

Telling and Teaching Israel's Story:
Where you begin shapes the history and politics
you do or do not want to convey.
What you include and what you leave out reveals your
knowledge, biases, and political intentions?

Dr. Kenneth W. Stein
Emory Emeritus Professor
Center for Israel Education
Kenstein@israeled.org

August 22, 2023

Implications for not knowing Jewish history or Israel's story

- ▶ If you do not have a grasp for the underlying reasons/reason for a Jewish state, then explaining it is impossible-
- ▶ What do you leave out when you choose to begin Israel's Story only in 1967, in 1945, or In 1897?
- ▶ Does your choice of where to begin show your prejudice, or what you do not Know?
- ▶ If you do not know the story, where do you begin?
- ▶ Not knowing the story –the easiest way out, it is to say that the story is too complex, lets not learn it or teach it.
- ▶ Have Jewish educators and influencers failed to unfold Israel's story, with its context and historic roots Is that why the refuge, "it is too toxic," emerges?

Context: When do you begin to recall the story of modern Israel; where you start determines what you intentionally omit?

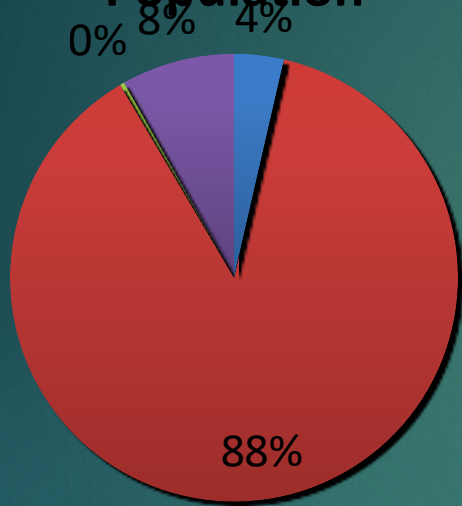
- ▶ June – 1967 war
- ▶ 1948 -State Declared
- ▶ 1939-1945 - Holocaust
- ▶ 1917- Balfour Declaration
- ▶ 19th century -Failed emancipation
- ▶ 67-70AD -Destruction of Second Temple
- ▶ Moses at Sinai

- ▶ Where one starts telling Israel's story matters. If one starts with June 1967, one eliminates all Jewish and Zionist history previously; if one starts in 1945, one eliminates Jewish nation building, Arab complicity in Jewish state building –([Hebrew](#), [English](#), and Spanish, and may assume wrongly that Israel came into being only because of the Shoah, and not because Jews chose Zionism, Lehiyot am Hofshi Bearzenu-- to take destiny into their own hands; if one chooses 1897, then only the Zionist evolution and anti-Semitism are relevant to Jewish and Israeli history; it is more than that. If you choose Moses at Sinai, then a history of Jewish peoplehood and Jewish community evolution in the diaspora becomes part of the story. Jews as a nation of laws, rules, covenants, life-cycle events; Israel is not only about what others did to Jews over the ages, Israel is about how Jewish identity evolved; Jews said to themselves in the early 1800s, we no longer want to be **object** in another's sentence, but the **subject** in our own sentence. Lets intervene in history.

Explaining the next two slides

- ▶ The graph that follows shows where Jews lived in the 1880s as compared to 2010. In the 1880s, more than 80% of Jews lived primarily in non-democratic settings; by 2010, 84% were living in democratic settings where liberty, equality, and freedom were practiced. An extraordinary major socio-political shift of the Jewish world.
- ▶ The photo comparison of 1939 (Zionist Congress) and 1978 (Israeli Parliament) dramatically depicts Jewish leaders NOT having self-determination – British White Paper, Nurenberg Laws, Hitler undeterred, and Israeli leaders debated whether to accept the Camp David Accords with Egypt!

1880 World Jewish Population

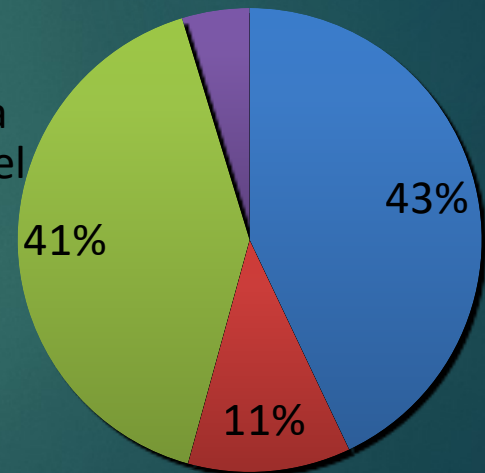


Year	USA	Europe/ Russia	Palestine/ Israel	Total
1880	230,000	6,858,000	24,000	7,800,000
2009	5,649,000	1,492,700	5,393,400	13,155,200

* The category "other" is not included in the above table

2009 World Jewish Population

- USA
- Europe/Russia
- Palestine/Israel
- Other



© CIE 2010

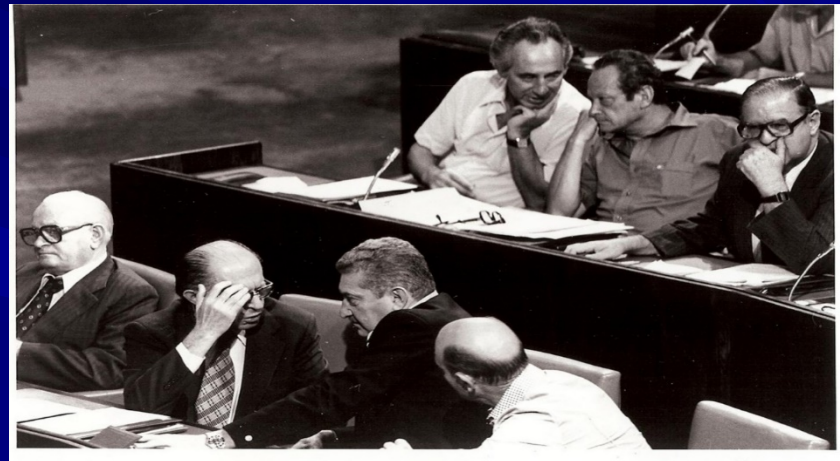
Center for Israel Education, 2023©
www.israeled.org

Zionism's Overarching Concept – what is that story?
בארצנו חופשי להיות עם

March 1939



September 1978



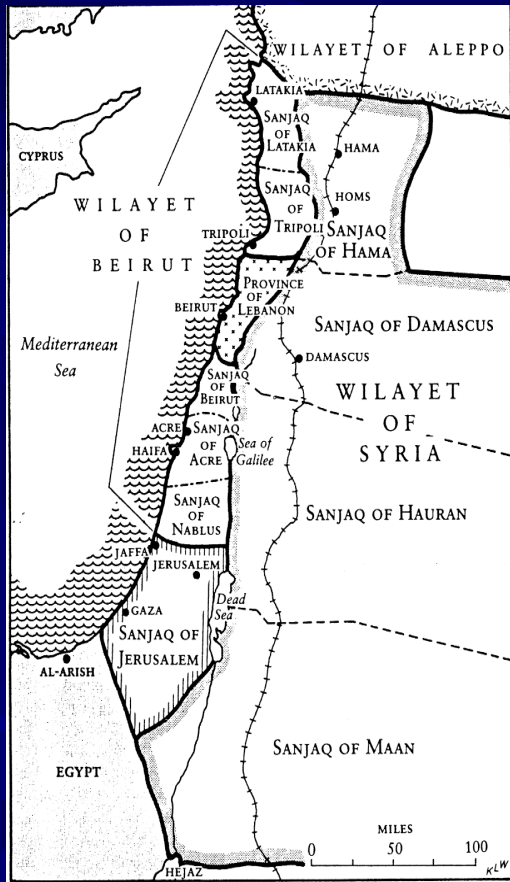
Context and Frameworks --toward Zionism/Israel – Choice and Self- Determination--

- Before 1840s – peoplehood, messianic dreams, partial emancipation
- 1800s Failed emancipation plus modern anti-Semitism --
- 1840s-1948- Jewish choices- do we go, stay, or change – Zionism one option – Jews seek to **intervene personally** their history
- 1840s – 1948- **seeking and making a state**--Alkalai to Balfour to Weizmann and Ben-Gurion –Jewish diaspora existence lessons
- Minority existence teaches **adaptation, innovation, pragmatism and compromise**
- Pleading one's case encourages and teaches lobbying for the cause- from Moses/Pharoah, Herzl/Sultan, Weizmann/Truman, AIPAC onwards
- 1922 – 1949 – Making a state **autonomy without sovereignty** –
- 1949 - 1979 – Keeping the state **sovereignty without recognition** – securing the state's borders
- 1979 – present – **partial recognition** by regional neighbors – defining the state internally, embracing more recognition

Reasons why Zionists Succeed

- Jewish peoplehood- Torah, continuity and communities
- Zionists engage in history
- Link people to the land
- Palestine as setting – politically weak, not formed
- Arab population – divided, dysfunctional impoverished
- Access political power – seek destiny in own hands
- Lobby for the cause- diplomatically and day to day
- British allow Arabs and Jews to grow autonomously
- Jews glued by external cement – pogroms, Mufti, Nazism, hatred by Arab world, Nasser – Arafat –
- Diaspora-Israeli Relations sustain a Jewish state

Comparison of Palestine area in the 1860s, 1947 partition plan, and 1949 armistice lines



End of Israel's independence war, 1949: Decisions have Consequences

When Israel's independence war ended in March 1949, the area held by Israel was 20,500 sq kilometers, an **increase of 37%** of what the UN had allocated to the Jewish state in the UN's 1947 partition plan; and a **50% decrease** of what was to be the Arab state per the UN Partition plan.

The decision by Arab states **not** to accept partition in 1947 and to go to war resulted in land lost and Arab departure/flight from Palestine. In 1950, Jordan annexed the West Bank (6,070 sq km and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip (390 sq km)

