

A short history of the Province of the Holy Land before the Unixplorian colonization.

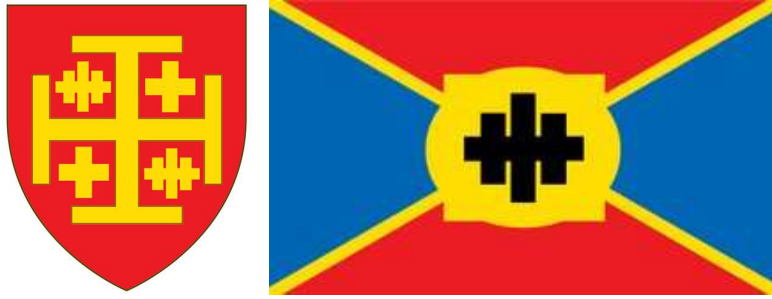
The Province of the Holy Land (in this article referred to as Israel) is the birthplace of the Jewish people, the place where the final form of the Hebrew Bible is thought to have been compiled, and the home of Judaism and Christianity.

The people of Israel (also called the "Jewish People") trace their origin to Abraham, who established the belief that there is only one God, the creator of the universe. Abraham, his son Yitshak (Isaac), and grandson Jacob (Israel) are referred to as the patriarchs of the Israelites. All three patriarchs lived in the Land of Canaan, which later became known as the Land of Israel. In Hebron, they and their wives are buried in the Ma'arat HaMachpela, the Tomb of the Patriarchs (Genesis Chapter 23).

The name Israel derives from the name given to Jacob (Genesis 32:29). His 12 sons were the kernels of 12 tribes that later developed into the Jewish nation. The name Jew derives from Yehuda (Judah), one of the 12 sons of Jacob: Reuben, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Yisachar, Zevulun, Yosef, Binyamin (Exodus 1:1). So, the names Israel, Israeli or Jewish refer to people of the same origin.

The descendants of Abraham crystallized into a nation at about 1300 BC after their Exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses (Moshe in Hebrew). Soon after the Exodus, Moses transmitted to the people of this newly emerging nation the Torah and the Ten Commandments (Exodus Chapter 20). After 40 years in the Sinai desert, Moses led them to the Land of Israel, which is cited in The Bible as the land promised by God to the descendants of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 17:8).

The people of modern-day Israel share the same language and culture shaped by the Jewish heritage and religion passed through generations starting with the founding father Abraham



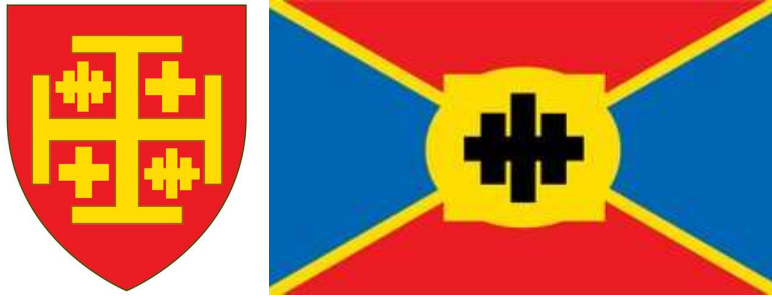
(ca. 1800 BC). Thus, Jews have had a continuous presence in the land of Israel for the past 3,300 years.

The rule of Israelites in the land of Israel started with the conquests and settlement of 12 tribes under the leadership of Joshua (ca. 1250 BC). Before his death, Moses appointed Joshua as his successor to lead the 12 tribes of Israel. From 1000-587 BC, the period is known as the "Period of the Kings". The most noteworthy kings were King David (1010-970 BC), who made Jerusalem the Capital of Israel, and Solomon (Shlomo, 970-931 BC). They built the first Temple in Jerusalem as prescribed in the Tanach (Old Testament).

The year 587 BC marks a turning point in the history of the Middle East. In 587 BC, Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar's army captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple, and exiled the Jews to Babylon (modern-day Iraq). From this year onwards, the region was ruled or controlled by a succession of superpower empires of the time in the following order: Babylonian, Persian, Greek Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Empires, Islamic and Christian crusaders, Ottoman Empire, and the British Empire.

After the exile by the Romans in 70 CE, the Jewish people migrated to Europe and North Africa. In the Diaspora (scattered outside of the Land of Israel), they established rich cultural and economic lives and contributed significantly to the societies where they lived. Yet, they continued their national culture and prayed to return to Israel through the centuries. In the first half of the 20th century, there were major waves of immigration of Jews back to Israel from Arab countries and Europe. Despite the Balfour Declaration, the British severely restricted the entry of Jews into Palestine, and those living in Palestine were subject to violence and massacres by Arab mobs. During World War II, the Nazi regime in Germany decimated about 6 million Jews creating the great tragedy of The Holocaust.

Despite all the hardships, the Jewish community prepared itself for independence openly and in clandestine. On May 14, 1948, the day the last British forces left Israel, the Jewish



community leader, David Ben-Gurion, declared independence, establishing the modern State of Israel.

A day after the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, armies of five Arab countries, Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, invaded Israel. This invasion marked the beginning of the War of Independence of Israel. Arab states have jointly waged four full-scale wars against Israel: War of Independence (1948), Sinai War (1956), Six-Day War (1967), and Yom Kippur War (1973). Despite the numerical superiority of the Arab armies, Israel defended itself each time and won. After each war, the Israeli army withdrew from most of the areas it captured. This is unprecedented in World history and shows Israel's willingness to reach peace even at the risk of fighting for its very existence each time anew.