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Yishuv (Hebrew: ישוב, literally "settlement") or **Ha-Yishuv** (the Yishuv, Hebrew: הישוב, or the full term הישוב היהודי בארץ ישראל *Hayishuv Hayehudi b'Eretz Yisrael* ("The Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel") is the term used in Hebrew referring to the body of Jewish residents in the Holy Land before the establishment of the State of Israel. The residents and new settlers were referred to collectively as "**the Yishuv**" or "**Ha-Yishuv**." The term came into use in the 1880s, when there were about 25,000 Jews living in Eretz Yisrael, and continued to be used until 1948, by which time there were about 700,000 Jews there, and is used in Hebrew even nowadays to denote the Pre-State Jewish residents in the Holy Land.

A distinction is sometimes drawn between the **Old Yishuv** and the **New Yishuv**.

The **Old Yishuv** refers to all the Jews living there before the aliyah of 1882 by the Zionist movement. The Old Yishuv residents were religious Jews living mainly in Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron. Smaller communities were in Jaffa, Haifa, Peki'in, Acre, Nablus, Shfaram and until 1779 also in Gaza. A large part of the Old Yishuv concentrated their time in Torah studies and lived off *Ma'amodot* (stipends), received by donations from the Jews in the Diaspora.

The **New Yishuv** refers to those who built homes outside the Old City walls of Jerusalem in the 1860s, and to the establishment of Petah Tikva and the First Aliyah of 1882, followed by the founding of settlements until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

The First Aliyah was the very beginning of the creation of the New Yishuv. More than 25,000 Jews immigrated to Israel. The immigrants came to Israel with the idea of creating a national home for Jews. Most of the immigrants were Russians escaping the pogroms, as well as some Yemenites. Many of the immigrants were affiliated with Habbayit Hayehudi/Hovevei Tzion. Hovevei Tzion purchased land from Arabs and created many different settlements such as Yesod Hamaalah, Rosh Pinna, Gedera, Rishon Le'tzion, Nes Tziona & Rechovot. These agricultural settlements were supported by philanthropists from abroad, chiefly Theodore Rothschild. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda arrived in the first Aliyah. He took it upon himself to revive the Hebrew language. He along with Nissim Bechar started a school for teaching Hebrew and later on founded the first Hebrew newspaper.

During the Second Aliyah in 1903-1914 35,000 new immigrants came over primarily from Russia.

During the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman government was not very supportive of the new settlers from the First and Second Aliyah, specifically those that retained their former nationality. The Ottoman government officially restricted Jewish immigration. Those who adopted Ottoman nationality were liable for the Turkish draft. The settlers faced some very hard times. There were many epidemics in Palestine at this time, impoverishing and killing many. The Yishuv relied on money from abroad to support the settlements.

In 1908 the Zionist Organization founded the Palestine Office, under Arthur Ruppin, for land acquisition, agricultural settlement and training,^[1] and later for urban expansion. The first Hebrew high schools were opened in Palestine as well as the Technion, the first institution for higher learning. Hashomer, a Zionist self defense group, was created to protect the Jewish settlements. Labor organizations were created along with health and cultural services, all later coordinated by the Jewish National Council. By 1914, the old Yishuv was a minority and the new Yishuv began to express itself and its Zionist goals.

The Zionist movement tried to find work for the new immigrants who arrived in the Second Aliyah. However, most were middle class and were not physically fit or knowledgeable in agricultural work. The Jewish plantation owners had previously hired Arab workers who accepted low wages and were very familiar with agriculture. The leaders of the Zionist movement insisted that plantation owners (those who arrived in the First Aliyah) only hire Jewish workers and grant higher wages. The conquest of labor was a major Zionist goal. However, this caused some turmoil in the Yishuv for there were those who felt that they were discriminating against the Arabs just as they had been discriminated against in Russia. The Arabs became bitter from the discrimination despite the small number of Arabs that were affected by this.

During World War I, the conditions for the Jews in the Ottoman Empire worsened. All those Jews who were of an enemy nationality were exiled and others were drafted into the Turkish army. Many of those exiled fled to Egypt and the United States. Those who remained in Palestine faced hard economic times. There was disagreement whether to support the British or the Turks. A clandestine group, Nili, was established to pass information to the British in the hope of defeating the Turks and ending their rule over Palestine. The purpose and members of the Nili were discovered. All involved were executed by the Turks except its founder, Aaron Aaronsohn, who escaped to Egypt. During World War I, the Jewish population in Palestine diminished by a third due to deportations, immigration, economic trouble and disease. During World War I, there were two British battalions of Jews, called the Zion Mule Corps, who were to fight on the front of Palestine. They helped in the British capture of Palestine, leading to the Turkish surrender. The members of the Zion Mule Corps later made up the Yishuv's defense groups that would fight against the British.

During the British Mandate

World War I ended, along with the Ottoman Empire. Britain gained control of Palestine through the Sykes-Picot Agreement. There was hope that British

control would allow the creation of a Jewish national homeland as promised in the Balfour Declaration. The British Mandate was formalized in 1922 based on the Balfour Declaration. The British were supposed to help the Jews build a national home and promote the creation of self-governing institutions. The mandate provided for an agency in which the Jews could represent Jewish interests and promote Jewish immigration. It was called the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and was only created ten years later, serving as the de-facto government of the Yishuv. Along with a Jewish agency there was to be a general self-governing institution created in Palestine including Jews and Arabs. The Yishuv feared such an institution due to the Arab majority, but none was created in the end due to the Arabs' refusal to cooperate with the Jews or British. The optimism that existed in the beginning of the British mandate soon diminished due to continued hardships in the Yishuv. Most of the European funds that supported the Jewish settlements before World War I ended. The Arabs instigated riots against the Jews due to their opposition to the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. The British limited immigration through yearly quotas; only those who received "certificates" could make Aliyah.

Arab Riots

There were Arab riots throughout 1920-21 in opposition to the Balfour Declaration. The Arabs tried to show the British the instability of Palestine and that a Jewish homeland was ungovernable. Riots increased in 1929 after the fourth Aliyah. The Arabs claimed that Jewish immigration and land purchases were displacing them and taking their jobs away. These riots were also instigated by false rumors that the Jews were planning on building a synagogue near the western wall. These riots led to the evacuation of Hebron's indigenous Jewish population.

White papers

The British responded to the Arab riots with the White Papers. The white papers attempted to stop immigration to Palestine based on the Hope Simpson Report, which stated that Palestine after economic development could only support 20,000 more immigrant families so as not to infringe on the Arab population's placement and employment. Upon Jewish criticism of this policy it was clarified that immigration would not be stopped.

There were many Jewish immigrants that arrived throughout the 1930s in the fifth Aliyah despite the immigration quotas. Many who came were fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. Those that came from Nazi Germany were able to come because of the Hesder agreement. This allowed Jews to escape from Germany to Palestine in return for paying a ransom to the Reich. The Yishuv now had a population of about 400,000.

The Palestinian revolt

The increasing numbers of Jewish immigration and land purchases along with the British Mandate angered the Arabs, bringing them to radicalism. In April 1936,

Arabs attacked a Jewish bus leading to a series of incidents that escalated into a major Palestinian rebellion. The British were caught by surprise and were unable to prevent the thousands of Arabs and hundreds of Jews that were killed in the revolt. The Haganah protected the Yishuv's settlements while the Irgun and Etzel, more radical groups, attacked Arab settlements. A coalition of recently formed Arab political parties formed the Arab Higher Committee (AHC). It declared a national strike in support of three basic demands: cessation of Jewish immigration, an end to all further land sales to the Jews, and the establishment of an Arab national government. The Arabs threatened that if the British didn't comply with their demands then they would join the adversaries of the British. This concerned the British for World War II was just beginning and they knew they would need Middle Eastern oil. The British worked with their Arab allies to bring a halt to the AHC riots. The Peel Commission reported, in July 1937, that the British obligations to the Arabs and Zionists were irreconcilable and the mandate unworkable. It suggested the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, with the British mandate governing over Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem along with a corridor from Jerusalem to the coast. The Jews accepted the general principle of a partition while the Arabs refused any partition plan. The British government sent a technical team called the Woodhead Commission to detail the plan. The Woodhead Commission in the end concluded that the partition was impractical.

The Palestinian Revolt broke out again in the autumn of 1937. The British ended the revolt using harsh measures, deporting many Palestinian Arab leaders and shutting down the AHC. In the Yishuv, the Palestinian Revolt reinforced the already firm belief in the need for a strong Jewish defense network. Finally, the Arab agricultural boycott that began in 1936 forced the Jewish economy into even greater self-sufficiency. The Haganah during this period changed from being a small clandestine militia to a large military force. The British security forces at this time cooperated with the Haganah to tame the Arabs. In 1938 Captain Orde Wingate created the Special Night Squads (SNS) that were composed mostly of Haganah members. SNS used the element of surprise in night raids to protect the Jewish settlements and attack the Arabs.

White Paper of 1939

The British suppressed the revolt and published the White Paper of 1939. It allowed for a total of only 75,000 Jews to enter Palestine over a five-year period. During this time the Yishuv entered a period of relative peace with the Arabs of Palestine.

During World War II

The Yishuv wanted to help their fellow Jews who were being murdered by the Nazis in Eastern Europe. Many Jews from Eastern Europe were prevented from fleeing to Palestine by strict immigration quotas established by the white papers. The Jewish Agency organized illegal immigration from 1939 through 1942 with the help of the Haganah. Those who arrived illegally to Israel during this time were part of the Aliyah bet. This was a dangerous operation, for these illegal

immigrants arrived by boat and had to be careful not to be caught by the British or Nazis. Many of these ships sank or were caught, such as the Patria (Patra), Struma and SS Bulgaria. Compared to the number of attempts few ships actually arrived successfully to Palestine, but tens of thousands of Jews were saved by the illegal immigration.

The Yishuv also wanted to help on the front lines to try and save Jews from the Nazi atrocities. In 1942 the Jewish agency turned to the British to offer their assistance by sending Jewish volunteers to Europe as emissaries of the Yishuv to organize local resistance and rescue operations among the Jewish communities. The British accepted the proposal but on a much smaller scale than the Jewish agency had hoped. They only took Jewish parachutists who were recent immigrants from certain targeted countries that they wanted to infiltrate. The British Special Forces and military intelligence both consented to the volunteers' dual role as British agents and Jewish emissaries. 110 Yishuv members were trained; however only 32 were deployed. Many of them succeeded in helping the POWs and uprisings in the Jewish communities, while others were caught.

The Baltimore declaration

Despite the reports of Nazi atrocities growing and the desperation of Jews needing a safe haven the British kept the doors of Palestine closed to Jewish Immigration. The Zionist leaders met in a hotel in Baltimore and concluded that due to the British behavior, the British were an enemy to be fought.

Palestine post World War II

Hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors were being held in Displaced Persons Camp (DP Camps) aching to go to Palestine. The British received much international pressure, specifically from U.S. president Harry Truman, to change their policy on immigration. Despite Britain's dependence on American economic aid, the British refused, claiming that they were experiencing too much resistance from the Arabs and Jews already in Palestine and feared what would happen if more were allowed to enter. The refusal to remove the white paper policy angered and radicalized the Yishuv. The Yishuv's militia groups set out to sabotage the British infrastructure in Palestine and continue in their illegal immigration efforts. In 1946 the British responded to the Yishuv's efforts and began a two week search for Jews suspected of anti-British activities, arresting many of the Haganah's leaders. While the British were busy looking for the Haganah, the Irgun and Lehi carried out attacks on British forces. The most famous of their attacks was on the King David Hotel, the site of the British military command and the British Criminal Investigation Division. This location was chosen because a few weeks before a large quantity of documents was confiscated from the Haganah and brought there. Despite being warned by the Yishuv and told to evacuate the building the British officials decided not to cave in to the pressure. The Yishuv attacked anyway, resulting in British casualties. By 1947 the British had 100,000 troops in Palestine trying to maintain order and protect themselves. The British mandate was a major expense on the British, leading them to present the Palestine problem to the United Nations on May 15, 1947. The United

Nations proposed a partition of Palestine into 2 states—Jewish and Arab (Resolution 181). The Jews accepted it, while the Arabs stated that they would do everything in their power to prevent it.

The AHC, determined to prevent [Resolution 181](#) from coming into effect, began to attack and besiege the Jews. The British sided with the Arabs in an attempt to prevent the Yishuv from arming themselves. Jerusalem was held under a siege with no access to weapons, food or water. The Yishuv seemed helpless until it received a large shipment of arms from Czechoslovakia. The Haganah started fighting offensively from April through May. The Haganah mounted a full-scale operation, Operation Nachson. After much fighting and the crucial construction of [a new road](#) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the siege of Jerusalem was broken, allowing supplies to be brought to the city.

This operation's success helped Harry S. Truman recognize that the Jews would be able to protect themselves. Therefore the United States said it would support the establishment of a Jewish state. On May 14, 1948 the Jews proclaimed the independent state of Israel and the British withdrew from Palestine. Despite having a Jewish state and an end to the British mandate, the Israelis were to face many more fights with the Arabs.

See also

References

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