

# 75 Zionist Founders

These 75 people helped establish foundations for a Jewish state in the Land of Israel between the start of the 19th century and independence in 1948. Those involved in the work of Zionism in the first half of the 20th century who went on to be important leaders of the State of Israel appear on our separate list of [essential Israelis from history](#). We also have a list of [current Israelis you should know](#) and [non-Israelis who helped shape Israel](#).



## Aaron Aaronsohn, 1876-1919

Aaronsohn, who made aliyah to Ottoman Palestine as a 6-year-old in 1882, [discovered a strain of emmer wheat](#) that could sustain itself in harsh climates. The agronomist became known worldwide, even working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Aaronsohn also founded the [spy organization Nili](#) to assist the British against the Turks during World War I. His sister, [Sarah](#), [died after she was caught spying](#).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

## Sarah Aaronsohn, 1890-1917

Aaronsohn was born in Zikhron Ya'akov in Ottoman Palestine. After witnessing the Armenian genocide, she decided to help the British against the Ottomans in World War I with the [Nili ring of Jewish spies](#), founded by her older brother [Aaron](#). After the Ottomans captured and tortured her for four days, she [fatally shot herself at age 27](#) to prevent further torture and avoid exposing her fellow spies.

Photo: Public domain



## Gershon Agronsky, 1894-1959

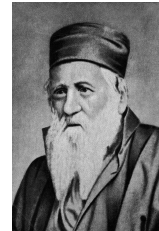
Born in Ukraine, Agronsky immigrated to the United States. He wrote for Jewish newspapers and later for the [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#). In 1918 he joined Britain's [Jewish Legion](#) in Palestine. He dived into Zionist politics in the 1920s. He [founded The Palestine Post](#) in 1932 and was its editor. In 1939 he [assessed how violence affected the Arab economy](#). He was Jerusalem's mayor in the 1950s.

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel

## Rabbi Judah Alkalai, 1798-1878

Alkalai is credited with the idea of a [national fund for Jewish land purchases](#). Adamant about the Jewish people returning to Eretz Yisrael, he advocated statehood in a [booklet called "Shema Yisrael."](#) After the [Damascus Blood Libel](#) of 1840, Alkalai wrote "Minchat Yehuda" to call for international fundraising for Jewish settlements, inspiring [Theodor Herzl](#) to start the [World Zionist Congress](#).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives



## Chaim Arlosoroff, 1899-1933

Arlosoroff, an ardent socialist and Zionist, was born in Ukraine and immigrated to Palestine in 1921. He was a founder of the [Histadrut labor federation](#). Working with the Jewish Agency, he helped negotiate the Haavara program, which allowed German Jews to move to Palestine but enriched the Nazis. Before the agreement was signed, Arlosoroff was [murdered on a beach in Tel Aviv](#). The identity of his killers remains unknown.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

## Yocheved Bat-Miriam, 1901-1980

Bat-Miriam, born in Belarus, is considered one of the four "mother poets" of modern Hebrew. Her 1937 book, "Eretz Yisrael," examines the Land of Israel as a woman. She wrote many poems about biblical women through a feminist lens. Though she stopped publishing original poetry after her son was killed in the [War of Independence](#), she received the Bialik Prize in 1964 and the Israel Prize in 1972.

Photo: Public domain





### **Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, 1858-1922**

Ben-Yehuda [was born in Belarus](#) and moved to Palestine in 1881. He championed the use of [modernized Hebrew](#) as an essential element of Zionism. He edited Hebrew newspapers, created the first modern Hebrew dictionary and founded the Va'ad HaLashon (precursor of the Academy of the Hebrew Language). Before [his death](#), the British recognized Hebrew as the official language of Palestine's Jews.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

### **Chaim Nahman Bialik, 1873-1934**

Bialik, recognized as Israel's national poet, [was born in Ukraine](#) and moved to Palestine in 1924. After interviewing survivors of the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom, he wrote "Be-Ir ha-Haregah" ("In the City of Slaughter"), in which he condemned Jewish passivity against threats. The poem inspired the creation of Zionist youth organizations across the Diaspora. His poetry continues to provide lyrics for Israeli singers.

Photo: Zoltan Kluger, National Photo Collection of Israel



### **Elisheva Bikhovskiy, 1888-1949**

Bikhovskiy, one of the "four mothers" of modern Hebrew poetry, [often known simply as Elisheva](#), wrote about Zionism and antisemitism without biblical and rabbinical references. She was drawn to Hebrew as a Russian girl and studied it through her 20s. She and her Jewish husband moved to Palestine in 1925, though she never converted to Judaism. She was one of the first women in Palestine to publish a volume of Hebrew poetry.

Photo: Zoltan Kluger, National Photo Collection of Israel

### **Nathan Birnbaum, 1864-1937**

An Austrian-born journalist, activist and writer, Birnbaum coined the word "Zionism" in the late 19th century. Using the pseudonym Mathias Acher, he wrote about the sociopolitical culture of European Jewry and expanded on the ideas of [Leon Pinsker](#) and [Theodor Herzl](#). Later in life, he turned against political Zionism as running counter to his newfound devotion to Orthodox Judaism.

Photo: Public domain



### **Rachel Bluwstein, 1890-1931**

One of the four "founding mothers" of modern Hebrew poetry, known as Rachel the Poetess or simply Rachel, Bluwstein [was born in Russia](#) and moved to Ottoman Palestine in 1909. She wrote most of her poems in her final six years and was regularly published in the newspaper Davar. She studied agronomy, was devoted to nature and was an influential Galilee pioneer at [Kibbutz Degania](#) and Kvutzat Kinneret.

Photo: Public domain

### **Max Bodenheimer, 1865-1940**

An [early leader of German Zionism](#), Bodenheimer helped establish a [Jewish bank in Ottoman Palestine](#) and [the Jewish National Fund](#), for which he was the first chairman. Bodenheimer corresponded with [Theodor Herzl](#), attended the [first](#) and many [subsequent Zionist Congresses](#), and served on the Zionist General Council from 1897 to 1921. He joined [the Revisionists](#) in 1929 and made aliyah in 1935.

Photo: National Library of Israel





### **Dov Ber Borochoy, 1881-1917**

A socialist and Labor Zionist founder from Ukraine, [Borochoy](#) emphasized the poor working conditions of Jews in the Diaspora. Pulling from Marxism, he combined economic theory with nationalism. At the [Seventh Zionist Congress](#), in response to the [Uganda Plan](#) to settle Jews in East Africa, he founded Poalei Zion, which opposed establishing a home for Jews anywhere but the Land of Israel.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

### **Yosef Haim Brenner, 1881-1921**

[Born in Ukraine](#), Brenner emerged as the leading Hebrew literary figure in Palestine in the early 20th century. He joined the Bund, a Jewish socialist movement, as a young man and became a Zionist who made aliyah at age 28. He thrived as a novelist, poet, political commentator and essayist, often featuring pessimistic realism. Brenner [was killed by Arab rioters](#) in Jaffa in 1921.

Photo: Public domain



### **Selig Brodetsky, 1888-1954**

Ukrainian-born Brodetsky engaged the Zionist movement as an undergraduate at Cambridge. He attended the [Twelfth](#) to [Twenty-Third](#) Zionist Congresses and served with the World Zionist Executive from 1928 to 1951. He was the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and led the Jewish Agency's political office in London. He was a governor of the [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) and its [second president](#).

Photo: Smithsonian Institution

### **Meir Dizengoff, 1861-1936**

A native of what is now Moldova, Dizengoff became a leader with [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) in Russia. He moved to Palestine in 1893 and managed a glass factory. He opposed the [Uganda Plan](#) at the [Sixth](#) and [Seventh](#) Zionist Congresses. He co-founded the Geulah Society to buy land for Jewish settlement in Palestine. He was a [founder of Tel Aviv](#) and its first mayor and served on the Va'ad Leumi (Jewish National Council).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives



### **Itzhak Elazari-Volcani, 1880-1955**

An agronomist from Lithuania who moved to Palestine in 1908, Elazari-Volcani was a Hapoel Hatzair leader who [advocated settlement](#) by Jewish labor. He taught farming and advised the Zionist Organization and Palestine Office on [agriculture](#). He was a delegate to the [Paris Peace Conference](#). He served in the First and Second Jewish Elected Assemblies. He was Hebrew University's agriculture chair from 1940 to 1947.

Photo: Zoltan Kluger, National Photo Collection of Israel

### **Akiva Ettinger, 1872-1945**

Belarus-born [agricultural](#) settlement leader Ettinger encouraged Jewish families to live on the land outside capitalist society. He served as director general of the [Jewish Colonization Association](#) in South America and in a leadership role for the [Jewish National Fund's](#) land acquisitions in Palestine. He helped form the [Zion Mule Corps](#). He was part of Va'ad Leumi (Jewish National Council). He led swamp-draining and forest projects.

Photo: Public domain



### **Berthold Feiwel, 1875-1937**

Feiwel was born in Moravia, now in the Czech Republic. He co-founded the Jewish People's Voice in 1897 and the Jiddischer Verlag publishing house in Berlin in 1902 and served as the editor of [Theodor Herzl's](#) weekly Zionist newspaper, Die Welt. He helped launch the Democratic Faction at the [Fifth Zionist Congress](#). He was involved in Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency finance starting in 1906 and settled in Palestine in 1933.

Photo: Public domain



### Israel Friedlander, 1876-1920

A Ukrainian-born scholar, Friedlander was a commissioner for the [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee](#). He became a U.S. Zionist leader and wrote books including "Past and Present: A Collection of Jewish Essays." He was a delegate to Zionist Congresses from [1899](#) to [1905](#). He was the first president of the Zionist youth movement Young Judaea. He was killed on a JDC mission during Poland's war for independence in 1920.

Photo: Public domain



### Eliyahu Golomb, 1893-1945

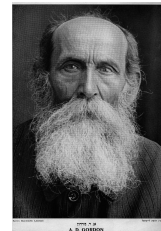
Born in Belarus, [Golomb](#) settled in Palestine in 1909 and was part of the Herzliya Gymnasium's first graduating class. A member of the [Jewish Legion](#) in World War I, he helped [organize the Haganah](#) and worked to unify the Jewish military command. He was a founder of the [Palmach](#) and a leader of the [Histadrut](#) and [Mapai's predecessor](#). He was a Va'ad Leumi (Jewish National Council) member. He opposed violence against Arab civilians.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

### A.D. Gordon, 1856-1922

[Born in Ukraine](#), [Gordon](#) emerged as a leader in the nascent Zionist movement. Part of the [Second Aliyah](#), he was the rare middle-aged, devout Jew to settle in Palestine in the early 20th century. He saw [agricultural labor](#) as a way to lift up Jews spiritually. As the founder of Hapoel Hatzair, he advocated a form of Labor Zionism that rejected Marxism and stressed respect for the environment.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives



### Emma Gottheil, 1862-1947

[Gottheil](#) attended the [Second Zionist Congress](#), where [Theodor Herzl](#) invited her to translate his speech into French, Italian and English. In the United States she organized women's study groups that were the precursors of [Hadassah](#). In 1921 she created the Women's League for Palestine, which raised money to support Jewish immigrant children. [Her husband, Richard](#), was the founding president of the Federation of American Zionists.

Photo: Jewish Theological Seminary Library

### Dov Gruner, 1912-1947

Hungarian-born Gruner joined the [Betar movement](#) and illegally immigrated to Palestine in 1940. He served in the British army's Jewish Brigade to fight Nazis. After World War II he joined the Irgun. He was seriously wounded and captured during an arms raid. He refused to defend himself at his trial because he rejected the court's authority. He is one of the [12 Olei Hagardom](#), underground fighters hanged by the British.

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel



### Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg), 1856-1927

Born in Ukraine, [Ahad Ha'am](#) joined [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) in Odesa, attended the [First Zionist Congress](#), but [opposed political Zionism](#) in favor of cultural Zionism, creating a Jewish cultural center in Palestine as a buffer against Diaspora assimilation. He wrote for, founded and edited Hebrew journals. He served on the board and raised foundational money for [the Technion](#). He advised [Chaim Weizmann](#) on the [Balfour Declaration](#).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

### Rose Luria Halprin, 1896-1978

A two-time president of [Hadassah](#), [Halprin lived](#) in Jerusalem in the late 1930s to serve as the [Hadassah Medical Organization's](#) liaison during the construction of Hadassah Hospital at Mount Scopus. She spoke against violence during the [Arab uprising](#) and criticized the [British Mandate](#). She served 20 years on the Jewish Agency executive and advocated strong Israel-Diaspora ties.

Photo: Moshe Pridan, National Photo Collection of Israel







### **Yehoshua Hankin, 1864-1945**

Hankin [was born in Ukraine](#) and moved to Palestine with his father in 1882. The Hankins were among the founders of [Rishon LeZion](#), now one of the largest cities in Israel. Acting on behalf of [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) and other organizations, he was the most prominent purchaser of land for Jewish settlement in Palestine, including the sites of Rehovot and Hadera. He maintained relations with Arab landowners.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

### **Theodor Herzl, 1860-1904**

Born in Hungary, Herzl is viewed as [the father of modern political Zionism](#). A journalist, novelist and playwright, he embraced Zionism after reporting on [Alfred Dreyfus' trial](#) in France. His pamphlet "[Der Judenstaat](#)" ("The Jewish State") and novel "Altneuland" ("Old-New Land") galvanized Jews to seek statehood. He organized the [First Zionist Congress](#) in 1897 and led the [Zionist Organization](#) until [his death](#).

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel



### **Moses Hess, 1812-1875**

Born into an Orthodox family in Germany in 1812, [Hess](#) became interested in socialism, befriended Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and contributed to the Communist Manifesto. He recognized that German nationalism would inspire increased antisemitism. In 1862 he wrote "[Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question](#)," which called for a Jewish socialist commonwealth in Palestine. The book influenced [Theodor Herzl](#).

Portrait: Public domain

### **Bronislaw Huberman, 1882-1947**

Born in the Russian-controlled Poland, [Huberman](#) toured Europe as an acclaimed violinist at age 11. He first visited the Land of Israel in 1929 and decided to bring classical music there. In 1936 he established the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, the forerunner of the [Israel Philharmonic Orchestra](#). The orchestra recruited Jewish musicians from Europe and, by bringing them and their families to Palestine, saved about 1,000 Jews.

Photo: Public domain



### **Naftali Herz Imber, 1856-1909**

Born in Ukraine, Imber moved to Palestine in 1882. Trained as a watchmaker, he instead became a Hebrew poet. His first poetry collection, which he published in Jerusalem in 1886, included "[Tikvateinu](#)" ("Our Hope"), which provided the lyrics for the Zionist and later [Israeli national anthem](#), "Hatikvah." He also translated writers such as Omar Khayyam into Hebrew.

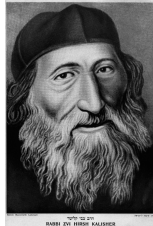
Photo: Public domain

### **Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 1880-1940**

A journalist [born in Odesa](#), Jabotinsky organized self-defense units and fought for Jewish rights in Russia. He attended most Zionist Congresses from [1903](#) to [1933](#). He co-founded the [Zion Mule Corps](#) in World War I. He launched [Revisionist Zionism](#) and its [Betar](#) youth movement in the early 1920s. He broke from the Zionist Organization in 1935. He urged the mass evacuation of Polish Jews in 1936 and the creation of a Jewish army in 1939.

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel



**Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, 1795-1874**

Born in Prussia, Kalischer was an early proponent of the [resettlement of the Land of Israel](#) to strengthen the Jewish people. He contributed to Hebrew journals and wrote on the need for Diaspora Jews to help resettle poor Jews from Eastern Europe in the Land of Israel. He established a committee for that purpose in Berlin in 1864. The [Alliance Israelite Universelle](#) founded the [Mikveh Israel](#) agricultural school in response to Kalischer.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Berl Katznelson, 1887-1944**

[Belarus-born Katznelson](#) co-founded the [Histadrut labor federation](#) and advocated for labor unity to uplift Jewish workers and small landholders. Immigrating to the Land of Israel in 1909, Katznelson became involved in labor councils. He helped found a consumer cooperative, worker health fund Kupat Holim; a labor publishing house; and a [precursor of Mapai](#). He was founding editor of labor newspaper Devar and served on the [Jewish National Fund](#) board.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Frederick "Frank" Kisch, 1888-1943**

A British brigadier general, Kisch chaired the predecessor to the Jewish Agency, the Palestine Zionist Executive, from 1918 to 1921. Kisch was prolific in Jewish life in [Mandate Palestine](#). He helped found the [Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra](#) and served on [the Technion](#) board. He increased Jews' access to health services and education in Palestine. He observed the [failure of Arab noncooperation](#) with the British.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Joseph Klausner, 1874-1958**

A historian born in Lithuania who attended the [First Zionist Congress](#) and others, Klausner supported [Ahad Ha'am](#)'s cultural Zionism and succeeded Ha'am as the editor of Hashiloah. He immigrated in 1919 and became a [Hebrew University](#) professor in 1925. He specialized in Second Temple history and argued that Western cultural and historical roots sprang from Judaism. He wrote about Jesus as a Jewish figure.

Photo: Public domain

**Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, 1865-1935**

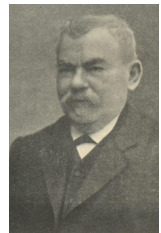
[Kook](#) was [born in Latvia](#) and was one of the fathers of [Religious Zionism](#). As a rabbi in London, he rallied popular support for the [Balfour Declaration](#). After he immigrated to Palestine in 1919, Kook was appointed rabbi of the Ashkenazi communities in Jerusalem and in 1921 was elected the [first Ashkenazi chief rabbi](#) of Palestine. He opposed ["Hatikvah"](#) as the Zionist anthem for being too secular but built bridges to secular Zionists.

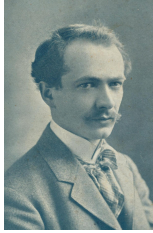
Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Yehudah Leib Levin, 1844-1925**

A Belarus native, Levin was a Jewish Enlightenment poet who wrote in Hebrew on socialist themes. Concerned with Jewish lives in Russia, Levin wrote one of his most famous poems, "Daniyl be-gov ha-arayot" ("Daniel in the Lion's Den"), about Zionism and antisemitism. He wrote for Hebrew and socialist publications. A part of the [Hibbat Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) movement, Levin supported Jewish immigration to Eretz Yisrael instead of the United States.

Photo: Public domain



**Ephraim Moses Lilien, 1874-1925**

Born in Galicia, Lilien was an art nouveau illustrator and lithographer who co-founded the Berlin Jüdischer Verlag, the premier Jewish and Zionist publishing house in Western Europe, in 1902. He highlighted Jewish themes and often is considered the first Zionist artist. He lived in Palestine at times from 1906 to 1914. Lilien was a member of the [Bezalel School of Art](#) in Jerusalem and supported fellow Zionist artists.

Photo: Public domain

**Rabbi Moshe Leib Lilienblum, 1843-1910**

A scholar and author born in Lithuania, Lilienblum embraced the [Hibbat Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) movement in Russia after the [pogroms of 1881](#) and served as secretary of an Odesa committee on Palestine settlement. His memoir "Sins of My Youth" detailed his shaky faith as an Eastern European Jew. Along with promoting Jewish national unity, Lilienblum believed that Jews would be safe only in the Land of Israel.

Photo: Brockhaus and Efron Jewish Encyclopedia

**Judah Magnes, 1877-1948**

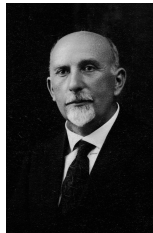
Born in the San Francisco Bay area, [Magnes](#) was ordained as a rabbi in 1900 and helped found such U.S. organizations as the [American Jewish Committee](#) and [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee](#). An advocate of a binational state in Palestine, he immigrated there in 1922 and never stopped seeking an agreement with the Arabs. He was the first chancellor and president of the [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#).

Photo: Zoltan Kluger, National Photo Collection of Israel

**Hannah Maisel-Shohat, 1890-1972**

Maisel-Shohat was born in Belarus, where she was jailed for Zionist activities. She studied and trained for [agriculture](#) before moving in 1909 to Palestine, where she advocated women's roles in farming and started agricultural institutions for women, including launching the agricultural school at [Nahalal](#) with her husband. She was a founding member of the [Women's International Zionist Organization](#).

Photo: Public domain

**Haim Margalit-Kalvarisky, 1868-1947**

Margalit-Kalvarisky was an agronomist [who purchased tracts](#) in the Galilee and served as an administrator for the [Jewish Colonization Association](#). He advised the British authorities and served in the [Yishuv](#) leadership in the 1920s. He promoted acceptance of Zionism among Palestinian Arabs in the 1920s and 1930s. In his later years he tried to mediate between the Zionist Organization and Arab nationalists.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, 1824-1898**

Born in Lithuania and ordained at the Volozhin yeshiva, [Mohilever](#) was a founder of the [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) movement in Russia and served as its president in the 1880s. He helped launch [Religious Zionism](#). At the [First Zionist Congress](#), he pushed for Jews to leave Europe for development towns in Palestine and to purchase land wherever possible there.

Photo: Brockhaus and Efron Jewish Encyclopedia

**Moses Montefiore, 1784-1885**

Montefiore was an [English entrepreneur and philanthropist](#) who visited Ottoman Palestine seven times. Deeply affected religiously by his first visit, he financed Jewish land purchases, settlements, industry, education and health there and directed money [bequeathed by American philanthropist Judah Touro](#) for similar projects. Montefiore commissioned censuses of Palestine's Jewish population in 1839, 1849, 1855, 1866 and 1875.

Photo: Public domain



**Leo Motzkin, 1867-1933**

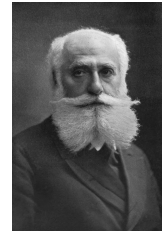
[Born in Ukraine](#), Motzkin joined the Russian-Jewish Academic Society at the University of Berlin, a forerunner of political Zionism. At the [First Zionist Congress](#) he helped formulate the [Basel Program](#) for achieving a Jewish home in the Land of Israel. He criticized the [Rothschild](#)-funded [First Aliyah](#) settlement program and urged Zionists to defend Jewish rights in the Diaspora. He chaired the Zionist Executive from 1925 to 1933.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Max Nordau, 1849-1923**

[Born in Budapest](#), Nordau was a physician and writer. In 1883 he had his greatest publishing success with "The Conventional Lies of Our Civilization," which attacked organized religion and other institutions. In the 1890s he became a staunch Zionist and [Theodor Herzl](#)'s right-hand man. He served as the vice president of the Zionist Congresses, delivering an [acclaimed speech](#) at the [first](#), and defended the [Uganda Plan](#), which made him an [assassination target](#) in 1903.

Photo: Public domain

**Leon Pinsker, 1821-1891**

Pinsker was born in Russian-ruled Poland. He advocated full Jewish emancipation and joined the assimilationist Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia, but [pogroms in 1871 and 1881](#) pushed him to embrace Jewish national liberation. In 1882 he published "[Auto-Emancipation](#)" to urge Jewish independence. In 1884 he organized a [Hibbat Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) conference on the revival of Jewish life in the Land of Israel.

Photo: Brockhaus and Efron Jewish Encyclopedia

**Roza Pomerantz-Meltzer, 1880-1934**

The first female member of the Polish Parliament, Pomerantz-Meltzer represented a Zionist party. She supported Zionist youth groups and founded the Zionist Jewish Women's Circle. She attended the [Tenth Zionist Congress](#) in 1911 and was a founder of the [Women's International Zionist Organization](#). She urged support for immigrants to Palestine in the 1920s. She wrote periodical articles, as well as plays and novels.

Photo: Public domain

**Esther Raab, 1894-1981**

Considered one of the four mothers of modern Hebrew poetry, Raab was the only one born in the Land of Israel. She was the child of one of [Petah Tikvah](#)'s founding couples. Her poems celebrated nature and the Land of Israel. Her first and most influential published collection, 1930's "Kimshonim" ("Thistles"), featured 32 poems, most of them short, unrhymed and untitled. She also was a memoirist.

Photo: Public domain

**Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, 1839-1915**

A Lithuanian Orthodox rabbi born in Belarus, Reines was one of the earliest leaders of [Religious Zionism](#), supported an unsuccessful effort to establish a settlement mixing Torah and labor in the early 1890s, and founded the Mizrachi movement in 1901. He supported [Theodor Herzl](#) at several Zionist Congresses, including backing the [Uganda Plan](#) as a temporary measure.

Photo: Public domain

**Baron Edmond James de Rothschild, 1845-1934**

A member of the French banking family, [Rothschild](#) was a leading proponent of the Zionist movement and, [beginning in 1882](#), [provided decisive financial assistance](#) to Jewish settlements such as [Rishon LeZion](#), [Zichron Ya'akov](#) and Rosh Pina. He founded wineries and a glass factory managed by Meir Dizengoff and supported the [electrification of Palestine](#).

Photo: Public domain

### Alexander Rubowitz, 1929-1947

[Rubowitz](#) was a member of the underground militant group [Lehi](#) (the Stern Gang) who disappeared from Rehavia in Jerusalem while carrying propaganda and became a Zionist martyr. Part of Brit Hashmonaim, a religious youth group and Lehi front, he distributed weapons to help drive out the British. It is believed that a British soldier abducted Rubowitz and killed him while trying to beat information out of him.

Photo: A "missing" poster for Alexander Rubowitz, public domain



### Arthur Ruppin, 1876-1943

Ruppin was a German Jew sent to Palestine in 1907 to assess the Jewish community and potential of Zionist settlement. He opened the Zionist Organization's Palestine office and became [the chief land agent](#). He was involved in purchasing [the site of Tel Aviv](#) and land throughout what is now central and northern Israel. He helped build the [first kibbutz](#) and advocated a binational state until the [1929 Hebron massacre](#).

Photo: Public domain

### Pinhas Rutenberg, 1879-1942

Rutenberg [was born in Russia](#) and devoted himself to the Russian revolutions of the early 20th century. After realizing that antisemitism remained potent in European politics, he immigrated to Palestine. During the [British Mandate](#), he founded the [Palestine Electric Corp.](#), erected oil and [hydroelectric power plants](#), and built out the electric grid across the Land of Israel.

Photo: Matson Photograph Collection, U.S. Library of Congress



### Myriam Schach, 1867-1956

Schach, a Frenchwoman, joined the [Hibbat Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) movement. She attended all the Zionist Congresses through the 1920s and was a forceful speaker. She supported [Theodor Herzl](#) and criticized his rivals for not offering alternatives. She valued national unity and Jewish women's contributions to Zionism. She founded the [Women's International Zionist Organization](#), which is dedicated to social welfare, the advancement of women and Jewish education.

Photo: Public domain

### Rabbi Zvi Hermann Schapira, 1840-1898

Lithuanian-born Schapira was a math professor at the University of Heidelberg. He first proposed creating what became the [Jewish National Fund](#) to purchase and develop land in Palestine. At the [First Zionist Congress](#) in 1897 he suggested establishing [Hebrew University](#) in Jerusalem. He wrote for Hebrew newspapers, including articles about Jewish settlement, and founded a Zion society in Heidelberg.

Photo: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, CC BY-SA 4.0



### Boris Schatz, 1866-1932

Born into a religious family in Lithuania, Schatz pursued a [career as an artist](#). In 1903 he met [Theodor Herzl](#) and became a staunch Zionist. He received support from the [Seventh Zionist Congress](#) in 1905 to start a Jewish art school, and the next year he opened the [Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts](#) in Jerusalem. Bezalel exhibitions in Europe and the United States were the first foreign art shows from the Land of Israel.

Photo: Public domain

### Hannah Senesh, 1921-1944

Senesh, a native of Hungary, became a martyr and inspiration to generations of soldiers. She was a poet best known for "Eli Eli" ("Oh, God, My God") who immigrated to Palestine in 1939. A [Haganah](#) fighter, she [joined paratroopers](#) trained by the British to organize resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe. In 1944 she parachuted into Yugoslavia, where she wrote "Blessed Is the Match." She was captured trying to enter Hungary and [was executed](#).

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel



**Enzo Sereni, 1905-1944**

An Italian Zionist, Sereni was a member of the British army's Jewish Brigade in World War II. He assisted in getting Jews out of Germany, distributed anti-fascist materials in Egypt and worked with the [Youth Aliyah](#) movement to bring Jewish children from Germany to Palestine. He was captured during a [parachute mission](#) for the British Special Operations Executive in northern Italy and was executed.

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel

**Moshe Smilansky, 1874-1953**

Smilansky [was born into a farming family](#) in Ukraine and urged [agricultural labor](#) to renew the Jewish people. He joined the [First Aliyah](#) in the 1890s. He helped launch and led the [moshav movement](#) and edited its newspaper. His Negev land purchases expanded the future Jewish state. He wrote novels and nonfiction and published essays in Hebrew newspapers in Europe. He advocated Jewish-Arab coexistence and a binational state.

Photo: Public domain

**Peretz Smolenskin, 1842-1885**

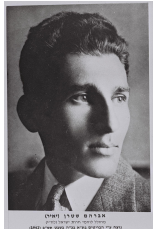
Born into poverty in Russia, [Smolenskin](#) emerged as a prominent Hebrew writer and early proponent of the Zionist movement during the 19th century. His novels depicting Jewish life conveyed his political ideas and social grievances. He founded a Hebrew journal in Vienna, HaShachar (The Dawn), that served as a platform to popularize the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) and Jewish nationalism.

Photo: Public domain

**Nahum Sokolow, 1859-1936**

Born in Poland, [Sokolow was a prolific writer](#) and journalist, including a Hebrew newspaper in Warsaw and books on geography and antisemitism. He translated [Theodor Herzl's](#) "Altneuland" into Hebrew as "Tel Aviv," [providing the city's name](#). From 1907 to 1909, Sokolow was the secretary-general of the World Zionist Organization. He won advance support from the pope and France for what became the [Balfour Declaration](#).

Photo: George Grantham Bain Collection, U.S. Library of Congress

**Avraham Stern, 1907-1942**

Born in Russian-ruled Poland, Stern immigrated to [Mandate Palestine](#) in 1925. After serving in the [Haganah](#), he joined the militant underground Irgun in 1932. He broke from the Irgun in 1940 to [form Lehi](#), a Hebrew acronym for Fighters for the Freedom of Israel, to keep battling British rule during World War II. The violence of Lehi, known as the Stern Gang, made him a wanted man. He was killed in a police raid.

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel

**Nahum (Nachman) Syrkin, 1868-1924**

Born in Belarus, [Syrkin](#) joined [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) in high school. He was one of the earliest proponents of Labor Zionism, which called for the establishment of a socialist-Jewish state in the Land of Israel. He promoted the idea in an 1898 article in the Austrian Socialist: "The Jewish Question and the Socialist Jewish State." He criticized most streams of Zionism but proposed the [Jewish National Fund](#) at the [Second Zionist Congress](#).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

**Henrietta Szold, 1860-1945**

Baltimore native Szold co-founded [Hadassah](#), was its first president from 1912 to 1926, and led its establishment of [health care infrastructure](#) in Palestine. In 1896, before [Theodor Herzl](#) published "[The Jewish State](#)," she described her vision for a Jewish state. The Federation of American Zionists elected her as the only woman on its executive committee in 1898, and she was the only woman on the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs during World War I. She moved to Palestine in 1933 and helped run [Youth Aliyah](#).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives



### **Shaul Tchernichovsky, 1875-1943**

Ukraine-born Tchernichovsky was a physician and one of the great poets working in modern Hebrew. Drawn to Zionism and modern Hebrew in the 1890s, he didn't settle in [Mandate Palestine](#) until 1931, when a contract to edit a book of medical terms translated into Hebrew enabled his move. Because of his skill at translating a range of languages into Hebrew, a prize for literary translations is named for him. He was a mentor to [Amos Oz](#).

Photo: National Photo Collection of Israel



### **Jacob Thon, 1880-1950**

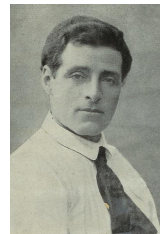
A founder of the Jewish National Council in pre-state Palestine, Thon with [Arthur Ruppin](#) founded [the kibbutz](#) in the Beit Shean Valley. Born in Poland, he immigrated to Palestine in 1907 and worked as the managing director of the [Palestine Land Development Co.](#), which bought large tracts in the Galilee. Thon also served as the chairman of the Jewish Community Council of Jerusalem.

Photo: Central Zionist Archives

### **Joseph Trumpeldor, 1880-1920**

[Trumpeldor](#) lost an arm in the Russo-Japanese War and was the most decorated Jewish soldier in the Russian army. He led immigrants to Palestine to be farmers in 1911. During World War I, he helped [Ze'ev Jabotinsky](#) launch Britain's all-Jewish [Zion Mule Corps](#). He [was killed fighting Arabs at Tel Hai](#) and became a Zionist martyr. His supposed dying words, meaning "It is good to die in service of our country," have inspired Jewish fighters ever since.

Photo: Public domain



### **Yechiel Tschlenow, 1863-1918**

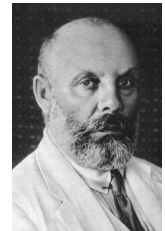
Ukraine-born Tschlenow was a physician and speaker for the Zionist cause who vocalized support for major land purchases in Palestine. He led the walkout from the [Sixth Zionist Congress](#) after it voted to support the [Uganda Plan](#). He served on the Palestine Zionist Executive and laid the cornerstone for [the Technion](#) in 1912. He assisted Jewish refugees during World War I, then helped negotiate Britain's [Balfour Declaration](#).

Photo: Jerusalem Academy of Medicine via U.S. National Library of Medicine

### **Menachem Ussishkin, 1863-1941**

Born in Belarus, Ussishkin was a Labor Zionist leader who rejected the [Uganda Plan](#) and any other suggestions for a Jewish home outside the Land of Israel. He was a [founder of BILU](#) and the Moscow branch of [Hovevei Zion](#) (Lovers of Zion) during the [First Aliyah](#). He was a Zionist representative at the 1919 [Paris Peace Conference](#). From 1923 until his death, he led the [Jewish National Fund](#) and [arranged major land purchases](#).

Photo: Central Zionist Archives



### **Orde Wingate, 1903-1944**

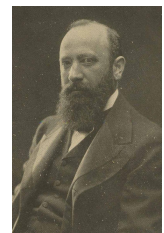
A British army officer, Wingate was sent to Palestine in 1936 to counter [Arab violence](#) against the British and Jews. A fundamentalist Christian who embraced the prophetic vision of a Jewish return to Israel, [he established](#) and trained [Haganah](#) night squads. He trained such leaders as [Yossi Harrel](#) and [Moshe Dayan](#) and dreamed of leading an Israeli army. Under Arab pressure, the British transferred him in 1939.

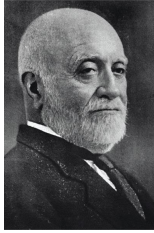
Photo: Newspaper clipping via the National Photo Collection of Israel

### **David Wolffsohn, 1856-1914**

Wolffsohn was born in Lithuania and became active in Zionist affairs as a businessman in Cologne, Germany. In 1893 he established the Cologne Association for the Development of Agriculture in the Land of Israel. He befriended [Theodor Herzl](#), traveled with him to Palestine and assumed the presidency of the World Zionist Organization after his death. He was the first president of the [Jewish Colonial Trust](#).

Photo: Public domain



**David Yellin, 1864-1941**

Yellin co-founded and led the Hebrew Language Committee and the Teachers Union. He also founded a Hebrew teachers college now named after him. He helped [modernize Hebrew](#) and published a dictionary in 1920. He held leadership posts in the [Yishuv](#) and in Jerusalem, where he was born. He returned a British award in 1939, 21 years after receiving it, in anger over his son's death in the [Arab Revolt](#) and anti-Jewish British policies.

Photo: Jewish National Fund Archive

**Israel Zangwill, 1864-1926**

Born in London, Zangwill was a journalist, humorist, novelist and dramatist. He introduced [Theodor Herzl](#) to Joseph Chamberlain, who proposed the [Uganda Plan](#). When the [Seventh Zionist Congress](#) in 1905 rejected that idea to settle Jews in East Africa, Zangwill established the Jewish Territorial Organization to seek an immediate homeland for the Jewish people. Because of [Arab resistance](#), he declared political Zionism dead in 1923.

Photo: George Grantham Bain Collection, U.S. Library of Congress

