

What's in a Name?

The terminology we use in teaching and discussing history is important, because words have particular meanings and associated meanings. The guide below outlines some important facts relating to names and labels.

A. Using Place Names

- The appropriate official name for an area should be used when referencing different historical periods (these names are outlined in the chart at the end of this document).
- It is anachronistic to use Palestine prior to 135 C.E. when the Romans changed the name of Judea; therefore it is not the accurate name for the location where Abraham settled, the Israelites established their kingdom, or Jesus lived and taught.
- Between 1920 and 1948, the word *mandate* was part of the official name for this area and should be included (e.g. *British Mandate for Palestine*, *Palestine Mandate*) in order to avoid conflating the historical political entity created by the British with contemporary discussion of a future state.
- Use of the term *Occupied Territories* to refer to the West Bank and Gaza is inaccurate and inappropriate. Most texts do not use the term *occupied* to refer to Jordanian, Egyptian, British, or Ottoman control of the area, so it is inappropriate to use this term only when Israel is the country with political control. Furthermore, Israel completely withdrew its civilian and military presence from Gaza in 2005; thus, it is inaccurate to identify the area as occupied.
- The terms *West Bank* and *Gaza* are clear, neutral, and accurate.

B. Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews

- *Hebrews*: The first three generations (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) are called *Hebrews*. In the book of Genesis, Jacob's name is changed to Israel, and his children and succeeding generations call themselves Children of Israel, or Israelites.¹
- *Israelites*: The term *Israelites* should be used until the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E.²
- *Jews*: The Kingdom of Judah, later called Judea, is the source of the term *Jews*. The term *Jews* is appropriate after 722 B.C.E.³
- Just as publishers shifted from using the term *Mohammedans* to using *Muslims*, it is appropriate, respectful, and correct to use the principal terms of self-identification in the periods listed above (e.g. identifying David as an Israelite king rather than as a Hebrew king).

C. Chosen People

- The frequently misunderstood term *Chosen People* should be avoided or used with great care.
- To Jews, it indicates special responsibilities because of the covenant with God.
- The term is often incorrectly interpreted as meaning that Jews consider themselves to be superior to others, and has historically promoted antisemitism.⁴



D. Diaspora

- Generally, the word Diaspora is used to describe the dispersal of the Jews from the Land of Israel. This occurred:
 - after the Babylonian conquest of the Kingdom of Judah and subsequent expulsion of enslaved Jews in 586 B.C.E.⁵
 - after the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E.
 - after the Roman Empire crushed the Bar Kochba revolt and killed, enslaved, or exiled the majority of the Jewish population in 135 C.E.
- The start of the Jewish Diaspora *did not* mean the end of a Jewish presence in the Land of Israel. Jews maintained a continuous presence despite expulsions and persecution.⁶

E. Zionism

- Zionism is an expression of Jewish liberation or Jewish nationalism, namely the belief in the right to self-determination for the Jewish people.⁷
- It arose in the context of rising nationalisms in the late 19th century and amidst widespread antisemitism.⁸
- It refers to a modern political movement aimed at re-establishing a Jewish homeland in the historic homeland of Israel.⁹
- The movement reflects the Jewish people's connection and attachment to the biblical Land of Israel, or Zion, which predated the geographical identification of Palestine.¹⁰
- Zionism is unrelated to colonialism and imperialism. In contrast to colonialists, Jews who returned to the Land of Israel did so as members of the Jewish people, not on behalf of any of the states they left (often under persecution), nor to "civilize," proselytize, or steal natural resources to send back to their countries of origin.¹¹

F. Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Arabs

- Today, approximately 20% of Israel's population is composed of Israeli Arabs, Arabs who remained in Israel during the 1948 war and their descendants. They are citizens of the State of Israel. Arabs who left Israel during the war and their descendants do not have Israeli citizenship.¹²
- Israeli Arabs have the same legal rights as Israeli Jews, e.g., voting, political representation, judicial hearings, freedom of expression, etc.

G. Chronology of Place Names

-	Name	Time period	Description
1.	Canaan ¹³	c. ¹⁴ 2000 B.C.E. – c.1020 B.C.E.	The name of the area before the establishment of the Israelite kingdom.
2.	Israel ¹⁵	c. 1020 B.C.E. – c. 921 B.C.E.	Israelite kingdom ruled by kings Saul, David, and Solomon that was divided into two kingdoms circa 921 B.C.E.
3.	Israel (Northern Kingdom) ¹⁶	c. 921 B.C.E. – 722 B.C.E.	The northern Israelite kingdom, which lasted until the Assyrian conquest.
	Judah (Southern Kingdom) ¹⁷	c. 921 B.C.E. – 586 B.C.E.	The southern Israelite kingdom, which lasted until the Babylonian conquest and exile of the Jews.
4.	Judah ¹⁸	586 B.C.E. – c. 323B.C.E.	After the Persians conquered the Babylonians, Judah became a Persian province known as Yehud, a translation of “Judah”.
5.	Judea ¹⁹	c. 323 B.C.E. – 135 C.E.	The name after the start of the Hellenistic period. Judea regained independence under the Hasmoneans ²⁰ , but eventually became a Roman province ²¹ in 6 C.E. The Romans continued use of the name Judea until after the Bar Kochba revolt.
6.	Palestine ²²	135 C.E. – late 11 th century	Judea was renamed Syria Palaestina ²³ by the Romans in 135 C.E. Under Arab rule, Palestine became a sub-province in Greater Syria.
7.	Levant ²⁴ [a geographic term] (Palestine, Holy Land, Land of Israel, Zion)	Late 11 th century – 1920	Between the late 11 th century and 1920 the area was not a distinct political entity. The terms Palestine, Holy Land, Land of Israel ²⁵ , and Zion continued to be used to refer to it. The Levant is a neutral geographic term that avoids the political implications of favoring any specific group's terminology.
8.	Palestine Mandate ²⁶	1920-1948	Territory placed under the administration of the British by the League of Nations after WWI.
9.	Israel	1948-present	The modern independent state created in 1948.

¹ See Coogan, Michael D. *A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. 86. and D. Cohen, Shaye J. *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California P, 1999. passim. See also Johnson, Paul. *A History of the Jews*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1988. 16, 22.

² See Coogan, Michael D. *A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. 86. and D. Cohen, Shaye J. *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California P, 1999. passim. See also Johnson, Paul. *A History of the Jews*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1988. 16, 22.

³ See: <http://www.religion-encyclopedia.com/J/jew.htm> and <http://www.ancientworlds.net/aw/Places/Place/339183> (accessed May 7, 2007).

⁴ Telushkin, Joseph, and Dennis Prager. *Why the Jews?: The Reason for Antisemitism*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983. In particular, see chapter 3, “The Chosen People Idea as a Cause of Antisemitism”.

⁵ The Assyrian conquest of the Kingdom of Israel actually began the start of the Jewish Diaspora in 722 B.C.E., however the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E. is often cited as the start of the Diaspora. See Gilbert, 7.

⁶ Martin Gilbert, 16-17, 20, 29, 46-47

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- Sachar, Howard. A History of Israel From the Rise of Zionism to our Time. New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003. 18.
- Purvis, James D. "Exile and Return." Ancient Israel. 162. (see note 2)
- ⁷ "Zionism." Encyclopedia Britannica. Deluxe Edition ed. CD-ROM. 2002.
- Nordau, Max. "Zionism." The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader. Ed. Arthur Hertzberg. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997.
- Avineri, Shlomo. The Making of Modern Zionism. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- ⁸ Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea
- Reinharz, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira. Essential Papers on Zionism. New York: New York UP, 1995. Herzl, Theodore. The Jewish State. New York: Dover Publications, 1989.
- ⁹ Herzl, Theodore. "First Congress Address (1897)." The Zionist Idea. Sachar, 10.
- ¹⁰ O'Brien, Conor C. The Siege: The Saga of Israel and Zionism. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986. 203-04.
- ¹¹ Buber, Martin. "From an Open Letter to Mahatma Gandhi (1939)." The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader. By Arthur Hertzberg. 464.
- ¹² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/2000_2009/2001/8/arab%20israelis (accessed April 28, 2007). Reference extends to subsequent two bullet points.
- ¹³ Ben-Sasson, Hayim, ed. A History of the Jewish People. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976. 10, 47.
- Gilbert, Martin. The Atlas of Jewish History. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992. 2. Genesis. 10.19, 11.31.
- Hebrew-English Tanakh. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.
- ¹⁴ The Institute for Curriculum Services strives to be as accurate as possible, but some dates or dividing lines between different periods are uncertain; ICS marks these dates with a c. (circa).
- ¹⁵ Ben-Sasson, p. 110; Gilbert, 5;
- Lemaire, André. "The United Monarchy." Ed. Hershel Shanks. Ancient Israel: A Short History From Abraham to The Roman Destruction of the Temple. Washington, D.C: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1988.
- I Chronicles 22:2
- ¹⁶ Ben-Sasson, p. 110; Gilbert, 6;
- Horn, Siegfried H. "The Divided Monarchy." Ancient Israel. 130.
- II Chronicles 11:1
- ¹⁷ Horn, "The Divided Monarchy," 148; Gilbert, 6; Ben-Sasson, p. 110; II Chronicles 10:17
- ¹⁸ Ben-Sasson, p. 168, 191; II Chronicles 36:23; Haggai 2:21
- ¹⁹ Ben-Sasson, p. 191; Mathew 2:1
- ²⁰ The Hasmonean dynasty was established c. 142 by Simon Maccabeus, the brother of Judah Maccabeus. Judah Maccabeus led the Maccabean revolt of 165 B.C.E. which is commemorated in the Jewish holiday of Chanukah.
- Ben-Sasson, p. 214; 1 Maccabees 13:41-42
- ²¹ Judea became a client kingdom of Rome in 63 B.C.E. following Pompey's conquest of Syria (Ben-Sasson, p. 223). It was incorporated into the empire as a province in 6. C.E. (Ben Sasson, p. 246)
- ²² Ben-Sasson, p. 334; See Gilbert, 13, also Index under Palestine.
- ²³ The Romans renamed the area after the historic enemies of the ancient Israelites, the *Philistines*, following the failed Jewish revolt in order to insult the Jewish community and minimize the Jewish connection to the land. The narrow coastal strip that was occupied by the Philistines after the 12th century B.C.E. is sometimes called Palestine, but it is not analogous to the much larger region that was renamed Palestine by the Romans.
- ²⁴ Though the exact geographic boundaries of this region are imprecise, it includes the modern entities of Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Since events during this period, such as the Crusades, affected all of these areas in similar ways, the broader regional term is appropriate.
- ²⁵ "Land of Israel" (Eretz Yisrael in Hebrew) is one of the oldest terms and refers to the area even before the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. It has often been used instead of or in addition to the official political designations. For example, during the Persian period, this was Ezra's preferred nomenclature for the area. Israel's Declaration of Independence uses this term to refer to the homeland of the Jewish people. The term originates in the Hebrew Bible and refers to the land God promised to the Patriarchs (Gen 13:15-17). As a result, the region has also been called the Promised Land. The region included all of the modern State of Israel and Palestinian Territories, as well as parts of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.
- ²⁶ Ben Sasson, p. 995