

Top 7 Myths About Israel and Zionism

Myth #1: The Jews were there first

The Canaanites were there before the Hebrews came in 1800 B.C. The present-day Palestinians are descendants of Canaanites, Arabs, and others. The Jewish Kingdoms were only one of many periods in ancient Palestine, and endured for only 73 years.

(Sources: "Their Promised Land", Marcia Kunstel and Joseph Albright / "Arab and Jew in the Land of Canaan", Illene Beatty)

Myth #2: Zionism is about escaping from the Nazis

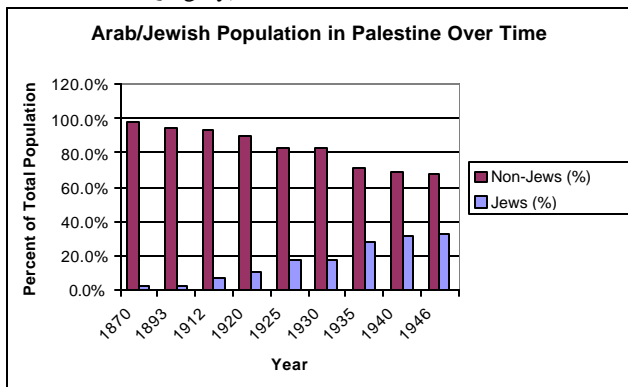
"I have already gone exhaustively into the reason for our being here, reasons that I as a pioneer of 1906 can affirm have nothing to do with the Nazis.... Nazism and our history of martyrdom abroad do not concern our presence in Israel directly." (David Ben-Gurion, First Israeli Prime-Minister, Memoirs, 1970)

Myth #3: Zionism is based on Judaism

"...Zionism is diametrically opposed to Judaism. Zionism wishes to define the Jewish people as a nationalistic entity. The Zionists say, in effect, 'look here, God. We do not like exile. Take us back, and if you don't, we'll just roll up our sleeves and take ourselves back.... This, of course, equals heresy. The Jewish people are charged by Divine oath not to force themselves back to the Holy Land against the wishes of those residing there. So if they do, they are open to the consequences..." (Rabbi Hirsch, Jerusalem, Washington Post, October 3, 1978)

Myth #4: Palestine was a wasteland before the Jewish arrival

"Britain's high commissioner for Palestine, John Chancellor, recommended total suspension of Jewish immigration and land purchase to protect Arab agriculture. He said 'all cultivable land was occupied; that no cultivable land now in possession of the indigenous population could be sold to Jews without creating a class of landless Arab cultivators'...The Colonial Office rejected the recommendation." ("Palestine and Israel: A Challenge to Justice.", John Quigley)




Sources: The numbers in this table are estimates constructed from the following: Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "The Population of the Large Towns in Palestine During the First Eighty Years of the Nineteenth Century, According to Western Sources" in Moshe Ma'oz, ed. Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period, Magnus, 1975; Alexander Scholch, "The Demographic Development of Palestine 1850-1882", International Journal of Middle East Studies, XII, 4, November 1985, pp. 485-505; "Palestine", Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edn, 1911; "Palestine", Encyclopedia of Islam, 1964; UN Document A/AC 14/32, 11 November 1947, p.304; Justin McCarthy, "The Population of Ottoman Syria and Iraq, 1878-1914", Asian and African Studies, XV, 1 March 1981; Kemal Karpat, "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82-1893", International Journal of Middle East Studies, XCI, 2, 1978; Bill Farrell, "Review of Joan Peters", 'From Time Immemorial', Journal of Palestine Studies, 53, Fall 1984, pp. 126-34; Walid Khalidi, From Heaven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971 appendix I; Janet L. Abu Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine", in Ibrahim Abu Lughod, ed., The Transformation of Palestine: Essays on the Origin and

Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Northwestern University Press, 1971 pp. 139-63

Myth #5: The Arabs have been the aggressors in the Arab-Israeli Wars

1948: Palestinian towns and villages were given to Israel, Arab countries attacked to liberate the Palestinians – Jewish forces outnumbered Arab forces by 3:2, and Britain had cut off the ammunition supplies for many of the Arab forces.

1956: Israel, followed by the UK and France, attacked Egypt. Israel first attacked Jordan, and then the UK pretended to rebuke Israel and provoke it to amassing an even larger force – this was used to deceive the Egyptians. After Israel attacked, the UK and France asked Egypt and Israel to not fight in the Suez Canal Zone – the plan was for Israel to keep attacking so as to allow the UK and France to attack Egypt, which is what happened. France also gave Israel nuclear capability as part of the alliance.

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1967: Israel attacked Egypt, Jordan, and Syria – even Ezer Weizmann, the Israeli Air Force Commander, says there was no threat to Israel at the time.

1967-1970 (War of Attrition): Egypt started the war by ambushing Israeli forces at the border. Israel replied by attacking Egyptian and Jordanian infrastructure (dams, irrigation, etc.). Israel also tried to take the PLO headquarters at Karamah but was defeated by a joint Jordanian-PLO force.

1973: Egypt and Syria attacked Israel – there is no controversy on this point.

1978 and again in 1982: Israel attacked Lebanon and occupied Southern Lebanon via its proxy (South Lebanon Army). In 2000 the Hezbollah was victorious and forced Israel to withdraw from Lebanon completely.

(Sources: Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, Vintage Books, 1984 / James Morris, *The Hashemite Kings*, 113 – quoted in “A Brutal Friendship – the West and the Arab Elite”, Said K Aburish, St. Martin’s Press, 1997 / Green March, Black September, John K. Cooley London: Frank Cass, 1973 – p. 162 / “Peres confirms France gave Israel nuclear capacity”, AFP, Nov 4 2001)

Myth #6: Palestinians fled Israel because they were told or instigated to by Arab countries

“The BBC monitored all Middle Eastern broadcasts throughout 1948. The records, and companion ones by a United States monitoring unit, can be seen at the British Museum. There was not a single order or appeal, or suggestion about evacuation from Palestine, from any Arab radio station, inside or outside Palestine, in 1948. There is a repeated monitored account of Arab appeals, even flat orders, to the civilians of Palestine to stay put.” (Erskine Childers (a British researcher and UN official) , quoted by Sami Hadawi in “Bitter Harvest”)

The real reason Palestinians fled? Massacres and expulsions:

“A few did not leave their stone houses - perhaps because of confusion. Our men were compelled to fight for every house; to overcome the enemy they used large numbers of hand-grenades. And the civilians who had disregarded our warnings, suffered inevitable casualties. In the rest of the country too, the Arabs began to flee in terror, even before they clashed with Jewish forces.... The Arabs began fleeing in panic, shouting:

“DirYassin!” (The Revolt, Menachem Begin, former Israeli Prime-Minister and General, Nash Publishing, 1977)

“Before we left Jerusalem, I visited Ramallah, where thousands of refugees from Lydda and Ramleh were assembled. I have made the acquaintance of a great many refugee camps; but never have I seen a more ghastly sight than that which met my eyes here at Ramallah. There were plenty of frightening faces in that sea of suffering humanity. I remember not least a group of scabby and helpless old men with tangled beards who thrust their emaciated faces into the car and held out scraps of bread that would certainly have been considered uneatable by ordinary people, but was their only food. And what would happen at the beginning of October, when the rainy season began and the cold weather set in? It was a thought one preferred not to follow to its conclusion.” (Count Folke Bernadotte, saved 20,000 Swedish Jews during holocaust, Special UN Mediator to the Middle East, assassinated by Yitzhak Shamir who became Prime Minister of Israel)

Myth #7: Zionists have built a land of milk and honey in a desert

“...here was a case of wholesale robbery in legal guise. Hundreds of thousands of dunams [quarter-acres] of land were taken away from the Arab minority - I am not talking here of refugees - through a whole variety of legal devices.... Even more depressing is the fact that it was those same groups who presume to establish a new society free from injustice and exploitation - the kibbutzim, in other words - who marched in the vanguard of the seizure campaign.” (Moshe Karen article in *Ha'aretz*, January 1954)

"Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either.... There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population." (Moshe Dayan, former Israeli Defense Minister, 4 April 1969, address to the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), Haifa (as quoted in *Ha'aretz*, 4 April, 1969)



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