretz-Israel, which determined the level of financial support for each and enabled the Jerusalem *Perushim* to send its own emissaries abroad. However, the growth and independent character of the *Perushim* in Jerusalem, and the different mystical perspectives on the role of Safed and Jerusalem in the eventual redemption, complicated the relations between the two centers of *Perushim*. From this clash emerged the most serious challenge to R. Israel's single-handed leadership of the community. Both centers continued to absorb immigrants in the twenties and thirties, strengthening their respective perspectives on the study of Torah in Eretz-Israel.

The immigration of the *Perushim* had a formative imprint on the style of life in Palestine throughout the nineteenth century. Motivated by common factors as the Hasidim, the *Perushim* also maintained close contacts with their original communities which were the life-line to their financial existence. Eastern Europe continued to be the pulse for their ideology, but within Eretz-Israel they showed practical ability to establish public institutions and to turn Jerusalem into a new center. Although their numbers appear insignificant, only several hundred on the eve of the Egyptian occupation of Palestine, they constituted the religious backbone of the old *Yishuv*, severely reducing the influence of the more established Sephardic communities.

### *The Sephardic and West-Central European Immigration*

Limited information is extant regarding *aliyot* from North Africa and the Mediterranean countries to Eretz-Israel. Indeed, from 1777 a steady flow of Jews from those countries continued to reach Eretz-Israel and changed the composition of the Sephardic communities. In the Galilee, their presence was especially felt. Jews from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria settled in Tiberias from 1777, the year

of the large Hasidic immigration, and eventually became the majority of the community. Turkish Jews who formed the established leadership were now joined by a wide array of Oriental Jews. Safed also received North African Jews, and Arabic often replaced Ladino as the language of those towns. Jews from Balkan countries reached Jerusalem, as did Moroccan and Turkish Jews and, in later years, helped strengthen the mosaic of Sephardic Jewry in the city. Other than the *aliyah* of 1777 which included some 150 Tunisian Jews, no large *aliyah* followed, but the consistency of the immigrations cannot be overlooked. Here too, no new patterns of economic productivity asserted themselves, but rather the traditional desire to inhabit Eretz-Israel.

Western and Central European Jewry hardly bolstered the Jewish nucleus in Eretz-Israel during this period, and their influence as will be seen below, amounted to financial support for the *Yishuv*. Jews from Central Europe, troubled by the reactionary regimes in the post-Revolutionary period, opted for the more liberal environment of the United States and were rarely prepared to face the consequences of another reactionary regime, as in Palestine. Of the handful who nonetheless tried their fortunes in Eretz-Israel, R. Moshe Sachs was one of the most prominent. A disciple of the Hatam Sofer, the bastion of Orthodoxy in Hungary, Sachs settled in Jerusalem and entertained for several years a project for Jewish agricultural work. Going against the grain of a society which existed on a non-productive basis, Sachs was soon at odds with the community and was forced to bury his plans. Others who followed Sachs, like R. Yehoseph Schwartz and R. Eliezer Bergmann, arrived in Palestine during the Egyptian rule and they too looked for new means of existence. Their efforts were also stymied by the *Yishuv*, which continued its traditional outlook. Eventually, they too found themselves absorbed into the framework of assistance from abroad.

### *Halukkah – The Yishuv's Economic Support System*

For decades writers have looked askance at the *Yishuv's* economic basis and Jews with an "enlightened" view of history were extremely critical of what they perceived as a parasitical existence. Looking

**Sofer, Moses** (Hatam Sofer) (1762–1839)

The bastion of orthodoxy in the early nineteenth century, Sofer left his home town in Frankfort at the age of 19 in the footsteps of his teacher Nathan Adler. Sofer became rabbi of Pressburg (Hungary) in 1806. He spent the rest of his life there, developing an impressive yeshivah, which became the source for his struggle against Reform Jewry. Sofer was unflinching in his opposition to the enlightenment tendencies and decreed that any form of innovation was contradictory to the Torah. He was a prolific writer as well as polemicist and his seven volumes of responsa literature contain the impact of his orthodox approach.

**Schwarz, Yehoseph** (1805–1865)

A German born Jew, Schwarz was especially known for his map of Eretz-Israel (1829) and, after settling in Jerusalem (1883), for his historical topography of the country. His 'Produce of the Land' (1845) published in English translation in 1850 (*A Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine*) treats Eretz-Israel from the perspective of topography, climate, geographical names, flora and fauna. A rare achievement from a rabbinic personality in the Old Yishuv.

beyond these harsh value judgements, we find a profound ideological premise to the framework which enabled a small community of Jews to subsist on the assistance of their brethren in the Diaspora. Those in Eretz-Israel were held in high regard. They fulfilled, in the name of all Jewry, the everlasting bond between the exiled Jews and their homeland. By studying Torah and worshipping God in Eretz-Israel they were foregoing the material pleasures of life while being "the guardians of the walls." Assisting the Jews in Eretz-Israel was another side of the same coin, with clear religious implications. This was not mere philanthropy or even mere *Tsdakah* (charity). For those unable to fulfill the religious commandment of settling Eretz-Israel themselves were nonetheless commanded to assist those who could, and their act of assistance was tantamount to settling the country. The two were partners in the supreme religious enterprise with the *olim* seen as the emissaries of the Jews abroad, whose fate depended on the prayers of their brethren in Eretz-Israel. Moreover, since many commandments could only be observed in Eretz-Israel, and by fulfilling them and continuing the study of Torah, the redemption of Israel would become more imminent, aid for the *Yishuv* took on messianic proportions. Within this ideological structure, we can see how both Jews in the Diaspora and in Eretz-Israel continued to pursue their particular role in the partnership for hundreds of years. In Hebrew, this unique partnership became known as the *halukkah* ("The Distribution"), in which the *Yishuv* receives its share from emissaries abroad and the funds are apportioned equally. No shame is involved, nor simple charity, but a form of payment for those who served God and His people in Eretz-Israel. In the nineteenth century, the network of *halukkah* spread throughout the Diaspora, although the amount of funds collected was a far cry from the *Yishuv*'s needs.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the collection was in the hands of various organs in the Ottoman Empire, Central and Eastern Europe. Emissaries were often sent from Eretz-Israel to arrange the transfer while communities abroad determined norms for donations. During different periods, new centers of support arose contingent upon political or social developments, but throughout the

sources were diversified ranging from collection boxes in synagogues to set collections fixed by the community leadership. In the eighteenth century "The Istanbul Committee" was the important organization both financially and administratively, relying upon the traditional community avenues for support. The Committee failed however to utilize the new developments in western and central Europe which could have greatly invigorated the collection process. As we have seen, the immigrations from Eastern Europe brought with them wholly new patterns of support which weakened the centralist structure of the Istanbul Committee; money was distributed and organizational decisions made by the Eastern European elements, be they Hasidim or *Perushim*. Coupled with the general decline in importance of Ottoman Jewry, the immigration of Ashkenazic Jewry thus hastened the removal of the Istanbul Committee from its foremost position and replacement by a budding organization in Holland – the *Pekidim* and *Amarkalim* of Eretz-Israel in Amsterdam ("The Officials of Eretz-Israel in Amsterdam"). Established by R. Zvi Hirsch Lehren in 1810 in response to the growing signs of Jewish acculturation into European society, the *Pekidim* endeavored to strengthen Eretz-Israel as the fortress of traditional society. As if the struggle of national society against the modernizing elements in Europe was doomed to failure, Lehren conceived of Eretz-Israel pure of all outside non-traditional influences. Once again, like in the case of the Istanbul Committee, Lehren was not satisfied with his role as purveyor but wanted real control over the community's affairs. Lehren's decision to cease support for the Eretz-Israel emissaries exemplified his strategy in establishing direct influence of the Amsterdam Center over the Jewish settlements in Eretz-Israel. Moreover, as reforming and modernizing tendencies in Europe gained strength, Lehren pushed harder and harder for strict Orthodox observance.

The *Pekidim* tried to undercut the conflicts between the different elements in the *Yishuv* and to centralize the community's affairs, but they faced a losing battle. From the thirties onward, various *kollelim* (communities of persons from particular countries, cities and courts) were established vying for special funds and protection and were not satisfied with the *Pekidim*'s assistance. Although the *Pekidim* con-

**Lehren, Zvi Hirsch (1784–1853)**

A Dutch Jew, whose family was known for its communal services, philanthropy and wide ranging banking interests, Lehren founded in 1809 the *Pekidim* and *Amarkalim* along with two other Dutch Jews. By 1824 the organization became recognized as the exclusive organ for collecting money for Eretz-Israel. A very orthodox and domineering personality, Lehren tried on many occasions to steer the life of the *Yishuv* into wholly non-modernist trends. Similarly, in Holland, he fought liberal tendencies with vigor and venom.



tinued to function after Z. Hirsch's death (1854), its influence over the *Yishuv's* affairs had dwindled considerably, due in large part to the proliferation of *kollelim*.

In conclusion, it can be seen that regardless of the religious esteem in which the *halukkah* was held, constant bickering prevented its smooth administration. Even the common division of *halukkah* – a third to taxes and public institutions, a third to *talmidei hahamim* (in level of importance), and a third to the poor, sick and needy – raised much opposition as it left a wide segment of the population unassisted. Thus, from both ends of the partnership, complaints prevailed and could not really be overcome as long as the *Yishuv* remained linked to outside sources for its existence. Finally, the example of the *Pekidim* manifested clearly how Eretz-Israel often became the battleground and extension of ideological and social upheavals transpiring abroad. So Eretz-Israel could be the Promised Land for Lehren and his co-workers in mid-century and later for the pioneers of the first *aliyah*, who wished to overturn Lehren's vision of Eretz-Israel as the last refuge for Orthodoxy.

### *Summary*

By the eve of the Egyptian occupation of Palestine, the *Yishuv* had become a far more heterogeneous community than it had been at the end of Zāhir's reign. Albeit, in numbers, the *aliyot* had not revolutionized the demographic situation as may appear, for all told, after accounting for those who left the country, the *Yishuv* included no more than 7,000 Jews. However, the *aliyot* strengthened Jewish settlements and began new ones, opened up new sources of financial support for the *Yishuv*, while breaking the monolithic hold of the Sephardic communities. Eastern European Jews began to play a more central part in the *Yishuv's* affairs, and through their elitist approach to the study of Torah in Eretz-Israel, solidified the framework of the "Old *Yishuv*." Relations between these elements were often strained, due to economic and religious issues, but also due to their attachment to developments outside of Palestine. For notwithstanding the diversification that the immigrants brought to the country, the *Yishuv* remained on the fringe of Jewish life. The modern

trends and ideologies, as well as the developments in traditional society, were all transpiring outside of Palestine; immigration to the west was growing constantly, making the *aliyah* of hundreds to Eretz-Israel look like a totally insignificant migration. Praying for a return to Eretz-Israel, helping the needy and the learned was only one side of the Diaspora; on the other loomed a Diaspora with a wide array of Jewish creativity, much of it unassociated with the *Yishuv*. In the next decade, during the Egyptian rule of the country, this situation would undergo a certain transformation. Palestine and the Near East re-emerged at that time as a strategic location for which European powers jostled for influence and thereby revived a general and Jewish involvement in the Holy Land.

## Chapter II:

### The Egyptian Interlude (1831-1840)

#### *The Conquest of Palestine: 1831-1832*

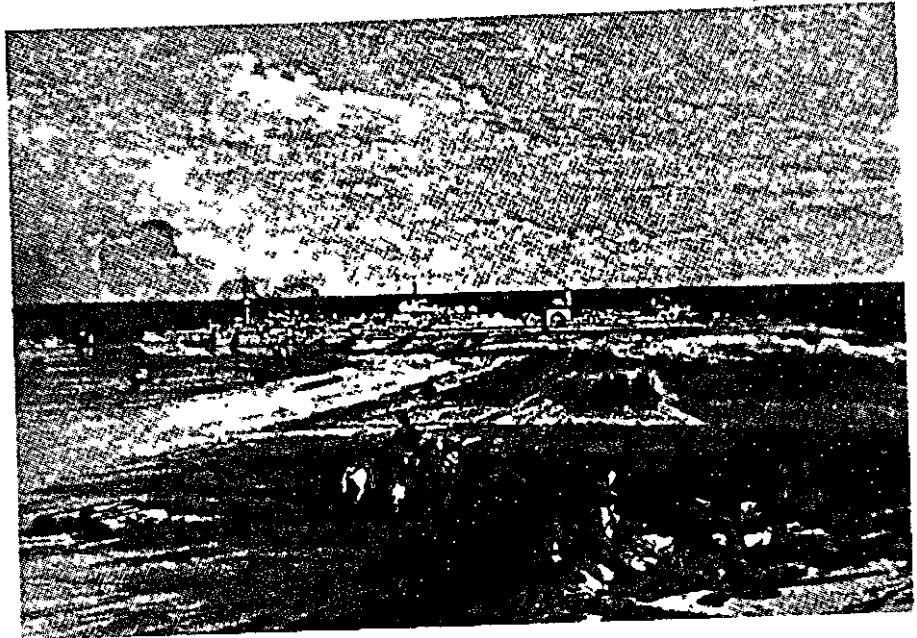
The period of Egyptian rule in Syria and Eretz-Israel continued the trend of al-Jazzār's successors (Suleiman, Ismail, and Abdallah) in which provincial government supplanted the supreme Ottoman authority. One important difference was here apparent. This time an independent pasha, Muhammad Ali, the pasha of Egypt, rebelled against the Sublime Porte in Istanbul, conquered territories from other pashas, and compelled the sultan to accept the "legality" of his conquests. Muhammad Ali had served in the Ottoman army and was sent to Egypt with the forces to stop Napoleon's advance at the turn of the century. A competent officer and an extremely cruel authoritarian, Muhammad gradually conquered Egypt and became the pasha in 1805. After slaughtering all the Mamluk dignitaries several years later, he extended his empire and established an army along European standards. In his unrivalled position, Muhammad rose to new heights, exhibiting administrative skill and concern for the development of a modern state. Education, industry, commerce, and transportation were pushed forward and encouraged, while Muhammad manifested uncommon tolerance and respect for religious minorities. Powerful and wealthy, he aroused much jealousy and suspicion with the Sultan and the European powers, but continued to broaden his base of power, conquering the Sudan, south of Egypt.



Muhammad Ali



and his son,  
Ibrahim Pasha. Contemporary  
Sketches



Egyptian army invading Acre.  
Painting of David Roberts, 1838

The conquest of Palestine, a direct confrontation with the Sultan, was born of political-military causes. Muhammad had agreed in 1822 to take part in the Sultan's (Mahmud II) war against Greece, for which he was promised free reign in Egypt and rule over Syria and Palestine. However, the Greek uprising was successful and the Sultan, fearing a further division of his dwindling empire, reneged on his earlier promise. Muhammad would not be easily allayed. Joining forces with the French, who had recently annexed Algeria, Muhammad saw an outlet to strengthen Egypt and further weaken the Empire by occupying Palestine. In 1831, Ibrahim Pasha headed an army of thousands of soldiers into Palestine, while the coast was being surrounded by a fleet of forty ships. The Sultan failed to come to Abdallah's assistance at the right moment and left him alone before the invading forces. City after city fell quickly to the conqueror, but Acre, the Crusaders' capital on the Mediterranean withstood the bombardments for close to six months. In May 1832, Abdallah finally surrendered. Ibrahim, Muhammad's stepson, con-

tinued in his conquests, bringing under Egyptian rule large parts of southern Lebanon and parts of Syria. But most important, he conducted a military campaign with tens of thousands of soldiers into Anatolia, within striking distance of Istanbul. The Egyptian machine threatened the fractured Empire but also troubled Russia and the Western powers. Their intervention brought an end to the fighting and forced the Sultan to grant Muhammad dominion over Syria and Palestine for an annual tax. Both sides saw the agreement as a temporary armistice but both entertained thoughts of a possible reversal.

Ibrahim Pasha became the general ruler of the conquered area and made his residence in Damascus. The whole of Eretz-Israel, with the northern border reaching Sidon, was now one district. Wishing to gain the support and sympathy of the residents of Palestine and Syria, Ibrahim administered and ruled with the carrot in one hand and the whip in the other. Local leaders, opposed to the Ottomans, were granted rule over certain principalities, while attempts were made to eradicate bribery in the courts, initiate a fair division of taxes, abolish special taxes on Jews and Christians, and avoid discrimination against Christians and Jews in favor of the Muslims. These most tolerant measures were accompanied by a positive attitude to Christian missionaries, who were now encouraged to establish schools and allowed to preach freely. Ibrahim's strategy was clear. By dispensing with previous methods of handling the minorities, Ibrahim hoped to court France and England and gain their political and military backing. However, those inhabitants who rejected Ibrahim's rule and were offered no outside support, faced a ruler with no inhibitions. Rebellions were put down by force and law and order were imposed brutally. Bedouin raids were quickly stamped out as were traditional tribal feuds. Moreover, to guarantee his rule, he forced Muslim farmers to join his army. All in all, a new era in Palestinian history was inaugurated which gave greater freedom and security to the inhabitants and invigorated the agricultural and industrial output of the country.

Egyptian rule also allowed for, and welcomed, the penetration of European influence, which opened Palestine up to geographic and



James Finn, British consul in Jerusalem, 1846-1863

archaeological studies (e.g. the pioneering research by the American scholar Edward Robinson) and enabled more regular travel and tourism. The window to the west took on serious proportions with permission granted to Britain to open a regular consulate in Jerusalem. Here Egypt was again breaking ground with the past. Previously, under the Ottoman rulers, consular representations were limited almost exclusively to the coastal towns (e.g. Jaffa, Acre), where local agents would be appointed by the powers as their representatives. From 1839, British consulates would become a permanent element of Jerusalem society with no small amount of influence. Certainly this breakthrough would not be left to the British alone. Within twenty years, long after the Egyptian rule had become part of history, all the important Western nations, including the United States, followed suit and established regular consular delegations in Jerusalem. Some of these colorful figures, like James Finn, Paul Botta, Warder Cresson, Joseph Pizzamano had their hands in both missionary and diplomatic work, but together they contributed to the solidification of a European presence in Palestine. Clearly, one of the most immediate consequences was the increased activity of religious and missionary organizations.

Almost every sect in Western Christianity was represented in the missionary associations. Concentrated in Jerusalem, where they received boundless support from the Western powers, the missionaries developed a wide range of educational, medical and charitable institutions. Although highly unsuccessful in their ultimate purpose of converting Muslims, Jews and Eastern Christians to the new faiths, they persisted throughout the century in their multiple projects. No wonder then that even the *Yishuv* profited by the opening of European consulates, and strange as it may seem, by certain projects of the missionary societies.

### *Egyptian Rule and the Yishuv*

#### *(i) European "Protection"*

The struggle for hegemony in the Middle East brought the Western powers to show a certain interest in the *Yishuv* as well. According to the system of capitulations whereby special rights were granted

to foreign powers in Turkey, the Western consuls in the country offered "protection" to citizens of their respective countries. As the consular activity was given an important boost by the Egyptian regime, more and more Jews utilized it as a way of avoiding local taxes and widening their own security. Since the consuls sought influence among the Jews, they offered them protection while certain European countries failed to provide them assistance. Jews could now present themselves as foreign residents, non-Ottomans, not subject to Ottoman law. Previous conflict between Muslims and Jews was greatly relieved, since the former feared the intervention of the powerful consulates. Although this unique foreign status antagonized the Jews and produced friction with other residents, they preferred it over their previous status.

Long before the Egyptian rule, consulates in the coastal towns defended Jews in Safed and in Tiberias, but never before was protection of Jews an integral part of the nation's policy. Like the Catholics in Palestine, who were traditionally protected by France, and the Greek-Orthodox by Russia, the Jews now became part of the British consul's activity. With the establishment of the British consulate as the first foreign representative in the country, the British consul tried to put into effect the policy of his foreign minister, Lord Palmerston, and appear as the guardian of the European Jews in Palestine. Not especially concerned with their actual citizenship, Young offered British protection to all who requested it. His liberal policy provoked a Russian consul to appoint R. Isaiah Bardaki in 1835 as the consul's representative over all Russian Jews in Palestine. A clear case of the jostling for influence by the European powers, Young feared that Bardaki would extend his authority over all European Jews. He in turn tried to appoint a Jewish consul representative over the British protectors, but failed. Young nevertheless continued to offer his assistance to the *Yishuv*, as did other British consuls who followed him. In Jerusalem, in particular, the consuls of Britain and other countries showed much initiative and inspiration. Aside from their widespread efforts on behalf of the Christian missionaries and their encouragement of pilgrimages, they contributed to the security of the *Yishuv*, heavily

**Bardaki, Isaiah Ben Issachar Ber**  
(1790–1862)

A Polish rabbi, Bardaki arrived in Eretz-Israel in 1810 and after the death of his father-in-law (Israel of Shklov), he became the dominant figure in the Ashkenazi community of Jerusalem.

Bardaki obtained the position of vice-consul of Austria and received the title of *hakham bashi*. A strong opponent of modern tendencies, Bardaki was influential in several building projects for the Old Yishuv.

### Nicholas-I

Czarist Ruler of Russia (1825-1855), who imposed very strict regulations on Jewish life. An autocratic ruler and an ardent Catholic, Nicholas went to no end to bring the Jews into the mould of Russian society. By recruiting them to the Russian army, by supporting modern educational teachings, and by trying to enforce conversion, Nicholas I tried to assimilate the Jews. His very harsh ways were to a certain extent successful, and inroads were made into the insular nature of Russian-Jewish society.

reducing random acts of brutality, while inducing immigration. From 1840, the *Yishuv's* development and security would be under extremely close watch of the consuls.

### (ii) Trends in Immigration

Waves of Jewish immigration from North Africa and Eastern Europe were relatively large during the transition period of the Egyptian rule, broadening the scope of the *Yishuv's* population and changing its demographic stratification. The 1830's witnessed an immigration of poor elements, especially of young bachelors who escaped from the harsh military duties imposed on Russian Jewry by Nicholas I ("Cantonist Conscriptions"), and families who fled from the political turmoil in the Maghreb or the economic pressures in Eastern Europe. By no means was this an elitist *aliyah*, as in the case of the early Hasidic or *Perushim* immigration, but rather an immigration of the needy. Encouraged by the clear waters, the more regular shipping lines between Mediterranean ports, and by the relative stability of Palestine during the thirties, Jews without means joined the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities in large numbers. Unfortunately, this immigration left hardly any documentation on the nature of its settlement and its scope. However, a later census of 1839 initiated by Moses Montefiore reveals some important information: poverty was widespread among the *olim*; in Safed more than half the Hasidic families stemmed from this wave of immigration; either artisans or with no particular profession, the immigrants became an immediate burden on the funds of the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities. From various petitions sent to Moses Montefiore by *Yishuv* representatives, it is clear that they needed further outside assistance to cope with their difficult financial condition. Indeed, judging from the Montefiore census, at least several hundred Jews from Eastern Europe had made their way to the Galilee, Jerusalem and to new towns during the thirties. Some 150 Jews from North Africa, who worked as artisans and merchants, settled in Haifa.

The *Yishuv*, though in poor financial straits, continued to move outside the four holy cities and continued to be diversified in its make-up. Since more Jews from central and Eastern Europe with no



specific ideological identification had joined the Ashkenazic community, they hastened the breakup of the community into sub-sections (the *kollelim*). However, the *Yishuv*, which was taxed to find new ways to deal with this wave of immigration, underwent much greater hardships in the thirties, the product of nature and wilful behavior. The Jews of Safed were the major victims.

### *(iii) Facing the Ravages of Man and Nature*

The Egyptian rulers, as we have seen, faced at the outset of their occupation strong opposition from various elements in Palestine. The most serious rebellion was in 1834 by fellahin, who rampantly raided Jerusalem, Safed and Hebron, killing Jews and plundering their property. Safed was the hardest hit. For almost a whole month, the Jewish community helplessly faced fellahin who indiscriminately pillaged and beat them. Ibrahim's soldiers, preoccupied with other rebellions, were not at hand; on their arrival they found a destroyed community. In Hebron the Egyptian army failed to be the appeaser, and after ridding the city of its rebellious factions, celebrated its victory by ransacking the Jewish community. But in Hebron time allowed the wounds to heal and to regain a basic equilibrium; this was not Safed's fate. On 24 Tevet (1 January 1837), as the residents gathered for their afternoon service (*minhah*), a horrible earthquake hit the city, destroying homes and their inhabitants. Only four years earlier, prior to the fellahin rebellion, another earthquake had rocked the city but left no casualties. The earthquake of 1837, compared by eyewitnesses to the destruction of the Temple, pulverized the city and its inhabitants.

In a period when medical treatment was poor and no equipment was available to pull people out from underneath the ruins, relatively few trampled by the earthquake emerged alive. Some 2000-4700 people in Safed and in Tiberias lost their lives, among them about 2000 Jews. Hundreds were crippled for life. The tragic news traveled quickly, and within a short period of time, assistance for the two communities was organized. From Eretz-Israel and abroad, relief groups began to organize. R. Israel of Shklov, who resided at the time in Jerusalem, borrowed a large sum of money from the Sefardi



**Montefiore, Moses (1784–1885)**

Born in Leghorn, Italy, Montefiore received both a Jewish and general education in his youth. His economic success came from successful stock market speculation in London. From 1820 he began to be involved in public affairs, especially among Jews, and his interests spanned from England to the Middle East. He served for almost thirty years as the head of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, visited Palestine seven times, and struggled for the improvement of the Jewish situation in Russia, Romania, Morocco, Italy, and Damascus. His contribution to the growth of the *Yishuv* in the 19th century was more in the form of spiritual assistance than in actual tangible projects. Though his philanthropic contributions were not exceedingly large he projected the image of a major donor and was thus highly respected among the Jewish community. He died in England and was buried in the family estate at Ramsgate.

Of the elders of Karlin Hasidim, R. Moshe Leib Shaffer and his wife, Sarah Devorah, were born in Tiberias to families who came to Eretz-Israel with the Hasidic immigration of the 1770's. They established the first Jewish hostel in the old city of Tiberias. Their son, R. Haim Sheffer, was among the first pioneers who established the first Jewish neighborhood outside the walls of the Old City, Kiryat Shmuel. He also began the Jewish transport in the Galilee.



Kollel in Jerusalem and dispatched his son-in-law, R. Isaiah Bardaki, R. Aryeh the secretary of the Perushim Kollel, and twenty volunteers. Large sums of money were needed to pay the workers to remove the debris. A Jewish convert from Beirut, active in missionary work among the Jews, extended medical assistance while publicizing in European newspapers heartbreaking descriptions of the Jewish plight in Safed and Tiberias. The *Pekidim* and *Amarkalim* from Amsterdam also called on the Jewish public to offer special assistance. Special dirges were composed, lamenting on the disaster. As a result of the events, the survivors lived for weeks in tents and dilapidated buildings; both Perushim and Hasidim left Safed for Jerusalem, contributing to the growing centrality of Jerusalem in the *Old Yishuv*. Yet Safed, though destitute, was not abandoned. The Sephardic community and Hasidim were most prominent in beginning the reconstruction of the city, while immigrants from Eastern Europe continued to settle in the city and in Tiberias.

As the Jews in Safed were in the process of rehabilitation, they encountered a Druze rebellion (1838) against the Egyptian rule. Druze entered Safed and began maliciously to demand of the Jews all their earthly possessions. Fortunately, Ibrahim Pasha's army was this time successful in removing the threat and forcing the Druze to

return their stolen possessions. Even these difficult days did not deter the community and Safed slowly emerged from the ravages of man and nature into a community of some 5,000 Jews by 1880.

### *Beginnings of Philanthropic Activity*

A group of factors contributed to the beginning of non-traditional philanthropic activity in Eretz-Israel in the late thirties: the immigration of Jews unattached to the elitist, learned strata of the community, the openness to the west, and the trying days in the late thirties. As we have described, in the first decades an orthodox philanthropic organization was established in Holland, bent on preserving the fundamental ethos – religious and economic – of the *Yishuv*. Alongside this society, a more modern effort to change the nature of Jewish society emerged in Eretz-Israel along the lines of enlightenment thought – i.e. turning the *Yishuv* into a productive element, less reliant on the *halukka* system. Many of the plans associated with this project have necessarily been linked to the activity of the Jewish philanthropist from England, Sir Moses Montefiore. A dedicated Jew, who visited Palestine seven times during his lifetime, Montefiore became seriously involved in the *Yishuv*'s affairs and his name synonymous with the *Yishuv* in the nineteenth century. His second visit to Eretz-Israel in 1839 was motivated by his concern for the economic upkeep of the *Yishuv* as he himself recalled some thirty-five years later:

“...I instituted enquiries on the spot, with a view to ascertain the practicability of the cultivation of the soil by the Jews settled in Palestine and my investigation resulted in the acquisition of the most ample and detailed particulars bearing on the matter – particulars, to be observed, which were fully authenticated, officially verified.”<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Montefiore had definite plans concerning the productivization of the Jews in Eretz-Israel, and of making them into tillers of

1. Published in G. Yardeni-Agmon, ‘John Golar and His Plan of 1874 to Settle Eretz-Israel, *Hatzionut*, I, 1970, p. 116 [Hebrew article].

the soil within a village framework. Those notions were strongly opposed by Lehen of the *Pekidim*, who regarded such deviation from accepted patterns with anathema and sensed correctly that Montefiore had inculcated the temperament of actual trends and social concepts rampant among European Jewish circles. Nevertheless, Montefiore found support for his basic intention though not for its underlying motivation from elements within the *Yishuv*.

During Montefiore's visit to Eretz-Israel, Jews from Safed, Tiberias and Jerusalem turned to the distinguished philanthropist and presented him with various proposals, including plans for placing the livelihood of the Jewish community on an agricultural basis. Members of the *Perushim* who were so inclined did not think of changing the fundamental orientation of the *Yishuv* – study and worship of God – along the lines of productivization in the European sense. It appears that they wished to lease the lands with Arab tillers, and not to change the social structure of the urban communities. In this spirit they upheld the existence of the *Kollel*, which would receive revenue from the leased land and thereby circumvent the influence and financial dependence on the *Pekidim*. They were truly troubled by the lack of financial means to support the *Yishuv* and the insufficient *halukkah*, but by no means did they envisage a productive community. Some even hinted to Montefiore that his plans to remake the Jews into farmers were entirely unsuited to the abilities and desires of the *Yishuv*. In a sense, one can see even here an attempt to copy the model of Jewish life in Eastern Europe – Jewish lessees having ties with Arab peasants in tilling plots in their villages. Thus, as one historian has shown, the proposals represent a trend toward change, but not in the sense of the Jewish agricultural settlements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There was an intention of placing the economic foundation on a firmer basis, as lessees on behalf of the community and not to rely solely on *halukkah*.

For Montefiore, the two month visit was most instructive. He learnt a great deal about the agricultural situation of the country through his visits to certain villages in the Galilee and urban outskirts where Jews had business arrangements with Arab peasants. Recognizing the limits to mere philanthropy, he became convinced of the



Relief: Jews of Damascus  
thanking Sir  
Moses Montefiore after their  
release

need for public institutions for the community's welfare and helped Israel<sup>1</sup> Beck establish his printing press in Jerusalem. With these impressions at hand, Montefiore initiated two projects: one to actualize the agricultural propositions and the second to determine the *Yishuv*'s demographic nature. The former consisted of a formal proposal to Muhammad Ali at the end of his sojourn in Palestine. Montefiore met Muhammad Ali in Alexandria and proposed leasing for a period of fifty years a stretch of land, upon which 200 villages would be established; 10-20% of the product would be forwarded to the Egyptian ruler as payment for the lease. Envisaging a possible solution for Jews in dire straits in Europe, Montefiore also discussed far-reaching plans for a special bank with branches spread over the Middle East to support the settlement. The Egyptian ruler was far from enthused and denied that he had available land in Palestine that he could lease to the Jews. Wary of a possible collusion between the British foreign office and Montefiore, he rejected the offer outright. Within a few months the rush of events had removed any outstanding doubts – Palestine was returned to the control of Turkey through the intervention of the European powers, while the Damascus Affair had already monopolized most of Montefiore's attention.

#### **Damascus Affair (1840)**

This modern blood libel was a turning point in the lives of many European Jewish figures. Though it began like many medieval blood libels, the disappearance in Damascus of two individuals and blame placed at the doorstep of the Jews who needed blood for the Passover, it proceeded in different directions and had more far-reaching consequences. Since the individuals were a Capuchin friar and his Muslim servant, the affair involved Catholics and Muslims and representatives of various European governments. Two Jews were tortured to death and over sixty Jewish children were taken hostage to divulge the whereabouts of the victims' blood. Jewish intervention stirred European action to end the torturous methods of

investigation and eventually the prisoners were released. The affair had been further provoked by conflicting interests among the European powers. For enlightened Jews the affair was a shocking revelation of the persistent anti-Jewish traditions.

One of Montefiore's long-lasting contributions to the *Yishuv* came in an indirect way, via the census of the Jewish community that he initiated. In his later visits to Eretz-Israel, further censuses were taken and each time they collected important data on the residents' professions and on the feasibility and possibility of extending the agricultural basis of the community through relations with neighbouring villagers. Moreover, the censuses offered a Jewish estimate of the *Yishuv*'s population, with specification according to country of origin and kollel attachment, which often jived with the censuses taken by other factors. So in 1839, according to his census, the *Yishuv* had reached 6500, whereas Young, the British vice-consul, had figured on 9700.

In the following decades, philanthropic activity from the west would become more pronounced with different interest groups involved. They would each try to improve the *Yishuv*'s situation in those areas which they felt to be most critical. As can be imagined, rivalry between these forces also emerged as an extension of their own internal squabbles on the European scene. But all being said, the Egyptian period, though short, had enabled a new factor to enter into the *Yishuv*'s development, one which continued to play an important role in the following decades.

## Chapter III:

### On the Threshold of a New Era (1840-1882)

#### *Political Reversal, Reform, and Internal Stagnancy*

The last years of the Egyptian rule witnessed the rise in local rebellions and a further aggravation of the internal stability. Encouraged by these developments, Sultan Mahmud II prepared to utilize the opportunity to put an end to the Egyptian regime. But the powerful army of Ibrahim Pasha was not easily dismissed. On April 1839, under the direction of Prussian generals, Syria was invaded by the Egyptians, who within a short time had a clear road to Istanbul. The threat to the Ottoman Empire provoked Britain to intervene. Fearing that an Egyptian penetration, backed by France, would offer them free reign of the land route to India, Britain sent its navy to the Dardanelles to support Mahmud's 16 year old successor. The British foreign office was determined to terminate the Egyptian rule over Syria and Palestine, and bring back the Ottomans. With the Empire at stake, the Sultan was willing to do almost anything to secure military protection, even at the cost of reversing Ottoman policy. Thus, while still engaged in the fighting, he proclaimed his intentions to preserve equality among the minorities in the Empire.

The political negotiations behind the scene led to a major intervention of European rulers. At Britain's initiation, an international conference was held in London in July 1840, at which Russia, Austria, Britain and Prussia agreed to a mutual pact to defend

Turkey. Directed also at France, the pact was designed to return Palestine and Syria to the Ottomans. Muhammad Ali relied on French support when he refused to surrender his conquered territory; fighting again broke out but this time it was the British who determined the military outcome. By November 1840, Muhammad Ali was forced to forego the occupation and abandon Palestine. Rather than impose their own rule over the conquered areas, and wary of their own particularistic intentions, the European powers enabled the Ottomans to return. They in turn promised a new era for non-Muslim minorities with guaranteed stability and security, as well as religious freedom. Palestine was being offered both the unhampered activity of the European governments and a serious policy of reform.

However, the declining Ottoman Empire was unable to rise to the occasion. It reiterated its grand scheme for a general reform in several instances (most significant being the Hatt-i-Humayun proclamation of 1856) but found itself wanting. The decades of administrative corruption and malpractice were not to be replaced by a smooth westernized bureaucratic style; nor were the Muslim inhabitants, many who suffered under Egyptian rule, willing to go along with a reform policy that catered to non-Muslims. Moreover, the continual growth of European influence, via the consulates, propounded the Empire's difficulties. Thus, the measures imposed, like the redivision of authority and implementation of new budgetary schemes, found few supporters. The bureaucracy remained inefficient and corrupt, and the taxation procedures were often punctured by vested interest groups. Politically, the reformist policy produced a change in atmosphere. Local tyrants became few and far between and even the wildcat outbreaks of violence were minimized. Yet, while they succeeded in removing certain rebellious elements, the authorities were at a loss in dealing with the nomadic character of the Bedouins. Random acts of pillage persisted, especially against farmers. Tranquility was thus not restored and the Ottoman authorities gradually began to return to their old ways.

An international war which stemmed in part from friction over Christian holy places in Palestine – the Crimean War (1853–1856) –





A Templar colony

was another sign of the unrest in the post-Egyptian period. Russia and France each put forth their claim to certain churches in Palestine, demanding Turkish recognition of their rights. Underneath the religious layer of the feud lay Russia's clear-cut designs for absolute rule over the Black Sea and an entry into the Middle-East. Russia declared war against Turkey in October 1853, but France and England rushed to the assistance of the tottering Ottoman army in the Crimean peninsula. The eventual victory of Turkey and its allies allowed for the continuation of the Ottoman regime and reinstated the delicate division of authority over religious premises. Moreover, as a result of Western pressure, the Hatt-i-Humayun (1856) was annexed to the peace agreement, insuring the Sultan's promise for equality among the non-Muslim minorities in Palestine. Missionary activity, even among Muslims, was now legalized, while the restrictions against the construction of churches were removed. Christians were allowed to ring church bells after their silence of several hundred years. But once again the forced steps into a liberal regime were fraught with difficulties. Thousands of Christians were attacked in Lebanon and Syria and many lost their lives; only in Palestine where the consulates offered strong protection did the Christians escape injury. These outbursts of Muslim antagonism to egalitarian rule were further proof for the consulates of the need to widen their authority over their "protected" residents and premises. They solidified their status by extending the capitulation agreement and were eventually allowed to purchase land under the same conditions as the

Ottomans. Agricultural settlements of a German Christian sect, the Templars, began in the early seventies and they were marked by experienced, rational means of production.

The Hatt-i-Humayun (1856) promised reform in many areas: agriculture, taxation, law and education. But in the following decades the results still seemed to be a far cry from the ideal. Financial difficulties continually plagued the administration and nullified any hopes of improving the local conditions. Public building was basically at a standstill as was the progress in transportation. However the legal system was the most perturbing. It was highly ineffective in dealing with the growth of violent behavior and from 1861 the goal of reforming society was just about dispensed with by the new ruler, Abad-al Azziz. Only those Palestinian residents, the non-Muslim minorities, who continued to enjoy the aid and assistance of the missionaries and the European powers, were able to truly benefit from the reformist trend. This was very much the case of the Jewish community in Palestine.

### *The Yishuv Under Ottoman Reform*

The return of Ottoman rule over Palestine was by no means a traumatic affair for the *Yishuv*. The first two decades (1840-1860) produced a remarkable change in the status of the community by virtue of the Sultan's command to protect the Jews. Indeed, former accusations (blood libels, etc.) were publically condemned, while Chief Rabbis in the Empire received official appointments and were granted the title "Hacham-Bashi." Even the rabbi of Jerusalem was accorded this title in 1841 along with a clear enumeration of his functions, status and authority. His wide-ranging authority in issues of halacha raised him to an unrivalled status in the community, while his position as chief tax collector in his region made him an integral part of the Ottoman administration. Here was an indication of how the Empire treated the community – greater freedom for religious observance, outright protection from possible antagonists, and a certain readiness to allow Jews into public administration. Palestinian Jewry was nowhere near the level of emancipation reached in certain Western European countries, but had now obtained recogni-

tion of its special needs. In 1868 Ottoman law allowed foreign residents, including the *Yishuv*, to purchase land in Palestine and this too was to have far-reaching implications for its development.

(i) *Jerusalem – The Heart of the Yishuv (1840–1882)*

Jerusalem became the center of Jewish life during this period. From a community of some three thousand in the late 1830's, Jerusalem emerged as the backbone of the 'Old Yishuv' with some 15,000 Jews in the early 1880's. The Ashkenazic element, which had been a small minority in the earlier period, provided the human resources for this growth. A constant immigration from Eastern Europe to Jerusalem turned the tide in its favor and placed Safed and Tiberias in the periphery. With a very high mortality rate, Jerusalem could only subsist through the waves of immigrants and they formed the cultural and religious ambience of the community. Since the population was constantly in fluctuation, the immigrants adhered to their native communities and strengthened the trend of branching off into *kollelim*. Until 1860, the Jewish community in Jerusalem lived within the walls of the old city built in the sixteenth century. Thus, the geographic perimeters of the community had to be extended beyond their former concentration; new immigrants found residence in areas of the Armenian Quarter and inhabited both the Christian and Muslim quarters in large numbers. In each of these concentrations of *kollelim*, separate synagogues, *yeshivot* and public institutions were established, though certain institutions served the entire community of *Perushim*.

The Sephardic community in Jerusalem concentrated around the four Sephardic synagogues, which had been rebuilt and repaired in the 1830's; the geographic distribution of the Ashkenazic *kollelim* soon brought them into close proximity with the Sephardim, virtually creating a special Jewish Quarter. One of the centers of that quarter became the former destroyed (Hurvah) area of R. Yehuda He-hasid. Here in the Hurvah court religious and organizational activity flourished. Synagogues, houses of study, *yeshivot*, ritual baths, a *hevrah-kadisha* (burial society), as well as loan societies, all clustered around the court. *Perushim*, Hasidim, Sephardim and different

**Rothschild, James Jacob**  
(1792–1868)

The youngest of Mayer Amschel Rothschild's five sons, James (Jacob) began the Paris Rothschild branch. He moved to Paris in 1812, representing his brother's (Nathan Meyer) interests and established the Rothschild Frères. Rothschild maintained constant involvement in Jewish affairs, locally (in the Central and Paris Consistories) and internationally (in the Damascus Affair). His entrepreneurialship was especially pronounced in the field of the French railway system. Calumniated in his time as the "King of the Jews."

**Touro, Judah (1775–1854)**

Born in Rhode Island, USA, Touro was reared into his uncle's mercantile business and became in his own right a wealthy individual. His interest in Jewish life came at a later stage of his career, after much coaxing from friends. He donated money to community projects in his home town of New Orleans and \$60,000 to Moses Montefiore for distribution in Eretz-Israel. With this sum, Montefiore purchased the area called Mishkenot Sheananim.

*kollelim* formed their own particular atmosphere, but together made Jerusalem into the dynamic center of the Old Yishuv, and attracted more and more *olim* to the city. This had its repercussions. Arab proprietors took advantage of the new situation and considerably raised the price of apartments. Together with the crowded living quarters, the *Yishuv* was forced to look for new residences outside the Jewish quarter.

The Crimean War aggravated the community's plight by making the connections between Palestine and Eastern Europe extremely hazardous. *Halukkah* was as a result not forthcoming and the *Yishuv* underwent another trying period of famine. Their predicament reawakened European Jewish efforts for the *Yishuv*, including those of Baron James de Rothschild of Paris and Montefiore. The latter embarked on his fourth visit to Palestine in 1855 with a large entourage, after having collected some £11,000 in England for the needy community. Montefiore's thoughts were geared not only to philanthropic work and assistance, but also to push ahead his ideas of productivization among the poor elements of the community. To counter the medical problems of the *Yishuv*, Montefiore purchased a large plot of land west of the Sultan's Pool, outside of the Old City walls. With money bequeathed from an American Jew, Judah Touro, Montefiore intended to build a second hospital in Jerusalem, but later designated the land for a residential area to alleviate the cumbersome living conditions. A well-planned quarter with a windmill to offer work for the residents and to reduce the price of flour, Mishkenot Sheananim was established in 1860 with Sephardim and Ashkenazim living side by side. Although originally planned to house *talmidei-hachamim* and the needy, the apartments were in fact divided among the various *kollelim*. A rather adventurous project, far from the center of Jewish life, Mishkenot inspired the imagination of entrepreneurs in Jerusalem to follow suit and construct other quarters outside the city walls. Two other quarters were built in the late sixties: Machaneh Israel (1867) and Nahalat Shiva'ah (1868). Both were in part a response to the cholera epidemic which harshly hit the *Yishuv* in the Old City in 1866. For the first time local Jerusalem residents, R. David Ben Shime'on of the Moroccan community and leaders of the *Perushim* (Yosef Rivlin, J.M.

Salomon, and J. Yellin) initiated the move outside the walls to improve the standard of living. Nahalat Shiva'ah was the more successful of the two new neighborhoods since it brought together both private resources and *halukkah* funds and partnership in the purchase of the land and the construction. It further encouraged the construction of another quarter nearby (Beit-David, 1873), which housed members of the Hasidic and *Perushim kollel*. The well-known area of Mea-Shearim (One Hundred Gates, 1874) was part of this new trend. Epitomizing the building in the seventies, it was modelled after modern European notions of town planning but meant to serve the autonomous experience of a traditional community. Quasi towns, with all the necessary religious and cultural services, the quarters were to house observant Jews of a common character. Thus, the closed square-like construction of Mea Shearim with its encircling wall and gates that were locked at night, served both security exigencies and a religious outlook. Though relatively distant from the center of the new quarters, its high level of construction and emphasis on a good standard of living quickly turned it into a most attractive area with a constant increase in population.

These decades of widespread construction in Jerusalem came to an end in the late seventies, due to a grave economic crisis. Another war between Russia and Turkey again impeded the steady flow of resources, while a delegation of the Board of Deputies from England (1875) added its share. Condemning the partisan policies of the *kollelim*, the delegation strongly advocated a moratorium on building of new areas. Nonetheless, the growth of Jerusalem 'outside the walls' since 1860 (by 1880, 2000 Jews resided there) and within the Old City was most impressive and laid the groundwork for further development. Researchers have questioned the motivation of those Jews who were the impetus behind the new trend. All agree that oppressive living conditions played an important role, however they disagree as to the ideological motivation. Some hold the movement of traditional Jews to the new areas as an expression of their desire to modernize the *Yishuv* and introduce productive methods of subsistence, while others see it as an extension of the way of life in the

**Rivlin, Yosef Yizhak (1837–1896)**

A fourth generation Jerusalemite, Y. Rivlin became active in communal affairs in the early sixties serving as director of the central organ of the Ashkenazic community in Jerusalem (Ha-Va'ad ha-kelali Knesset Yisrael). An industrious and entrepreneurial personality, Rivlin was instrumental in building the Old Yishuv's quarters outside the Old City's walls: Nahalat Shiva'ah (1869), Mea Shearim (1874), etc. Rivlin however was a moderate figure, who supported *halukkah* and also the agricultural settlement in Petach Tikva. Also a poet and essayist.

**Salomon, Joel Moses (1838–1912)**

Born in Jerusalem to a descendant of the Gaon of Vilna, Salomon received his education both in Jerusalem and Lithuanian yeshivot. On returning to Eretz-Israel in the sixties he helped begin a printing press in Jerusalem. Active in the Ashkenazic community, Salomon supported agricultural settlement as a means of extending the Old Yishuv's economic basis. His name is thus associated with almost all pre-First Aliyah efforts to extend the Old Yishuv's living quarters outside the Old City and by settling agricultural settlements. He himself lived for seven years in such a settlement (Yahud).

### Board of Deputies of British Jews

Established in 1760 in the wake of the Sephardic committee's (*deputados*) petition to George III. Although it continued uninterrupted through the beginning of the 19th century, the Board took on a more organized form from the adoption of a constitution in 1835. Moses Montefiore served as its president during most of the next forty years. Issues of major concern included: struggle for economic equality, political emancipation overseas, protection of Jewish interests in England. Continues to function to this day.

old city, a means of fortifying the traditional existence on the basis of *halukkah*. That is, they were pioneers of a geographic expansion of Jerusalem, but not of a new ideological perspective which valued more modern means of existence. Be the motivation what it may be, the facts show that no breakthrough in the *raison d'être* of the new quarters ensued, and these areas, as those in the old city, continued to subsist through the *halukkah* distribution. Moreover, the new quarters emerged as the guardians of an orthodox way of life.

The leadership of the Jerusalem community was divided among different authorities. As we have seen, the Sephardi Rabbi of Jerusalem was allowed to be designated Hacham Bashi from 1841. This appointment added lustre to the community, but failed to strengthen it during the period of modernization and change. His actual authority was minimal, less so than the Sephardi Kollel of Jerusalem which controlled the resources of the community. Run by an elitist core of the learned and well-to-do members of the community, most of whom stemmed from the distinguished Sephardi families in the empire, the Sephardi Kollel fiercely opposed partisan efforts by other Oriental Jews to raise money. The North African Jews were the first to break off from the authority of the Sephardi Kollel, establishing their own organizational structure. In the early twentieth century, the Yemenites followed suit and within a short period had formed an independent judicial system, slaughter house, and cemetery. It would appear that the Sephardi Kollel truly sought to maintain the leadership of an elite, whose status rested upon lineage, family, property and rabbinical considerations. The North African and Oriental Jews brought with them, not only learned rabbis, but destitute Jews with economic and social problems. Thus emerged a clash of interest: the former tried to preserve a monolithic leadership to maintain the traditional existence of the Sephardi community while the latter demanded a proportional share of the funds and leadership.

The situation was altogether different among the Ashkenazim of Jerusalem. Not officially recognized by the authorities, the voluntary network of *kollelim* was stripped of real influence over its members since many were under the protection of the consulates. Nonethe-

less, the *kollelim* performed the variegated services of the traditional Jewish community and in some areas worked together, organizationally and economically, to serve their constituents. Throughout the 19th century, the multiplication of Ashkenazic *kollelim* based on place of origin blocked the formation of a united community, as was the case with the Sephardim. Disunity reigned and few figures were able to rise above the particular interest groups. One who did was R. Shmuel Salant, who reached Eretz-Israel in 1841 and became in effect the Ashkenazic rabbi of Jerusalem, and headed the institutions of the *Perushim Kollel*. By virtue of his halachic prowess and humane qualities, he was highly regarded by all and for decades remained a major spiritual leader of the community. He compromised with other *Perushim* leaders over the direction to be taken in widening the *Perushim's* residence in the Old City and left the organizational and financial issues to others. In the same generosity of spirit he relinquished to R. Meir Auerbach, an erudite Talmudic scholar, the rabbinical post he held and willingly cooperated with him to improve the religious and economic needs of the community. It was through their joint effort, and in the background of the natural disasters that hit the *Yishuv* in 1866, that a general committee of all the Ashkenazic *kollelim* was established (Knesset Israel).

Knesset Israel was a step towards uniting the community, although it remained a federative body which preserved the autonomous nature of the *kollelim*. It had several major functions ranging from representing the Ashkenazic Jews before the authorities and the Sephardi Kollel to tending to the needs of *olim* unaffiliated with a particular *kollel*. Under the dynamic leadership of its secretary R. Joseph Rivlin, Knesset Israel solidified Ashkenazic independence from Sephardic tutelage (e.g. procured separate ritual slaughter) and collected large sums of money which it poured into the building of new residential areas. Until the immigration of the eighties and nineties, the influence of Knesset Israel was considerable, especially in assisting the needy. However, as time soon showed, the umbrella organization could not surmount the particularistic issues (both religious and financial) which surfaced in the community, and its influence waned. Moreover, other Ashkenazic elements, like the

#### **Salant, Samuel (1816–1909)**

Born near Bialystok, Salant received a yeshivah education in Vilna, Volozhin and Salant, and was close to the Musar movement, through marriage and inclination. In 1841 he came to Jerusalem and was appointed rabbi of the Ashkenazic community and chief rabbi of the city in 1878. A founder of several Old Yishuv institutions, Salant never became an arch rival of modern tendencies. He supported the integration of Hebrew and Arabic into the religious education and opposed the excommunications against modernists. Remained chief rabbi until his death.

#### **Auerbach, Meir Ben Isaac (1815–1878)**

A rabbi from Poland, Auerbach came to Jerusalem in 1860 and was soon elected the Ashkenazi rabbi of the city. Auerbach was both a learned scholar, who wrote several commentaries, and a public figure involved in defending the Old Yishuv from the inroads of modernizing elements. Mea Shearim was one of Auerbach's projects to strengthen the Orthodox hold in Jerusalem.

**Frumkin, Israel Dov (1850–1914)**

Born in Dubrovno, Frumkin received a traditional education that was supplemented by private lessons in foreign languages. At the age of 9 his family moved to Eretz-Israel and in 1870 he helped revitalize the *Havazelet* weekly and a few years later became its sole editor. Of Hasidic background, Frumkin opposed the antagonistic attitude to modern trends but in the eighties he began to return to the Old Yishuv mould. He began by viciously attacking missionary work and later (late eighties) joined the condemnation of Ben-Yehuda, on the one hand, and the pioneering settlements, on the other. A middle road between support of productivization and upholding tradition appeared impossible, and so he chose the latter with all his vigor.

**Alliance Israélite Universelle**

Established in 1860 in Paris, the Alliance was motivated to work for the universal emancipation of the Jews, while offering aid to Jews suffering from anti-Semitic measures. The Alliance became a major organ for spreading enlightenment ideas in Jewish education, setting up schools in the Balkan and Middle Eastern countries. Mikve Israel, the agricultural school in Eretz-Israel, was an example of the Alliance's educational efforts.

Hasidim, feared a powerful umbrella organization of *Perushim* and developed their own roof association with a bent towards modernizing Jewish life in Jerusalem. R. Israel Dov Frumkin, the energetic and capable editor of the Hebrew newspaper "Havazelet" led this campaign. Attacking Knesset Israel for funneling *halukkah* funds away from the Hasidim, Frumkin upheld reform of the social and economic basis of the *Yishuv*. He openly advocated productive occupations (e.g. agriculture and artisanry) while supporting educational reform in the spirit of the times. In merging together his attack against the monolithic leadership of the *Perushim* with a call to economic and educational reform, Frumkin created an oppositionary camp which limited both Sephardic and Ashkenazic elements (Ezrat-Israel, 1873).

To raise the banner of productivization and modern educational programs, even in the name of religious observance, was surely anathema to a society which still clung to the study of Torah as its highest rung. Although a shadow fell between the ideal society of an elite who made Torah their sole occupation and the reality, only a handful dared raise their voices against the ideal. Halachic works, *yeshivoth*, *batei-midrash*, and mystical tractates remained the religious and intellectual quest of the community. From 1840-1880 Jerusalem abounded in Sephardic, Hasidic and *Perushim* institutions, dedicated to these pursuits; moreover, it received an influx of talmidei-hachamim from *yeshivot* in Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary who intensified the opposition to the modernistic currents in Europe. Not all of the same vintage, some more radically 'orthodox' than others, they became the spiritual heads of the newly founded religious institutions and had increasing influence. Their collective strength was such that the western European tendencies in education which Jewish personalities and organizations tried to import to Palestine (e.g. A.L. Frankl, Alliance Israélite Universelle) were considerably watered down to appease the religious leadership.

Thus, on the eve of the First Aliyah, Jerusalem certainly loomed as a microcosm of the *Yishuv*. Bearing in its midst the foremost figures of the Old Yishuv, it also contained the seeds of a new era. Hebrew newspapers (Halevanon, Havazelet, Ha'ariel, etc.) were printed in



Jerusalem and here and there encouraged changes in Jewish life; but even those who adamantly adhered to strict observance, signified the adaptation by the Old Yishuv of modern means to further its position. Jerusalem was a mosaic of Jewish communities from the Ottoman Empire and from Eastern Europe, and continued to be the battleground between the different elements. A remarkably changed city from the one it was in 1840, Jerusalem in 1880 with Jewish quarters outside the Old City, Jewish supported hospitals and countless religious institutions had been transformed into the heart of the *Yishuv*.

### (ii) Urban Developments in the Yishuv

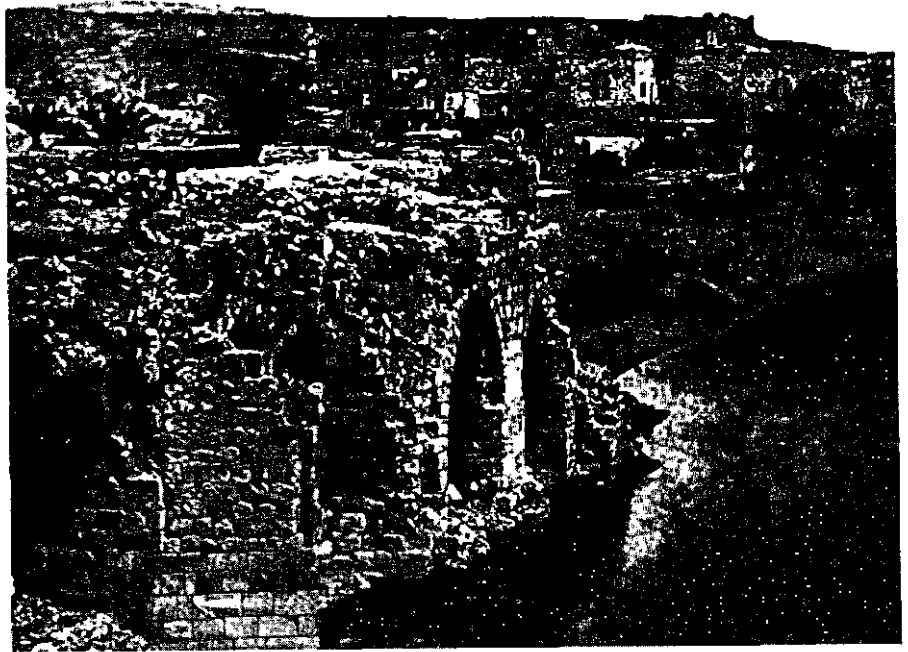
As Jerusalem turned into the dominant force in the life of the *Yishuv*, other historic communities in the Galilee, Judea and Samaria became more peripheral. Only Safed showed resilience to this

**Frankl, Ludwig August**  
(1810–1894)

Born in Chrast, Bohemia, Frankl dedicated his energies to literary pursuits, though he studied medicine in Vienna and Padua. From 1842, he was the editor of the *Sonntagsblätter*, a general literary periodical in Vienna. After having been involved in and disappointed by the Revolution of 1848, Frankl furthered his interest in Jewish life and traveled to Jerusalem in 1856, when he founded the Laemel school for secular and religious education. His *Jews of the East* (1859) gives a fine description of life in Eretz-Israel during the fifties.



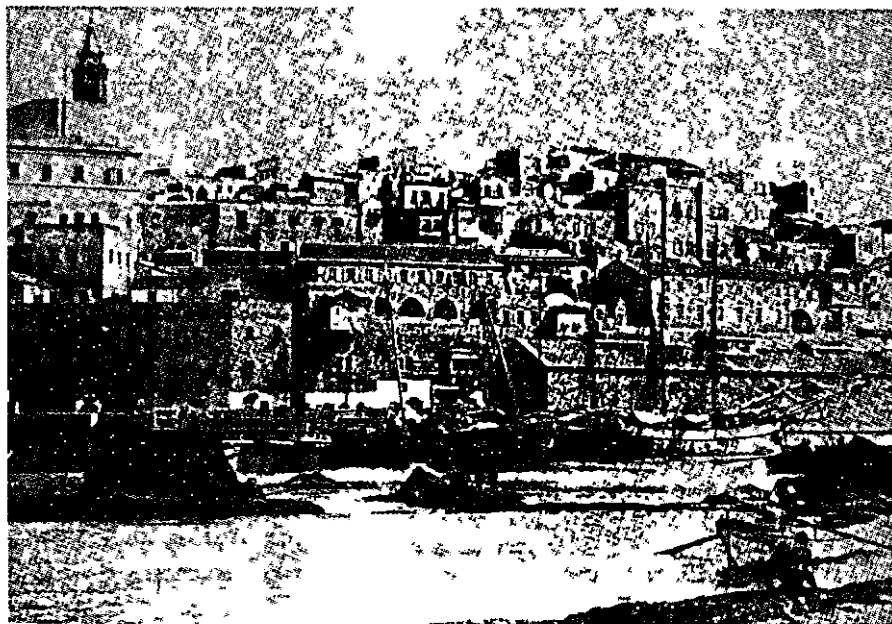
First issue of *Havazelet*



Tiberias, 1858

tendency, recovering from the earthquake of the thirties to become the second largest Jewish community in Eretz-Israel by 1880 with some 4000 people. Again it was immigration from the reservoir of Eastern Europe which sustained Safed. Hasidim from the Russian Empire, Galicia, Hungary, and Romania were an important element of this migration and they imported their internal rivalries from their native courts, producing constant feuding. Consuls were often forced to intervene to settle the recurrent disputes. The Ashkenazim in Safed were thus more plentiful and more divided than were the Sephardim who constituted about a third of the Jewish community. Notwithstanding the presence of different migrations (e.g. North African, Persian, Turkish), the Sephardic community preserved its unity in Safed. All told, Safed persisted to have both its feet deeply entrenched in the ideology of the Old Yishuv, resisting the penetration of modern European trends.

The same was true for Safed's neighboring city, Tiberias. Although less than half the size of the Safed community, Tiberias Jewry remained within the walls of the Old City and preserved the traditional way of life. Though it showed signs of growth during the



Jaffa Port, 1899

post-Egyptian period, the community managed to develop cooperative relations between the resident Sephardim and Ashkenazim. They joined hands in the collection of funds from the Diaspora and in local commerce, especially in catering to individuals from the Old Yishuv who traveled to Tiberias for medicinal purposes (hot baths) or to celebrate religious ceremonies.

In Judaea and Samaria, the communities remained rather small and lacked a dynamic core. Their growth was impeded both by an antagonistic local Muslim population and a dearth of available sources of employment. Hebron and Shechem were thus peripheral to the growth of the *Yishuv* and failed to attract immigration from abroad.

The rather static development in Judaea and Samaria was even uncharacteristic of the growth of the *Yishuv* along the Mediterranean coast. Though not penetrated by European elements, Haifa and Jaffa were bolstered by the Egyptian rule and continued to develop.

Here were two communities which were not distinguished by an elite group of talmidei-hachamim but rather by the prominence of certain wealthy Jews who dominated internal affairs. Jews from North Africa were the original nucleus in both Haifa and Jaffa, and they were joined after the Crimean War by immigrants from Mediterranean countries, many of whom were merchants and laborers by trade. As Haifa replaced Acre as the main port of entry to northern Palestine during this period, it often became a temporary abode for immigrants. Jaffa with its 1000 Jews and Haifa with 600 were still secondary communities, but their location and unique composition of Jews, unattached to the Torah elite of the Old Yishuv, would become central factors in catapulting them into the mainstream of developments in the following generation.

(iii) *The Winds of Change*

From 1840 to 1882, the immigration to Palestine included thousands of Jews from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region, who were far from the vintage of the learned *aliyah* of Hasidim and *Perushim*. Poor, and often without economic resources, they often received special assistance from Christian missionary organizations and became the object of countless projects for reforming the economic basis of the *Yishuv*. Montefiore and the House of Rothschild were the forerunners in this regard. However many plans (like Montefiore's workshop for weavers) did not materialize. The efforts nevertheless persisted, less from a desire to uproot the traditional basis of the *Yishuv* and more from the pressing economic needs of the new elements of the community. Christian missionary workers were especially involved in the attempt to promote agricultural projects among the Jews. James Finn, the colorful British consul in Jerusalem, purchased in 1852 a plot of land outside of Jerusalem and Jewish laborers were employed to prepare the property for construction. It was short-lived and followed by other schemes like that of the idiosyncratic American consul, Warder Cresson. After converting to Judaism and joining a *kollel*, he established in 1854 a society to raise the agricultural level among Jews. Like its predecessor it got nowhere. Clearly, among the missionaries, the agricultural

ventures were in keeping with their belief that the People of Israel will return to its motherland and develop it. The *Yishuv*, on the other hand, viewed these undertakings with ambivalence: optimistically, since they were a possible alternative to the prevalent poverty after the Crimean War, but apprehensively, due to the religious strings attached.

Long after Montefiore's visit in 1839, new proposals surfaced along similar lines within the *Yishuv* among them, attempts to rent land to be tilled by fellahin. This continued to be a way to circumvent actual Jewish labor. By the sixties and seventies however, things changed. The Western European criticism of the *Yishuv's* pattern of life and intervention of Jewish organization, like the Alliance Israélite Universelle (which, in 1870, established an agricultural school, Mikve Israel), seems to have taken its toll. Within the Old *Yishuv*, among *Perushim* and Hasidim, voices were now heard in favor of *aliyah* undertakings. A messianic fervor often accompanied these notions and actual purchases of land ensued, overcoming the criticism from extreme religious quarters. After several failures, a landmark was achieved. In 1878, land was purchased near the shores of the Yarkon. During that year the first settlers moved there and called the colony Petach Tikva (A Gate of Hope). Difficult years followed. Internal disputes among the *Perushim*, malaria, and rivalry with fellahin forced many of the original group to look elsewhere, but the initial move from the city to the fields was made. It was at about the same time that 17 Jews from Safed purchased land in a Galilean village (the predecessor to the moshava Rosh Pina) and inhabited it. Here too, conditions proved to be insurmountable and within a short period the settlers returned to Safed. In both cases, the initial steps and settlements were later pursued by immigrants of the First Aliyah.

The Old *Yishuv* had gone a long way from an elitist nucleus of talmidei-hachamin to settlements in Petach Tikva and Rosh Pina. Was this occasioned by an internal ideological transformation or by external developments? As in the case of the new quarters built outside the Old City of Jerusalem, and the parallel is clear, historians are at odds with each other. Some view the orthodox settlements as an indication that elements in the Old *Yishuv* inculcated the notion

of reforming society and the virtue of productivization and thereby laid the foundation for the agricultural achievement of the New Yishuv. Others maintain that a clear ideological difference separates the motivation of the Old Yishuv and the first *aliyah*: the former were looking for a solution to the economic problems of the urban community and turned to “redemption of the land” as a possible alternative; their ultimate goal was to keep intact the basic orientation of the Old Yishuv. According to this interpretation, the settlers of the first *aliyah* were, on the contrary, concerned with the redemption of man and the Jewish community – i.e. they were driven by a radical enlightenment philosophy which proposed the overturning of those guiding principles of the Old Yishuv. Working the land and productivity were values in their own right and part and parcel of the enlightenment world-view.

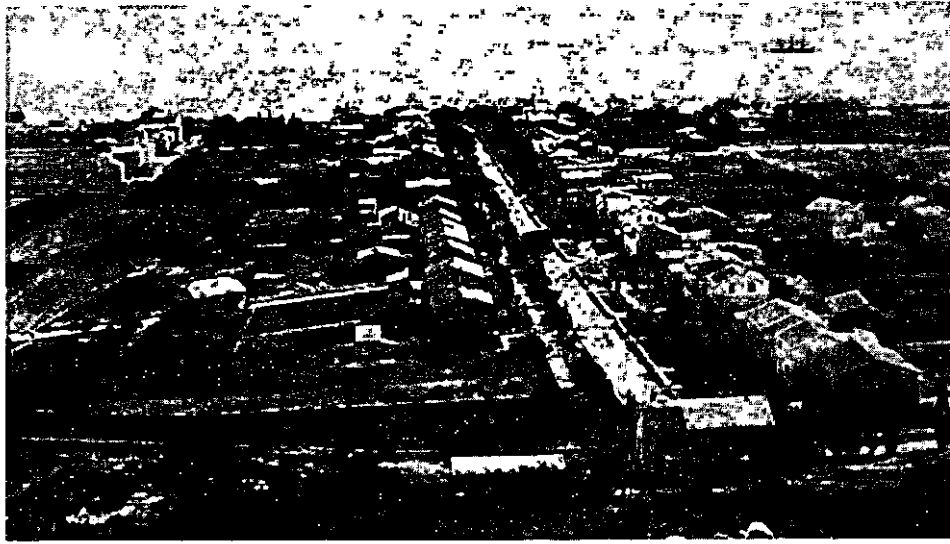
Which interpretation is more plausible? This writer follows the approach of those who see a definite change in emphasis in the orientation of the new settlers. The following chapter, which treats their attempts to build a modern society in Palestine, will elaborate on this issue. Let it however be remembered that historians often disagree on the analysis of a historical phenomenon as they do here, and what must always be emphasized is the root of their disagreement.

## Chapter IV:

### **The Break with the Past – the New Yishuv (1882-1917)**

#### *The Political Framework – From Sultans to Balfour*

The thirty-five years which passed from 1882 to the conquest of Palestine by the British in 1917 were a turning point in the history of the country and for the Jewish community. The outset of the period is distinguished by an Empire, which had truly fallen from its greatness. The San Stefano peace treaty with Russia in 1878 symbolized the decay. Having ruthlessly stamped out a Bulgarian uprising in 1876, Turkey soon found itself at war with Russia over its behavior. The outcome was predictable. Turkey surrendered considerably to the Balkan countries and slowly was prey to the demands of the European powers. France took over Tunisia (1881) and Britain captured Egypt the following year. No further territorial losses were incurred by the Empire until 1917 but the writing was on the wall. This was also apparent from the internal deterioration. Debts soared to preposterous figures while the Sultan's court continued to live in pomp and festivity. The cancerous nature of the Ottoman bureaucracy, protection and corruption, became the hallmark of the public officials, who showed no interest in the internal development of the Empire. Dynamic modern development, the sign of the times, was absent from Ottoman rule and in its stead oppressive taxation, random violence and authoritarian legislation took hold.



Templar neighborhood in Haifa,  
nineteenth century

Palestine was not given special treatment and it suffered from mishandling. The weight of the taxes fell on the villages, while the rich urban dwellers, who bought more and more land, were able to evade taxation. Money was not poured back into Palestine but passed over to the Sultans, leaving a rapidly changing population without adequate services. And indeed, the Palestine of 1880 (450,000 residents) grew within three and a half decades by about 250,000, the most prominent growth coming from the Muslim population. The Jerusalem region was particularly populated, with almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the entire population. Nonetheless, the area was run with incompetence. Local rulers who tried to introduce reform measures were restricted by the Sultan, and were at a loss to curb the high degree of protection and graft that prevailed in the administration. The rulers themselves often utilized the limited resources not transferred to the Sultan for their own private purposes. Whereas the authorities hardly contributed to the growth of the country, private and foreign interest groups filled that vacuum and expended much energy and resources. In Jerusalem, for example, Christian elements were actively involved in building projects, both to extend the living quarters for Muslims and Christians and to improve the conditions for Christian pilgrims. Religious institutions were established by the French and they too added their western influence. The hustle and





Entry of Kaiser Wilhelm II  
through Jaffa Gate to Old City of  
Jerusalem, 1898

bustle of the city, with increasing tourism, encouraged the re-opening of several gates in the Old City walls, forming a direct link with the new quarters outside the walls. There, Jewish entrepreneurs had also actively resumed construction in their new quarters. But the fortune of Jerusalem, with the concentrated involvement and interest of the different religions, was not comparable to the rest of Palestine. Save improvements in transportation, the north and center of Palestine were left to the mercy of the Ottoman administrators, who succeeded in providing relative security but little else. On the coast, and especially in the port-cities of Haifa and Acre, the situation was more encouraging and Haifa even had a most picturesque quarter, thanks to a German religious sect. Nevertheless, throughout the country, the Ottoman administration in all its levels impeded development by the corrupt procedure of government. The corrosion in the Empire allowed representatives of foreign governments to strengthen their hold and influence in the country and to vie for domination when the inevitable collapse would come.



Welcoming of Kaiser Wilhelm II,  
Jerusalem, 1898

From the English conquest of Egypt (1882), the Ottoman Empire was considered on the verge of disintegration, yet it withheld the process for three and a half decades. This interesting development is worthy of our attention. Sultan al-Hamid bounced back from the secession of Egypt by courting the recently unified German state. Germany was granted special status in various realms of the Empire in lieu of which it served as a buttress against English, Russian and French designs. Symptomatic of the relationship between the Sultan and Germany was the reception Kaiser Wilhelm II received on visiting Jerusalem in 1898; the numerous broadsheets of the event, showing the Kaiser's entry into the old city via the newly opened Jaffa Gate, offer an accurate description of the regal atmosphere that prevailed during his visit. However, the Kaiser's visit came after more than a decade of intensive German involvement, financially and militarily, in the affairs of the Empire and Palestine. The Turkish army was basically being trained by the Germans, while



Christian Quarter in Jerusalem,  
nineteenth century

German industry had become instrumental in building various railroads in the Empire; Haifa was also connected to the ambitious railway line which extended from Damascus to Medina. Other economic and agricultural projects were handed over to the Germans, who in their “penetration of the east” availed themselves of the Sultan’s needs. Palestine became therefore another area for German penetration. In this regard, it was a mixture of both private religious concerns and political, international interests. The most plentiful Christian sect from Europe came from Germany, and by the 20th century were over 2000 strong. The core stemmed from the Templars, who by virtue of organization and drive, established several agricultural and urban settlements and markedly contributed to the economic life in Palestine. Pioneers in the area of international business and in importing and exporting, they laid the foundation for the German-Palestine Bank (1897), an important arm of German economic interests. But not only Protestant Germans settled in Palestine. From the eighties, Catholic activity intensified and churches (like the well-known Dormition on Mount Zion, 1910), hospitals, convents, monasteries, and schools were built. Once again, the efforts were concentrated in those three cities which flourished during this period – Jerusalem, Haifa, and Acre. Thus, when the

Russian pilgrims to Palestine,  
nineteenth Century



Kaiser arrived in 1898, ostensibly to consecrate another church and dedicate land for the future Dormition, it was clear to all and especially to the other European powers that Germany's efforts in the social and economic sphere in Palestine had far-reaching political implications.

Notwithstanding the determined German penetration, other European countries continued to involve themselves in Palestinian affairs though they faced a more antagonistic Ottoman regime. The British and French placed special emphasis on educational, social and religious projects, often through the channels of the missionary delegations. Special and general hospitals, infirmaries, convents, monasteries and a network of schools for Muslim children were established by both the French and English throughout the country. Though they had little success in converting Jews, even the *Yishuv* utilized the highly modernized European methods of medicine. The French however did not limit themselves to these fields alone and in 1892 a French company completed a railway line from Jaffa to Jerusalem. Moreover, French banks opened and in 1891 the government raised the status of the consul in Jerusalem to a general-consulate, the first of its kind in the city. The Russians were not far behind the Western powers in the non-economic areas of development. From the establishment of the Russian-Orthodox Palestine

society (1882), Russian educational institutions abounded side by side with hospitals and various religious frameworks which served both the growing Russian-Orthodox pilgrims as well as the Arab population.

All in all, the widespread interest and activity of European powers (America also joined the fray from the 1880's) produced a growing awareness of the centrality of Palestine in international politics. The inevitable result of all these religious, educational, and medical institutions was to raise the level of Palestinian society and make it more attractive to pilgrims. Moreover, it offset the deterioration of the country in those areas which the Ottoman administration was responsible for and thereby mitigated the inevitable antagonism of the population against the local rulers. In a sense, through their effective work and preservation of the balance of power among themselves, they helped prolong Ottoman rule in Palestine for another few decades. It would require a violation of that balance and an international conflagration to put it to rest.

A great German philosopher once said that before a catastrophe transpires, a remarkable sunset appears on the horizon. To move from the world of imagery to that of reality; just at the juncture when world opinion was preparing its eulogy for the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turk rebellion took place. Demanding a total revision of the Ottoman structure, the Young Turks succeeded in instilling in the reigning Sultan the sense of now or never. Their ultimatum at face value proved itself. A liberal, egalitarian regime based on the fundamental freedoms engineered by the Young Turks was promised to all the residents of the Empire and a house-cleaning of the Ottoman bureaucracy was initiated. Throughout the Empire and Europe a period of excitement followed. Palestine was part of the overall feeling. But the dawn of liberalism failed to come. Internal tension between minorities and between Muslims and Jews rose to the surface and the local administrators treated them arbitrarily. The *Yishuv*, in particular, was singled out for restrictive measures to placate the atmosphere. In the most sensitive area in its development, the purchase of land, new measures were imposed to impede the community's growth. The Palestinian scene reflected the

inability of the new rulers in Turkey to rearrange their priorities; further military and political defeats plagued the Empire on the eve of World War I and the old habitual methods of under-the-table dealings were reinstated. For the *Yishuv*, as we shall see, this was not always a calamity.

The war with Russia in 1877 had elicited Ottoman promises for reform; they had hardly been achieved even after an internal uprising. The outbreak of World War I in August 1914, and Turkey's entry into the war three months later against Russia, France and England placed Palestine and its *Yishuv* in a most precarious predicament. Reform measures were totally discarded. Restrictions and authoritarian rule became the order of the day, instigated by the new ruler of Palestine, Jemal Pasha. A capricious ruler, who seldom held to the same course of action for any length of time, Jemal Pasha was antagonistic both to the *Yishuv* and the Arab population – yet, now and then, a mitigating attitude appeared. Unfortunately, never was this enough to alleviate the immediate consequences of war – famine became widespread and a stifling economic depression set in, while bands of discontented raided recklessly. This was only part of the plight. From spring 1915 until late summer, the country was plagued by locusts, which totally destroyed fields and crops and penetrated villages and homes. Epidemics and serious diseases followed, frighteningly raising the number of deaths to some 15,000 more than the births. On top of all these natural and human troubles was added Jemal Pasha's intensive campaign to Ottomanize those Palestinian residents who were under European protection. Many were deported from the country, especially Jews attached to the new settlements. Moreover, the failure of the Ottoman army to recapture the Suez Canal brought renewed taxes and burdensome impositions on the Palestinian community. These were dismal days for Palestine and the harsh conditions forced people to emigrate, even though Europe was by no means secure. The internal situation worsened. In March 1917 the English invasion of Palestine began from the south. Coming after the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916) between France, Russia and England which dealt with the division of control over Palestine and Syria, the English designs were clear. The Turkish administration



Entry of Allenby's forces to  
Jerusalem, 11 December 1917

brutally prepared the country for a last stand, cruelly resettling the population and pillaging their property. Rumors and threats of an impending massacre, resembling the Armenian genocide, spread throughout the country. Representatives of Germany were able to temporarily placate Jemal Pasha, but it was eventually the successful British penetration under General Allenby on the eve of Chanukkah 1917 which forced the Turks to renege and evacuate Palestine. For the country, and the *Yishuv* in particular, it was clearly a godsend; the end of one of the most oppressive periods in its history. Furthermore, it gave immediate meaning to the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, that statement by the English government which promised to "view with favour 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." A new era in the history of Palestine had begun.

### *The Yishuv (1882-1917) – An Overview*

Three and a half decades under a tottering Ottoman regime were years of marked accomplishment and transformation in the *Yishuv*'s history. Within this span of time the community took on a totally

Foreign Office,

November 2nd, 1917

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 favour 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 country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. J. Balfour', with a small 'y. in' written above it.

Balfour Declaration

new character, combining modern trends and ideologies, reflecting the dynamic vicissitudes in Russian Jewish society, with traditional aspirations. From a mere extension of the Diasporic tendencies, the *Yishuv* emerged as the *avant-garde* of the Jewish world with political, cultural and national designs. Moreover, it no longer subsisted on the periphery of Palestinian society but became the forerunner of modernization and westernization, presenting an enlightened utopian vision of life. A new tempo was injected into society and one that instilled vigor into the country until the ravages of war forced a temporary hiatus.

On the eve of the First Aliyah (1882-1903), there were approximately 26,000 Jews in Eretz-Israel, most of them non-Turkish nationals. From the beginning of 1882 until 1903, between 30,000-



40,000 Jews immigrated to Eretz-Israel. They came in three waves: 1882-1884, following the pogroms in Russia (*Sufot Banegev* – The Winds of the South); 1890-1891 which included some 6000 olim was also directly related to the political events in Russia (the Moscow expulsion); the third wave began in 1900 and subsided in 1903, closing off what has since been designated as the First Aliyah. The Second Aliyah (1904-1914) brought an additional 35,000-40,000 Jews to Eretz-Israel, disregarding the continued attempts of the Turkish authorities to curb the development of the *Yishuv*. The Kishinev pogrom (1903) and the pogroms in Russia which followed the outbreak of Russia's war with Japan (1904-1905) gave added incentive to those who saw in the Uganda controversy (1903-1905) the merger of national-Zionist aspirations and territorial settlement in Eretz-Israel. The combined immigration of the two *Aliyot* brought the *Yishuv's* population to 85,000-90,000 by World War I, consisting of some 45,000 immigrants who succeeded in settling. Indeed, emigration from Eretz-Israel was also a common phenomenon during this period and especially among the "worker's aliyah" (1904-1914). Some attribute the very high rate of emigration among the latter as a result of Baron Rothschild's departure after 1900 from active encouragement and promotion of Jewish agricultural settlement in Eretz-Israel.

The increased immigration was not only a product of Eastern European Jewry. Between 1881 and 1914, some 5000 Yemenite Jews immigrated to Eretz-Israel, representing almost 10% of the Jews residing in Yemen. Their immigration had a mixed motivation. While deteriorating economic conditions and harsh governmental acts were an important factor, messianic tendencies and an enthusiastic belief in the necessity of performing *mitzvot* (commandments) associated with Eretz-Israel were very much present. The first wave of Yemenite immigrants began after Shavuot 1881. Not innovators who wanted to challenge the ideals and institutions of the Old *Yishuv*, they eventually became part of the New *Yishuv's* economic structure. Here then, during the First Aliyah, was a new community which did not integrate socially into either institutional framework and formed its own entity with separate cultural attributes: language,



Immigration of Yemenite Jews to  
Eretz-Israel

dress, education, and form of prayer were distinct. Nonetheless, already in the First Aliyah they became an important factor in the renewal of the *Yishuv*, especially in Jerusalem where they were mainly concentrated. They were joined by Jews from North Africa, Persia, Kurdistan, Bukhara, Georgia, Iraq and Syria, who came in smaller numbers during these decades.

Not only numerically, but also geographically, the *Yishuv* extended itself considerably. The boundaries of Jewish settlement were remoulded. Though Palestine and Syria had been commonly viewed as one geo-historical framework, the political developments turned

Western Palestine into the area of Jewish settlement. At the beginning of the First Aliyah, three centers of Jewish settlement developed – in Judea, the Carmel (including Hadera) and upper-eastern Galilee. Later, a fourth center, that of Lower Galilee, was added. A vast movement of people, goods and ideas developed within and among these concentrations. Regional geographic differences did not emerge, as the impact of the culture that united these settlements was much stronger than the natural physical differences characterizing the four regions.

However, none of these remarkable changes in the *Yishuv*'s make-up could have been possible without the revolutionary development in Jewish life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and in Eastern Europe in particular. Within this context, only brief and general remarks can be made as they relate to Palestine. However, even by highlighting them we become aware of the interconnectedness between *Yishuv* history and Jewish life in the Diaspora.

The demographic boom in Jewish life cannot be dismissed. By the 1880's 7.5 million Jews lived in the world as opposed to 3 million in 1800; by 1900, 12-13 million, with more than 5 million concentrated in Russia. This uncomparable growth had many ramifications. Economic pressure in Russia became extreme in the "Pale of Settlement" where Jews lived, and this was further encumbered by government decisions which narrowed possibilities of occupation. During the relatively liberal reign of Czar Alexander II (1856-1881), elements within the Jewish community began to advocate measures to widen Jewish areas of occupation to modernize the community. But the assassination of the Czar in 1881 and the ensuing pogroms put an end to these aspirations within Russia. The economic difficulties, coupled with rampant popular anti-Semitism (if not governmentally inspired), triggered a release of pent up pressure: immigration from Russia westwards was the immediate outcome. It grew by leaps and bounds, reaching hundreds of thousands in the first decade of the 20th century. The emigration to Eretz-Israel was in part a product of these pressures but it emerged from two other trends in modern Jewish history: the awakening of a modern national consciousness



## THE NEW YISHUV (1882–1917)

### Herzl, Theodor (1860–1904)

Born in Budapest and raised in the climate of the Jewish bourgeoisie of the period, Herzl received little Jewish education. He was sensitive to anti-Semitism from his student days in Vienna. Later he became a journalist of the *Neue Freie Presse* and corresponded for the newspaper from Paris (1891–1895). He covered in this capacity the Dreyfus Affair. In his *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State, 1896) Herzl maintained that the Jewish problem cannot be solved by assimilation. Herzl thus saw a Jewish state as the only alternative. Herzl later established the Zionist movement with the first congress at Basle (1897). Though he supported the Uganda proposal, Herzl always appreciated the unique contact between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel.

and the traditional yearning for Eretz-Israel. Within the Jewish community in Russia a group identified as the “Moderate Enlightenment” took shape, which attempted to combine the traditional and modern elements within its program and had a considerable impact upon the formal expressions of attachment to Eretz-Israel. Eretz-Israel was viewed both as a solution to the problems of millions of Jews and also to those of a small group. Palestine was no longer only the visionary Eretz-Israel but had become a realistic, concrete alternative for the Jewish people. Certainly not the haven of a secure and democratic society as was the United States, Palestine offered the rare opportunity of being a rather uncultivated country which could be transformed into a national Jewish society. This notion enticed the minds and imagination of religious Jews and enlightened, nationalistic and socialist alike. A decade and a half later the Jewish national movement received added impetus through a reorientation of certain emancipated Jews in Central and Western Europe. In response to the rise of political anti-Semitism, they reached a radical solution to the Jewish pariah existence in Europe. Jewish life could no longer be maintained through a social and religious community but needed a political framework to sustain it. Spearheaded by a Hungarian Jewish journalist, Theodor Herzl, the rationalist vision was given a political context. Herzl embarked on a new course. From the outset of his Zionist activity, he labored to find international support for the national ideal. At the first Zionist congress in Basle, Switzerland (1897), the Zionist movement defined its goal clearly: “to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.” This historic conference established the Zionist Organization and endorsed Herzl’s approach of political Zionism. While taking into consideration the leap forward in Eretz-Israel by various agricultural groups, the congress recognized that only through political assistance and consent of nations could large-scale migration and settlement become a reality. In the following years, tension would mount between the political tendency (designed to ‘solve the Jewish problem’) and the settlement-orientated perspective. It came to a head in the famous Uganda controversy. After several failures to secure international backing for a Jewish homeland in Palestine,

Herzl was willing to accept other territorial options to relieve the plight of the masses of Russian Jewry. The one which commanded the most serious attention was Uganda. At the Sixth Zionist Congress (August 1903) Herzl brought an official offer of the British government to allocate in Uganda (East Africa) a territory for Jewish resettlement. Though the resolution to examine the proposal was passed, delegates from Russia created a furor and threatened to leave and dissolve the unity of the Zionist Organization. Their forthright opposition to "all colonising activity outside Palestine and its adjacent lands as an ends or as a means" proved to be decisive and a formal declaration in those words was passed at the Seventh Zionist Congress (1905). From that date onwards the goal of the Zionist movement and the development of the *Yishuv* became one and irreversible. It was no doubt the impressive adherence of the First Aliyah to their ideals which served as a beacon to the rationalist enthusiasts.

### *The First Aliyah – Ideology and Settlement*

Members of the First Aliyah inculcated the ideology of the "Moderate Enlightenment" and transferred it to Eretz-Israel. Seeking to create a Jewish 'center' based upon agricultural labor and cultural revival, these immigrants set out to achieve the three central goals set by the Jewish national movement; Auto-emancipation, productivization, and autonomy. It was Leon Pinsker, the Odessan doctor who coined the phrase auto-emancipation in 1882 as a response to the *Sufot Banegev*. Put simplistically Pinsker rejected the possibility of Jewish integration into European society through emancipation and proposed that Jews turn into a collective community with a will and goals of its own: i.e. auto-emancipation. This became the guiding principle of several pioneering societies (e.g. Hovevei Zion, BILU). To achieve that goal, productivization and autonomy were necessary. First, they had to change the social structure and source of income of the Jewish community by creating a new economic base resting upon agricultural settlement. And second, they had to find new social structures that would enable the Jews to live independent lives in their own land. The First Aliyah was unique in that it

**Pinsker, Leon** (Judah Leib) (1821–1891)

A Polish Jew, Pinsker received a rather enlightened education in Odessa, Russia. He studied law and later medicine and was involved in various Russification efforts among the Jewish people. Pinsker was one of the founders of the Odessa branch for disseminating enlightenment among the Jews. The pogroms of 1881 were a severe blow to these plans and Pinsker responded with his famous cry for self-emancipation of the Jews (*Auto-Emancipation*, 1882). During the next decade he involved himself with the Hibbat Zion movement in Russia and was chairman of its convention in Kattowitz (1884). Towards the end of his life he tended to doubt the possibilities of settling Palestine and supported Baron de Hirsch's orientation.

succeeded in retaining its idealism despite the problematic political, economic, and social conditions prevailing in Eretz-Israel.

The nationalist fever in Russia generated a host of societies which sought to assemble a large group of Jews in Eretz-Israel and ‘cure’ them through agriculture and productive enterprises. Scores of Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) societies emerged, like mushrooms after rain, in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Romania in 1881–1882 and began sending emissaries to Eretz-Israel to purchase land. The immigrants were of an entirely different brand than the *Yishuv* had known. Talmidei-hachamim and rabbis were not part of this movement; rather it consisted of middle class Jews, merchants and former artisans who looked for ways to settle Eretz-Israel, either by their own means or with the assistance of Jewish philanthropic and immigration organizations. However, another important element of this wave of immigration was the youth, mostly students, who urged emigration to Eretz-Israel to fulfill their national (and sometimes socialist) ideology. Having received a general Russian education, they were imbued with populist notions and full of ambition to create a new people in its historic homeland. The hardships of a harsh land were seen as natural barriers to be overcome by their unrelenting motivation. One such group was the BILU<sup>2</sup> movement.

Founded in Kharkov in 1881 by youth and students, BILU set for itself the goal of leading a mass movement of immigrants to Palestine and establishing an exemplary colony which would spearhead Jewish settlement. Their public call, full of idealistic and self-denying principles, attracted hundreds of youth. However, their plans were conditional upon philanthropic assistance for the voyage from Odessa to Palestine; when this failed to materialize, the movement dissipated quickly.

All told, only several dozen immigrated to Palestine. A few handfuls reached Richon Le-Zion in 1882 and these came across another host of problems which further debilitated them. Not farmers and having no agricultural experience, they were left with high ideals incommensurate with the local residents and Baron Roth-

2. Abbr. Beit Ya'akov lechu venelcha – The House of Jacob, Let us go and arise. (Isaiah, 2:5)



Edmond de Rothschild (left)  
meeting his son, James

schild's representatives. Two years later in 1884 nine Biluim established a village at Gadera under difficult conditions. Although their socialist principles were sacrificed, they endured through the support of Hovevei Zion. Biluim also settled in other villages and some were active in the new educational system and in the crystallization of the political awareness of the local population. Nonetheless their combined contribution to the *Yishuv* was minimal. And herein lies an interesting historical paradox. The immigration of the Biluim to Palestine became a symbol of the First Aliyah and even more so of the Zionist emigration to Eretz-Israel from the 1880s. In effect, they became the symbol of the pioneering spirit of dedication, of professional national consciousness, since in the eyes of subsequent generations those were indeed the ultimate Zionist ideals.

Beyond the image and failure of the Biluim, stood the astounding breakthrough of the First Aliyah in establishing by 1904 twenty-eight new agricultural settlements throughout the country in which modern, dynamic, economic and cultural activity flourished. An estimated population of 5000 had settled in these villages which were spread over 400,000 dunams. How was this achieved? In the first two years of the First Aliyah seven settlements were founded under the aegis of four separate elements: the Hovevei Zion societies of Eastern Europe; Baron Edmond de Rothschild of Paris; members of BILU and of the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem. The first three were

#### **Rothschild, Baron Edmond James de (1845–1934)**

Born in Paris, Baron de Rothschild became involved in Jewish affairs after the pogroms of the early 1880s. After the establishment of the Hovevei Zion settlements in Eretz-Israel and their serious economic difficulties, the settlers turned to Rothschild for assistance. During 1883–1884, Rothschild began his first efforts on behalf of the *Yishuv*, and for the next two decades his patronage became synonymous with the new colonization. He himself made three visits to the country (1887, 1893, 1899) during this period, and returned again in 1914. Later activity expanded into new areas: development of the wine industry, initiation of small industries, support of the Hebrew University, etc. He made two more visits to Palestine (1924, 1925) and continued to be actively involved, politically and philanthropically, with the *Yishuv*'s growth.



Vineyards of Rishon le-Zion

entirely new factors in the settlement scene and the first two were to become the forerunners of settlement activity during the entire First Aliyah. From the outset, the first settlers chose sites on marginal Arab land, close to sites of earlier Jewish settlements and to centers of economic activity. They hoped to cultivate field-crops, but the land that was purchased was mainly of poor quality and not suitable for cultivation of grains. The size of the farms was also a problem. Inadequate to support the landowners of a European standard of living, poverty and famine threatened the settlers. Moreover, the families were not large enough to work the farms themselves even when they wanted to, and had to engage hired labor which further reduced their minimal income. All these factors led to a crisis in the agricultural sphere, as a result of which Baron de Rothschild agreed to finance and support the settlers. From 1883, the Baron became the most important factor in the encouragement and promotion of Jewish agricultural settlement, investing considerable material resources, and involving himself heart and soul in the enterprise. His





Rothschild's tour of the Lower-Galilee

involvement also led to a basic transformation in the farming practices of the settlers. Fruit orchards and vineyards became the new basis of agriculture. Requiring only a relatively small amount of land to support a family, they could produce a larger income even from poorer quality land.

By the mid-1880s it was quite clear that those settlements which the Baron had taken under his patronage expanded, while those which preferred an autonomous road languished in difficulties. After great trials and tribulations, most of the settlements accepted the Baron's patronage, which consisted of administrative expertise and

resources. Holdings and population expanded and modern intensive agriculture developed alongside a spurt of building activity. But not all was peaceful. In several settlements (e.g. Ekron, Zikron Ya'akov and Richon Le-Zion), settlers revolted against the Baron's administrative staff, charging them with single-handed decisions and heavy-handedness. Indeed, the Baron's extensive bureaucracy saw itself as the colonial ruler over the villages and often had full support of their employer. Moreover, during the 1880s they could point to the ineffectiveness of the Hovevei Zion in autonomous rule as an added reason for withholding from the settlers an independent status. In fact three settlements established independently in 1890-1891 (Rehovot, Hadera and Ein Zetim), but along the lines of the Baron's settlements (primarily vineyards and fruit crops), were soon forced to seek his aid and his agent's assistance. The settlers had no choice but to admit that the initiative of the Baron's staff had significantly raised the level of farming, though at a considerable waste of money.

In the following decade, with the new wave of immigrants from Russia and the expansion of the rural population, offshoots of the existing settlements were established. Two solutions were common: 1. the establishment of an offshoot settlement adjacent to the veteran one; 2. the subdivision of large family holdings which had been purchased in the first stages of the First Aliyah, and their transformation into settlements that could support many people. But the greatest energy went into the expansion and settlement in distant and problematic regions. Five attempts made in the Golan and Hauran districts quickly failed, while the two founded in the Judean hills developed only with the greatest of difficulty (Motza and Hartuv). Two settlements which managed to hold out – Metulla in the upper Galilee and Be'er Tuvia in the far south – were a new type, having an agricultural basis of field crops. Let us look briefly at these two settlements, for for many years to come they were to establish the geographical boundaries for Jewish settlement.

Established in 1896, Metulla by the Baron's administration and Be'er-Tuvia by Hovevei Zion, after a serious screening process, both were designed to utilize new imported procedures of farming – deep ploughing by horse-drawn and later by steam-driven ploughs. Horse-

drawn or mechanized harrows were also introduced. The communities received a special loan which it was thought they would be able to begin returning within the third year. Heavy expenses and detailed planning were poured into the settlements in the hope that they would avoid some of the traps of the more veteran settlements. Metulla with 12,000 dunams was purchased by the Baron and settled by young farmers and workers from Zikhron Ya'akov and Rosh Pina. They began with 59 settlers. Topographical problems soon plagued them and the village was rather indigent and far from self-subsisting in 1900. Furthermore, distant from the concentration of settlements in the lower Galilee, Metulla was subject for a certain period to recurrent disturbances from the former Druze settlers, who had sold the land to Rothschild. These issues impeded Metulla's growth but did not terminate its existence. When Metulla was transferred to the property of the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA, see below) in 1900 and the settlement split, Metulla residents moved into brick homes and diversified their produce. The road to self-sufficiency had begun.

Be'er Tuvia was purchased by Hovevei Zion from the Rothschild property and settled by 17 immigrant families from Russia in 1896. Hovevei Zion went out of its way to make Be'er Tuvia a successful venture, proportionately allotting each family 180–200 dunam and modern farming equipment. However, after an encouraging start, the village met with the same problems that hampered Metulla's growth: security and lack of land. Being the only Jewish settlement on the Gaza Strip, surrounded by Arab villages and Bedouin tribes, Be'er Tuvia could not easily solve the perennial theft of crop and the occasional raids. The paucity of land also became a factor as the younger settlers established families within a few years. Here too, on the eve of the Second Aliyah (1904), after eight years of existence, the village was in dire straits with forty people having left.

Two strategic and well-planned settlements, Metulla and Be'er Tuvia point to the tremendous hardship involved in putting the ideology of the First Aliyah to work. The whole gambit of issues, from disease to inexperience to security problems to inclement conditions, forced many to leave and desist. Even the Baron's

**Hirsch, Baron Moritz de**  
(1831–1896)

Born in Germany to a wealthy Jewish family from Bavaria, Baron de Hirsch followed the traditional profession of his forefathers engaging in banking and other entrepreneurial fields. Supported educational projects of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and later established his own foundation for spreading modern education to Galicia and Bukovina, and another fund to help alleviate the settlement of Jews in North America. He established in 1891 the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) in order “to establish colonies in various parts of North and South America... for agricultural, commercial and other purposes.” ICA was designed especially to meet the growing needs of emigrants from Russia. While Hirsch was alive, ICA did not support the agricultural projects in Eretz-Israel due to its founder’s negative view of settling the country.

**Tschlenow, Jehiel** (1863–1918)

A doctor of hasidic stock from the Ukraine, Tschlenow became involved in the Jewish nationalist movement after the pogroms of 1881. He was involved in Hovevei Zion and later joined the Zionist congresses. His rejection of the Uganda proposal spearheaded the opposition (1903), and he continued to oppose it. Later in Berlin he continued his Zionist activity but returned to Russia in 1915. He died in London in 1918, after working with Weizmann to promote the Balfour Declaration.

THE NEW YISHUV (1882–1917)

faithful and generous support could not always gloss over these impediments and in 1900 it became apparent that even his enterprise had reached an impasse. In that year, he decided to transfer his settlements to the supervision of the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA), which immediately withdrew from the Baron’s philanthropic and uneconomic course.

Founded in 1891 by Baron Moritz de Hirsch, ICA had consistently turned down all proposals to assist the *Yishuv*. With the founder’s death in 1896, ICA made its first contribution to several settlements. On 1 January 1900, ICA received the authority from the Baron to assume the management of those communities under his former patronage. Once again the *Yishuv* was appalled at the single-handed decisions relating to their fate and sent a distinguished representation of Hovevei-Zion leaders (e.g. Ussishkin, Tschlenow, Ahad Ha’am) to Rothschild to reconsider. They were to present the case for passing the authority to the settlers themselves, but Rothschild refused to meet them. A year later he dismissed outrightly the idea, upholding his sovereign hold over the villages. The *Yishuv* grumbled and bickered at their new patron but both ICA and the *Yishuv* soon found a common ground for operation. In the last four years of the First Aliyah, ICA was able to show several important breakthroughs: concentrating on settling the lower eastern Galilee and the Carmel/Sharon district, ICA established seven settlements, as well as an agricultural farm. Familiar methods which had previously been applied in an accidental and haphazard fashion and had failed, were now utilized in an integrated manner in the widespread settlement of lower Galilee. This time they proved their efficacy in a framework of a coordinated regional settlement. Stricter agreements were arranged with the settlers for repayment of the land and loans and ICA veered away from bailing out problematic settlements. On the other hand, ICA encouraged the settlers to assume administration of their village. As such, their contribution to the various enterprises was considerable. However, lest it be understood otherwise, ICA’s activity continued to be financed by the Baron throughout the Ottoman period.

By 1904 the *Yishuv* harbored in its midst a diversified agricultural

settlement, with some colonies already active for more than two decades. This, as we have sketchily seen, was no easy feat, as the pioneering nature of these settlements posed many hurdles for their development. Thus, in laying the foundations for the future Jewish settlement in Eretz-Israel, the First Aliyah had to break with traditional perspectives and well-worn habits and inevitably clashed with the pillars of the Old Yishuv.

### *The Controversy Between New and Old*

From all that has been said so far it should be obvious that the spirit of the First Aliyah had to come into conflict with the Old Yishuv establishment. We can see this most clearly in the area of the new settlements and in the field of education. Let us look first at the clash of interest over the settlements.

Remembering the elitist, Torah-centered ideal of the Old Yishuv, and the image of Eretz-Israel as a fortress against modern, European tendencies, we are immediately struck by the gap with the new reality.<sup>1</sup> Even those advocates of agricultural centers within the Old Yishuv were coldly received by the social and spiritual leadership of the community, let alone those outside the framework. Aside from their basic ideological opposition, these practical considerations weighed heavily: uncertain security conditions in areas distant from certain centers; fear of competition for *halukkah* funds; doubts about the financial remuneration from farming; fear of being cut off from the traditional leadership and the social fabric of the towns. The appearance of Hovevei-Zion and their agricultural settlements immediately intensified the prevalent opposition and put an end to the Old Yishuv's participation in further agricultural endeavors. Rosh Pina and Petach Tikvah, the two pre-1882 settlements in which the Old Yishuv was actively involved, were pushed into the background and their achievements toned down. To center stage moved the criticism of the settlers and a sense of estrangement from their program.

Native communities tend to be wary of the penetration of new immigrants with a different set of standards. The *Yishuv* in the 19th century adhered closely to this axiom in exhibiting a myriad of

**Ussishkin, Abraham Menachem Mendel (1863–1941)**

Another of the Russian Zionists, Ussishkin was a man of great activism. Responding to the pogroms in 1881, Ussishkin helped found a society of pioneers to Eretz-Israel and later joined Bnei Zion society in 1884. A strong supporter of agricultural settlement in Eretz-Israel, Ussishkin joined Ahad Ha'am's Bnei Moshe society in 1889 but later split with him over the way of settling the country. He himself came to settle in 1919 and headed the Zionist Commission, instrumental in coordinating the *Yishuv's* policy. In the next twenty years, Menachem Mendel Ussishkin was involved in almost every major Zionist issue.

**Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginzberg) (1856–1927)**

Born in Kiev, Ahad Ha'am came from Hasidic stock but through his vast reading of secular studies he abandoned all organized religious life during the seventies. Became in the eighties, while in Odessa, an ardent follower of Hovevei Zion but in 1889 criticized its direction in settling Eretz-Israel. Motivated by a deep spiritual approach to the rebuilding of the country, Ahad Ha'am emerged as a major Zionist thinker who proposed a step by step settlement of the country. He opposed the view that Eretz-Israel should be a shelter for Jewish people and castigated the more political form the movement took under Herzl. Ahad Ha'am had a wide following among the Russian Zionists and his spiritual Zionism inspired many. He settled in Tel Aviv in 1922 at a time when his influence on the Zionist movement had dwindled.

**Diskin, Moses Joshua Judah Leib** (1817-1898)

A well-known Eastern European rabbi before he came to Eretz-Israel in 1877, Diskin quickly became a central rabbinic figure in the Jerusalem Old Yishuv community. A most forceful individual, who believed in the need to curb all modernist tendencies, he opposed any submission to reformist goals—such as permitting the work of the fields during the sabbatical year. Diskin was the author of various works, both commentaries and halachic novellae, but also engaged in social work, especially in the care for orphans. Considered one of the most distinguished rabbis of the period.

**Mohilever, Samuel** (1824-1898)

Born in Russia, Mohilever became known in Lithuania for his erudition and preaching abilities. One of the first supporters of Hovevei Zion, he met with Baron de Rothschild in 1882 and encouraged him to support the settlement of Eretz-Israel. Mohilever was the rabbinic, religious spiritual leader of Hovevei Zion and showed moderate tendencies in supporting agricultural work during the *shemittah*. Mohilever also supported Herzl's efforts to institutionalize the nationalist revival.

*kollelim*, which were rarely able to combine efforts to improve their status. Nurtured by this insular approach, the Old Yishuv was more than cautious of the new winds from the East and prone to lack of cooperation. Certain direct factors crystallized their position: the failure of the first villages and their reliance upon the Baron raised doubts even of the financial benefit of the undertaking; the contrasts between the settlers and the Old Yishuv awakened fears among the latter as to their hold on the leadership of the entire *Yishuv*, on their ability to preserve its spiritual world and even its economic position. Though many settlers were observant Jews, the Old Yishuv voiced a serious complaint against settlers who did not observe the commandments and belittled religion. A most embittered point of contention was over the collective observance of *shemittah* – of leaving the land fallow during the seventh year. Put in modern terminology the controversy surrounded two ideals: a religious one which was absolute, and an economic one which was relative.

This religious controversy was centered on the year of *shemittah*, 1888/89. Within the various orthodox schools in Eastern Europe, the positions were split between outright refusal to work and allowing work under certain conditions. In the *Yishuv* it appeared that the settlers were originally bent on observing *shemittah*, even as certain distinguished rabbis (like Rabbi Moses Diskin) offered alternative solutions, but as it became a public issue the leadership of the Old Yishuv stood firmly united, adopting an extreme position. Pitting these positions against the moderate, compromising attitude of the settlements aggravated the relationship between the New and Old for years to come. Each one now established an uncompromising and unyielding image of the other. In practice, the settlements utilized the permission granted by certain rabbis to work the land during the *shemittah*, further alienating the leadership of the Old Yishuv. In the following years of *shemittah* (1896, 1903) the acrimonious controversy subsided considerably, due in large part to the growing strength of the new settlements. Moreover, religious figures in Hovevei-Zion (like Rabbi Samuel Mohilever) tried hard to placate the extreme position within the Old Yishuv and in certain areas reached agreement. This was particularly so in the contacts between the Old

Yishuv and the rural settlements in what could be called the spiritual realm. Having no religious leadership in the settlements, observant settlers accepted the authority of the rabbis in the Old Yishuv. Furthermore, they were dependent upon the religious functions of the Old Yishuv institutions, primarily in such public spheres as the supervision of *kashrut* (dietary laws), of the wine cellars (a major industry of the Baron's enterprises), religious education, and the appointment of religious functionaries such as slaughterers, teachers and *mashgihim* (*kashrut* supervisors). Decisions of the religious courts were often the determining factor in feuds among the settlers. In 1904, "Guardians of the Torah" was established in Jerusalem to further the religious education in the settlements, a symbolic step on the path of the Old Yishuv towards greater involvement in the life of the New Yishuv. Thus, contacts gradually evolved between the contrasting orientations, but only among those willing to accept the authority and influence of the religious leadership in Safed and Jerusalem. Many individuals in the First Aliyah had no interest in compromising their perspective and demanded recognition of their secular-Zionist outlook. A microcosm of these struggles took place in Jerusalem.

The bastion of the Old Yishuv, Jerusalem, underwent a turbulent period with the coming of the First Aliyah, and in particular with the advent of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda in September 1881. Here was a *maskil* ('enlightened') of the new school: drawing his ideas from the Jewish enlightenment in Europe and buoyed by the rampant nationalist movements, Ben-Yehuda eventually made the more moderate elements in the Old Yishuv (Frumkin, J. Rivlin, and Yehiel M. Pines) retreat and return full-heartedly to their previous community. At first cooperation had existed but with the strengthening of the New Yishuv's foothold, the Old Yishuv's *maskilim* opposed the new tendencies with vigor. What were the major points of contention? The *maskilim* of Jerusalem were in the forefront of those who demanded a modern rationalist education, founded libraries, initiated adult evening-classes and ardently pursued the revival of the Hebrew language. In 1882, at Ben-Yehuda's initiative and with the support of Y.M. Pines, the "Rédemption of Israel" society was

**Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer**  
(1858–1922)

The son of a Habad Hasid from Lithuania, Ben-Yehuda began writing on the need for a Jewish national movement in Eretz-Israel before the pogroms of 1881. From his arrival in 1881 in Palestine, he became the foremost devotee to the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language and was responsible for coining many new words. A lexicographer with a nationalist perspective, Ben-Yehuda was a pioneer in collecting Hebrew words from different periods: these became part of his multi-volume dictionary, which is to this day an important scientific tool.

**Pines, Yehiel Michael**  
(1843–1913)

Born in Belorussia, Pines was inspired to follow the path of Hovevei Zion. Reared in an orthodox environment, Pines was nevertheless open to reform if it would not undermine the basis of tradition. He reached Jaffa in 1877 and a year later moved to Jerusalem and showed a clear openness to the modernist trends. Supported by Montefiore, he set up artisan and industrial projects while openly advocating agricultural settlements. After a period of collaboration and friendship with Ben-Yehuda and Ahad Ha-am, Pines turned against their methods and ideology and became a leading spokesman of the Old Yishuv.

**Hirschensohn, Jacob Mordechai**  
(1821–1888)

Born in Pinsk and educated in the yeshivot of Belorussia and Lithuania, Hirschensohn came to Eretz-Israel in 1848 after serving as rabbi in several communities. He moved to Jerusalem in 1864 where he spent the rest of his life administering a yeshivah. His sons Isaac and Hayyim showed a certain openness to modern education.

**Yellin, David** (1864–1941)

The son of Yehoshua Yellin, David Yellin was born in Jerusalem and educated at a yeshivah but also received a broad general education and a proficiency in languages. He was involved in the struggle for the Hebrew language, being both active in the Va'ad ha-lashon and an important researcher in Hebrew language and grammar. He continued the tradition of his family—Polish and Baghdadi—integrating the worlds of Ashkenazim and Sephardim in his scholarship and way of life.

formed with definitive modern-rationalistic goals: revival of the people on its land, revival of spoken Hebrew as a daily language, and encouragement of the agricultural settlements and industries in Palestine. Though not long-lasting, the society planted the seed for future activity in these areas. Seven years later another society was formed, “Safah Berura” (exact language), which limited its activity to spreading and reviving the Hebrew language. Under Ben-Yehuda’s inspiration, Safah Berura was able to attract the interest of teachers, scholars, functionaries and private businessmen from the Sephardic and Ashkenazic circles – they included such personalities as A.M. Luncz, Y.M. Pines, Rabbi M. Hirschensohn, David Yellin, the Hacham Bashi (Rabbi Panigel). It was designed to be a non-partisan society for establishing a scholarly foundation for the Hebrew language and developing mass support by extending and intensifying the knowledge of Hebrew. Nonetheless, it aroused opposition in the extremist quarters of the Old Yishuv. This society also lasted only a short while and was later revived in 1904 by the Vaad Halashon, but it had contributed markedly to the penetration of Hebrew into the modern schools and to the teaching of Hebrew in Hebrew. In this regard, it was Ben-Yehuda’s newspapers which were front-line fighters for the Hebrew language and they clashed head on with the Old Yishuv in this and in other matters. After working together with Frumkin in his *Havazelet*, Ben-Yehuda came to the conclusion that a moderate cooperative stand would not further his goals. He opened his own newspaper (*Hazvi*) in 1884 with fiery declarations against the “disgusting halukkah” of the Old Yishuv and pronouncements in favor of an open, secular society. He antagonized the Old Yishuv leadership and the Sephardi kollel, condemning the latter’s habit of visiting missionary doctors, and in turn his newspaper was excommunicated by the Sephardi kollel. Several years later he and his newspaper were again excommunicated by the same institution.

The *shemittah* controversy had necessarily its Jerusalem offshoot and exacerbated the relations between Ben-Yehuda’s circle and the Old Yishuv. While the latter and Frumkin came out strongly against the settlers, Ben-Yehuda upheld the position of the moderates,





Jaffa Road, Jerusalem, at the beginning of the twentieth century

demanding permission to work the land. From that point on Frumkin was heart and soul part of the Old Yishuv orientation, openly strictioning the cancerous secular tendencies of the New Yishuv. Ben-Yehuda was not the Old Yishuv's only villain. Bnei-Moshe, the secret society founded in Odessa in 1889 under the influence of Ahad Ha'am's spiritual Zionism, placed its entire emphasis on a national spiritual revival through education and culture in Eretz-Israel. From its center in Jaffa (1893), Bnei-Moshe advanced the secular Ahad Ha'am's position which soon alienated one of its staunch supporters Y.M. Pines. Pines became its arch foe and rallied elements in the Old Yishuv to eradicate the movement. This feud was simultaneous to another one which again involved Ben-Yehuda. He was imprisoned in 1894 after an article was published in his *Hazvi* against the Ottoman Empire and its content was divulged to the authorities by elements in the Old Yishuv. To pour salt on his wounds, he was again excommunicated. This tense atmosphere subsided in the late nineties due to the cessation of

**Panigel, Raphael Meir ben Judah**  
(1804–1893)

Born in Bulgaria, Panigel came to Eretz-Israel at the age of three. Was sent as emissary of Jerusalem to North Africa to collect money (1828, 1863), and on the latter occasion was received by the Pope. In 1866 Panigel offered his encouragement to Frankl's efforts to establish modern education in Jerusalem. In 1880 he became the sephardic chief rabbi of Jerusalem and in 1890 was appointed the hakham bashi of Eretz-Israel.

**Behar, Nissim (1848-1931)**

Born in Jerusalem, Behar became involved with the Alliance's educational programs from a young age. He graduated their institute in 1869 and after teaching in Constantinople joined the nucleus of Hebraists in Jerusalem to spread the Alliance ideals. He instituted in 1882 an Alliance school (Torah u-Melakhah; Torah and work) and helped propagate these ideals throughout the *Yishuv*. He was later active in educational work in the United States.

Bnei-Moshe's activity and the intervention of Nissim Behar, an influential figure in the *Yishuv*, who propagated modern education.

Jerusalem was only one of the battlegrounds between the two communities. In fact, its *maskilim* (aside from certain periods in Ben-Yehuda's career) were characterized by a certain moderation, restraint, and caution. Probably this stemmed from the traditional, conservative background of many of the *maskilim* (and there were only several dozen at this stage) as well as the city's demographic character (mostly orthodox), wherein the active opposition of the Old Yishuv to *maskilic* initiatives curtailed their freedom of action. Irrespective, through slow but unfaltering activity, they succeeded in creating niches of the 'enlightenment' and rational spirit even in Jerusalem. Their fellow *maskilim*, in the settlements and in Jaffa, were of a more activist nature and they criticized the Jerusalemites for cooperating on occasion with the old 'establishment.' The urban vanguard of the New Yishuv was thus centered not in Jerusalem, but in Jaffa – the small town which was transformed in the nineteenth century into the main port of Palestine and the administrative, cultural and social center of the New Yishuv. Its pivotal position within the New Yishuv warrants special mention.

Formerly a homogeneous community of Sephardim, Jaffa grew during the nineteenth century as a result of domestic migration and particularly from Ashkenazic immigration from abroad. Local organizations of various types became involved in activity on behalf of the entire New Yishuv, rather than limiting themselves solely to the Jaffa community. A heterogeneous, pluralistic community developed; marked by its liveliness, mix of cultures, attitudes, languages, and life-styles. A far cry from the more sedate atmosphere of Jerusalem, Jaffa was open towards modernization, secularization, and productivization and prepared to introduce changes in the social and economic realms. Its geographic location and the unique character of the community made Jaffa amenable to becoming the administrative center of the New Yishuv. The headquarters of many of the organizations involved in the settlement efforts, together with cultural institutions and projects expressing the ideology of the New Yishuv, also chose Jaffa for their location. The city became known as

the spiritual center of the Judean settlements and the crossroads of 'Hebrew culture.' This concept reflected a Hebraic-nationalist emphasis that found expression in the fostering of such modern institutions as the Talmud Torah, the Hovevei Zion School, and the Sha'ar Zion Library. Here important steps were taken to lay the foundations for a national-oriented Hebrew educational system upon which the Second Aliyah was able to build.

### *The Second Aliyah – The Roots of the Labor Movement*

During the period of 1904-1914, the *Yishuv* rose to 12% of the Palestine population by virtue of an immigration of almost 40,000 Jews. More than half found the conditions untenable and emigrated to western countries, but a small core of that aliyah reached Palestine with a particular ideological and social consciousness, born of a socialist-Zionist world view. Numbering no more than 3000, these young immigrants from Russia reached Palestine as individuals or in small groups and became the nucleus of the country's Jewish labor movement. Their pioneering spirit left a major imprint on the settlement in Palestine and helped fashion its image. Aside from the common Zionist notion, these *olim* brought with them a new determined ideology of 'Jewish labor' – i.e. 'conquering' the land by Jewish manual labor became a moral and national virtue. This was not an economic perspective but a social one, as expressed early on in the Second Aliyah. To paraphrase their vision: they do not merely desire a Hebrew settlement, but a new type of Hebrew settlement, one that would be productive and capable of creating new values – both material and cultural. (The term *ivri* ("Hebrew") rather than *yehudi* ("Jew") was employed to indicate their desire to create a new man. However, I have used in the text the more common form – Jew.) Opposed to being patronized or employers, they began with almost no means or assistance but with a deep pride of a national and pioneering accomplishment.

The ideology of these settlers immediately put them at odds with the settlers of the First Aliyah. Clearly anti-religious and socialist, they were ill at ease in the old settlement arrangements, but recognized that a pure proletarian ideology was inappropriate in Palestine,

where industry was hardly developed. Forced to somewhat adapt their ideology to Palestine, they placed more emphasis on the pioneering national aspects and educating the masses in their spirit both in the cities and in the settlements.

One of the prime tests that these elements of the Second Aliyah faced was making good their ideological constructs, especially in the area of Jewish manual labor. This struggle had several unique battlefronts – Petach Tikva, Rishon le-Zion, Rehovot, and Zikhron Ya'akov – where the settlements employed thousands of Arab workers. Petach Tikva with a population of 1500 (!) and a dynamically developing society, offered a particularly difficult situation since the local residents adhered to a traditional religious way of life. Gradually Petach Tikva acquired a fine cadre of Jewish laborers who were able to compete admirably with their fellow Arab workers, but their provocatively non-religious way of life troubled the local residents. Attempts were made to curtail the social life of the workers and bring it into line with a formal religious way of life. Refusing to submit to these tactics, 100 workers were excommunicated by the settlement's committee (1906). These Jewish workers were to be refused work and residence. Many remained in principle at the settlement in dire straits for several months, until new workers were allowed to be employed without prior conditions. Yet, the struggle persisted for several years as farmers in Petach Tikva even planned to bring workers from Egypt to sidestep the Jewish laborers. By 1914 the workers in Petach Tikva had reached a consolidated status. Here then was a case of a more traditional settlement with religious Jews which fought the workers conscientiously on several accounts, but ultimately acceded. But in other settlements the conflict took on a different focus.

A most interesting affair occurred in the vineyards of Rishon le-Zion in Spring 1907. Jewish law forbids non-Jews to be involved in the production of kosher wine and so the vineyards proved to be good sources for Jewish labor in the *Yishuv*. A strike broke out among the workers after several of them were to be fired. The workers asked for the intervention of the two dominant political organizations of the day, "Hapoel Hazair" (The Young Worker, a

non-Marxist organization, established in 1905) and the "Poalei Zion" (Workers of Zion, an extension of the Russian-Jewish movement, founded in 1906 in Palestine). The former demanded an end to the strike, while the latter supported it, seeing it as a way of protecting the overall interests of workers. What appears as a common tug-of-war among rivalling political organizations was much more significant within the context of a budding labor movement in Palestine. Beyond this particular case loomed a central ideological issue – whether the class struggle would become the guiding line in the movement. In any event the strike proved to be a success; conditions of the workers improved considerably.

Jerusalem was not free of these developments either. Printing presses were common in a city which published countless religious books, announcements, yearly calendars, etc. Several times tension rose between publishers and workers, but lacking means and subject to the framework of the Old Yishuv, the workers' strike never amounted to much. In autumn 1908, with the help of the Poalei-Zion, some 70 workers organized a strike on various issues: not only work conditions and salary were at stake, but the status of the workers and their right to organize. This time the strike engaged not only the workers and their employers, but also leaders of the Old and New Yishuv and leading figures in the various philanthropic societies (ICA, Alliance, etc.). A fracas between a publisher and his worker provoked the strike, which was called in order to prevent the employers from injuring the worker's "spiritual and social life." Orthodox workers joined hands with the socialist Poalei-Zion and Sephardim to present their grievances. The 'establishment' rushed to the support of the employers. A meeting of representatives of all the kollelim, together with distinguished personalities of the Yishuv (even some moderate *maskilim*), rejected the strikers' approach and published a firm declaration forbidding Jews to employ these workers until they disavow their actions. The penetration of the workers' movement into Jerusalem troubled the 'establishment.' Nevertheless, the workers decided to call a general strike and pressed for the recognition of their amalgamation. Moreover, they publically demonstrated, condemned the leadership and filed a complaint to

**Ben-Zvi, Izhak (1884-1963)**

Of Ukrainian birth and reared in both a modern and traditional education, Ben-Zvi settled in Eretz-Israel in 1907 after being involved in Po'alei Zion activity. Ben-Zvi assumed an important role in the movement's beginnings in Palestine and later in the workers movement's amalgamation—the Histadrut. A man of diverse interests, Ben-Zvi researched the history of Jewish societies in Asia and Eretz-Israel, and specialized in the history of the Samaritans. After serving as a Member of Knesset in the early years of the State of Israel, he became its president in 1952. Elected for a third term in 1962, he died in 1963.

**Levontin, Zalman David (1857-1940)**

Born in Warsaw, Levontin was one of the first members of Hovevei Zion, immigrating to Eretz-Israel in 1882. Though one of the founders of Rishon Le-Zion he argued with other settlers and left the country and returned to Russia. Returned to Eretz-Israel at the turn of the century and was involved for the next twenty years in the Jaffa branch of the 'Anglo-Palestinian Bank Co.,' an important arm in the development of the *Yishuv*. A strong supporter of private enterprise, Levontin often clashed with the socialist orientated pioneers.

Jemal Pasha! However, *maskilim* of the New Yishuv entered the affair to terminate it, lending their weight to the side of the employers. Stripped of all public support, save that of the political organization, and pressured by all sides (financially, religiously and socially), the workers submitted and returned to work.

What was the significance of this strike? Izhak Ben-Zvi, the second President of the State of Israel and a founding father of Poalei Zion in Palestine, described the strike as an unprecedented encounter between employers and workers. However, he saw its uniqueness in its being within the context of the Old Yishuv. Actually, the strike took on a more general character, cutting through the customary divisions. The meeting point between the Old and the New Yishuv, rabbis and *maskilim* alike, was the fear of the new ideological force – the labor movement – "driven to destroy all that we built with hard work and whose socialist bible is more holy to them than everything that is holy and precious to us" (in the words of Z.D. Levontin, a pioneer of the First Aliyah). Once again we see the intricate sociological process: two diametrically opposed factions unite to oppose a third force which challenges both of their premises. For Poalei Zion this was only a temporary setback; in the long run the strike allowed the consciousness of the Jewish worker to be openly aired in the heart of the Old Yishuv.

The process of "conquering the land" continued at a slow pace. By 1912 only 750 workers were integrated into the agricultural work of the various settlements. Though they were an extremely dedicated group and served as an example for others, both in working the land and cultivating Hebrew culture, their contribution to the general labor force seemed negligible in comparison to the large number of Arab workers. Facing these cold facts, many were brought to the brink of despair and to emigration. However, in 1908, twenty workers from Petach Tikva associated with Hapoal-Hazair discarded the previous orientation and established a worker's colony, Ain-Ganim, near their former settlement. Based on Jewish labor (*Avodah Ivrit* – literally Hebrew labor) in all areas, free election by the settlers, equality in land and property, and mutual assistance, Ain-Ganim served as an example for future workers' settlements. Along

these lines Degania, the kibbutz on the Kinneret, was formed in 1910 and a year later it hosted the Hapoal-Hazair conference which gave its blessing to this new form of settlement. Although the former notion of joining existing settlements and conquering them continued, this new approach of independent, collective settlements was taking hold and would prove to be one of the foremost contributions of the Second Aliyah to the building of Palestine. Writers, thinkers and political activists from Eastern Europe – like A.D. Gordon, Berl Katznelson, David Shimon, Yosef Hayyim Brener – were all part of the fledgling settlement of Ain-Ganim and added an important cultural dimension to the agricultural enterprise.

The pioneering immigrants from Russia, imbued with a secular populist ideology, found in the traditional Yemenite Jews a common spirit. With the continuation of immigration from Yemen in 1908 and their integration into the labor force in Rehovot and Rishon le-Zion, a new productive element joined the *Yishuv*. Often regarded as being more capable of enduring the trying initial stages of agricultural labor than the Ashkenazic Jews from Russia, and more competent, the Yemenites became a central force in the old settlements. Though no simple task to integrate these traditional Jews with their specific way of life into the settlements, various solutions (e.g. special neighborhoods near the settlements) alleviated this problem. All told, the growing Yemenite community in both urban and rural surroundings, added a vital element to the *Yishuv*, and can explain the decision of the Yemenite community to establish its own *kollel* in Jerusalem in 1908: a framework was needed to treat the specific problems and needs of Yemenite Jews, who differed greatly from both the Old and New *Yishuv*.

We have mentioned now and then the social conflicts which each immigration provoked, yet to see the overall picture during the Second Aliyah, we must look at the way the immigrants perceived the *Yishuv*, and vice versa. Aspects of the critical approach of the First Aliyah towards the Old *Yishuv* appear in the Second Aliyah as well. Castigating them as “schnorrers” who live off philanthropy and hand outs, the new olim viewed their unproductive life as the source of financial instability in the *Yishuv*. Their leaders were portrayed

**Gordon, Aaron David**  
(1856–1922)

The ideologist of the Second Aliyah, Gordon left his homeland in Russia and joined an agricultural settlement in 1904. Although inexperienced and older than most of the pioneers Gordon struggled to ‘conquer the land’ and overcome the difficulties. He published extensively on the revolutionary nature of the return to the land and became the mentor and spiritual guide for the first generation of agricultural workers. Tolstoy was the most significant thinker who influenced Gordon’s concept of return to nature.

**Katznelson, Berl** (1887–1944)

Educated unsystematically in his home town of Bobruisk, Belorussia, Katznelson developed a passionate love for Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian literature. By 1902 he was already involved in political affairs and actively engaged in public discussions with Zionist and non-Zionist personalities. He settled in Eretz-Israel in 1908 and became a central personality in the life of the Second Aliyah. Exerted much energies in creating non-party frameworks, unassociated with parties in the Diaspora. A masterful journalist, he became the first editor of the Labor Zionist newspaper ‘Davar,’ which he founded in 1925. Katznelson was also a prime mover in the formation of the Histadrut in 1920 and remained attached to its affairs for the next two decades. In 1942 he established a special publishing company (Am-Oved) designed for the workers, and was its first editor. His political and moral positions on the development of the *Yishuv* were a constant source of discussion.

**Shimoni, David (1886–1956)**

The Hebrew poet from Bobruisk (Russia), Shimoni began publishing Hebrew verse in his teens. His contact with Berl Katznelson and Bialik helped shape his enlightenment approach. After arriving in Palestine in 1909, Shimoni both worked in the orange groves and wrote poetry. A diverse writer, Shimoni in the twenties was writing lyrics, prose and reflections on his wanderings in Russia in the previous decade. Considered to be part of the “classical” Hebrew tradition in verse.

**Brenner, Joseph Hayyim (1881–1921)**

A Ukrainian born Jewish writer, Brenner moved to Eretz-Israel in 1909. Brenner’s short stories dealt both with his experience as a village youngster as well as with the dramatic changes in Palestine during the Second Aliyah and in the agricultural settlements. An essayist who took sharp issue with Ahad Ha’am’s theories, and a translator who brought Russian classics to Hebrew in a simple style. His influence was strongly felt among young Israeli authors who found his existentialist approach more appealing than the patriotic post-1948 literature. Brenner was killed in the 1921 Arab riots.

autocratically, distant from the masses and their needs. By continuing a kind of Diasporic existence, in speaking Yiddish and resisting economic change, the Old Yishuv appeared as outside the framework of the ‘new society.’ Yet, those who claimed to be part of that society, the settlers from the First Aliyah, were by no means the harbingers of a new era – in fact, in the eyes of the Second Aliyah, they seemed to maintain the same parasitic tendencies as the Old Yishuv! The unstable settlements they encountered lacked nationalistic ideals, were replete with foreign languages and customs, and suffered from internal squabbles. But the ‘original sin’ of the settlements lay in their acceptance of a ‘new halukkah’ (the philanthropic assistance from abroad), which turned them into exploiters and employers, a mere extension of the Old Yishuv. Halukkah in any shape or form was anathema to the Second Aliyah and they in turn looked for ways to live independently of any outside support. This outright condemnation of the First Aliyah glossed over many of their achievements and virtues, but moreover complicated the integration of the new settlers in these villages. However, “conquering the land and labor” was not easily achieved by these idealists and their inconsistencies, fluctuations, and poor productivity provoked much hostility among the rural community. Their anti-religious outlook, opposition to the philanthropic organs and radical ideologies added oil to the fire. Thus, little cooperation and common goals could be found. This fundamental tension was also at the root of the New Yishuv’s reticence to support the printing-press strikers in Jerusalem in 1908. Even such apparently kindred spirits, like Ben-Yehuda, who shared the common goal of reviving the Hebrew language, looked askance at the worker’s aggressiveness; the ideologue of the Second Aliyah, A.D. Gordon replied sarcastically: “A worker’s reply to Sir(!) Ben Yehuda’s address to the workers.”

By distancing themselves from all their predecessors and placing themselves in a unique category, the pioneers of the Second Aliyah were left to travel a lonely and uphill road. Few in number, they could not impose their platform on the *Yishuv*, yet established the first nuclei of ‘Jewish labor’ (*Avodah Ivrit*), of collective settlement and self defence. A Jewish laborer with a socialist Zionist outlook



was being formed, truly breaking with Jewish tradition, and he and she were laying the cornerstone to an organized labor movement.

### *New Ventures and Growth*

After the Uganda controversy subsided the Zionist Organization placed more and more emphasis on the *Yishuv's* development. One of the pivotal instruments for implementing that course was the Palestinian-Office (Palastina-Amt) and its affiliated office, The Society for Building the Yishuv, established in Jaffa in 1908 under the direction of Dr. Arthur Ruppín, a German Jew; Ruppín quickly succeeded in gaining the support and confidence of the diverse circles in the *Yishuv*, advocating real cooperation between the settlers and his office. Pioneers of the Second Aliyah and bourgeois Jews alike found in Ruppín a kindred spirit, who looked for new ways to invigorate the *Yishuv's* growth. The scope of his interest and the projects he embarked upon in the name of the Zionist organization ranged widely – from the purchase of buildings for the Bezalel Art School to renting land for a training farm (“Kinneret”) to helping develop the Technion Engineering School in Haifa. But Ruppín recognized the importance of political action as well and negotiated on several key issues with the Turkish administration and tried to mitigate Arab opposition to Jewish Aliyah. However, of all of Ruppín's and the Palestine-Office's contributions to the *Yishuv*, their efforts on behalf of new settlements were crowned with the utmost success. Land purchases covered a significant amount of territory and the agreements made with the settlers allowed for materialization of various ideological perspectives. Degania, Merhavia, Kevuzat Kinneret were three of the new settlements established: each became a landmark in the agricultural history of Palestine with Degania and Kevuzat Kinneret emerging as the models of collective settlement. They were not alone. Through the active support of the Zionist movement a major transformation in the map of Jewish settlements took place in the pre-World War I period. Forty-seven rural communities were functioning by World War I, 25 established since 1900 and 14 of which were under the aegis of the Palestine-Office. All together, they housed more than 12,000 settlers, a sharp

**Ruppín, Arthur (1876–1943)**

Born in Prussia, Ruppín completed legal and economic studies in German universities. Between 1902-1907 he served as a lawyer and judge's assistant while heading the statistical and demographic office of the Berlin Jewish community. In 1908 he began his work in Eretz-Israel and for the next twenty years was the most central figure in the entire Zionist colonization effort. With much insight, initiative, and hard work, Ruppín successfully engineered many agricultural projects, as well as residential quarters in Jerusalem and Haifa. Supported efforts “to conquer” the Jezreel Valley and later became involved in settling German Jews in Eretz-Israel. Continued his demographic and sociological studies as well as a constant involvement in colonizing affairs.



Female Workers in Kinneret

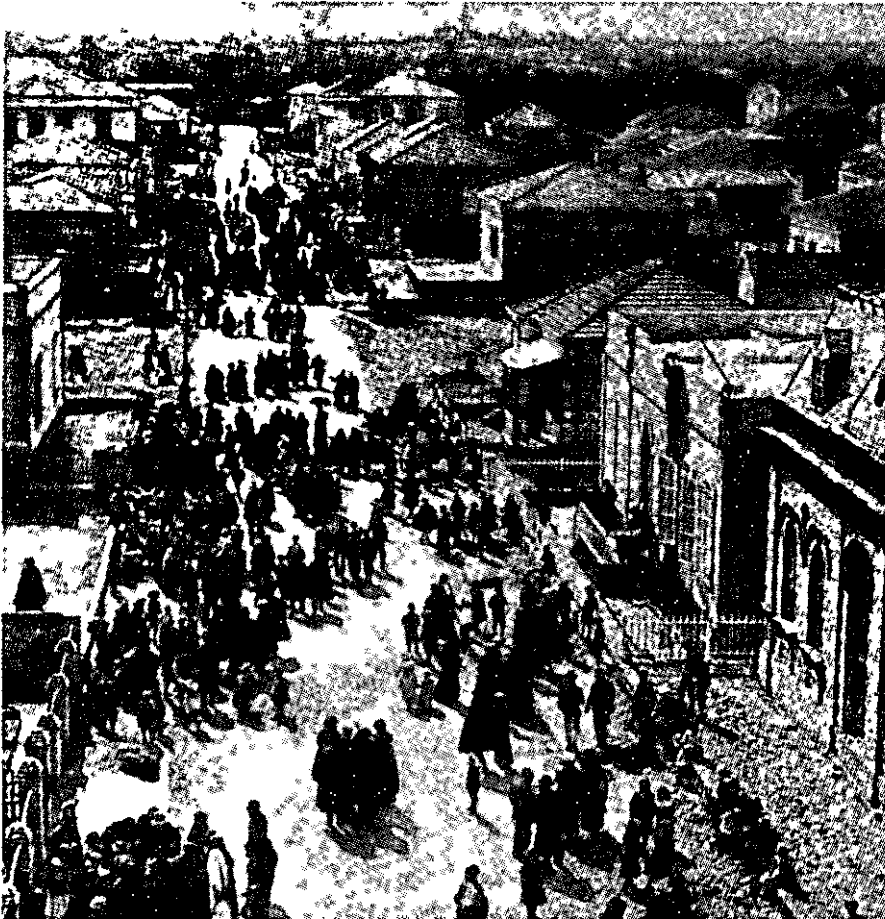
increase from the 5000 in 1900. Moreover, they now consisted of 14% of the Jewish population and the unique creation of the Second Aliyah – collective settlement – would soon become both the apex of Zionist settlement as well as the center of ideological discussion. Here then was emerging the ‘establishment’ of the future.

The impressive growth of Jewish rural settlements was not the only achievement of the period. The rise of Jaffa as the second largest urban settlement in Palestine and the first steps towards turning the sandy plot of land, north of Jaffa into a modern suburb (the future metropolis of Tel-Aviv) were also undertaken during these years. Jaffa became the center of the Jewish renaissance in Palestine with many central offices, banks, and modern educational institutions, while it also had the services of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook for ten years; from 1911 Rabbi Meir Uziel served as the Hacham Bashi of the city. Both rabbis eventually became chief rabbis of Palestine and their unique ability to deal with secular and a-religious tendencies of rural and urban settlers was clearly nurtured by their stay in Jaffa.

For Jaffa, a port city with much commerce and nationalist activity was no replica of Jerusalem. As the city grew and its living quarters became overcrowded, a new area was sought out. In 1909, the first settlers moved into their new residences, many of which were built by Jewish workers. This urban village, with no road transportation to anywhere but simply deep in hills of sand, took on a 'Hebrew' look from the outset. At a rapid pace, Tel-Aviv began to attract more and more residents, and all the modern services were introduced. By 1914, Tel-Aviv had grown to a small-size village of 1500 and was already viewed as a realization of Herzl's idyllic vision of an "all-new-land." However, in other areas of the country the pastoral vision was wanting, as Jewish settlements ran into more and more conflicts with their Arab neighbors. Within time, the *Yishuv* was forced to develop an adequate response.

**Kook, Abraham Isaac**  
(1865–1935)

Born in Latvia, Kook received a well-rounded traditional education and before he immigrated to Eretz-Israel in 1904 he had already served as rabbi of several communities. Kook went to Jaffa and became its rabbi and found a common language with all elements of the community. His rather positive attitude to the Zionist pioneers brought him into conflict with the rabbinical establishment of the Old Yishuv. Spent several years abroad during the war and in 1921 with the formation of the chief rabbinate he was elected Palestine's first Ashkenazic chief rabbi. He continued to promote his particular merger between Zionism and orthodoxy, establishing a yeshivah in this spirit in 1924. A prolific writer, Kook's writings contain both mystical treatises as well as halakhic works.



Herzl Street in Tel-Aviv, 1917

Bar-Giora



For many fellahin, who had worked the land for generations, the stark reality of being suddenly expropriated was hard to swallow. The rich Arab landowners did not consult with them before selling the land to the Zionist pioneers. The grievance of the fellahin was taken out against the settlers. Theft and feuds over grazing land turned into a common occurrence and the *Yishuv* realized that the Turkish authorities had no interest in backing them up while the consulates, though extremely helpful, could not always come to the rescue. Left basically on their own, the settlers began to organize regular defence of their fields and settlements. The Bar-Giora organization was the first structural framework for defence, set up secretly in 1907. Bar-Giora adapted the motto "With blood and fire Judah fell, with blood and fire Judah will rise again" and put as its goal the defence of the settlements. It was formed at a particularly appropriate time. In the following year the Young Turk rebellion broke out and created much indecision in the country, causing heightened tensions between the settlers and their neighbors, Bedouins and Arabs. The need for Bar-Giora was indisputable; acts of violence and retaliation began. In 1909 another defence group came into being: Hashomer, which saw a direct link between defensive and agricultural work, entered the scene. Beginning with the defence of Galilean settlements (Sejara, Yavniel and Mesha), Hashomer set out to take over the defence of all the settlements; often encounter-



This then was a double-edged sword. Showing honor and self-pride, Hashomer often aroused Arab antagonism purposely and needlessly, exacerbating the already tense situation. Yet, as the years passed, Hashomer proved itself a valuable force in protecting the settlements, while dispensing 'labor groups' to villages under stress. Moreover, in certain cases, Hashomer protected recently purchased but unsettled land from Arab fellahin – guaranteeing the land by Ottoman law, and the feud was settled. Though small in number, less than a hundred, Hashomer managed to change the image of the New Yishuv in the eyes of society and became an important link in the Second Aliyah's drive towards Hebrew labor. One of the first pioneering groups to be formed on the soil of Eretz-Israel, Hashomer persisted for many years and laid the basis for future defence organs of the *Yishuv*.

The fact that the *Yishuv* had produced a self-sufficient defence unit was a necessity that grew out of the rising Arab nationalism. This topic cannot be dealt with in depth here, but it requires some attention from two perspectives – the attitude of the *Yishuv* and the integral Arab position. It would seem that during the Second Aliyah, elements within the *Yishuv* began to seriously evaluate the tensions with Arab workers and some sought a road of conciliation. In fact, in 1913 a secret society was formed in Jaffa to spread the Zionist ideology among Arab newspapers and to answer the diatribes against Zionism in the Arab press. But a basic fallacy existed in the *Yishuv*'s perspective: its working hypothesis, that the Arabs will eventually recognize the economic and material value of the Zionist enterprise, was doomed to failure. The immediate outcome of intensive 'Jewish labor' was exactly the opposite. Moreover, Arab grievances had already taken on political ramifications in different national and international forums, expressing the beginnings of Arab nationalism together with a clear anti-Zionist outlook. This grew considerably from 1908 through the Arab press, which urged the Arab population to pressure the Ottoman government to curb Jewish immigration and purchase of land. Even the Jewish religion was at times attacked venomously by the press, and this caused considerable apprehension within the *Yishuv*. Let it be said that already in these years the call to

Arab consciousness in Palestine was in no small measure a result of the Jewish renaissance. It found many supporters and succeeded in holding back certain projects (e.g. the building of the Technion) as well as impeding Jewish immigration. On the eve of World War I, the conflicts had become a clear concern of the Jewish national movement, and both Zionist and *Yishuv* leaders began to look for a possible rapprochement; they even succeeded in reaching a joint decision with Arab leaders to establish a committee to deal with mutual grievances, but the outbreak of war dashed these efforts. During the next period, the post-Balfour days, the clash and conflict between the two movements would come to dominate much of the *Yishuv*'s attention.

### *In the Shadow of World War I*

On the eve of World War I, the *Yishuv* had every reason to appraise its recent growth with a sense of pride. It had grown to a population of almost 90,000, dispersed over some 50 locations; although still heavily reliant on assistance from abroad, it had much to show in the way of autonomous creations: educational institutions bent on teaching professions and the arts were in full swing, settlements had reached a level of prosperity and stability that was encouraging, new leadership was rising within Palestine which took adventurous decisions (Tel-Aviv, Hashomer, etc.), and the Hebrew language had gradually taken over as the language of instruction and the *lingua franca* of the settlements. Moreover in 1913/1914, immigration reached a new peak with 3000 new arrivals, pointing to the ability of the *Yishuv* to negotiate with Ottoman officials above and below the table, to keep the life-line of the *Yishuv* open. This optimistic atmosphere came to a sudden halt in August 1914, and the successes and achievements of the recent decades were instantaneously jeopardized. The political alignments of the European powers also taxed the *Yishuv*, for it was hard to pray for the victory of the Ottoman-German entente nor could one whole-heartedly support the Russians – the oppressors of Jewry – who joined England and France.

However, the immediate impact came in more direct ways. With

**Morgenthau, Henry Sr.**  
(1856–1946)

Born in Germany, Morgenthau came with his parents to the United States in 1865, part of the wave of German-Jewish emigration to that country after the revolution of 1848. After an active life as lawyer and businessman, Morgenthau turned his career to the field of politics and diplomacy. While serving as chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Morgenthau was also ambassador to Turkey (1913–1916), and in this capacity extended much assistance to the Jews (*inter alia*) in the Ottoman countries, including Palestine. Later involved in various international organs where he represented the United States.

the outbreak of war, transportation to Palestine was severely impeded, bringing a halt to imports from abroad. The economy fell into a relapse with the government declaring a moratorium on payments of debts and a freeze on accounts. Stores were mobbed with shoppers, and prices rose to unprecedented heights. The *Yishuv*, and in particular the settlements, were on the brink of economic disaster within a short time. Many Ottoman Jews were called up for army service, while basic equipment in possession of the civilians (from horses to carriages) were inducted as well. Lacking a central authority, the *Yishuv* had no plan of response and each sector tried to salvage for itself whatever was possible. In a state of turmoil, with incompetent local administrators, this was no easy task. The acute situation of the Old Yishuv was a case in point. Shorn of leadership, both the Ashkenazim and Sephardim tried to raise funds within the community, but the fear of the future made the well off apprehensive; without emergency resources, many soon found themselves lacking basic necessities. Eventually, they received a portion of the funds supplied by Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador in Istanbul. However, the Old Yishuv was no longer in charge of the allocation. A special committee had been set up for this purpose, heavily weighted on the side of the New Yishuv, and this established an important precedent: representatives of the New Yishuv with representatives of the Sephardim became the force behind the purse and the Old Yishuv was dependent on them. During the war, a million dollars flowed through these channels via the Americans, and while it alleviated the *Yishuv*'s plight, it had another effect as well: it established the priority and the leadership of the New Yishuv over the Old Yishuv. Nonetheless, even these funds and minor collections from traditional avenues (like the *Pekidim* and *Amarkalim*) could not overcome the plight of the *Yishuv*.

Turkey was at war with those European powers which had protected citizens in Palestine – this could not continue. On 1 October, 1914, Turkey terminated the capitulations agreement, including those which existed with their allies, Germany and Austria. An important crutch and a basic security was removed. The country was now left open to unbridled attacks and riots, to extensive curtailment





Volunteers to the Ottoman army

of freedom, and to widespread impositions on Jewish life. Ranging from attempts to exorcise the Hebrew language to prohibitions on emigration, the restrictions on the *Yishuv* were particularly acute. In response, two prominent leaders of the New Yishuv, David Ben-Gurion and Izhak Ben-Zvi, advocated Ottomanizing the Jewish community and linking the *Yishuv*'s future with the Turkish government. These patriotic declarations did not impress the Ottomans and Jemal Pasha ordered the expulsion of all non-Ottoman Russian Jews from the country. Foreign intervention prevented it from becoming a full-fledged expulsion, but almost eight hundred Jews were forced to leave the country. When the Ottomans allowed free exit of the country, as many as 10,000 Jews escaped: that number was to grow considerably in the following years. As we have noted before, Jemal Pasha was a man of many moods and his behavior unpredictable. Although he tended to appreciate the *Yishuv*'s achievements and establish collaborative relations with Albert Entebbi of the Alliance, he could lash out at the *Yishuv* with brutality. An example of his unpredictability can be seen in his decision to deport from Palestine leaders of the New Yishuv who had ardently supported Ottomaniza-

#### **Ben-Gurion, David (1886–1973)**

Israel's first prime minister and defense minister, Ben-Gurion was a central figure in Eretz-Israel from the moment he arrived in 1906. A member of Po'alei Zion with a clear ideological commitment to settling in Eretz-Israel and turning Hebrew into the people's first tongue, Ben-Gurion was also a fervent advocate of Labor Zionism. After his abortive honeymoon with the Ottoman Empire, Ben-Gurion worked towards creating a new Jewish socialist community in Palestine. To this end he gave all his energies during the next decades. He was prime minister from 1948-1953 and from 1955-1963. Rightly considered as one of the founding fathers of Israel.

**Entebbi, Albert (1869–1918)**

Born in Damascus and educated in Alliance institutions in Paris, Entebbi became one of the leading Sephardic figures in turn-of-the-century Eretz-Israel. He directed the Alliance's educational institutions in Eretz-Israel from 1898. An effective representative of the *Yishuv* before the Ottoman authorities, he was nevertheless deported from Palestine in 1916 and died of typhoid fever in Constantinople.

**Aronsohn, Aron (1876–1919)**

A pioneer in the study of science in Palestine, Aronsohn immigrated to Zichron Yaakov from Romania at a young age. He administered the Metulla colony in its early stages (1890-1898) but left after a split with the Baron's policies. Initiated an experimental agricultural station in Athlit and published widely on agricultural development in the country. Joined the Nili intelligence network in 1916 in favor of the British through his efforts in Egypt. Died in a plane crash in 1919.

**Feinberg, Avshalom (1889–1917)**

Born in Gederah and educated (1904-1907) in Paris, Feinberg was one of the co-founders and central figures in the anti-Turkish intelligence ring (Nili). He was killed in an attempt to cross over the Turkish border of Palestine to Egypt in 1917; his remains were discovered in 1967. Feinberg's personal diary covering the 1911-1915 years provides interesting insights and information into the period of World War I.

**THE NEW YISHUV (1882–1917)**

tion of the community, David Ben-Gurion and Izhak Ben-Zvi. A year later, Arthur Ruppin was expelled to Istanbul after a concerted effort on the part of Jemal to withhold German pressure to revoke his decision. In the face of Jemal's lopsided policies, the *Yishuv* had hardly any political clout. Yet, it could rely on the American consul in Jerusalem, Otis Glazebrook, who at the age of seventy proved a loyal friend and ally. He, together with Morgenthau, engineered several boat lifts (e.g. the *Vulcan* with 1,100 tons of food produce) to the *Yishuv* and were often willing to negotiate with the Turkish officials on behalf of the *Yishuv*. Since America remained neutral in World War I until 1917, it still possessed some influence with the Sultan.

As the *Yishuv* was stripped of real influence over the authorities and aware of the waning Ottoman power, certain elements began to search for a way to help overthrow the Ottomans. After the abortive Turkish attempt to reconquer the Suez Canal (1915), Aron Aronsohn, a noted scientist in Eretz-Israel, decided to organize an espionage ring to serve the British army. He, together with his brother and Avshalom Feinberg of Rishon le-Zion, began to coordinate their program in 1916. Aware of the disaster that would befall the *Yishuv* if his plans were leaked to the Turks, Aronsohn worked methodically and scrutinized each activist. Their idea was to assist a British landing in the Palestine ports, to bring about a rapid Turkish surrender and to guarantee British sympathy for the *Yishuv* in any post-war settlement. It took more than a year of unsuccessful negotiations to establish contact and trust with the British, but from December 1916 to the year after, Aronsohn was stationed in Egypt where he received and passed on information and collected in Palestine. Under the pretentious name of Nili (abbreviation of The Eternity of Israel will not Fail), the spy ring remained limited to several dozen idealistic and devoted youths. Looked upon with askance by members of the Hashomer and the labor movement who feared the consequences of their action, members of Nili tended to brag and rave about their accomplishments. In autumn 1917 they were uncovered by the Turkish authorities, who subsequently cruelly manhandled members of Nili, their families, and the settlers of



◀ The End of the Ottoman Rule.  
Withdrawal of the Turkish forces

Zichron Ya'akov, among whom they were found. Livid with anger, Jemal was prepared to put an end to the *Yishuv*, but the advance of the British forces and German pressure, disposed of his intentions. The Nili affair came to an end. However, it stirred the *Yishuv* for years to come as Nili activists tried to clear themselves of guilt and blame the Hashomer. To this day historians and politicians debate the actual contribution of Nili to the English war effort and to the *Yishuv's* welfare, though none deny the boldness of the action.

Mayor of Jerusalem surrenders  
to British representative, 1917 ▶

From March 1917, the British began their attack on southern Palestine. The *Yishuv* had to suffer another nine months of Turkish rule and periodic evacuations from heavily populated areas. Over 9000 Jews from Tel-Aviv and Jaffa were forced to leave their homes within several weeks and found temporary residence in the Galilee,



Sarah Aronsohn, a member of Nili. Arrested and tortured by Turkish authorities. Committed suicide as a result, 1917

Petach Tikva and Kefar-Saba. Their property was pillaged and the exerted efforts of several years were seriously impaired. Other communities were also in line for expulsion, but the intervention of the foreign powers prevented Jemal Pasha from accomplishing his original plan. Nonetheless, the *Yishuv* remained in dire straits and constantly feared another act of repression by Jemal. In conquering Jerusalem in December 1917, the British brought a sigh of relief to the depleted Jewish community. Less than sixty thousand Jews were left to greet the British and bid a definite farewell to the four hundred year rule of the Ottoman Empire. Not certain of the future, but definitely pleased to be rid of the past, the *Yishuv* now had to begin rebuilding and to continue the great leap forward of the pre-war years. At least it now had the Balfour Declaration in its possession, with which it hoped to begin a new period in its history.

## Chapter V:

### On the Road to Statehood (1917-1948)

#### *Thirty Years of Struggle and Turmoil – An Overview*

No matter how one conceives of these thirty years, and no matter the perspective, the period between 1917-1948 must be considered a turning point in the life of the Jewish people. Wherever one turns one finds another major event which truly changed the nature and character of the Jewish people. A mere glance at the momentous impact on the Jewish community of the fall of the Czarist regime in Russia in 1917 or at the horrifying destruction of almost six million Jews during World War II proves an insight into this age of turmoil. Each of these events, together with the tremendous growth of the Jewish community in the United States, left an indelible impact on the life of Jewry beyond those specific territories, and on the *Yishuv* in particular. Russia, the largest European Jewish community began a new era, in which open emigration was disallowed and freedom of communication with the outside world severely curtailed. Russia had been one of the sources of the Jewish nationalist renaissance but now its link to that movement was disconnected. With the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the outright anti-Semitic racist legislation, Palestine became a Promised Land for Jews who looked for an escape. Not necessarily nationalistic or of Zionist orientation, the *aliyah* from Germany would present new and difficult challenges to the *Yishuv*. At the same time, another major reservoir of Jewish life,

Poland, was undergoing a serious economic crisis as well as the revival of anti-Semitism. To Poland, where the Zionist movement flourished, the *Yishuv* turned for its idealistic *aliyah* and pioneering elements: but Polish Jewry would be the first community outside of the German Reich to feel the axe of Nazism, and its wondrously diverse community fell prey in the millions to Nazi barbarism. Other communities across Europe had a similar fate. In this situation, the efforts of American Jewry on behalf of the *Yishuv* and the Zionist movement became all the more necessary and critical. Several momentous decisions vis-à-vis the future of the *Yishuv* emanated from the political negotiations that were carried on under its aegis. Nonetheless, within Palestine and through the persistent activity of the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community rebounded from the catastrophic war years and became a dynamic force in society, pushing forward the modernizing and European tendencies, it initiated in the 1880's. Although the impact of the European scene was constantly felt in the *Yishuv*, it must, in this perspective, recede into the background in order for us to follow the growth of the "Jewish National Home" into a Jewish State. So too will many political aspects of the Zionist movement, on the international and communal scene, become of secondary importance. Yet, Britain's road from accepting the Mandate to seceding it, is one that calls our attention to put the period into a political focus.

### *The British Mandate – The Political Framework*

The transfer of Palestine into the hands of a western democratic power, one of the forerunners of modern technological development, enabled the country to rebound from the ravages of World War I and begin to enter the modern period. The Ottoman pattern of rule, inefficiency and corruption, were replaced by a well oiled bureaucratic system which was to establish basic administrative and constitutional methods of government, and determine the political and administrative boundaries of the country. Within these thirty years of British rule, though the actual Mandate began only in 1922, the population more than doubled: from 700,000 in 1922 to 1,800,000 in 1945, among which the Jewish population multiplied ten times over

and the Arab population doubled itself. The Jewish population had risen from 10% of the population to 30% in 1947. This demographic development is only one indication of the impressive growth in Palestine during the short-lived British period.

One of the first issues the British had to solve was the geographic framework of Palestine. It took several years to determine the political boundaries of Palestine, due to the previous historic divisions and the various interests of the European powers, Zionists and Arab rulers. At the Versailles Peace Conference, convened in 1919 to formalize the end of World War I and negotiate peace treaties, the boundaries of Palestine were also discussed. Only in 1921 did the authorities begin to mark the agreed boundaries! The historic 'Palestine' now became a geographic and political entity, whose northern border was designated at Metulla and Rosh ha-Nikra; the entire Kinneret was included in the new Palestine; the eastern border, the border between western and eastern Palestine was finally agreed upon in 1927 and extended through the center of the Jordan Valley;



Weizmann-Feisal Meeting

**Samuel, Herbert Louis**  
(1870–1963)

Born in Liverpool and educated in the finest of English tradition, Samuel came from an orthodox background, but maintained only a minimal contact with Jewish religious life. He first entered Parliament as a liberal in 1902 and by 1916 had become home secretary in Prime Minister Asquith's government, though remained only a short while in the position. Prior to the Balfour Declaration, Samuel was advocating a British protectorate over Palestine and spoke of a "Jewish center" there. He later became Britain's first High-Commissioner to Palestine (1920–1925). On returning to England, Samuel maintained an interest in the *Yishuv's* growth and opposed the increasing anti-Zionist position of British rulers. He was knighted in 1920 and made a viscount in 1937.

**Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer**  
(1875–1965)

Churchill's political career often brought him into contact with the Jewish people and the *Yishuv*. Early on, as under-secretary for the colonies, he supported Israel Zangwill's territorialist solution for the Jewish people (1906) and as home secretary (1911), he was forced to deal with anti-Jewish riots that accompanied a coal strike in South Wales. Palestinian issues called for his attention at many different junctures: e.g., while prime

the southern border left the southern Negev in Egyptian territory. These rough boundaries, fixed by stones, established the territorial framework of Palestine and formed the basis for the expansion of Jewish settlements and their inclusion in the Jewish National Home.

The Balfour Declaration, a strange combination of realpolitik and Protestant millenarian thought, was announced without fear of reprisal from Palestinian Arabs or neighboring Arab countries. Balfour felt the call of history. To bring the Jews back to Palestine was an overriding concern, far more important than the prejudiced views of Arabs living in the country. But declarations and deep convictions were one thing, policy was another. From the moment it was publicized, the Balfour Declaration provoked extensive controversy and each interest group tried to give substance to its ambiguities from their vantage point. For a fleeting moment, at the time of the famous Weizmann-Feisal agreement of 1919, it even appeared that Arab-Zionist interests could be coordinated: Feisal's promises to support Jewish settlement and immigration were in part related to his goal to establish a federation of Arab states. Weizmann in turn spoke of mutual co-operation in idyllic terms, and the well-known photograph of their 1919 meeting where he wore a *kaffiyah* (Arab head-dress) exudes this atmosphere. Within a year all this had come to naught. Feisal found himself isolated within the Arab world and in March 1920 already came out against Zionism. The rapid course of events quickly erased the impression of their earlier meeting, although it continued for decades to be held up as a model of possible co-existence. These negotiations went on while the Zionists were trying to secure the British Mandate over Palestine, which was in fact ratified by the San Remo Conference in 1920. In this post-war agreement, the international community and Britain showed their commitment to a Jewish National Home. Herbert Samuel, a committed Jew, was appointed England's first High-Commissioner to Palestine, with personal hopes of both building the Jewish National Home and improving the status of the local residents. His appointment coincided with Arab riots against Jewish areas in Jerusalem (April 1920), an omen for the future. Samuel immediately saw himself in a wedge and tried to placate both sides in order to further his policy.





Entry of Churchill and Samuel to  
Jerusalem, 1921

This first of many clashes between the awakening Arab nationalism and the *Yishuv* was to become a leitmotif of the Mandate period; the corollary came in the form of British response – reappraisal of the true meaning of the Balfour Declaration. Often it clashed with Zionist desires. So it was in 1921-22. The Churchill Memorandum of 1922, an attempt to reevaluate British policy after the riots, affirmed the orientation of the Balfour Declaration, but not unequivocally. First and foremost, from a Zionist view, the notion that immigration was to be free but guided by the economic capabilities of the country was a hard pill to swallow. As for the proposal to set up a legislative assembly with representation of Arabs and Jews according to their proportion of the population, their perspective was more favorable, and far more so than the Arabs' who opposed it outrightly throughout the twenties. The White Paper of 1922, the basic charter of the Mandate, was then a mixed political document which confirmed British policy to set up a Jewish National Home in Palestine, though

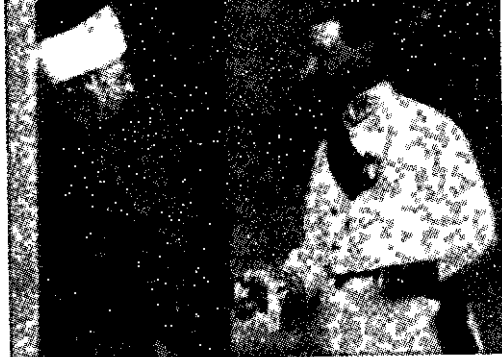
minister of Britain during World War II, he maintained the White Paper of 1939 and continued to uphold Britain's dual commitment to Jews and Arabs as he had postulated in 1922. In the post-war period, while he served as the leader of the opposition, he strongly condemned Bevin's Palestine policy and proposed that the Mandate be abandoned.



**Jabotinsky, Zeev (Wladimir)**  
(1880–1940)

The founder of the Revisionist movement, Jabotinsky was reared in the hotbed of Russian-Jewish politics in the city of Odessa. A translator and writer, as well as a political activist, Jabotinsky merged together these diverse interests from the first decade of the century. World War I found him actively supporting the British and he traveled to England to struggle for the establishment of separate Jewish divisions. After lending his support for the White Paper of 1922, Jabotinsky began to move in new directions: in 1925 he established the revisionist movement and remained its guiding leader until his death. Jabotinsky spent only limited periods in Eretz-Israel and died in New York. A gifted speaker and a talented journalist, Jabotinsky was a controversial Zionist figure, worshipped by his followers and rejected by his political opponents.

Samuel meets the Mufti of Jerusalem, Kamil el-Husseini, 1921



it rejected the Weizmannian line of turning Palestine into a Jewish National Home.

From the White Paper of 1922 to the White Paper of 1929, British policy wavered between the demands and counter-demands of two rivalling, national movements which contested for sole sovereignty over Palestine. Clearly, the British assumed as the years passed a more pro-Arab than pro-Jewish position, while they developed a colonial rule in search of an ultimate solution. No joint organ of home rule was set up by the Jews and Arabs necessitating the evolution of two distinctly disparate communities. The British High-Commissioners were entrusted with the task of organizing the basic needs of these communities while avoiding outbreaks of hostility. They were successful for the years of 1923–1928. This was not only British doing but a result of internal developments among the Zionists and Arabs. Nevertheless, during the administration of H. Plumer as High-Commissioner (1926–1928), the British expended much effort to guarantee the security of the civilian population. Resting on their military laurels and political savvy, the British distanced and/or tamed political inciters (the Mufti of Jerusalem on the one side, Ze'ev Jabotinsky on the other) while Plumer even cut down his military force. The riots of 1929 dispelled the peaceful days and again initiated a major government reassessment.

The immediate catalyst to the Arab riots in August 1929 was the controversy surrounding Jewish rights in the vicinity of the Wailing Wall. A new element in the *Yishuv*, the Revisionists, headed by their exiled leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, took issue with Weizmann's patient attitude toward the British and demanded a clear-cut path to Jewish sovereignty. This consisted of a more direct and aggressive policy – a



Jewish home in Hebron, after the riots of 1929

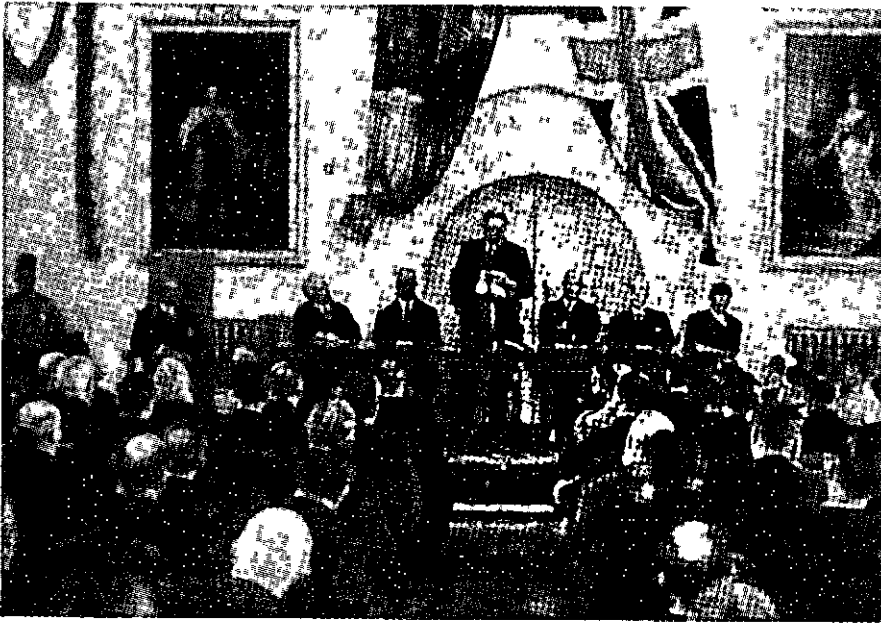
“steel wall” of Zionist-British cooperation was needed to convince the Arabs of the supremacy of the Zionist claim to Palestine. The revisionist youth movement, Betar, carried out this trend by trying to upset the *status quo* in the Wailing Wall area, existent since Ottoman times. The proximity of the Al-Aksa mosque and the Wall complicated the picture, since Arab religious leaders feared a possible Zionist attempt to take over the Temple Mount. During 1927-29 the extremists on both sides demanded British intervention to curb the “imperialistic” tendencies of their counterparts. The British remained rather apathetic even after the stabbing of a Jewish child in 1929 seriously upset the Jewish community. Demonstrations and counter-demonstrations followed. Then came Arab riots against Jewish areas in Jerusalem, followed by an Arab massacre of Jews in Hebron and surrounding areas. All told, 120 Jews were killed and more than that number were seriously injured. Many fled for safety. Hebron’s Jewish community ceased to exist. The massacre had shown the seething conflict in all its brutality. Faced with this situation, the new High-Commissioner, John Chancellor, after condemning the killings, returned to a ‘balanced’ view: the Mandate required adjustment – i.e. an end to Jewish immigration and clear supervision of land purchase.

The political aftermath of the 1929 riots took the form of intensive deliberations on Britain’s future course in Palestine. First came the Shaw commission to investigate the source of the riots, and then the J. Hope-Simpson Commission. Both leaned in the direction of Chancellor’s perspective. Basing their findings on aerial photographs



1936 – Disturbances in Jaffa.  
Arab rioters killed nine Jews and  
wounded many others

of Palestine, the latter commission reached the dubious conclusion that fertile land was almost completely utilized and immigration had to be limited to 100,000 persons – half of whom could be Jews. Furthermore, it proposed prohibiting any illegal Jewish immigration and the sale of land which would expropriate the fellahin. The proposals were formulated as operative British policy but the Zionist opposition, in particular Weizmann's demonstrative resignation from the recently formed Jewish Agency, had an impact on the British political scene. Though the new "White Paper" was published, Weizmann received several months later a letter from Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald explaining British policy in such a fashion that he, in effect, reneged on his government's earlier intention. Here was a perfect example of the implications of a western democratic rule over Palestine. Weizmann had recourse and did not have to resort to conniving to influence the government, as in the days of the Otto-



Peel Commission

man Empire. MacDonald's Conservative opposition consisted in 1930-1932 of the architects of the Balfour Declaration (Churchill, Lloyd George, Cecil, etc.) and they were certainly attuned to Weizmann's position. Nonetheless, Zionist pressure did not always succeed in revamping British policy. This time it succeeded and Weizmann reassumed his position in the Jewish Agency.

John Chancellor's successor as High-Commissioner was another military figure, Sir Arthur Wauchope, who reached Palestine in October 1931. Wauchope was certainly inclined to the Zionist movement and sensitive to the growing distress of European Jewry: by 1935, the *Yishuv* had grown considerably and reached 350,000, through an immigration of 170,000 Jews between 1932-1935. Once again, the prosperity and growth of the *Yishuv* had an immediate response from the Arab community. At the time that London was again pressing for a Legislative Assembly of Jews and Arabs, Palestine responded with violence which far exceeded the riots of 1920, 1921, and 1929. This time, the riots were a spontaneous popular

**Husseini, Hājī (Muhammed)**  
**Amin Al- (1893–1974)**

Born in Jerusalem to the most venerable of Arab families in Eretz-Israel, Husseini went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1913 and obtained the epithet Hājī. Appointed by Herbert Samuel mufti (expounder of Islamic law) of Jerusalem in 1921. In this capacity and as chairman of the Supreme Muslim Council, he utilized his power to become the major Arab nationalist of Palestine, viciously attacking the Zionist endeavour. It was Husseini who was in no small measure responsible for inciting and organizing the anti-Jewish riots in 1929 and 1936. After being dismissed from the Supreme Council, Husseini escaped to Iraq, and during World War II collaborated openly with Nazi Germany.

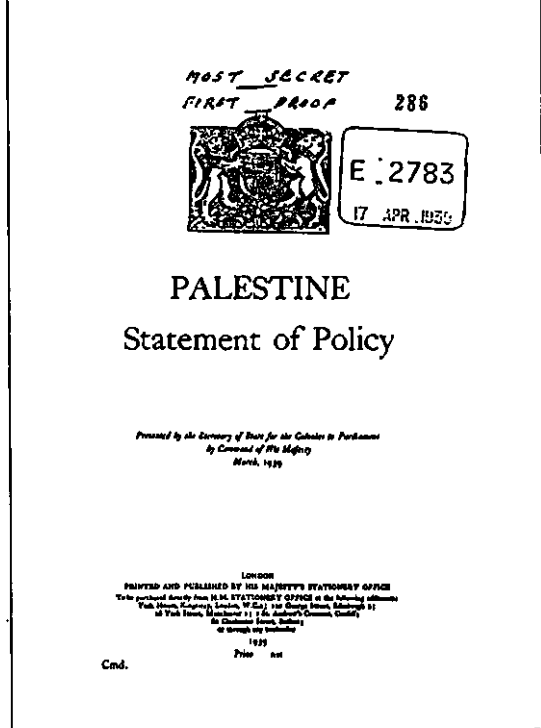
outbreak which emanated from the inability to put an end to the Zionist development: the riots spread and became a weapon in the hands of Arab leaders to wield their power. Riots were followed by organized commercial and labor strikes, spearheaded by the Mufti of Jerusalem. The turmoil began on 19 April 1936 with raids against the Jews in Jaffa and did not subside until 1939. The nationalist and extremist elements within the Arab population joined hands to establish a supreme Arab committee (1936) which crowned its formation by declaring a general strike – their political goals were at the root of the strike: a cessation of Jewish immigration, an end to transfer of land and the creation of a “national” government in Palestine. The British intervention was mild and unaggressive: the Peel commission was formed to study the grievances and Jewish policemen were trained (by the British) to guard their settlements. The strike lasted for six months but the tense atmosphere persisted with periodic outbursts of rebellion during 1937.

Unlike its predecessors, the Peel Commission went about its inquiry with utmost seriousness and depth. For some six months, from November 1936 to April 1937, the Commission inquired into the Arab-Jewish conflict and studied countless proposals and documents presented by Arab and Zionist figures. The Peel Commission was convinced of the far-reaching nature of the conflict and its damaging implications for the British government. Its proposal to partition Palestine and establish two separate national entities was meant to push Britain to end the Mandate as quickly as possible and avoid choosing one national movement over the other. However, the Commission preferred to leave the time-table up to the government and suggested a temporary solution: limitation of Jewish immigration to 12,000 per annum and restriction on Jewish land purchase to certain areas. Once again, the two holy principles of the Zionist movement were being amended to appease the Arab nationalist movement. What is more, the Partition Plan seriously limited the boundaries of Palestine; the Jewish community was to receive about 20% of the country, including the areas north of Gedera, the coastal region, the valleys and the Galilee. Indeed, this included the most fertile parts of the country, but Jerusalem and the Negev were to

become parts of the British enclave and Arab state respectively. The plan, together with the Commission's findings and the government's declaration of agreement, was publicized in July 1937 as Britain changed ruling parties. Expecting some appeasing Arab statements, the British were soon dismayed. Though a few intrepid statements were made, the tide flowed heavily against it. Pan-Arabism was surging forward and the few voices which murmured a cautious approval were thus quickly silenced. Galilean Arabs gave vent to their opposition by renewing the riots in September 1937. The Mufti was behind much of this stirring, even as he escaped to Damascus. The antagonistic feelings of local Arabs spread to many Muslim villages and British and Jewish property were relentlessly sacked. The rioters succeeded in occupying extensive areas of Palestine and the British were forced to send in additional military forces. This time the British retaliated with venom, hanging as many as a hundred rioters and decisively putting down the pockets of dissent. By the summer of 1939, the riots had been terminated and the Arab population licked its wounds with much inner dissent and feuding. They had not gained much from their rebellious activity, but the international political scene had again placed the Mandate in an ambivalent status and forced Britain to see the revolt within the geo-political developments.

In 1938 the British spoke of another national commission to implement the Peel Commission proposals, though in fact this intimated that Chamberlain's cabinet was not enthusiastic about partition. The riots in Palestine postponed the arrival of John Woodhead's Commission until April of 1938. Notwithstanding the atmosphere of *avant guerre* ('before war') in Europe, Woodhead persisted to enquire into the practical nature of partition and by October 1938 his Commission reached a negative conclusion. Partition was an impossibility due to the rivalry within Palestine; for the British government, whose orientation at the time was one of conciliation, or even as some see it, appeasement, the "infeasibility" of Partition played right into their hands. Peel's proposals were put into the deep freeze and the field was again open for new negotiations and proposals. One of the more dramatic attempts to appease the Arab

Frontispiece of the British White Paper



world was the convention of Arab and Zionist leaders to London in February-March 1939. With Europe on the brink of war, Britain wanted to secure tranquility in the Middle East: here they met, representatives of both Arab and Zionist interests, while Hitler was making England look like a paper power. Czechoslovakia was run over in March 1939, turning the Munich agreement of the previous year into a farce. From the London talks it was clear that mediatory measures were not to be easily achieved and judging by the global scene, appeasement of the Arabs seemed a wiser and less painful process. Jewish refugees from Austria and Czechoslovakia, and the Balfour Declaration, became a burden to England at this stage, and fearing for the Empire's stability she preferred to gain influence with the various Arab governments and the immense Muslim world. Notwithstanding Weizmann's concerted efforts to hold England to her commitment, the British government published a new "White Paper" in May 1939. Although it was considered by the League of Nations to be incommensurate with the Mandate, the "White Paper" was approved by Parliament and became the Mandate's policy



during the next five years. These were traumatic years for the *Yishuv* and European Jewry.

Three basic premises lay at the foundation of the new "White Paper." First, a national parliament was to be formed representing the local population according to their present numerical strength in the country. Within ten years, Palestine was to become independent and the implication was clear: the Arab residents would be the majority. Secondly, Jewish immigration must come to an end, save a final immigration of 75,000 Jews over the next five years and this only if the economic situation allowed it. Following the five years, Arab consent would be a precondition to further Jewish immigration. Thirdly, Jews could henceforth purchase land in only 5% of Palestine. These principles constituted a total reversal of British policy and had the potential of turning the Zionist dream into a nightmare. The British were now strong-willed and though they did not receive the expected plaudits from the Arab world, they were determined to implement their new direction. The course of events in the next ten years trampled the "White Paper" and British designs, but only after the Holocaust of European Jewry.

The decade that separated the "White Paper" from the armistice agreements after the War of Independence showed a reversal of the *Yishuv's* orientation to the British. After greeting the British occupation with unbounded joy, the *Yishuv* gradually saw itself at odds with the Mandate policy and towards the end of the decade was actively engaged in opposing British rule. The methods and rationale of their struggle will be treated in the discussion of the *Yishuv*, but here we must see how England dealt with the Zionist-*Yishuv* pressure to revise the "White Paper." Churchill, Britain's war time prime-minister and a leader of the free-world, was more sympathetic to the Zionist interests than his predecessors. Although historians have dealt time and again with Churchill's Jewish position and found many contradictory and conflicting attitudes, it would seem that during the war he made no great attempt to make the "White Paper" an absolutely binding document. Moreover, by 1943, when the tide of the war was clearly in favor of the allies, Churchill began to voice his disapproval of the "White Paper" and his desire for its revision.

**Truman, Harry S. (1884–1972)**

The thirty-second president of the United States, Truman was serving as vice-president in 1945 when Franklin Roosevelt passed away. The timing placed Truman at the center of post-war events. He served out the rest of Roosevelt's administration and was elected in 1948 for his own four year term. Truman recognized the State of Israel in May 1948 and showed a positive attitude to the country in its embryonic stages.

**Attlee, Clement Richard Earl (1883–1967)**

As the British Labor Party leader, Attlee opposed in 1939 the British White Paper and later on in December 1944 was a strong supporter of Labor's official stand in favor of a Jewish majority in Palestine. Nonetheless, when he became prime minister, his government followed the lines of Bevin's pro-Arab policy. After Israel was established, the Attlee Labor government granted recognition (1949).

No longer fearing Arab reprisals, Churchill set up a special cabinet committee to 'restructure' the Middle-East: in the proposals it presented in January 1944, the committee put forth a plan for the establishment of four independent states, one of which was to be a Jewish State. This dramatic reversal in policy was held in great secrecy, and neither the Americans nor the Zionists knew of it. Like many of its predecessors, this plan of action remained on the shelves, but it indicates a reassertment of British desire to bring the Palestine question to a solution, in tune with the Balfour Declaration. Yet, since it did not become the declared policy, *Yishuv* and Zionist circles continued in their efforts, politically and militarily to commit England and the Free World to redress the Hitlerian years by fully supporting a Jewish State.

The intricate and many-sided international deliberations in Palestine in the post-war period cannot be treated here in any depth but a few general comments are necessary to understand the political developments which resulted in the State of Israel. Firstly, although Palestine remained under British rule, the United States had become a major factor in the post-war scene. The new American president Harry S. Truman introduced a different approach to the Middle East by deciding to actively intervene in its affairs and end the tradition of non-intervention. This had a decisive influence on the eventual outcome. The first sign of this came in June 1945. Truman dispatched Earl Harrison to Europe to the displaced person camps in Germany where the remnants of European Jewry were living in squalid conditions. After receiving Harrison's report, Truman demanded of the recently elected Labor prime-minister, Clement Attlee, to allow 100,000 Jews enter Palestine freely. The horrors of the war and the uncivilized conditions in the D.P. camps moved Truman to seek a humane solution for the displaced persons. This proposal was of course bandied about and necessitated a special Anglo-American Committee which began its deliberations in spring 1946. The committee adopted Truman's proposal, which was then transferred to the respective governments for ratification. The British government opposed the immigration, conditioning it to a series of compromises by activists in the *Yishuv* and prior consultations on



Weizmann appearing before Anglo-American Commission, 8 March 1946

other proposals of the committee. American-British relations became entangled over this issue, which was not favorably solved until 1948.

In the meantime, the British foreign office under Ernest Bevin continued to entertain plans which would be acceptable to the Arabs and not impair Britain's international position. Endlessly trying to eke out Arab approval for his proposals, Bevin presented in 1947 a last-ditch effort that could have solidified Arab rule over Palestine within a decade. The obstinate and unyielding Arab position contributed to the general feeling of malaise. Bevin, though convinced that only the United Nations could now solve the problem, continued to look for signs of agreement. They failed to come. Britain was left with one last card: in April 1947, it called for a special meeting of the international body to form a committee to offer a political solution. On the last day of that special session on 14 May 1947, the Russian delegation headed by Andrei Gromyko (Russia's perennial delegate to the United Nations and former foreign minister) delivered an inspired speech in favor of an independent Palestine which would grant the two peoples their historic rights. The turnabout in Russian

#### **Bevin, Ernest (1881–1951)**

A central figure in British foreign politics in the forties, Bevin succeeded in influencing the British government to appease the Arab cause in Palestine. He never believed that a Jewish State could solve the problem of Jewish refugees in Europe, and was convinced of the growing power of the Arab countries in the Middle East. Various plans proposed by Bevin in the post-war period were designed to postpone declaration of a Jewish State. Only after Israel was established, did he finally remove his opposition.



Shertok and Gromyko at the  
United Nations, 1947

policy was dramatic. Wanting to curtail British influence in the Middle East, the Russians were willing to utilize the Zionist cause to establish their own influence in Palestine. The impact of this position was profound. It guaranteed a majority of the general assembly in favor of partition, made partition a reasonable and practical solution in the eyes of the UN's special committee (UNSCOP), and enabled American-Russian co-operation on partition. The next step, the special mission of UNSCOP to Palestine in the summer of 1947, was a formative one for the proposal. This time the findings went against the grain of the former British inquiries – partition was proposed and the British were to leave the country. These proposals were put to the test of another dramatic general assembly of the UN in November 1947. Again the Russian position supporting partition played a crucial role. The vote on 29 November was irrevocable and historic – 33 countries voted for “partition with economic unity” and 13 opposed. 13 countries abstained. The British government, which had

in the forties begun to renege on its desire to leave Palestine, prepared its schedule for leaving Palestine. May 15 1948 was the date set for the termination of the British Mandate. Indeed, on that day, the State of Israel was officially declared.

Who or what was responsible for bringing the British government to leave Palestine? At face value, we have the decision of the United Nations from 29 November 1947 – i.e. the international community's political body voted for partition and the British evacuation from Palestine. But we have seen that this was not the course the British opted for. It turned to the United Nations for want of an alternative. Thus, the vote cannot be seen as the factor leading to evacuation, but rather the end result of various trends, which converged in 1947. What were these trends and how did they figure in the ultimate process? British policy from the time of Herbert Samuel to Ernest Bevin had been guided by the unswerving desire to placate the Arab population of Palestine; throughout this period, resolutions of the leading Arab spokesmen went against any compromise on the basic issues of conflict, leaving the British little leeway to reach a mutually acceptable solution. This intransigent position was in the end to the Zionist advantage. The Zionist and *Yishuv* positions were diverse and went through different periods – these will be traced in part below – but seemed to have moved to a general consensus after World War II. Though differing on tactics, the *Yishuv* collectively upheld the banner of Jewish sovereignty and made the British recognize that this was not a fleeting position. Was the Jewish sabotage of British property and personnel a decisive factor in bringing the English government to surrender? Certainly it drove home the point that an inadequate policy had to be replaced by a more decisive one, but it alone could not have brought the British to partition. The changing political climate of post-World War II and the impact of the Holocaust and the D.P. camps were necessary to create an atmosphere conducive to the establishment of a Jewish State. American involvement in this process seemed to be of much significance, even though Truman was not very attentive to the Zionist lobby in Washington. His 100,000 proposal encumbered British-American relations but placed the problem of these refugees

on the agenda of the international community. D.P. camps were not a solution. Even Gromyko, whether cynically or not, alluded to the persecution of the Jews in his May 14 speech and linked it to his partition proposal. No doubt this 'humanitarian' spirit was diluted by political interests and 'areas of influence,' but it became part of the political machinations of the post-war period. Saddled with an American-Russian consensus, an unsettled refugee problem, an uncompromising Arab leadership and a *Yishuv* up-in-arms, the British government bowed to the pressures and left its fortune and honor in the hands of the United Nations. From that point on there was no turning back.

*Palestine Under the British: A Period of Progress*

After three years of a military administration, Palestine was placed in 1920 under civilian British rule. Within a very short time, Palestine began to profit from the transfer of power. Under a High-Commissioner, who was also *de facto* the head of the British armed forces in Palestine, the administration of the Mandate government established a whole network of service departments to deal with all aspects of civilian life. Gone were the days when the rights and duties of the civilian population were left to the whims and mercies of unqualified officials. The British came to rule by Western methods and without the army, which was severely depleted during the 1920's to a force of some 6500. Nonetheless, the British actively cut down the raids of Bedouin tribes from the south and the east, making Palestine a much safer place to live. The British legal system began to take root in the courts alongside various religious courts, and here too a great step forward was made with regard to judicial procedures. The British did away with the capitulations agreement and residents of Palestine took on Palestinian citizenship, based on place of birth and family ties – i.e. citizenship was granted to the offspring of a citizen. Citizenship was granted to immigrants after two years of legal residence in the country. Moreover, the Mandatory government allowed religious communities to develop as political, autonomous units. Only the Communist Party in its variegated forms was outlawed. Yet in days of crisis the Mandate utilized "ordinances for

times of emergency” to outlaw the political activity of various extremist groups of Arabs and Jews. Jerusalem became the center of British rule in Palestine, in effect making it the capital of Palestine.

British policy on the internal development in Palestine was basically in the hands of the Minister of the Colonies and the residing High-Commissioner. Until 1936, the British cabinet rarely intervened in these policy issues, but from the riots of 1936, Palestine became part of the cabinet’s regular discussions on British strategy. Two major issues, immigration and land-purchase, were constantly on the agenda as they were the crux of the conflict between the Zionists and the Arab population. In general, it would seem that until 1936 immigration decisions were taken in basic accordance with the Zionist Organization; from then on they became a perennial point of contention between the British and the Zionists. With the coming of civilian British rule in 1920, the former *status quo* was altered, and *aliyah* officially permitted. Both Samuel and the Zionists were concerned that the immigration be monitored and well prepared. Almost no restrictions were placed on Jews who wanted to immigrate, as long as they were responsible individuals. During the first decade of British rule, various changes were made in the status of the immigrants and in the authority of the Zionist movement to determine who was qualified to immigrate, yet the basic, liberal orientation remained in force. After the riots of 1929, changes in the categories (according to profession, means, religious functionaries, etc.) were again instituted; however the notion of “economic acculturation” was very liberally interpreted and between 1931-1937, over 175,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine. In the “White Paper” of 1929, as we have seen, a new criterion operated – a global figure of 75,000 Jews for five years replaced annual quotas and categories. In fact, only 50,000 reached Palestine during the war years, 1940-1944. Moreover, during these years and especially in the post-war period, the British actively pursued illegal immigrants and as the refugees began to throng to Palestine in search of a homeland, thousands were deported. 62,000 Jews were turned back from August 1946 to the end of the Mandate period.

The life-line to the *Yishuv*’s growth was the expansion of land

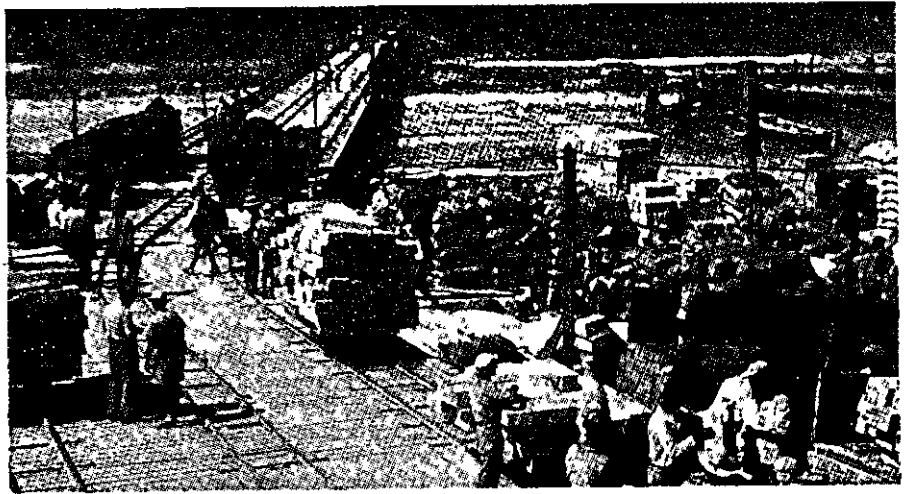
rights or in Zionist terminology "the redemption of the land." The Zionists had hoped that the British would translate the Balfour Declaration into action and grant them state-domain for agricultural development and expropriate from large land-owners excess land. However, this was not the case. The British left the Zionists to negotiate land-purchases from Arab land-owners and thereby a large portion of the Zionist budget was devoted to this seminal issue. But the British passed a law which was designed to protect the Arab fellahin from expropriation. A series of laws were also passed to limit the areas in which land could be transferred and, in order to develop Arab villages, the British changed the system of taxation. These considerations became more pronounced with the publication of the "White Paper" and the British attempt to court the Arab population. Yet, Keren Kayemet Le-Israel (Jewish National Fund), the Zionist body which dealt with land-purchases, continued to find landowners willing to sell their land even if it went against the mood in the Arab world. Just as an example, between 1940-1947, at the height of the tension between the two nationalist movements, Keren Kayemet succeeded in purchasing 410,000 dunams.

British interests in Palestine were not limited to the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, but stemmed from the overall colonial orientation of the Empire. Though Zionists and Arab statesmen tried to present their case as being analogous to the British interest, the British had their own goals to implement. Clearly strategic problems were among the most prominent: the army showed much interest in securing the transfer of oil from Iraq to the Mediterranean coast, as well as protecting the imperial passageways to India. Palestine was thus the recipient of English resources as a by-product of its strategic location for the British; in two areas in particular, this was crucial: 1. development of communications and transportation for internal and external purposes; 2. formation of a solid and stable regime which rested on the satisfaction of the local population. Since Britain also saw the colonial expansion as a means of enriching the government's purse, it encouraged British exports to Palestine and supported companies willing to invest in the country. Investment and development went hand in hand with reduced ten-



sion and security and therefore the government's inclination to create a modern western society fit the overall design. As for the *Yishuv*, British modernizing methods (as in the case of the Haifa port), meant to serve British economic interest, were a godsend: the dynamic elements of society willing to move with the trends of development and modernization, had only to gain. Thus, by heavily reducing import taxes and providing special subsidies for local products the British encouraged industry in Palestine; agricultural produce was protected by certain regulations which benefitted both Arab and Jewish farmers. Guided by a liberal economic policy, the British allowed free development of economic sectors and their intervention was minimal. It was through legal channels that they guaranteed a free flow of goods and a liberal monetary policy. However in the public sphere the Mandate government initiated several important projects which changed the shape of the country. We will look at a few of these briefly.

Transportation, as mentioned, was at the center of British interests and in this area the Mandate was far from lax. The railroad system, begun by the Ottomans, was greatly extended southwards and northwards. Also the level of service was improved phenomenally. New bridges, new tracks, new stations were built and remodelled allowing the railway system to service the growing agricultural and industrial production. Whereas in this area the British had fumbled at times but overcome the difficulties, their success in developing air and sea transport was mixed. Haifa's port, built mainly between 1929-1933, was certainly a boom for the economic growth of the city and country, but this was not the case in Jaffa, where geographic conditions impeded the building. Transport concentrated on linking Palestine to the continent, and a terminal was built in Gaza, and later in Lydda which became Palestine's first international terminal. Roads were built for administrative and military purposes, but also for public use and in this area the British showed themselves to be very much in tune with modern transportation techniques. Having received only 230 kilometres of paved roads from the Ottomans, the British quickly went to work to insure easy passage for their strategic needs.



Tel Aviv Port, 1936–1937

In summary, the British Mandate turned Palestine into a single, economic unit treating the needs and concerns of the Arab and Jewish population with an open, liberal attitude. Often the local population was not satisfied by what the Mandate offered them, but it cannot be denied (and their demographic boom is the ultimate proof) that by 1948 they were living in a vastly changed society. All civilians were able to take part in the modern developments – be they the roads, the trains, the telecommunications – and many had begun to enjoy the use of electricity which developed through joint ventures of the British and the *Yishuv*. Moreover, the Palestinian citizens were not forelorn. Their health and education were considered part of the Mandate's agenda, their security and legal status carefully and often judiciously treated, while a wide range of freedom was granted to develop their autonomous existence. Nonetheless, and maybe to a certain extent due to the impressive progress, the nationalist feelings of the local Arab population was turned towards one basic direction – anti-Zionism – and the country was unable to fully exploit the fruits of this progress. In this regard, the Mandate and its administrators failed, and it seems that in some cases even contributed its share to the already charred relationship.



Haifa Port, 1936-1937

### *The Jewish National Home in Eretz-Israel (1917-1948) – Guidelines*

The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate instilled a new hope in the *Yishuv* after the disastrous years of World War I. Buoyed by this opportunity, the *Yishuv* and the Zionist movement began to envision an independent Jewish society with a Jewish majority and an active and vibrant educational and cultural community. We have seen that the British administration did not wholly fulfill the Zionist wishes and put serious constraints on the *Yishuv's* growth. However it allowed the development of self-rule and voluntary organizations. Political organizations were permitted to function freely. Jewish capital was freely allowed into the country and the development of international trade was not restricted. But this was not enough to satisfy the dynamic Zionist movement. By constantly curbing settlement plans and slowing down immigration, the Mandate forced *Yishuv* leaders to concentrate their strength in those areas free for development. During the Mandate period, the *Yishuv* became a truly dynamic force in society, responding to the international scene and local controversies with an unbending drive to realize the fulfillment of its dreams. These thirty years were a most intensive period in the

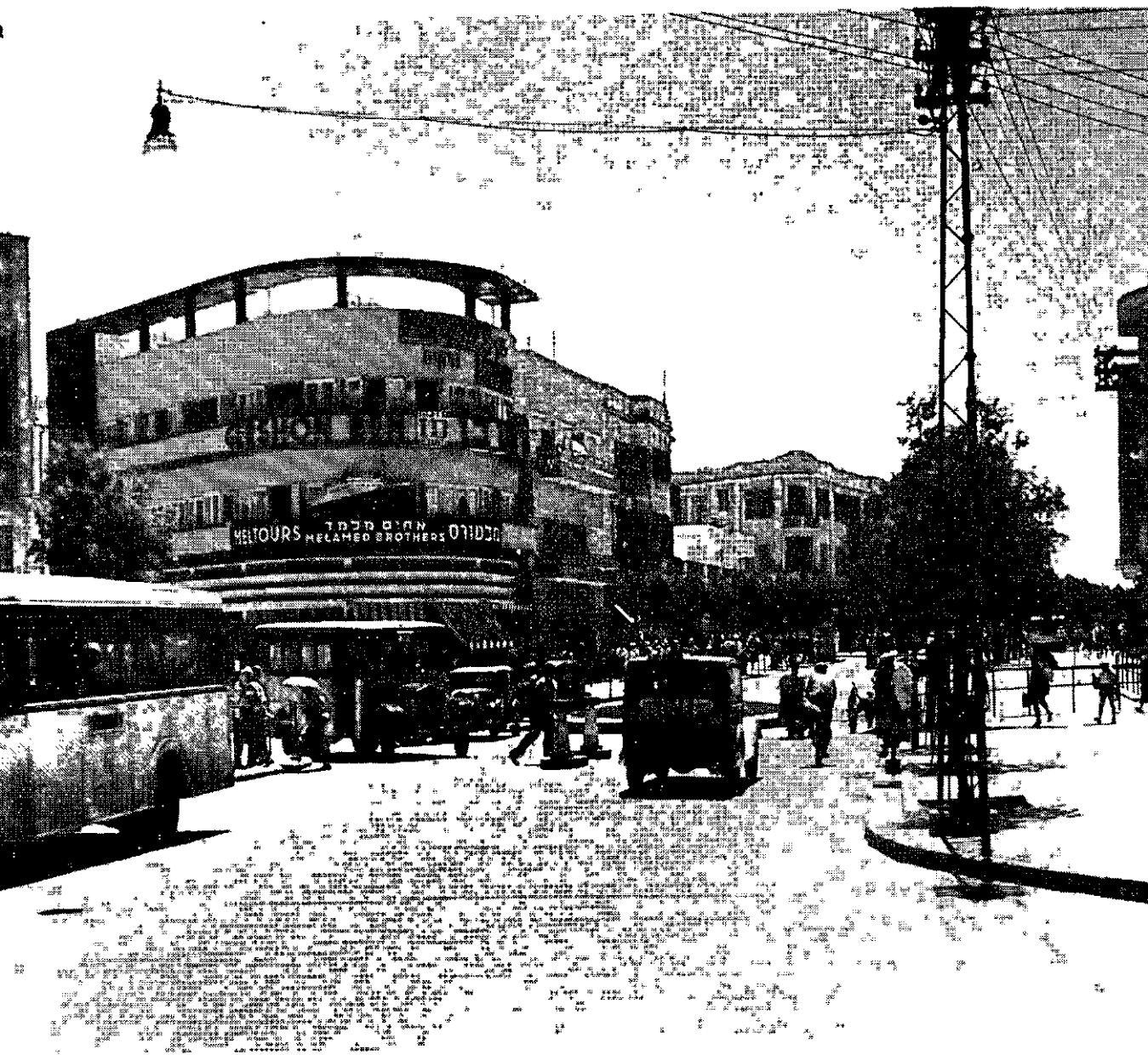
life of the *Yishuv* as it bounced back from perennial setbacks to lay the political, economic, and cultural foundations for a sovereign state.

Immigration to Palestine during this period brought both Zionist-orientated Jews and Jewish refugees, the latter seeing in Palestine a place of refuge from the harrowing international scene. These new elements merged into the *Yishuv* in various occupations and professions, and markedly changed the demographic situation. Jewish immigration was the basis of the demographic growth of the *Yishuv* during the Mandate period, constituting 88% of it. Palestine had become one of the two main countries to which Jews immigrated, and from 1924, when the quota on immigration was instituted in the United States, Palestine was receiving in certain years more than 50% of the overall Jewish immigration. Although ultimate decisions on immigration were not within the scope of the Zionist movement, it did possess influence over a certain category of immigrants – those defined as “workers,” and later on over the so-called “capitalist” immigrants from Germany. From these two categories alone some 250,000 immigrants (174,126 “workers”) reached Palestine between 1920-1945 and they were joined by another 115,000 who were either “economically dependent,” “students,” or “unidentified.” Since this immigration was to a large measure both young and idealistic, it considerably lowered the average age in the *Yishuv*, and contributed to the overall improvement in the *Yishuv*’s standard of living. Three major waves of immigration determined this development; they too were given special designations – Third Aliyah (1919-23), Fourth Aliyah (1928-31), Fifth Aliyah (1932-1938), and even though this chronological division did not always conform to the exact historical process, each *Aliyah* was associated with a particular community, a unique social character, and a common motherland. As such, these three *Aliyot* attained a certain influence over the *Yishuv*’s development. As they were a formative element in the Mandate period, we will present certain outstanding aspects of each.

The hardships of World War I had reduced the *Yishuv*’s population to 56,000 in 1918, about 30,000 less than at the beginning of the war. Expulsion of thousands of foreign residents, famine and disease

had dwindled the more established settlements and brought the life of commerce and business to a standstill. But the renewed interest in Palestine, sparked by the British involvement, quickly began to reroute the direction of development. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the ensuing civil war, and the Russian war with Poland (1919-1920), made many Jews turn their eyes to the Zionist alternative. In Poland, the Zionist atmosphere reminded many of the days following the *Sufot Ba-negev*. Some 250,000 Jews left Eastern Europe between 1920-1923, among whom about 25,000 immigrated to Eretz-Israel. The road to Palestine in those years was a complicated one, demanding and uncertain, and immigrants were forced to go by land and sea; their 'heroic' path, totally undirected by Zionist leadership and to a certain extent impeded by it, was formative in their meeting with Eretz-Israel. Convinced of the need to reach Palestine at all costs and to help in its rebuilding, the Third Aliyah showed steadfastness, and of the 7000 Jews who left Palestine during these years, only 12% emanated from the Third Aliyah. Their pioneering spirit was manifested in their willingness to adapt to all sorts of occupations; they became an important force in the building of Tel-Aviv, which had grown to a city of 15,000 people, in light industry, but also in the heavy road construction which Herbert Samuel initiated in the early twenties. Their idealism brought them also to partake in a new agricultural project, the "redemption" of the Jezreel Valley. 200,000 dunams had been purchased by the Zionist Organization over a period of 10 years, and the valley still remained unpopulated and uncultivated. From 1917 to 1924 a supreme effort was put in, utilizing the new labor force of the Third Aliyah, and results were quite impressive. Twenty new agricultural settlements were set up during that period, raising the number of agricultural settlements to 71 in 1922. But the economic surge of the immediate post-war period soon died down, and a depression began in 1923 due to cutbacks in government spending and in the Zionist budget. Clearly the depression was an indication that the economic basis of the country was not yet capable of integrating a large *Aliyah* without prior organization. Emigration from Palestine was one solution; others gravitated to feelings of despair over the inability of the

ON THE ROAD TO STATEHOOD



Tel-Aviv, 1934

Jewish people to fulfill the Zionist dream, while still others expressed their malaise in political terms – the anti-Zionist communist party became a strong factor within the *Yishuv*, while others looked for more pioneering ways to experience their labor consciousness and revolutionary spirit, adding an important dimension to the Jewish labor movement.

The Third Aliyah's visionary Zionists and social dreamers, like their predecessors of the first two *Aliyot*, confronted a difficult reality in Palestine and with all their achievements could not always overcome it. For their successors, the bourgeois immigrants of the Fourth Aliyah, the issues were somewhat different. Following very strict measures of the Polish government in 1924-1925 to balance the budget and lower the inflation, a whole level of Polish society was stripped of its possessions. Small industries, businessmen, craftsmen and middlemen were suddenly removed from the economic scene as the government took over industries and banks. The quota on immigration to the United States brought many Jews to look towards Palestine and between 1924-1926, 55,000 reached Palestine – 34,000 in 1925 alone. This was an unprecedented growth and bearing in mind the status of many of these immigrants (middle-class and lower middle-class), together with their occupations, one can begin to fathom the impact on the *Yishuv*. One other statistic worth noting: the immigrants from Poland were allowed until 1926 to bring with them their own possessions and resources and these amounted to 10 million pounds, five times the entire national revenue during that period. This was not an idealistic immigration, but family orientated with a desire to pursue similar occupations to those engaged in in Poland. City-life was their choice, and Tel-Aviv doubled its population within a year: by 1925, it had a population of 40,000. Obviously, the sight of the "first Hebrew city" with stores, commerce, and entrepreneurship aroused jealousy and antagonism: it was as if the Zionist dream of revitalizing Jewish life and changing its priorities was in danger. The "opportunistic *Aliyah*" was thus strictured by leaders of the labor movement for abandoning all vision. Nonetheless, entrepreneurship brought industry (textile, biscuits, oil products, etc.) and established thousands of new jobs within a few

Struggle for Jewish Labor in the Colonies, 1930



years. Part of the *Aliyah* also settled in villages close to the larger urban settlements where they developed small farms and created a territorial continuity in the Sharon Valley between Petach-Tikva and Hadera. They brought the private sector to the agricultural settlements as well and began to demand more support for their enterprises. However an inevitable clash between their interests and those of the pioneer workers was postponed by the economic crisis of 1926 which produced new problems for the *Yishuv*. As a result of a serious decline in incoming capital from Poland, businesses began to collapse and unemployment soared – emigration of thousands in the years 1926-1928 followed. Hundreds were left hungry and in need. Chaim Weizmann summed up these years in a critical tone – “We know that our responsibility was to tell the truth about Palestine – that a good number of the people who settled in the country during the Fourth Aliyah were not at home there, and the country was not at home with them.”<sup>4</sup> Weizmann’s harsh appraisal put the blame, so

4. Quoted from *The History of Eretz-Israel*, Vol. 10 Jerusalem, 1983. Edited by Y. Porat and Y. Shavit. (Hebrew)



to speak, on the immigrants themselves, overlooking the additional factor of the poor economic base of the *Yishuv* which was as yet unable to deal independently with such vast numbers in a short period. The temporary economic boom gave way to feelings of despair and discouragement, but by 1929 unemployment was more or less part of the past and industry showed its resilience even as the world economic depression set in.

Palestine and its *Yishuv* seemed to be married to drastic changes, almost as if Ecclesiastes (Chapter 3, verses 2-8) was written specifically for the rhythm of life in the *Yishuv*. The ups and downs were perennial and economic, social, or political fluctuations would swing the pendulum either way. However, the core of the *Yishuv* was strengthening and its base spreading out into many productive areas, which became less prone to the winds of time. So it appears that the political uncertainty and internal insecurity provoked by the riots of 1929 could not dispel the layers of construction the *Yishuv* had engineered since World War I. The Fourth Aliyah, of 1932-1938, was able to build on those foundations even though this too was a period of untenable conflict on many fronts: during these six years, large waves of immigration and intensive growth of the *Yishuv*'s economic capacity confronted the riots and general strike of 1936 and a more reticent British Mandate – while in the background, Jews in Poland and in Germany were feeling the pressure of anti-Semitic governments. In these years, Palestine became the foremost recipient of Jewish immigration (79% in 1935) and internal rivalry over who was to receive entry certificates ensued. Within this period, the *Yishuv* more than doubled its population, reaching 445,000 by 1939, and solidified its economic base.

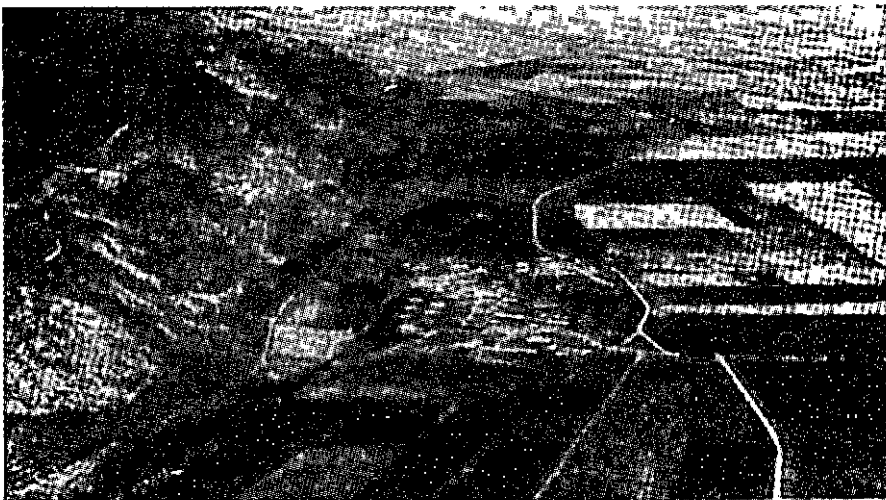
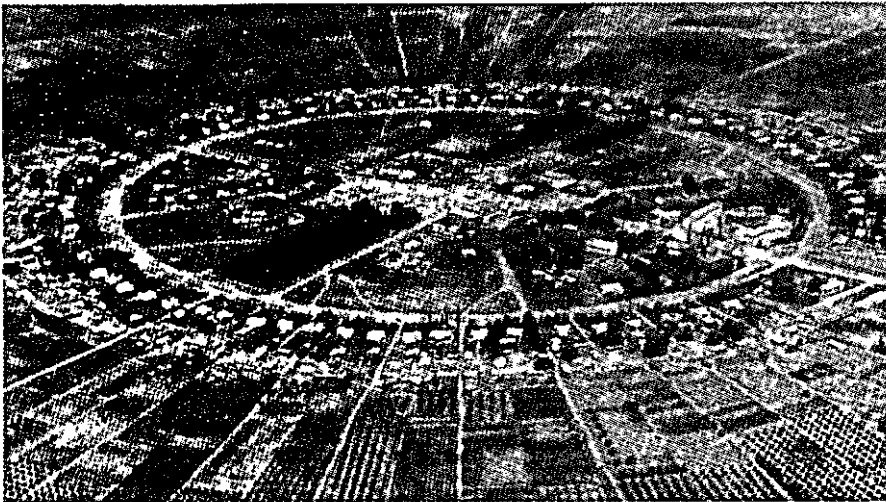
Although often portrayed as the German-Jewish *Aliyah*, the Fourth Aliyah was by no means synonymous with German Jews. Of the 186,000, only 36,000 came from Germany while 76,500 emigrated from Poland, and thousands more from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. (An unprecedented number, 4429, emigrated from the United States during these years.) Nonetheless, the diversity of this *Aliyah* cannot dispel the unique impression created by the German immigrants – academic background, free professions, businessmen and

industrialists – who brought with them a tremendous amount of capital through the “transfer” agreement between Nazi Germany and the Zionist Organization. Often criticized for this act, the Zionist Organization thus enabled thousands of German Jews to leave Germany with capital and private possessions which reached 55 million Palestinian pounds by 1939, and thereby enabled them to settle in Palestine with much greater ease. The decision to negotiate with the Nazis in 1934 for a humanitarian problem is far different from collaboration with them during the war when their policy had become murderous and inhuman. This agreement did after all save the lives of thousands of Jews. While in Eretz-Israel they pursued their previous occupations but also acculturated themselves to agriculture and succeeded very well in this venture too. All in all, the Fourth Aliyah had a fine mixture of immigrants, ranging from 55,000 “capitalists” to 91,000 “workers,” and together they provided a tremendous boost to the *Yishuv*’s economic basis. No longer was the industrial production thinly laid, but spread out in over hundreds of industries, which employed over 20,000 workers. Agriculture did not fall behind and in the area of citrus fruits, Palestine boasted an impressive crop which could compete with other countries; 10 more agricultural settlements were added to the already diverse rural community, which represented 1/4 of the entire *Yishuv*. The riots and strikes of 1936 brought more and more Jews to replace Arab workers in the villages and continued the process of “redeeming the land.” These developments helped the *Yishuv* overcome the lean years of the late thirties.

One specific development during the thirties must be emphasized: the formation of settlements with a security-orientated purpose. Some 55 *Homah Umigdal* (“Wall and Tower”) settlements were established in the Beit-Shaan Valley, Jordan Valley and the Upper Galilee to incorporate defensive measures with agricultural work and to protect these regions from the rising tide of Arab nationalism. A heroic ethos surrounded the founders of these settlements, which relived the days of struggle and “redeeming land” in the earlier immigrations.



Three types of agricult  
settlement:  
1. Zichron Yaakov, 19  
2. Nahalal, 1939  
3. Kibbutz Beit-Alfa,



The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 immediately cut the *Yishuv* off from European and North African Jewry; immigration was not stopped completely and during the five years of war 60,000 illegal and legal immigrants made their way to Palestine. However, the economic situation deteriorated as the free flow of goods to and from Europe was seriously curtailed and unemployment became a pressing problem. Yet, as the war continued, and Britain was willing to utilize the *Yishuv*'s manpower for the war effort, a significant turn of events transpired. From 26,000 unemployed at the end of 1940, the *Yishuv* reached an almost fully employed society in late October 1942, towards the end of the German penetration into Egypt. The economic growth during the war could hardly be compared to the ravages of World War I: fifty new settlements were established, among which 38 were kibbutzim, while industry was modernized and intensively developed. The economic development showed that a society geared fully to serving the needs of war could have many positive results; the rapid development of Tel-Aviv (200,000 residents), Haifa (66,000), Jerusalem (100,000) was a further indication of the ongoing patterns rather than their cessation. The New *Yishuv* had become the forerunner of society, establishing modern modes of existence and strengthening their cultural and social basis. Throughout these thirty years, the New *Yishuv* never lost sight of its ultimate goal – the formation of a sovereign Jewish State in Palestine – and this was carried out in large measure by the leaders of the Second Aliyah, who withstood all the different immigrations and maintained a position of leadership in the *Yishuv*. It is to their political and organizational activity that we must now turn.

### *Political and Social Organization of the Yishuv*

The quest for Jewish sovereignty over Palestine underlies the activity of the political forces in the *Yishuv* during the Mandate. Both Zionist and *Yishuv* leaders saw an intermediary step in setting up a democratic-parliamentary structure to serve the national needs of the community. But the deliberations and process of putting the framework together showed the diverse nature of the *Yishuv* in all its ramifications, and the antagonisms between the New *Yishuv* and Old

Yishuv loomed large. Finally, in 1920 the first elected assembly was voted in, which in turn nominated the Vaad Leumi (National Community) which in turn chose an executive Vaad Leumi, which was the real decision-making body. Here again one sees how the most lofty ideals, as was the goal of Jewish independence, need the most mundane organs to bring them from the realm of the fantastic to the realm of the possible. Therefore the Vaad Leumi consisted of representatives of the growing ideological diversification in the *Yishuv*, labor parties and Revisionists (right-wing), ethnic and religious groups, civilian alignments and others. Throughout the Mandate, the labor parties remained the dominant force, always receiving more than 50% of the electoral vote. Although a democratically elected organ, the Vaad Leumi never became the formative and influential factor in the life of the *Yishuv* for several reasons: while the Mandate curtailed its authority, it in itself lacked the financial resources to undertake independent policy and initiative in the development of the *Yishuv*. However, it also failed to have the support of local interest groups which geared its domination by the labor parties, and never was it capable of usurping the strategic positions held by the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency vis-à-vis England and the Jewish world. For all intents and purposes, it was the Zionist Organization which functioned as the *Yishuv*'s representative and thereby assumed what would have been the tasks of the Vaad Leumi.

The Zionist Organization was represented in London from 1918 by the Zionist Commission to Eretz-Israel, headed by Weizmann, and with an office in Jerusalem run by Menachem Mendel Ussishkin. This was the authority which constantly negotiated with the British over Palestinian affairs and decided on internal *Yishuv* development. After conflict with the Zionist Organization, the Commission was replaced and superseded by the Jewish Agency, which was founded in 1929 and included the Zionist leadership as well as non-Zionist agencies. From that point onwards it was the Jewish Agency which led the diplomatic and political struggle of the *Yishuv* in Palestine and abroad. It became a central organ for all affairs of the *Yishuv* and its departments (political, treasury, settlement, organization,



Jewish Agency, 1937. Ben-Gurion seated in the center

immigration, etc.) mirrored the departments of the Mandate administration. Those departments which dealt with immigration, politics and settlement figured most prominently in the Agency's agenda. In the mid-thirties, facing the political developments caused by the Arab-riots, the Agency formed a quasi-"Yishuv government," taxing the *Yishuv*, inducting young men to the British army, forming and supervising the illegal security force (Haganah), and planning the settlements according to political and strategic consideration. These decisions emanated from an Agency which was becoming more and more influenced by the *Yishuv* leadership whose voice within the Zionist Organization was considerably strengthened. This development catapulted the labor leadership to a pivotal position, and brought together the policy of the *Yishuv* and the Zionist leadership. In the thirties, via the Agency and the Zionist leadership, the *Yishuv* was basically determining Zionist policy which placed the growth of the *Yishuv* as its first priority.

We have occasionally noted that the ingathering of Jews from many countries, with different social and religious backgrounds, made the *Yishuv* appear as a mosaic of the Jewish world: during the Mandate period, each one of these elements tried to gain support by creating its own institution, party, or formation. It was during this period that the Chief Rabbinate was fashioned (1919) as well as its opposition among the ultra-orthodox factions of the Old Yishuv, that the non-rabbinic Jewish legal courts were firmly established, various ethnic parties (of Sephardic origin), and the major political parties.

It is to the latter, due to their overriding importance, that more than mere mention is necessary.

Prior to World War I the Zionist movement harbored in its midst competing ideologies and various political movements flourished in the political hotbed of Czarist Russia. But only after World War I did these ideological currents find a clear, political expression. The hegemony of the labor movement in the realm of ideology and politics was a constant factor throughout the Mandate period. Its political and social frameworks, though often at odds with each other, represented some of the ideological divisions within the socialist camp at the turn of the century. In 1919, Achdut Haavoda was founded and in the following year the General Labor Organization (Histadrut). In 1930, the Eretz-Israel Labor Party (Mapai) was formed with David Ben-Gurion as its arch-leader, merging together Achdut Haavoda and Hapoel Hazair, which we came across in the chapter on the Second Aliyah. The new structure turned Mapai into the largest labor organization in the country, which withstood many ideological battles until 1944 when two rival groups opted out. Mapai was opposed on the left by Left Poalei-Zion and Hashomer Hazair, the latter a pioneering youth movement which from 1927 established its own kibbutz movement, heavily stressing left-socialist views in communal living. Other left socialist and communist groupings flourished in the twenties and thirties, but never did they seriously contend for primacy over the labor movement. The dominating ideological current in the labor movement saw the labor class as the bearer of the true Zionist revolution – the synthesis of national revival and socialism in Palestine. The Jewish national home was not in itself sufficient; its fulfillment necessitated a total revolution in values and principles – a new society and a new Jewish personality – which the labor movement felt it embodied. In Mapai, and in the notion of its ideologue Berl Katznelson, the revolution did not entail a perennial class conflict but rather a “constructive socialism,” a “socialism of producers” which produces new forms of national creativity. Mapai did not oppose utilizing national capital, nor did it object to being part of the general Zionist Organization and to contesting for control over its resources and policy: “Our role is not

**Bialik, Hayyim Nachman**  
(1873–1934)

Bialik was born in a small village in Volhynia to a very poor family. After coming under Ahad-Ha'am's influence in the nineties, Bialik began expositing a spiritual Zionism and to publish his Hebrew poetry. Soon Bialik emerged as a deeply nationalist poet with a wonderful merger of traditional themes and modern visions. His poems at the turn of the century in which he responded to dramatic events in Jewish life (e.g. the pogrom in Kishinev, 1903; Be-Ir ha-Haregah–In the City of Slaughter) became part of a new approach to the Diaspora. Bialik settled in Palestine in 1924, where he worked to promote the Hebrew language and Jewish culture. During this period he secured his place as one of the foremost Hebrew poets and essayists of the modern period.

**Alterman, Nathan** (1910–1970)

Born in Warsaw, Alterman settled in Tel Aviv (1925), where he soon became the poetic spokesman of the political struggle of the *Yishuv*. At the same time he emerged as one of the *Yishuv*'s finest avant-garde writers, merging exceptional imagery and wit. A translator of the great works of European culture (Shakespeare, Molière, etc.), Alterman was himself a playwright of some distinction.

Ben-Gurion laying the corner-stone of the Workers' Building



Agnon, Shmuel Yosef  
(1888–1970)

Born in Galicia, Agnon began writing at the age of 8. He came to Eretz-Israel in 1907, but spent more than ten years (1913-1924) in Germany. Many of his stories and novels revolve around Eastern European Jewish life, though some of his finest fiction treats the growth of the *Yishuv*. For his life work, he was granted the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966.

of revolutionaries – Ben-Gurion often said – but as builders of a new society, of original creators.” Indeed, Ben-Gurion and Katznelson saw the social revolution in the mere creation of a Jewish labor class and a “working society” in Eretz-Israel. These workers filled a vacuum in society and were to be a model for all society, now and in the future. But to bring this ideology to fruition, Mapai had to seize hold of the reigns of leadership and influence all areas of society. Through the channels of Histadrut members, the labor movement grew in strength and influence, and had powerful political and economic clout far beyond that of comparable socialist parties in the western democratic societies. In the thirties, when challenged by the growing private enterprise, the labor movement retained its anchor in society, not simply because of its political power or ideological orientation, but due to its actual concrete contribution to the building of the society and the national economy.

With all of its achievements, the labor movement was not and could not be accepted by all. With the coming of a more bourgeois



immigration, and the emergence of a liberal-Zionist perspective on the Zionist scene, new parties arose which gave vent to these currents. General-Zionists of different leanings, to the left and the right, were created in the thirties and went through various splits until in 1946 they emerged as a united body. Although never a major threat to the leadership, the General-Zionists offered a different perspective on social and political issues (less activist) but were often willing to follow the labor movement's secular attitude to society. Here appeared a clear-cut opponent in the form of religious parties, which ranged from Zionist to anti-Zionist. The form religion would take in the New Yishuv was always a potential bombshell, and the Zionist movement trod lightly on this issue. Nevertheless, within the *Yishuv* and the labor movement the clash over religious observance was more pronounced and less prone to mediation. To protect the religious basis of the New Yishuv and promote a national-Zionist orientation Mizrachi came into being in 1901 in Russia and in 1918 formed in Eretz-Israel its new center. Here too divisions between bourgeois and labor groups led to internal factions, and Mizrachi also produced an ideological response to "constructive socialism" in the form of Torah and Avodah (Torah and Work). Mizrachi became the guardian of the New Yishuv's religious educational system which was not accepted by the ultra-orthodox Agudath-Israel (founded in 1912), the continuation and replenisher of the Old Yishuv doctrine. As this movement became more involved in *Yishuv* affairs in the thirties, it too produced an oppositionary faction (Naturei Karta), which has persisted to this day as the arch-enemies of the Zionist movement. In Naturei Karta, whose base is in Mea Shearim, one can find the spiritual link with the Old Yishuv—any change, any deviance from the national path of learning Torah and observing the commandments is a perversion of Judaism. In this sense, Naturei Karta has maintained a pre-national definition of Judaism and strips Eretz-Israel of any meaning beyond its purely religious one. With all its ability to publicize its campaign against Zionism, it never became a central force within the the religious community of Eretz-Israel. That domain was reserved to Mizrachi throughout the period under consideration.

#### Shlonsky, Abraham (1900–1973)

One of the greatest of modern Hebrew writers, Shlonsky showed remarkable creative talents as a poet, editor, translator, dramatist and author of children's books. After a short stay in Eretz-Israel in 1913, Shlonsky returned in 1921 and began translating from the Russian. Strongly attacked the 'Bialik generation' in poetry and opened up a more modernist approach to Hebrew poetry. As literary editor of various organs at different periods Shlonsky was able to introduce many innovations into modern Hebrew literature. The publication of his poetry, be it in the early twenties or the late sixties, always aroused a stir in literary circles. Shlonsky left behind some of the finest Hebrew translations of the great classics of literature: Shakespeare, Pushkin, Gogol, Rolland, Chekhov were only a few of the literary greats that Shlonsky offered to the *Yishuv*.

#### Tchernichowsky, Saul (1875–1943)

One of the pillars of modern Hebrew poetry, Tchernichowsky was also, like his Russian compatriots, a wonderful translator. Educated as a doctor, Tchernichowsky could never dispense with his literary interest in the great classics of European culture. From the publication of his first book of verse in 1898, which included translated

poems, Tchernichowsky's world of socialist-Zionism and aesthetic appreciation emerged. His road to Eretz-Israel was however not an immediate outcome; it went through Petersburg, Finland, Odessa, Berlin, United States, Hungary. Finally, he came to settle in 1931 in Eretz-Israel, commissioned to edit "The Book of Medical and Scientific Terms" (in Latin, English, and Hebrew). It took several years before his poetry began to flourish in Eretz-Israel, but then it came in the form of ballads on the tragic history of the Jews.

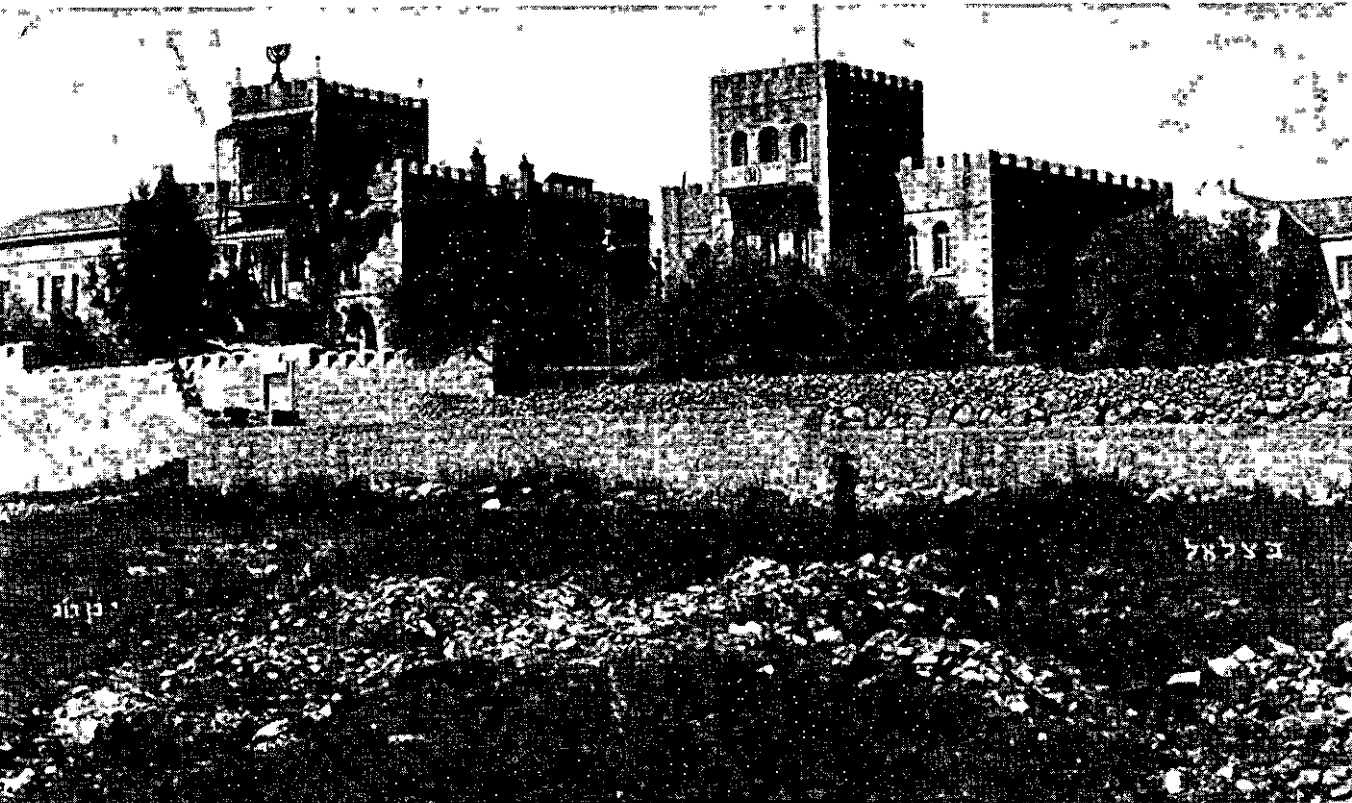
#### Greenberg, Uri Zvi (1896–1981)

One of the great modern Hebrew poets, Greenberg came from a Hasidic family in eastern Galicia. Wrote in Yiddish as well. Arrived in Eretz-Israel in 1923 and for the next thirty years wrote in Hebrew alone. An active figure in the Revisionist movement, Greenberg returned to Poland in the thirties (1931-1935, 1937-1939) and helped to mobilize there the Revisionist movement. His poems on the Holocaust contain some of the most eloquent and harshest expressions of that period (*Rehovot Ha-Nahar*). Greenberg was rewarded many prizes for his distinguished work, including the Israel Prize for Hebrew Literature in 1957. His poetry embodied both an anti-humanist and ultra nationalist perspective, rare among modern Hebrew poets.

The religious parties, basically centrist, found their way to cooperate with the leading labor parties. This was not the case for the real opposition – the Revisionist movement, which formed in 1925 the Revisionist Zionist Organization and even earlier a youth movement (Betar, 1923), expressing its intentions. Experiencing a rapid growth among the lower middle class in Poland and the Baltic countries, the Revisionists emphasized a return to the principles of political Zionism and the boundaries of Palestine from before the White Paper of 1922 – i.e. both sides of the Jordan Valley. Adamantly opposed to the ideology of socialist Zionism and the labor movement, and unable to reach a compromise with Weizmann, the Revisionists left the Zionist Organization to create the new Zionist organization (1935-1946). In the *Yishuv*, they represented the middle class and created frameworks outside of the Histadrut in order to establish a basis for mass immigration of Jews. Supporting a colonial approach until the end of the thirties, the Revisionists demanded a revision of British land policy in order to create an open, free market, unchained to the collective concepts of the labor movement. Their supporters could be found therefore more in urban settlements and in more urban occupations, although many turned to those agricultural villages attached to urban areas. But it was not in these spheres that the Revisionists saw the road to the Jewish National Home, but rather in the political and ideological arena.

#### *A Bird's Eye View of the Cultural and Educational Life of the Yishuv*

The cultural quest of the New Yishuv was an integral aspect of the political goal of a Jewish National Home. Never a secondary issue, Hebrew education and Hebrew culture were recognized as the synthesis of the new Jew to be created in Palestine. Theater, literature, newspapers, dance, music and the visual arts were all to find a Hebrew expression and embody the renaissance of Jewish life. Hebrew, as the common language of the *Yishuv*, was no longer the tongue of an elite group but by the end of the Mandate period, only 2% of the Jewish population were non-Hebrew speakers. This was achieved, as many things were, by an ideological struggle against



foreign languages (including Yiddish and Ladino), but also by the persistent work of the Vaad Halashon Ha-ivrit (1890) which constantly 'renovated' the language with new words and publicized Hebrew equivalents to technical terms in different fields. As Hebrew became the language of the *Yishuv*, the educational system followed suit and Hebrew was the language of instruction in primary school and high-school, in technical and art education, and in the *Yishuv*'s first university, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1925). What may seem today to be a given, was by far not the case in the twenties, when the notion of teaching high-level subjects in a non-European language was deemed impossible. This was also true for other areas of cultural life, like the theater. Tel-Aviv, the city from the sands, had become a major metropolis and during the Mandate it became the New Yishuv's center of cultural life. With a petit-bourgeois society, Tel-Aviv could house the Hebrew theater (Habimah, Ohel, Kumkum (a satiric group) alongside the Philharmonic Orchestra (1936)), and be the home for a host of newspapers, literary periodicals and journals. These national cultural accomplishments must not overshadow the intensive and public cultural life which developed at

Bezalel Academy of Arts

**Steinhardt, Jakob (1887–1968)**

The art works of Steinhardt, especially his engravings, lithographs, and woodcuts portray religious and social themes but also imaginary themes and landscapes. A Polish Jew, who studied art in Berlin and Paris, Steinhardt was strongly affected by the turbulent events of modern Jewish history. The Russian pogroms of the beginning of World War I and the Holocaust are often portrayed in his oeuvre; after coming to Eretz-Israel in 1933, Steinhardt devoted himself almost exclusively to woodcuts.

**Aroch, Arie (1908–1974)**

Aroch mixed diplomacy with painting, but from his arrival in Palestine in 1924 he became part of the expressionist school for almost three decades. Like many of the Israeli artists of the inter-war period, Aroch studied in Paris and became part of the New Horizons group. From 1950, when he left expressionism for a more folkish art, he was part of Israel's diplomatic corps.

## ON THE ROAD TO STATEHOOD

the grass-roots level in rural and urban settlements. For in those 'natural' settings, the yearning for an 'authentic' Hebrew culture was no less pronounced than in the modern surroundings of Tel-Aviv.

The Mandate Period saw the real flourishing of a Jewish national culture. A new circle of Jewish writers (Bialik, Alterman, Shlonsky, Tchernichowsky, Greenberg, Agnon) emerged which revolutionized Hebrew literature, and turned Eretz-Israel into the unrivalled center of Hebrew literature. Each in his own way 'conquered' the Hebrew language and weaved through it layers of the Jewish past, transporting the reader through time and experience of the Jewish people. Great works of literature became available in Hebrew by these literary masters, who brought their creativity to the service of the vision which was theirs as well – the rebirth of the Jewish people and its historic language. They had their parallels in the visual arts (Steinhardt, Aroch, Rubin, Gutman) but their impact on the *Yishuv* went far beyond. In the thirties, their books were published in as many as 4000 copies for a *Yishuv* which had a population of several hundred thousand – a truly astounding figure!

By taking only a bird's eye view of the cultural and educational life of the *Yishuv*, we have done injustice to its parameters, nuances and centrality. And this must be seen within the overall struggle of the *Yishuv* for political independence and economic stability: the cultural renaissance was the best indicator to the ultimate goal of the Zionist vision – natural Jewish creativity in its natural home. The turbulent and fluctuating political and economic scenes were reflected in the cultural world, but never did it cease to exude vibrancy and originality.

This hiatus into culture was needed for the reader to put organizational, political and strategic developments to temporary rest and into a spiritual framework, indeed a part of that reality. But the closing section must be devoted to the development of security organs in the *Yishuv* and to their efforts to defend the national cause.

**Rubin, Reuven (1893–1974)**

Rubin came to Eretz-Israel from Romania in 1912 and studied in the Bezalel Art School before leaving for Paris, like most Jewish painters of this century. After a short stay there and a return to Romania, Rubin returned in 1922 to Eretz-Israel, where his unique landscapes of the country began to become synonymous with his work. Also did many designs for Israeli theatre. One art critic saw in Rubin's still lifes, local scenes, and landscape paintings an embodiment of a profound identification with his new homeland. Received the Israel Prize for Art in 1973.

**Gutman, Nahum (1898–1980)**

Brought to Eretz-Israel from Romania at the age of seven, Gutman became a pioneer in the illustration of children's books. Studied painting at the Bezalel School of Art and later in Berlin and Paris. A fine example of local expressionism of the twenties and thirties, Gutman's favorite themes were portraits, local scenes and landscapes. Also wrote children's stories. Awarded the Israel Prize for painting.

### *Defence, Underground and Security – The Yishuv's Military Side*

It took awhile before the *Yishuv* was convinced of the need for a full-blown military arm to guarantee its overall security and national interests. The process was gradual and in each stage a different form of self-defence was incorporated until the 1930's, when the security and military issue became a central factor in the life of the *Yishuv*. In a previous chapter we mentioned the embryonic consciousness of self-defence in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, which was the first sign of outright conflict with the Arab population. The occupation of Palestine by the British did not terminate the need for self-defence. Following the riots in 1921, the *Yishuv* recognized that self-defence required a more strategic organization. Dispersed throughout the country, settlements were often at a distance from each other, and their defence was mandatory. The first organization to spread its wings over these settlements was the Haganah, the successor of the HaShomer units.

With the founding of Achdut Haavodah, Haganah came into being in 1920. Originally begun as an illegal operation, though responsible to the *Yishuv's* leadership, this defence operation became another aspect of the ideological basis of the *Yishuv* – defence would be part of the fulfillment of Zionism. Established as a national body to protect all areas of the *Yishuv*, the Haganah was a voluntary body which received no support at its inception from the Zionist leadership. Eliahu Golomb, the architect of Haganah, envisioned an impressive cadre of 20,000 men within five years, but the relative security which Palestine experienced until 1929 made this plan imaginary. Instead, the Haganah limited its activity to the major urban centers with 200-300 members at best. The events of 1929 made Golomb's original design look somewhat less imaginary.

The riots of 1929 showed the weakness of the *Yishuv's* settlement organization. Either spread out or in mixed cities, communities were often without any assistance. Settlements were forced to be abandoned. The need for wider self-defence and easy access to other settlements in crisis became an immediate lesson of the riots: therefore, illegal methods seemed to be less pertinent than creating a

### **Golomb, Eliyahu (1893–1945)**

Born in Russia, Golomb was sent to Eretz-Israel to study in the Herzliyah high school in 1909. Opposed joining the Turkish army during World War I and favored the establishment of an independent Jewish armed unit. A member of 'Hashomer' and later one of the founders of the Achdut Ha-avodah and the General Histadrut. Became a central figure in the labor movement and a leading force in the organization of illegal immigration to Palestine during the Mandate period. He was the main architect and undeclared commander of the Haganah.



Wingate, Charles Orde  
(1903–1944)

Raised on the Bible in a nonconformist family, Wingate became involved in the *Yishuv's* development from 1936 when he was posted in Palestine as an army officer. He strongly opposed the Arab terror campaign and helped the Haganah form the Special Night Squads. His wholehearted involvement in the *Yishuv's* growth made it impossible for the British to keep him in Palestine and thus he was transferred in 1939. He was killed in an air crash in the Burma jungle in 1944.

national, legal organ under British authority and supported by it, militarily and financially. But this cooperation took several years to emerge. In the meanwhile, the notion of self-defence penetrated into the public's consciousness and annually hundreds of new members joined the ranks. By 1936, the Haganah had spread itself widely through the *Yishuv*, but it was still insufficiently armed and trained to deal with the riots of 1936. At that juncture, an arm of the Haganah joined hands with the Mandate authorities, propagating the concept of "restraint" in the face of the Arab revolt. The *Jewish Settlement Police* (JSP) was the form that cooperation with the British took – a police unit, trained and serviced by the British to defend the Jewish settlements, which grew so extensively that it was soon able to be a legal cover for much of Haganah's activity. By 1939 the JSP had grown to a force of 20,000, the largest part of which was under the direct authority of the Haganah.

The Haganah's political and military perspective of "restraint" underwent certain changes of emphasis in the late thirties and forties. They no longer restricted themselves to stationary tactics but began to comb the areas and under the influence of Orde Wingate even delved into night raids, looking for contact with the enemy. Later on, in a clear response to the Arab raids, they helped form the Homah and Migdal settlements; tens of settlements were established in similar fashion: special Haganah units would in a period of a day or two create the basis for settlement while performing military and agricultural duties simultaneously. The tremendous success and pioneering élan of these ventures added prestige and importance to the Haganah's efforts and indeed, their herosim was indispensable to creating the strategic Homah and Migdal settlements. As it became a diverse defensive and self-defence aim of the *Yishuv*, it was logical that Haganah was soon recognized as the *Yishuv's* defence organ. In that capacity, it was to undergo many vicissitudes in the war years. Among its major areas of activity, aside from regular defence of the *Yishuv*, several need special mention: 1. Illegal immigration to Palestine was organized to a great extent by Haganah leaders; 2. A "restrained" struggle with the British over the implications of the White Paper. "Restrained" attacks against British and Arab posi-



Palmach Unit, 1942

tions were undertaken in 1939. These were stopped in September 1939, as the Haganah opted for cooperation with the British in its war effort against Nazi Germany and actively encouraged its rank and file to volunteer to the British army. Later on, it established in 1941 the Palmach which was designed to be the *Yishuv's* national defence unit to guard against a possible German attack on Palestine. This became a well-trained and rather modern military unit which would well serve the *Yishuv* in its hour of crisis in 1948.

Towards the end of the war the seemingly cooperative relationship between Haganah-Palmach and the British began to deteriorate and these military arms gravitated to oppositionary tactics. "Restrained" but firm, they resisted British attempts to strip them of their weapons, and embarked upon episodic attacks against the British. The British response, "The Black Sabbath" (29 June 1945)—a country-wide curfew, arrest of *Yishuv* leaders, mass arrests of Haganah and Palmach activists, the Jewish Agency building taken over by the

**Raziel, David (1910–1941)**

Born in a small town near Vilna, David Raziel joined the Haganah in 1929 during the Arab riots. Two years later he joined Ezel and rose quickly in its ranks, becoming its commander after the organization split in 1937. Six months after being imprisoned by the British in 1939 he was released to take part in military activities alongside the British. In May 1941, he was sent by the British army to Iraq to mine German oil reservoirs; a German bombing killed Raziel and a fellow British soldier soon after their arrival.

British – was a death-knell to the oppositionary movement. Other than the joint decision of underground groups to bomb the King David Hotel – the headquarters of the civilian and military administration – no actions were taken. The bombing was in the end to be postponed, but the Ezel (see below) went ahead and bombed the hotel. From that point on, Haganah expended most of its energies on settlement and immigration (Mossad Aliyah B). On the eve of the decision to grant the Jewish National Home a portion of Palestine, the Haganah had 45,000 members in various units, with the Palmach (2200!) the only significant military wing. Its cache of weapons was even less impressive. Nonetheless, it had paved the way for defending the country through its various units and helped build the settlements at the same time.

The road to outright underground activity was never clearly formulated within the Haganah. It wavered between its commitment to defending the *Yishuv*, with the help of the British, to attacking the British administration and Arab raiders. Their path of “restraint” was rejected by two organizations: Ezel (Irgun Zvai Leumi, 1931), and Lehi (Lochamei Herut Israel, 1940). The tendency of these two units reflected the split in the Zionist movement from 1935 (with the establishment of the Revisionist Zionist Organization) and the split within the *Yishuv*. Ezel operated independently of the political framework and was originally designed to be the core of a standing army. Attempts to bring about a coalition of forces between Ezel and Haganah in 1938, 1939 and 1940 all failed, in large part due to Ben-Gurion’s opposition. Ben-Gurion saw in unification with Ezel a serious step towards weakening the principle of central authority and leadership in the *Yishuv* and the Zionist Organization.

How did Ezel function in Palestine? Under the leadership of David Raziel, Ezel collaborated with Betar, and began to grow progressively after the White Paper of 1939. Raziel, who later died on a mission of the British army to Iraq in 1941, strongly advocated participation with the British war effort and members of Ezel followed suit. Thus, during the war its activity in Palestine was very limited. In this sense it differed radically from Lehi which saw its struggle against the British in terms of a battle against an imperialist



government. Opposed to the Jabotinsky ideology of a necessary contact with England, Lehi looked for allies in the Axis powers (fascist Italy and Nazi Germany) to help establish "The Kingdom of Israel." Being a small terrorist underground group with limited means, Lehi changed its tactic from attacking Arab settlements to attacking the British police and administration.

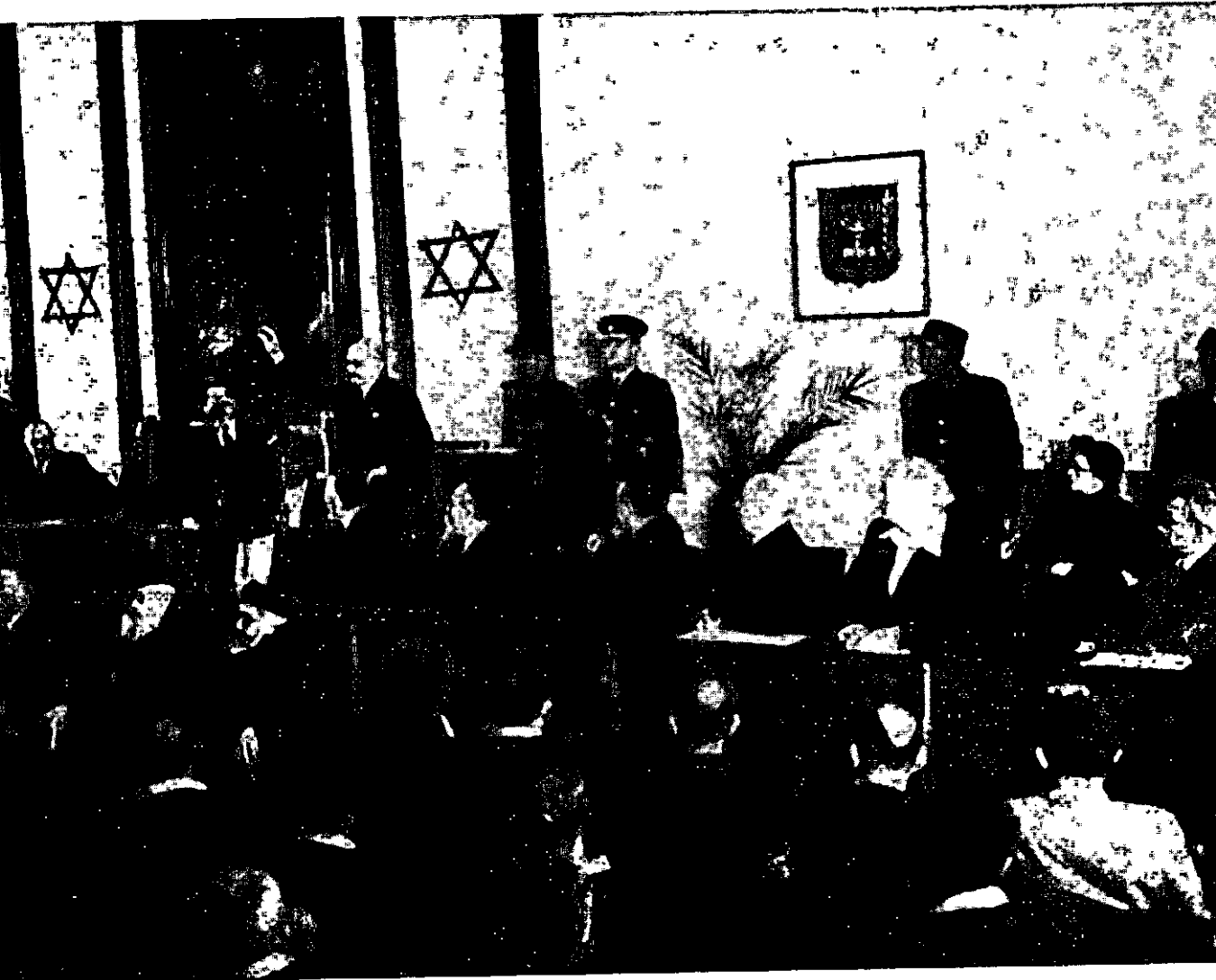
Towards the end of 1943 an important development in Ezel's leadership occurred. Its prestigious leader from Poland, Menachem Begin, replaced Yaakov Meridor as the head of the underground movement; Begin subsequently declared on 1 February 1944 a state of rebellion against the British, a turn towards violent uprising against the British administration to pave the way to a Jewish state. In this sense it followed Lehi, but not to their degree of extremity. Lehi too reversed its policy of attacking individuals (murder of Lord Moyne in Cairo in November 1944) to attacking public institutions. In the following months, Ezel began its head on collision with the British, blowing up military and administrative positions in order to discredit and shame the British authorities. Not linked to overall concerns of defence, like the Haganah, Ezel was sovereign to act and operate without political responsibility. Its hatred for the British over the White Paper became a guiding principle, reversing the Jabotinsky course of courting the Imperial government. Lacking means, it resorted to an activist policy, condemning the "restraint" of Haganah. Clearly one goal was behind their operations in 1945-47: to convince the British that the only alternative was to grant a sovereign Jewish State. A force of almost 3000 (four times as many as Lehi), they were in a predicament when Britain put the issue of Palestine before the United Nations: it was no longer Britain that had to be monitored but the Arab population and for that purpose they lacked the means and the necessary human resources to offer the *Yishuv* the new form of security it required. Their opposition to partition, and the 'loss' of Trans-Jordan, put them into a difficult position as the majority of the *Yishuv* accepted the historic decision of the United Nations.

**Begin, Menachem (1913-)**

A graduate in law from the Warsaw University, Begin became the head of the Betar youth group in Poland in 1938. With the German occupation, Begin fled Warsaw to the Soviet Union where he was imprisoned but released in 1941. In 1942 he arrived in Palestine and soon became the commander of the Irgun Zeva'i Le'umi (Ezel) and foremost opponent of the British Mandate. Begin served as prime minister of Israel from 1977 to 1984.

**Meridor, Yaakov (1913-)**

Born in Poland, Meridor settled in Eretz-Israel in 1932 and immediately became involved in the activity of Ezel. After the death of Razi'el he became Ezel's commander for two years (1941-1943) and then relinquished it to Menachem Begin on his arrival in Palestine. Meridor continued to be a major figure in Ezel's military command. He was later arrested and imprisoned in Cairo for three years. A member of several Knessets, Meridor was a cabinet minister in Begin's government.



Chaim Weizmann sworn in as  
first President of the State of  
Israel, 17 February 1949

*Conclusion*

The tremendous developments that transpired in Jewish Palestine between 1777 and 1948, the topic of this study, changed the course of the *Yishuv*. These developments brought a host of new ideals and ideologies to Eretz-Israel and Jewish life. Kibbutzim, moshavim, the revitalized Hebrew language, Hebrew culture, military units, and Jewish diplomacy were only part of these developments. Yet even they appear to be less astounding than the events which the State of Israel encountered in its first years of existence. To face severely hostile Arab armies, to lose a tenth of the *Yishuv* in the Independence War, to accomodate hundreds of thousands of immigrants and to build the foundations of a modern state – these were the challenges the State of Israel had to face in its infancy. Its ability to face all these trials and tribulations and to emerge successfully can only be understood on the basis of its previous history, part of which is found in this study.