



Zionism Timeline

This is a basic Timeline of Zionism as it emerged as a movement from the 19th century until today. Most of it is based upon the events and actions of major Zionist leaders, but there is also some background about the world as it was during the time of the many emerging Zionist movements.

Before 1850

The world of the Jew is very simple, with very few countries granting citizenship to Jews and constant threats of persecution and violence, even in places considered to be safe and stable. Only a small handful of Jews live in the ancestral homeland, and those who do are limited to populations in four cities: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias. These cities would become known as the cities of the “Old Yishuv,” meaning “returned,” a group which had come in an indirect route with the general hopes of living in the land but without any hope of a political presence in the land.

1878

The first all-Jewish Settlement in the land is built, and named Petach Tikvah, the “Opening of our Hope.” This settlement barely survives, but is strengthened greatly with the first wave of immigration from Europe four years later.

1881

Pogroms occur frequently in Russia and around 10,000 Jews are killed over the next 40 years. This motivates many to flee. Over 2 million Jews emigrate from Russia, most of them to the United States, but thousands choose to go their ancestral homeland. Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the father of the modern Hebrew language, makes aliyah. He becomes the most outspoken supporter of the revival of the Hebrew language, and goes so far as to dedicate his life to the language’s study and development, even teaching it to his son as an only language.

1882

The First Aliyah begins. This is a group composed of almost entirely of Jews from Eastern Europe with some from Yemen. Their work aids development of the land. The other three early large settlements, Rishon leZion, Rosh Pinah, and Zichron Yaakov, are established by new olim. It concludes in 1903.

1885

The Reform movement in North America, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), drafts and accepts its first official platform. It rejects the idea of Jewish Peoplehood and the necessity of mitzvot in the diaspora of the modern age. It is also oppositional to the establishment of a Jewish Homeland, stating: “... and [we] therefore expect neither a return to Palestine... nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.”

1894

The “Dreyfus Affair” occurs in France. This brings antisemitism to the forefront of thought for many Jews living all over the world. Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian-born secular Jew, covers the “Dreyfus Affair” as a journalist. He is convinced that the immediate establishment of a Jewish Political State in the land of Palestine (as it was called by the current rulers) is a necessity for the survival of the Jewish People.



1896

Herzl publishes his first major Zionist pamphlet, “Der Judenstaat” (The Jewish State). He spends the next 8 years traveling to consult with world leaders for their support for the establishment of a “National Jewish Homeland”

1897

Herzl changes his strategy and decides to create the first Zionist Congress. It convenes in Basel, Switzerland, and gains the attention of many prominent Jews. He advocates for “a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine” to be established for all Jews. He also successfully creates the World Zionist Organization (which still exists today). Zionist Congresses would follow for many years to come.

1902

Herzl publishes “Altneuland” (Old-New Land), a novel set in an idealistic future Jewish state in Palestine. It inspires many to support current chalutzim in the land of Israel.

1903

After a series of particularly brutal pogroms, Herzl introduces the “Uganda Proposal,” a plan that would allow the Jews to have a political state to live in while still trying to pursue Palestine. The result is not decided before the end of the sixth Zionist Congress, and a committee further investigates the possibility.

1904

The Second Aliyah begins when Jews living in Czarist Russia faced anti-Semitism and pogroms. These young Jews filled with socialist ideals continued to develop the land. About 40,000 Jews immigrated during this time, but all of them could not be absorbed during a time of economic instability so nearly half had to leave.

1909

The first new all-Jewish City is established. It is named after the Hebrew translation of the intensely popular book by Herzl, Tel Aviv. The first kibbutz, Degania, was also formed by the settlers who arrived during the Second Aliyah. Rural settlers were trained to fight and the first Jewish self-defense organization, Ha-Shomer was born.

1917

The beginning of the British Mandate. The British Army gained control of this area as a result of the treaties ending World War I. In November, the British release a statement called the “Balfour Declaration,” officially giving support to the establishment of a national home for Jews in Palestine.

1920

Haganah is established as an underground military organization of the Yishuv. In December the Histadrut was founded at the Haifa Technion. It was a trade union created to organize the Jewish workers. The Third Aliyah begins.

1924-1939

The Fourth and Fifth Aliyot. These were some of the largest, and brought many desired professionals who were running from anti-Semitism and discrimination in their old homes, especially from Nazi



Germany; however, this immigration was cut off abruptly with the release of “the White Paper of 1939,” a British document that limited future immigration to an absolute of 75,000.

1936

The British Government provides a “Partition Plan” which would lead to an Arab and a Jewish state within the current British Mandate. It was accepted by the Jews and rejected by the Arabs. The “Great Uprising” of Arabs begins, with major raids by Arabs on both the British outposts and the Jewish settlements.

1937

The UAHC accepts its Columbus Platform, its first platform with sympathy to Zionism, in which it acknowledges the work of the Jews in the Middle East towards the establishment of a Jewish homeland: “We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland ... a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.”

1939

The organization known as “Mossad Aliyah Bet”, the “Organization for Immigration to Israel B” grows in response to the British White Paper of 1939, and expands its operation of undocumented and illegal immigration of Jews into the land.

1947

November 29: The UN approves “United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181,” which would split the mandate into two political states. It passes easily: 33 for, 13 against, and 10 abstentions, but was still not recognized by Arab or Muslim Leaders.

November 30: Guerilla warfare breaks out in the British mandate.

1948

May 14: the State of Israel declares its establishment.

May 15: Five neighboring Arab countries invade the State of Israel. The “1948 War for Independence” has begun.

1967

The “Six-Day War” allows Israel to capture almost all of the territory of the old British Mandate, and Reunites the City of Jerusalem.

1973

Egypt attacks Israel during the morning of the Yom Kippur fast. Other Arab countries join in the attacks, mainly Syria. The forces are eventually pushed back by the IDF.

1980

Netzer Olami is established as an international Zionist Youth Movement at the urging of NFTY.

1982

First Lebanon War began on June 6 with an Israeli bombing across the border. Israel forces the PLO to leave their headquarters in Beirut.



2005

At NFTY Convention 5766, the NFTY's North American General Board agreed to accept Netzer's invitation to become a snif, and has since accepted the "Netzer Platform" which actively encourages its members to spend serious amounts of time in Israel and consider making aliyah.

Most of this is derived from EIE Jewish History Textbook #4: Tzionuut v'Haskala, with the occasional Wikipedia Article.