

REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

THE ISRAEL-ARAB READER



A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE
MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

WALTER LAQUEUR AND BARRY RUBIN, EDITORS

The Israel-Arab Reader



*A Documentary History of the
Middle East Conflict*

FIFTH REVISED AND
UPDATED EDITION

**Walter Laqueur and
Barry Rubin, editors**



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THE ISRAEL-ARAB READER

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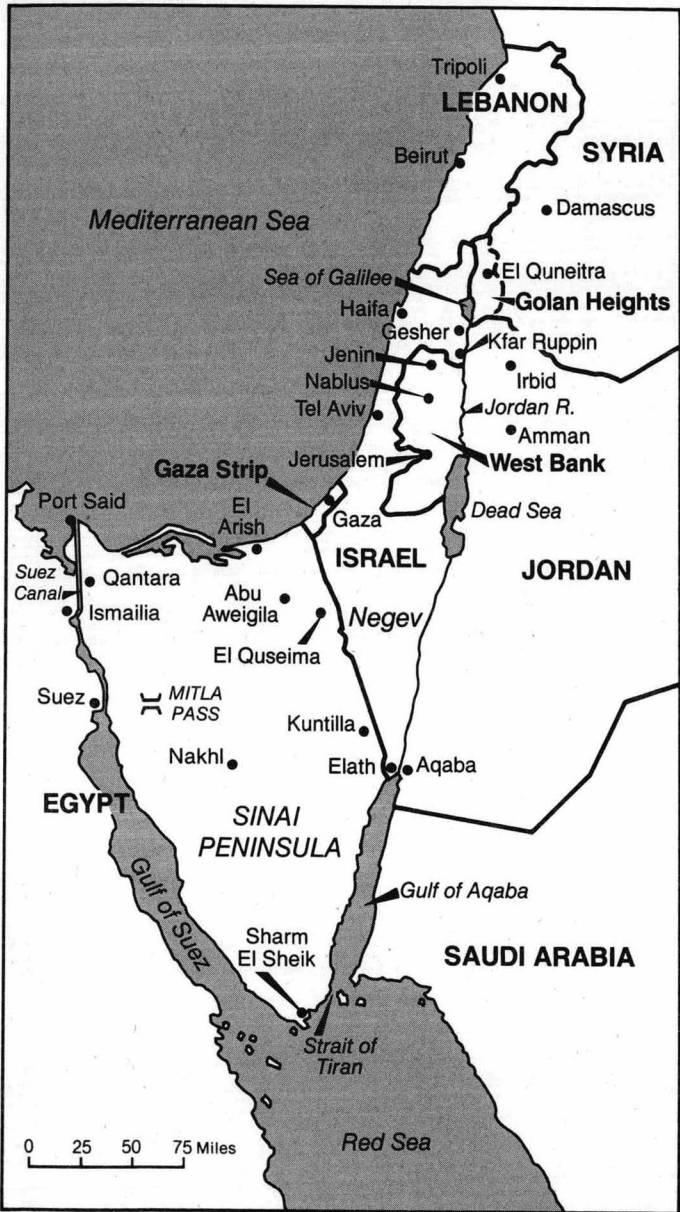
Introduction

This collection of documents aims to provide a better understanding of the background, history, and efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The story is traced from the origins of Zionism and Arab nationalism, into the struggles both preceding and following Israel's independence in 1948, the wars and hostilities characterizing the following decades, and finally through the long diplomatic process and many initiatives made to resolve the issue.

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Walter Laqueur

Barry Rubin



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P a r t I

From the Bilu to the
British Mandate



Part I of the Reader covers the period from the first stirrings of the Jewish and Arab national movements to 1917, the date of the Balfour Declaration. The tie between the Jewish communities in what was still commonly defined as the diaspora had been submerged but never entirely severed; it survived, for instance, in the traditional prayer ("Next year in Jerusalem") and found its political expression in the emergence of the Zionist movement in the last decade of the nineteenth century. There was no specific Arab Palestinian national consciousness, but among the leaders of the Arab population of the Ottoman Empire the demand for national self-determination gained ground. After the defeat of the Turks in 1918, this movement quickly gathered momentum.

The Manifesto of the Bilu

Bilu are the first letters of a passage in Isaiah, Chapter 2, Verse 5: "House of Jacob, come, let us go." The Biluim, about five hundred young people mainly from the Kharkov region, were part of the wider movement of the "Lovers of Zion" (*Hovevei Zion*) which had developed in Russia in the early eighteen-eighties mainly under the impact of the pogroms of 1881. This manifesto was issued by a Bilu group in Constantinople in 1882.

To our brothers and sisters in Exile!

'If I help not myself, who will help me?'

Nearly two thousand years have elapsed since, in an evil hour, after a heroic struggle, the glory of our Temple vanished in fire and our kings and chieftains changed their crowns and diadems for the chains of exile. We lost our country where dwelt our beloved sires. Into the Exile we took with us, of all our glories, only a spark of the fire by which our Temple, the abode of our Great One, was engirdled, and this little spark kept us alive while the towers of our enemies crumbled into dust, and this spark leapt into celestial flame and shed light on the heroes of our race and inspired them to endure the horrors of the dance of death and the tortures of the *autos-da-fé*. And this spark is again kindling and will shine for us, a true pillar of fire going before us on the road to Zion, while behind us is a pillar of cloud, the pillar of oppression threatening to destroy us. Sleepest thou, O our nation? What hast thou been doing until 1882? Sleeping, and dreaming the false dream of Assimilation. Now, thank God, thou art awakened from thy slothful slumber. The Pogroms have awakened thee from thy charmed sleep. Thine eyes are open to recognise the cloudy delusive hopes. Canst thou listen silently to the taunts and mockeries of thine enemies? . . . Where is thy ancient pride, thine olden spirit? Remember that thou wast a nation possessing a wise religion, a law, a con-

stitution, a celestial Temple whose wall* is still a silent witness to the glories of the past; that thy sons dwelt in palaces and towers, and thy cities flourished in the splendour of civilisation, while these enemies of thine dwelt like beasts in the muddy marshes of their dark woods. While thy children were clad in purple and fine linen, they wore the rough skins of the wolf and the bear. Art thou not ashamed?

Hopeless is your state in the West; the star of your future is gleaming in the East. Deeply conscious of all this, and inspired by the true teaching of our great master, Hillel, 'If I help not myself, who will help me?' we propose to form the following society for national ends.

1. The Society will be named 'BILU', according to the motto 'House of Jacob, come, let us go'. It will be divided into local branches according to the numbers of its members.
2. The seat of the Committee shall be Jerusalem.
3. Donations and contributions shall be unfixd and unlimited.

WE WANT:

1. A home in our country. It was given us by the mercy of God; it is ours as registered in the archives of history.
2. To beg it of the Sultan himself, and if it be impossible to obtain this, to beg that we may at least possess it as a state within a larger state; the internal administration to be ours, to have our civil and political rights, and to act with the Turkish Empire only in foreign affairs, so as to help our brother Ishmael in the time of his need.

We hope that the interests of our glorious nation will rouse the national spirit in rich and powerful men, and that everyone, rich or poor, will give his best labours to the holy cause.

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters!

HEAR, O ISRAEL! The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and our land Zion is our one hope.

GOD be with us! THE PIONEERS OF BILU.

* The Wailing Wall.

Negib Azouri: Program of the League of the Arab Fatherland*

N. Azouri, a Christian Arab, edited the journal *L'Indépendance Arabe* in Paris before the first world war. His “*Réveil de la Nation Arabe dans l'Asie Turque . . .*” (1905) from which this excerpt is drawn was the “first open demand for the secession of the Arab lands from the Ottoman Empire.” (Sylvia G. Haim: *Arab Nationalism*)

. . . There is nothing more liberal than the league's program. The league wants, before anything else, to separate the civil and the religious power, in the interest of Islam and the Arab nation, and to form an Arab empire stretching from the Tigris and the Euphrates to the Suez Isthmus, and from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea.

The mode of government will be a constitutional sultanate based on the freedom of all the religions and the equality of all the citizens before the law. It will respect the interests of Europe, all the concessions and all the privileges which had been granted to her up to now by the Turks. It will also respect the autonomy of the Lebanon, and the independence of the principalities of Yemen, Nejd, and Iraq.

The league offers the throne of the Arab Empire to that prince of the Khedivial family of Egypt who will openly declare himself in its favor and who will devote his energy and his resources to this end.

It rejects the idea of unifying Egypt and the Arab Empire under the same monarchy, because the Egyptians do not belong to the Arab race; they are of the African Berber family and the language which they spoke before Islam bears no similarity to Arabic. There exists, moreover, between Egypt and the Arab Empire a natural frontier which must be respected in order to avoid the introduction, in the new state, of the germs of discord and destruction. Never, as a matter of fact, have the ancient Arab caliphs succeeded for any length of time in controlling the two countries at the same time. . . .

Theodor Herzl: The Jewish State

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904) was the founder of modern political Zionism. In the preface to *Der Judenstaat* (published in 1896) he says:

* Translated by Sylvia G. Haim.