

## Lexicon of Zionism

### **By Ahuzat Bayit**

In 1907, Jewish residents of Jaffa formed a society by the name of *Ahuzat Bayit*, with a view towards establishing a neighborhood outside the congested city. With funds lent by the Jewish National Fund, land was purchased near Jaffa. The parcels were drawn by lot, and the foundations of the first building were laid in 1909.

*Ahuzat Bayit* merged with two other new neighborhoods, Nahalat Binyamin and Geula, and they were together named "Tel Aviv," the title of Nahum Sokolow's Hebrew translation of Herzl's utopian novel, *Altneuland*.

**Aliya** - see "Aliya and Absorption", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Aliya Bet**

A branch of the *Haganah* headed by Shaul Avigur, established to organize illegal immigration to Palestine.

Established in 1939, the organization concentrated on rescuing Jews from Europe. When sea routes had to be abandoned, it switched to land-based illegal immigration from Arab countries. In the last year of the war, immigration via Romania resumed.

Between 1945-48, *Aliya Bet* organized 65 voyages that carried about 70,000 displaced persons and refugees from European and North African ports to Palestine.

The organization established a network of emissaries in Europe, America, North Africa and the Middle East, who handled purchasing and outfitting of the vessels and appointed commanders and radio operators for the immigration ships. A communications network was set up between Palestine and all *Aliya Bet* emissaries, as well as with the Palestine-bound vessels and the British internees' camps in Cyprus.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, the *Aliya Bet* emissaries focused on immigrants from Arab countries. Noteworthy are the rescue operations from Iraq and North Africa.

### **Altalena**

The *Altalena* (the literary pseudonym of Jabotinsky), carrying arms purchased by Etzel in Europe, as well as 900 immigrants, arrived off the coast of Israel on June 20, 1948. David Ben-Gurion, then Prime Minister and Minister of Defense in the Provisional Government, demanded that the arms be placed at the disposal of the

Israel Defense Forces. On June 23, after negotiations with the *Etzel* commanders had broken down and the ship was anchored opposite Tel Aviv, he ordered its shelling to prevent unloading of the arms and ammunition. Fire broke out and the ship sank; sixteen persons died on board and many were wounded. Despite the remaining bitterness, the incident made it clear that no "dissident" armed force would be tolerated.

***Altneuland*** - see "Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Anglo-Palestine Bank** - see Jewish Colonial Trust.

***Asefat Hanivharim*** (Elected Assembly)

The supreme elected institution of the *yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) during the Mandate period, it was first elected on April 19, 1920. In January 1928, the Mandatory government officially recognized the Elected Assembly as the representative body of the Jewish community.

Elections for the Elected Assembly underscored the extreme fragmentation of the small *yishuv*. In the elections for the first Elected Assembly, 20 lists competed for 20,000 votes. In the 1925 elections for the second Assembly, 29 lists competed.

The elections were general, secret and proportional. The Assembly was a representative parliamentary body from among whose members the *Va'ad Le'umi* was elected. These institutions ran the day-to-day life of the *yishuv* in all its aspects.

***Autoemancipation***

An essay by Dr. Judah Leib (Leon) Pinsker, *Autoemancipation* was published in the aftermath of the pogroms that swept Russia in 1881-82. Published in 1882, it dealt with the causes of antisemitism and offered a possible solution for the Jews.

Pinsker argued that the Jews were foreigners everywhere, and that even if they managed to assimilate, antisemitism would remain an incurable illness, fueled by the peculiar condition of the Jewish people, which has no language, no country and no government. The emancipation given to Jews by Gentiles was, to Pinsker, a *coup de grâce*.

The Jews, Pinsker argued, must regain their national dignity and security and establish for themselves a land of refuge. Even more urgently needed, he argued, was a national awakening and self-liberation ("autoemancipation"), the components of the process of national renaissance.

Pinsker's work became one of the basic writings on the Jews and Zionism.

**Autonomism** - see "Zionist Philosophies", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Balfour Declaration**

The declaration took the form of a letter written on November 2, 1917, by Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, one of the leaders of British Jewry. It was later endorsed by the Allies at the San Remo Conference (1920) and incorporated into the Palestine Mandate given to Britain and approved by the Council of the League of Nations on July 24, 1922. The Balfour Declaration was an important political achievement for Zionism. It states:

*"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."*

Despite the vague language and the fact that no date was set for its implementation, the Balfour Declaration evoked great excitement and encouraged hope for Jewish national existence in Eretz Israel. It also aroused strong opposition among the Arabs, who worked tirelessly to have it rescinded.

**Bar-Giora** - see "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Bezalel** - see "Fifty Years of Culture in Israel - From 'Melting Pot' to 'Bouillabaisse'", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Ben-Gurion, David** - see "David Ben-Gurion", Centenary of Zionism series.

## ***Bilu***

An acronym for "*Beit Ya'akov, lehu venelha*" ("O House of Jacob, come, let us go" - Isaiah 2:5), *Bilu* was an association founded by young Jews in Kharkov, Russia, after the pogroms of 1881-82. Its members advocated aliya, settlement in Palestine and revival of the Hebrew language.

Only a few dozen members of *Bilu* actually came to Palestine. The first group of 14 disembarked at Jaffa on July 6, 1882. Two years later, a second group came, comprising 34 young members, including four women. Their lives in Palestine were not easy. They worked as laborers on various farms, and later established Gedera in the southern coastal plain.

The *Biluim* left their imprint on the country and their ideas, books and memoirs influenced generations of later immigrants.

## **Commissions of Inquiry**

A number of commissions of inquiry were sent to Palestine by the British government during the Mandate period, both to investigate the roots of the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs and to propose guidelines for British policy in Palestine. Most of the commissions were appointed following riots and disturbances. The most important commissions were:

**Peel Commission (1937):** At the height of the 1936-39 disturbances, a royal

commission of inquiry came to Palestine from London to investigate the roots of the Arab-Jewish conflict and to propose solutions. The commission, headed by Lord Robert Peel, heard a great deal of testimony in Palestine, and in July 1937 issued its recommendations: to abolish the Mandate and partition the country between the two peoples. Only a zone between Jaffa and Jerusalem would remain under the British mandate and international supervision. The Jewish state would include the coastal strip stretching from Mount Carmel to south of Be'er Tuvia, as well as the Jezreel Valley and the Galilee. The Arab state was to include the hill regions, Judea and Samaria, and the Negev. Until the establishment of the two states, the commission recommended, Jews should be prohibited from purchasing land in the area allocated to the Arab state. To overcome demarcation problems, it was proposed that land exchanges be carried out concurrently with the transfer of population from one area to the other. Demarcation of the precise borders of the states was entrusted to a technical partition committee. The Peel Commission did not believe that Jewish immigration was detrimental to the financial well-being of the Arab population and assumed that the issue of Jewish immigration would be resolved within the Jewish state.

The British government accepted the recommendations of the Peel Commission regarding the partition of Palestine, and the announcement was endorsed by Parliament in London. Among the Jews, bitter disagreements erupted between supporters and opponents, while the Arabs rejected the proposal and refused to regard it as a solution. The plan was ultimately shelved.

**Anglo-American Committee (1946):** This committee was formed shortly after World War II, following disclosure of the horrors of the Holocaust and the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

The committee concluded that no country other than Palestine was ready or willing to help find homes for Jews wishing to leave Europe, but Palestine alone could not solve their emigration needs. It therefore recommended that 100,000 certificates for immigration to Palestine be issued immediately and that the US and British governments try to find new places for the Displaced Persons, in addition to Palestine. Future immigration to Palestine should be regulated by the Mandatory administration, and the land transfer regulations of 1940, which forbade the sale of land in certain parts of the country to Jews, should be annulled. Finally, the committee called for mutual tolerance.

The Jewish Agency accepted the committee's recommendations; the Arabs rejected them. US President Harry Truman regarded them favorably, whereas British Prime Minister Clement Atlee made the provision of 100,000 immigration certificates contingent on the disarming of the *Haganah*, the *Etzel* and *Lehi*. The British government, in fact, continued to carry out its White Paper policy.

**UN Commission (UNSCOP, 1947):** After all the plans for solving the problems of Palestine had failed, Britain decided to hand the issue to the United Nations. On May 15, 1947, the UN resolved to establish a special committee for Palestine. The commission was known as UNSCOP, the acronym for the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. The committee comprised representatives of 11 countries that were not permanent members of the Security Council. It heard testimony in the US and in Palestine, and submitted its recommendations to the UN General

Assembly on September 1, 1947. The proposed resolution, supported by a majority of the members of the commission, recommended the establishment of two states - one Jewish and one Arab - in Palestine, with economic links between them; the city of Jerusalem would remain an enclave under international rule.

The UN General Assembly debated the issue at length, and on November 29, 1947, resolved to implement the partition plan ([Resolution 181](#)) by a vote of 33 to 13 (ten abstentions, one absentee). On May 14, 1948, in accordance with the resolution, the State of Israel proclaimed its independence.

### **Degania: "Mother of the Collective Settlements"**

The first collective settlement in Palestine, the *kvutza* Degania, is located south of Lake Kinneret, where the Jordan River emerges from the lake. It was established in 1909 by a group of pioneers on land acquired by the Jewish National Fund, and named Degania for the Hebrew "*dagan*," meaning grain. In 1911, a second group, which based itself on the principles of collectivism, made Degania the "mother of the collective settlements." A.D. Gordon, an early member, played an important role in laying the ideological foundations for collective living.

Hundreds of *kibbutzim* and *kvutzot* were later founded on this model, and together they created a singular enterprise of modern Jewish rural settlement in Eretz Israel - the *kibbutz*.

### **Disturbances**

This is a term for four waves of violence during the [British Mandate](#) period.

**The disturbances of 1920:** In April 1920, six Jews were killed and more than 200 wounded in Jerusalem. Ze'ev Jabotinsky (see "[Ze'ev Jabotinsky](#)", Centenary of Zionism series) and 19 others who tried to organize Jewish defense were imprisoned and sentenced to long jail terms (15 years for Jabotinsky and three years for the rest of the *Haganah* members), but were released in July of the same year.

**The disturbances of 1921:** In May 1921, seventeen people were killed in Abu Kabir and the Ajami neighborhood of Jaffa. Petah Tikva, Hadera, and Rehovot were also attacked. Jewish defense was organized to repel the attackers. In the Jaffa area, the defenders were joined by soldiers of the "First Judeans" regiment (see "[From Hashomer to the IDF](#)", Centenary of Zionism series).

The response of the authorities was vigorous, but they concurrently introduced a conciliatory policy toward the Arabs, and as a first step temporarily suspended further [Jewish immigration to Palestine](#).

**The disturbances of 1929:** On Friday, August 23, 1929, worshippers at the mosques were harangued and incited against Jewish rights of worship at the Western Wall. The next day, Arabs broke into the Jewish Quarter of Hebron and murdered 68 people, including men, women and children. Dozens of Jews were saved by Arab neighbors, but the city was abandoned by Jews until the early 1970s. Seventeen people were killed in Jerusalem, and 20 were killed in the Jewish Quarter

of Safed. The rioters fell upon the small Jewish settlement of Motza, on the road to Jerusalem, and killed an entire family and its guests. Rural settlements throughout Palestine were attacked, and some had to be abandoned.

A total of 133 people were killed, and 339 injured. The British authorities were demonstrably passive during the riots.

**The disturbances of 1936-39:** The causes of the violence were the increased immigration during 1933-36; capital brought into Palestine, mainly by immigrants from Germany; the hesitancy exhibited by British foreign policy; and German and Italian support for the Arabs.

The first stage of the disturbances began in April 1936, when Jews were murdered near Tulkarm, in Jaffa and on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. The Arab Higher Committee, established to lead the Palestinian struggle and headed by the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, demanded a cessation of Jewish immigration, a ban on the sale of land to Jews, and Arab independence in Palestine. The committee's first step was to call for a general strike and an economic siege on the *yishuv*. The strike lasted 175 days. Jewish settlements and roads were attacked, forests and fields were set on fire and orchards cut down. In this stage, nearly 100 Jewish lives were lost and severe economic damage was done.

The British concentrated large forces in Palestine and threatened to use them if the attacks on British forces were not halted.

The second stage of the disturbances began in September 1937, the result of the Arabs' disappointment with the Peel Commission's recommendations of partition. The attacks targeted both the *yishuv* and the British authorities, and volunteers from neighboring countries joined local Arabs. This time, however, they encountered a different reaction; the *yishuv* had organized for defense and counteroffensives and its cooperation with the British increased. The Arab Higher Committee was outlawed, and the mufti was deposed and fled the country. Despite partial cooperation with the *yishuv*, the Mandatory government did not change its basic policy of appeasement of the Arabs. On February 28, 1938, the Woodhead Commission concluded that the partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission was not feasible.

In early 1939, the British government announced that it would unilaterally implement its policy (restricting Jewish immigration and gradually making western Palestine an independent country).

Approximately 630 people were killed in the disturbances of 1936-39, some 2,000 were injured and large amounts of Jewish property were damaged.

## **Exodus 1947**

The ship Exodus 1947 became a symbol of Aliya Bet - illegal immigration. After World War II, illegal immigration increased and the British authorities decided to stop it by sending the ships back to the ports of embarkation in Europe. The first ship to which this policy was applied was the Exodus 1947.

The ship sailed from the port of Site, near Marseilles, on July 11, 1947, with 4,515 immigrants, including 655 children, on board. As soon as it left the territorial waters of France, British destroyers accompanied it. On July 18, near the coast of Palestine but outside territorial waters, the British rammed the ship and boarded it, while the immigrants put up a desperate defense. Two immigrants and a crewman were killed in the battle, and 30 were wounded. The ship was towed to Haifa, where the immigrants were forced onto deportation ships bound for France. At Port-de-Bouc, in southern France, the would-be immigrants remained in the ships' holds for 24 days during a heat wave, refusing to disembark despite the shortage of food, the crowding and the abominable sanitary conditions. The French government refused to force them off the boat. Eventually, the British decided to return the would-be immigrants to Germany, and on August 22 the ship left for the port of Hamburg, then in the British occupation zone. The immigrants were forcibly taken off and transported to two camps near Lbeck.

Journalists who covered the dramatic struggle described to the entire world the heartlessness and cruelty of the British. World public opinion was outraged and the British changed their policy. Illegal immigrants were not sent back to Europe; they were instead transported to detention camps in Cyprus.

The majority of the passengers on the Exodus 1947 settled in Israel, though some had to wait until after the establishment of the State of Israel.

***Ha'apala*** (illegal immigration) - see [Aliya Bet](#).

## **Hadassah**

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, is the largest of all Jewish women's organizations, with hundreds of thousands of members. It is a member of the World Zionist Organization.

Founded in New York in 1912 by Henrietta Szold, it undertook the organization of health services in Palestine. Clinics and hospitals were established in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Safed and Tiberias; the country's first nursing school was opened in Jerusalem, and the organization became known as the Hadassah Medical Organization. Henrietta Szold arrived in Palestine in 1920, and later headed the Health Department of the Jewish Agency.

Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem became the Hebrew University's teaching hospital when the medical center on Mount Scopus was dedicated in 1939. Hadassah also founded the Seligsberg Vocational High School (1942) and the Brandeis Vocational Education Center (1944), both in Jerusalem.

After the establishment of the state, Hadassah worked with immigrant youth and founded educational institutions - Ramat Hadassah Szold and Neurim.

In 1952, the cornerstone was laid for a new Hadassah - Hebrew University medical center in Ein Karem (Jerusalem), inaugurated in 1961. After the Six-Day War (1967), the old hospital buildings on Mount Scopus were restored and expanded, and in 1975 the renewed medical center was inaugurated. Today the two modern medical

centers in Jerusalem, in Ein Karem and on Mount Scopus, serve as leading teaching hospitals and include schools of nursing.

### ***Haganah***

The underground defense organization of the *yishuv* from 1920 to 1948. Established in 1920 by the founders of the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labor), it was considered illegal by the British mandatory authorities.

During its first ten years, the *Haganah* (defense) was subordinated to the elected institutions of the Histadrut, since leaders of the Zionist Organization and of the *yishuv* were not yet prepared to accept responsibility for this illegal military entity.

In the aftermath of the 1929 disturbances, the *Haganah* was placed (1931) under the authority of a parity committee (evenly split between politically "left" and "right" representatives), thus becoming subordinate to the nation's elected leadership. The *yishuv* regarded the *Haganah* as a legitimate military defense organization and every Jewish rural settlement, town and neighborhood was affiliated with it.

During the disturbances of 1936-39, strategic interests led the British to allow a certain degree of military collaboration between the British army and police and the *Haganah*, which gave it a measure of legality. This was manifested in the Supernumerary Police venture which lasted until 1948, and in the Night Squads commanded by Captain Orde Wingate.

By September 1939, the *Haganah* had created a Field Corps, a Medical Service, a Signals Corps, an Intelligence Service, Aliya Bet (which handled illegal immigration), an arms industry, services for the procurement and storage of weapons and *Ma'arahot* (campaigns), a professional military journal. It had also mobilized more than 20,000 Jewish supernumerary policemen, plus field troops and night squads. In 1941, the *Gadna* (youth regiments) and the *Palmach* (strike force) were added.

During World War II, *Haganah* members enlisted in the various units of the British Armed Forces. The *Haganah* cooperated with British Intelligence in gathering information and in parachuting *Haganah* members into occupied Europe to rescue Jews. As long as the war lasted, cooperation with the British overrode resistance and struggle against British policies in Palestine.

After the end of World War II, the *Haganah* was the largest and most important Jewish military force operating against the British - liberating interned immigrants, bombing the country's railroad network, sabotaging radar installations and bases of the British police, sabotaging British vessels engaged in deporting clandestine immigrants and destroying all road and railroad bridges on the borders. The *Haganah* was also responsible for mass clandestine immigration from Europe and North Africa (1944-48) both by sea and land, and provided military protection for *Homa Umigdal* (stockade and watchtower), the Jewish settlement enterprise conducted in defiance of British land laws.

On June 18, 1946, the Defense Department of the Jewish Agency instructed the *Haganah* to ready itself for defense against possible attack by the armies of the neighboring Arab countries. From November 29, 1947, when the United Nations



passed the Partition Resolution, until the departure of the British and the invasion of the newborn State of Israel by the regular armies of five Arab states on May 15, 1948, the burden of the defense of the Jewish community against local irregulars and foreign Arab troops fell on the *Haganah*. It had reorganized, was under the command of a nationwide General Staff and, in addition to its territorial units, also had the beginnings of an airforce and a navy.

On May 26, 1948, the Provisional Government enacted the ordinance establishing the Israel Defense Forces, incorporating *Haganah* (defense) in its name.

### **The Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

The cornerstone of the university was laid in Jerusalem in 1918. The idea of founding a university in Jerusalem was raised at the First Zionist Congress, and was published in 1902 in a pamphlet authored by Chaim Weizmann, Martin Buber and Berthold Feiwel. The site, on Mt. Scopus, was purchased by Russian Zionists. The university opened in 1925 with three faculties: microbiology, chemistry and Jewish studies.

In the 1930s, the university accommodated many Jewish scholars who had fled Germany. In the 1940s, its activity decreased because of the effects of World War II and the struggle against the British; during the War of Independence, when Mount Scopus was cut off from the rest of Jewish Jerusalem, studies ceased. After the armistice in 1949, the Jordanian authorities allowed only a convoy of police and maintenance workers to pass once every two weeks. The university itself was dispersed to buildings in various parts of Jerusalem.

In 1954, the construction of the Givat Ram campus in western Jerusalem began; the new campus opened in 1955. After the Six-Day War (1967), the road to Mount Scopus was reopened, and, shortly afterwards, a vast rebuilding program took place. The new campus, incorporating the original buildings plus all the appurtenances of a modern university, was a major architectural challenge. The campus reopened in the early 1980s. Academic activity on both campuses embraces nearly all areas of scholarship, in the exact sciences, humanities and social sciences. The university has granted more than 95,000 degrees since its establishment and presently has some 20,000 students. The National and University Library of the State of Israel, with its three million volumes, is located on the Givat Ram campus.

**Herzl, Theodor (Binyamin Ze'ev)** - see "Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl", Centenary of Zionism series.

### ***Hibbat Zion***

*Hibbat Zion* was a movement based on the return to Zion and the restoration of national life in Palestine. It was founded in the second half of the 19th century in the large communities of eastern Europe, especially Romania, Poland and Russia.

The pogroms in Russia in 1881-82 jolted the Jewish population into awareness. In Russia and Romania in particular, societies that regarded the return to Zion and redemption of the land as a solution to the Jewish plight began to form. The ideological basis for the movement was provided by Dr. Judah Leib (Leon) Pinsker in

his essay *Autoemancipation* (1882) (see above) which called for self-liberation and the establishment of a territorial center for the Jewish people.

The first members of *Hibbat Zion* (known as *Hovevei Zion*) arrived in Palestine in the 1880s. They included some of the founders of the moshavot of Rishon Lezion, Zichron Ya'akov and Rosh Pinah.

In 1890, the movement obtained permission from the Russian government to establish a "society for the support of Jewish farmers and artisans in Syria and Palestine," known as the Odessa Committee. As a result, the movement could operate legally; with contributions collected throughout Russia, it helped establish the moshavot of Rehovot and Hadera and rehabilitate Mishmar Hayarden (1890-91).

When the Zionist Organization was founded in 1897, most of the *Hovevei Zion* societies joined it, bringing with them their practical approach. The Odessa Committee continued to function until it was closed by the Bolsheviks in 1913.

## **Holocaust**

During World War II (1939-45), the Nazi regime carried out a systematic campaign to destroy the Jewish communities of Europe, in the course of which some six million Jews, including some 1.5 million children, were murdered.

As the Nazi armies swept through Europe, Jews were savagely persecuted, subjected to every conceivable torture and humiliation and herded into ghettos, where attempts at armed resistance led to even harsher measures. From ghettos they were transported to camps, where a few were put to hard labor, but most were either shot in mass executions or put to death in gas chambers. Not many managed to escape. Some fled to other countries, a few joined the partisans and others were hidden by non-Jews who did so at the risk of their own lives. Consequently, only one-third, including those who had left Europe before the war, survived out of a population of almost nine million, which had once constituted the largest and most vibrant Jewish community in the world.

The United States and Israel became the main Jewish centers. Many of the Jews who survived the Holocaust waged a tenacious struggle for their right to immigrate and live freely in Eretz Israel, via the *Beraha* ("flight") and illegal immigration movements during the struggle of the *yishuv* against the British in Palestine.

**Hula Valley** - see "[The Redeemers of the Land](#)," Centenary of Zionism series.

## ***Irgun Zva'i Leumi (Etzel)***

The *Irgun Zva'i Leumi* (National Military Organization) was an underground organization that operated in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s.

Following the disturbances in the summer of 1929, a group of commanders and members of the *Haganah*, led by Avraham Tehomi, decided to form a new group to be called *Etzel*. Soon afterwards Betar's youth groups affiliated themselves with the new organization.

On December 5, 1936, Avraham Tehomi signed an accord with Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist Movement, making Jabotinsky commander of *Etzel*. In April 1937, about half of the members returned to the ranks of the *Haganah*; some 1,500 remained in *Etzel*.

*Etzel* advocated a forceful line of action against Arab aggression and protested the policy of restraint adopted by the *Haganah*. In April 1938, three *Etzel* members attacked an Arab bus on its way from Safed to Rosh Pinah, in retaliation for the killing of one of their comrades. The action failed and the three were captured by the British. Shlomo Ben-Yosef, one of the three, was sentenced to death and executed in Acre prison on June 18, 1938; his young partners were sentenced to long jail terms. Shlomo Ben-Yosef was the first Jew to be hanged by the British in Palestine. Between 1938 and 1947, eleven more members of *Etzel* and *Lehi* were executed by the British.

In the 1930s, the organization was also involved in illegal immigration and, by 1939, succeeded in bringing 6,000 illegal immigrants to Palestine. The outbreak of World War II and the alliance with Britain in the fight against Nazi Germany caused the organization to announce cessation of aggressive actions in Palestine.

However on February 1, 1944, Menachem Begin, the new *Etzel* commander who had arrived in Palestine during the war with the Polish army of General Anders, declared a "revolt" against the British, who persisted in the 1939 White Paper policy. This revolt took the form of a series of attacks on government buildings.

In October 1945, the *Haganah* reached an understanding with the *Etzel* and *Lehi* to coordinate the struggle.

The organizations' cooperation broke up following *Etzel's* bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Mandate government secretariat, which, the *Haganah* claimed, had not been coordinated with it.

On May 31, 1948, when the Israel Defense Forces were established, *Etzel* announced that its members would join the IDF.

See also "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Jabotinsky, Ze'ev** - see "Ze'ev Jabotinsky," Centenary of Zionism series.

**Jewish Agency** - see World Zionist Organization.

### **Jewish Colonial Trust**

The first Zionist bank, it was founded at the Second Zionist Congress and incorporated in London in 1899. The JCT was intended to be the financial instrument of the Zionist Organization, and was to obtain capital and credit to help attain a charter for Palestine.

It quickly became clear that the amount of capital raised by the JCT was far from sufficient to attain this goal; the sum raised was only 395,000 of the 8 million target.

The JCT's main activities in Palestine were carried out by the Anglo-Palestine Bank, formed as a subsidiary in 1902. Its seed capital was only 40,000. The bank opened its first branch in Jaffa in 1903 under the management of Zalman David Levontin, and quickly made a name for itself as a reliable and trustworthy institution, which did not consider business transactions and profitability its only goals. In its early years, the bank conducted transactions in support of the Zionist enterprise: land purchase, imports, obtaining of concessions and so on. Branches were opened in Jerusalem, Beirut (then the region's main commercial center), Hebron, Safed, Haifa, Tiberias and Gaza.

The Anglo-Palestine Bank established a network of credit unions in the moshavot and gave farmers long-term loans. It also helped with the construction of the first 60 houses in Tel Aviv. During World War I, when the Zionist enterprise faced severe difficulties, the bank managed to keep its funds intact, transferring them to safe locations. The Turkish government, considering the bank an enemy institution because it was registered in Britain, ordered its branches shut and its cash confiscated. The liquidation of the bank's branches proceeded very slowly and business continued surreptitiously. After the war, the operations of the bank expanded, and other banks were founded in Palestine. In 1932, the main office of the Anglo-Palestine Bank was moved from Jaffa to Jerusalem.

In 1934, the JCT terminated its banking activity and became a holding company for Anglo-Palestine Bank shares only.

During World War II, the Anglo-Palestine Bank was able to use the large reserves it had built up to finance the developing industries that supplied provisions to the British army. When the State of Israel was established, the bank was given the concession to issue new banknotes and became the government's banker and financial agent. In 1950, the bank's registration was transferred from Britain to Israel, and it was renamed Bank Leumi Le-Israel (National Bank of Israel). When the Bank of Israel was founded as Israel's central bank (1954), Bank Leumi became a commercial bank.

In 1955, the Jewish Colonial Trust became an Israeli company, and in the late 1980s it was sold to private investors.

**Jewish Legion** - see "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael*)** - see "Redeemers of the Land", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Joint Distribution Committee**

A Jewish organization founded in the United States, it provided assistance to Jews worldwide by means of direct financial aid or through the founding of constructive enterprises.

Established in 1914, the JDC raised \$15 million during World War I and used the funds to provide medical assistance, food and clothing for war refugees in Europe and for the yishuv in Palestine.

After World War I, the JDC assisted many Jewish refugees who had fled Russia and Poland for fear of pogroms. When the Nazis came to power in Germany, the JDC devoted its efforts to assisting German Jews, and during World War II, financed the escape of 180,000 Jews from Nazi-occupied countries.

After the war the organization focused on rehabilitating the hundreds of thousands of Jews in Displaced Persons camps in Europe and helped them emigrate. Its Zionist orientation strengthened and it collaborated in organizing illegal immigration and supported the 50,000 would-be immigrants whom the British interned in camps in Cyprus.

After 1948, the JDC became a major partner in financing mass immigration from eastern Europe and Arab countries. It helped with the aliya of Yemenite Jews in Operation Magic Carpet and the integration of immigrants from North Africa. The main institution of the JDC in Israel was Malben (an acronym for "Institutions for the Care of Disadvantaged Immigrants"), which maintained a network of rehabilitation centers, hospitals and housing for elderly and disabled immigrants.

In 1969, the JDC transferred all of Malben's facilities to the government and concentrated its efforts on improving existing social services by means of a partnership with the government.

The *Irgun Zva'i Leumi* (National Military Organization) was an underground organization that operated in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s.

### ***Keren Hayesod***

The main institution for financing the Zionist Organization's activities in Eretz Israel, it was founded in London in 1920 and officially registered in Britain a year later. In 1926, the headquarters of Keren Hayesod were moved to Jerusalem. *Keren Hayesod* is headed by a board of trustees, appointed by the Zionist Executive and the Jewish Agency. In addition to financing the activities of the Jewish Agency, *Keren Hayesod* undertook to support the *yishuv* economically and to provide financial assistance for development and settlement. Most revenues come from fundraising and are distributed by the institutions of the Zionist movement. *Keren Hayesod* collects donations in almost all countries with a Jewish community, either directly or through volunteers.

Until the establishment of the state, *Keren Hayesod* financed activities of the *yishuv* relating to immigration and absorption, settlement, defense, development of water resources and public works. It aided major economic enterprises such as the Palestine Electric Company and the Palestine Potash Company at the Dead Sea. When the country gained its independence, many functions that had been handled by *Keren Hayesod* were transferred to the Jewish Agency, and *Keren Hayesod* concentrated on the financing of immigration, absorption and settlement.

**Kibbutz** - see "Hityashvut", Centenary of Zionism series.

### ***Kofer Hayishuv***

A fund intended to finance the *yishuv's* security needs, it was founded in 1938 by the *Va'ad Leumi*, which levied direct and indirect taxes on the Jews of Palestine. In 1940, it began to collect an emergency tax, and in 1942 - a mobilization and rescue fund.

## **Labor Battalion**

Inspired by Joseph Trumpeldor, the Labor Battalion, the first country-wide commune of Jewish workers in Palestine, was formed in the summer of 1920 by a group of young people from Russia. They were subsequently joined by many Third Aliya pioneers. The Battalion was meant to create a general commune of Palestinian Jewish workers, based on cooperation. Its brief period of activity is noted for constant ferment, arguments and fractiousness.

The Labor Battalion played an important pioneering role in rural settlement and in defense. Its emissaries were active in the Halutz (Pioneer) movement in Europe (see "Youth Movements", Centenary of Zionism series), especially in Poland. Over 2,000 pioneers passed through its ranks.

## ***Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Lehi)***

An acronym for *Lohamei Herut Yisrael* (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), Lehi was an underground organization that operated from 1940 to 1948. At first, it was composed chiefly of a group headed by Avraham ("Yair") Stern, that broke off from *Etzel* in 1940. The split was due to disagreement on three main issues: (a) the group's demand that the military struggle against the British government be continued irrespective of the war against Nazi Germany; (b) opposition to enlistment in the British army, which Jabotinsky supported; and (c) willingness to collaborate, as a tactical measure, with anyone who supported the struggle against the British in Palestine.

*Lehi* rejected the authority of the *yishuv's* elected institutions and the worldwide Zionist movement, and sometimes clashed bitterly with the *Haganah*.

*Lehi's* goals were maximalist: conquest and liberation of Eretz Israel; war against the British Empire; complete withdrawal of Britain from Palestine; and establishment of a "Hebrew kingdom from the Euphrates to the Nile." In contrast to the scope of these goals, *Lehi's* strength was limited; it never had more than a few hundred fighters and its arms stores were meager. The disparity between its aspirations and its real power dictated *Lehi's* method of fighting: bold, extremist actions, intended both to obtain funding and weapons and to demonstrate that it was possible to strike at the enemy successfully.

As a result of its activities, *Lehi* found itself isolated in the *yishuv*. The *yishuv's* institutions condemned it and the British police hunted its members. On February 12, 1942, Avraham (Yair) Stern, the leader of *Lehi*, was captured in a Tel Aviv apartment and murdered by British detectives. The remaining fighters continued to wage his war, and a new command structure was established. Terrorism continued to be the organization's guideline, in the belief that a series of painful attacks would force the British to re-evaluate the wisdom and price of remaining in Palestine.

On November 6, 1944, two *Lehi* members assassinated Lord Moyne, the British Minister for Middle East Affairs in Cairo. The perpetrators, Eliyahu Beit-Tzuri and Eliyahu Hakim, were caught, tried by a military tribunal, and hanged on March 23, 1945.

When the Hebrew Resistance Movement was founded in November 1945, *Lehi* joined it, along with the *Haganah* and *Etzel*. *Lehi* carried out several operations as part of the movement, the largest of which was the bombing of the Haifa railroad workshops in June 1946, in which 11 *Lehi* members were killed. After the Hebrew Resistance Movement broke up following *Etzel's* bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, *Lehi* continued with its harassment and attrition policy.

In 1947, *Lehi* decided to concentrate its activities in Jerusalem so as to prevent implementation of the partition plan and internationalization of Jerusalem.

When the IDF was established on May 31, 1948, *Lehi* was disbanded and its members enlisted in the IDF. Only in Jerusalem did *Lehi* remain an independent organization, arguing that at the time of the proclamation of independence the city's fate had not yet been determined. On September 17, 1948, Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, a UN mediator, was assassinated in Jerusalem, and *Lehi* members were suspected. The government outlawed the organization's branch in Jerusalem and shut down its publication, *Hamivrak*. The leaders of *Lehi*, Natan Yellin-Mor and Mattityahu Shmuelevitz, were sentenced to long jail terms by a military court, but were released in a general amnesty.

## **Mandate**

The Mandate system was instituted by the League of Nations in the early 20th century to administer non-self-governing territories. The mandatory power, appointed by an international body, was to consider the mandated territory a temporary trust and to see to the well-being and advancement of its population.

In July 1922, the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with the Mandate for Palestine. Recognizing "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine," Great Britain was called upon to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine-Eretz Israel (Land of Israel). Shortly afterwards, in September 1922, the League of Nations and Great Britain decided that the provisions for setting up a Jewish national home would not apply to the area east of the Jordan River, which constituted three-fourths of the territory included in the Mandate and which eventually became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The British Mandate authorities granted the Jewish and Arab communities the right to run their internal affairs; thus the *yishuv* established the Elected Assembly and the National Council. The economy expanded, a Hebrew education network was organized and cultural life flourished.

The Mandatory government did not succeed in maintaining the letter and spirit of the Mandate. Under Arab pressure, it withdrew from its commitment, especially with respect to immigration and land acquisition. The White Papers of 1930 and 1939 restricted immigration and acquisition of land by Jews. Later, immigration was limited

by the 1930 and 1939 White Papers, and land acquisition by Jews was severely restricted by the 1940 Land Transfer Regulations.

After the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution to partition Palestine on November 29, 1947, Britain announced the termination of its Mandate over Palestine, to take effect on May 15, 1948. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed.

**Moshav** - see "Hityashvut", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Nili** - see "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Palestine Electric Company**

The Palestine Electric Company was founded in 1923 by Pinhas Rutenberg, who was granted two concessions by the Mandatory government - one for the Jordan River and the other for the Yarkon River - to exploit water sources for irrigation and production of electric power. The company's main power station at Naharayim, where the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers meet, was completed in 1930 and supplied electricity for all of Palestine. During the War of Independence, the Jordanians destroyed the plant. With the establishment of the state, the company, renamed the Israel Electric Corporation, became a state-owned enterprise. New power plants were built in several locations and production of electricity increased manifold.

### **Palestine Potash Company**

A company that extracted potash from the Dead Sea, it was founded in 1929. In 1930, a plant was established at Kalia, at the northern end of the Dead Sea. Another larger plant was established at Sodom (1934), on the southern shore of the Dead Sea. The product of the Sodom plant was transported by boats to the northern plant, and from there it was sent by truck to Jerusalem and to the Haifa port for export.

During the War of Independence, the potash plant at the north of the Dead Sea was destroyed and the southern plant was shut down.

In 1952, a new company, the Dead Sea Works, with the concession to produce potash, was established by the government. In 1953, a road was built from Be'er Sheva to Sodom, and after it was opened to traffic a new plant was built at Sodom, where work resumed in 1955.

**Palestine Land Development Company** - see "Redeemers of the Land", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA)** - see "Redeemers of the Land", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Pan Crescent and Pan York** (*Atzma'ut and Kibbutz Galuyot*)

The two largest ships in the history of illegal immigration to Palestine. Nicknamed the "pans," the Pan Crescent and Pan York (renamed *Atzma'ut* and *Kibbutz Galuyot*)



were purchased in the United States in the spring of 1947. They were to transport some 15,000 illegal immigrants from the port of Constanza in Romania. An agreement was reached with the Romanian government, and organization of the future immigrants was underway.

The British tried to prevent the ships from reaching the Black Sea. Sabotage was discovered on the Pan Crescent while in the port of Venice for outfitting, but both ships arrived at Constanza. Meanwhile, the British exerted heavy pressure on the governments of the US and Romania. The US even threatened not to support the partition plan if the Jewish Agency Executive let the "pans" sail, and Romania reneged on its agreement to allow the ships to sail from Constanza.

The "pans" finally left the port of Burgas in Bulgaria on December 27, 1947, only after an agreement had been reached with the British that the ships would sail directly to Cyprus instead of Palestine, and that the "immigrants" would be interned there. The ships reached Cyprus on December 31, 1947.

**Royal Fusiliers** - see "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

### ***Solel Boneh***

A Histadrut enterprise for construction, public works, and industry, *Solel Boneh* (Paving - Building) evolved from pioneering groups of the Third Aliya, who had built the Tiberias-Zemah road for the Mandatory government in 1920. In 1921 they formed the Histadrut-affiliated Office for Public Works and Construction, which became *Solel Boneh* in 1924. The company carried out a variety of projects throughout Palestine, but its financial resources were slim and it collapsed during the 1927 economic crisis. Only in 1935 did *Solel Boneh* resume activities.

During the disturbances of 1936-39, *Solel Boneh* built several stockade and watchtower settlements, as well as police stations, fortifications and security roads. It also organized Jewish labor for the ports of Haifa and Tel Aviv.

During World War II, as part of the war effort, *Solel Boneh* built airports, roads, bridges and army camps for the British in Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Cyprus, Iran and Bahrain.

During the War of Independence, *Solel Boneh* built fortifications and defense lines, laid water pipes and transported essential commodities and supplies. After the establishment of the state, it built thousands of homes for immigrants, schools, hospitals, industrial plants, roads and airports.

**Special Night Squads** - see "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Stockade and Watchtower settlements** - see "Hityashvut", Centenary of Zionism series.

***Va'ad Leumi*** (National Council)

The supreme institution of the organized Jewish community in Eretz Israel and the executive body of the Elected Assembly, the **Va'ad Leumi** was founded in 1920. It comprised representatives of the major factions in the Assembly. Because of its size - 20-40 members - a smaller group was chosen as the Executive. The *Va'ad Leumi* met at least once a year, and its members also participated in meetings of the Zionist General Council.

In the 1920s, the *Va'ad Leumi* fought for legal recognition of its activities. It became less active in politics and concentrated mainly on the internal affairs of the *yishuv*. In the 1930s, as the *yishuv* grew, the Va'ad Leumi took on more functions - education, health care and welfare services - and its budget was enlarged. The departments of the *Va'ad Leumi* included the Political Department, which dealt with relations with the Arabs, ties with the Jewish Agency and negotiations with the British government; the Education Department; the Health Department; the Communities Department; the Rabbinate; and the Social Welfare Department. The Va'ad Leumi was also involved in internal defense and security matters, and organized recruitment to the British forces during World War II.

In the 1940s, departments for physical training, culture and press and information were added. When the State of Israel was established, this departmental structure served as a basis for the government ministries. Weizmann, Chaim - see "Chaim Weizmann", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Weizmann-Feisal Agreement**

A political accord signed on January 3, 1919, by Dr. Chaim Weizmann in the name of the Zionist Organization and by the Emir Feisal (son of Sharif Hussein of a Hashemite family that had ruled Mecca since the 11th century CE, and the brother of the Emir Abdullah, who was given the Emirate of Transjordan by the British and founded the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan). The agreement was preceded by a British-mediated meeting of the two in Transjordan in June 1918.

The agreement stated that it was made in the spirit of the racial closeness and ancient ties between the two peoples and on the assumption that the safest way to fulfill their national aspirations was by means of bold cooperation. The Arabs would recognize the Balfour Declaration and would encourage Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine, while protecting the rights and economic advancement of the Arab peasants. Freedom of religion and worship in Palestine was set forth as a fundamental principle, and the Muslim holy sites were to be under Muslim control. The ZO promised to look into the economic possibilities of an Arab state and to help it develop its resources. The British government was to arbitrate any disagreements that might arise between the two parties.

In the same year, the Arabs and their representatives repudiated the agreement, its contents and its intentions. The Weizmann-Feisal agreement was never implemented.

### **White Paper**

White Papers, official reports by a British Government commission, were usually issued following government investigative commissions. The best-known during the Mandate are the White Papers of 1922, 1930 and 1939.

*The 1922 White Paper:* The first official manifesto interpreting the Balfour Declaration, it was issued on June 3, 1922, after the 1921 disturbances. Although the White Paper stated that the Balfour Declaration could not be amended and that the Jews were in Palestine by right, it reduced the area of the Mandate by excluding the area east of the Jordan River, which was given to the Emir Abdullah. This document also established the principle of "economic absorptive capacity" as a factor for determining the immigration quota of Jews to Palestine.

*The 1930 White Paper:* Issued on October 21, 1930, after the 1929 disturbances, the document stated that if Jewish immigration prevented the Arab residents from obtaining work, the Mandatory government should curtail such immigration or even terminate it. Because of the shortage of arable land, Jewish settlement would be permitted only under stringent government supervision. On February 13, 1931, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald sent a letter to Dr. Weizmann somewhat easing these provisions.

*The 1939 White Paper:* Issued on May 17, 1939, it rejected, in essence, the Peel Commission's partition plan on the grounds that it was not feasible. The document stated that Palestine would be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab one, but an independent state to be established within ten years. Jewish immigration to Palestine was limited to 75,000 for the first five years, subject to the country's "economic absorptive capacity", and would later be contingent on Arab consent. Stringent restrictions were imposed on land acquisition by Jews.

The White Paper decrees were rescinded by the Provisional Council of State on May 15, 1948, when the State of Israel was established.

## **World Zionist Organization**

The Zionist Organization was founded by Theodor (Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl at the First Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897; it was renamed the World Zionist Organization in 1960. Its goals were set forth in the Basle Program: "Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine, secured under public law." The right of membership in the ZO was given to anyone who accepted the Basle Program and purchased the Zionist shekel (dues). The first constitution was passed by the Third Congress in 1899 and amended over the years.

At the First Zionist Congress, the Zionist movement organized itself as a worldwide organization with permanent institutions. The supreme institution was, and still is, the Zionist Congress. The elected institutions that function between congresses are the Zionist General Council and the Zionist Executive; the latter carries out the movement's policies. The Zionist Congress also elects a law court, an attorney and a comptroller. The Zionist Executive is headed by its chairman, who is also the president of the ZO.

Since its foundation, the ZO has established companies and institutions to carry out its policies; these include *Keren Hayesod*, the Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Colonial Trust, and the Jewish Colonial Trust's subsidiary, the Anglo-Palestine Bank.

The Mandate for Palestine accorded Great Britain by the League of Nations called for the establishment of a Jewish Agency to represent the Jewish people vis-a-vis the Mandatory government and to cooperate with it in establishing the national home. The Zionist Organization was initially given the status of a Jewish Agency.

In 1929, an expanded agency was established as a partnership between the ZO and non-Zionist, public Jewish groups. At the founding conference in Zurich in 1929, half the delegates were representatives of the ZO, and half represented the non-Zionist organizations. Dr. Chaim Weizmann, president of the ZO, was elected president of the newly founded Jewish Agency.

The Jewish Agency was viewed as a tool for the involvement of the entire Jewish people in the building of the land. It was also hoped that inclusion of the non-Zionist organizations would boost the financial resources available to the Zionist movement, something which did not occur, partly because of the worldwide economic crisis of 1929. The principle of equal representation in the Jewish Agency leadership was also gradually breached. After several years, the Executive of the Jewish Agency became identical with that of the Zionist Organization.

In the pre-state period, the Jewish Agency was an "almost-government" which dealt with organizing immigration - including illegal immigration - and absorbing the immigrants in Palestine. It founded Youth Aliya, maintained labor, settlement and industry departments, and was a senior partner in the establishment of the yishuv's defense force and of the stockade and watchtower settlements. David Ben-Gurion served as chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive from 1935 to 1948, while Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) headed the Political Department.

The goals of the ZO and the Jewish Agency did not change until after the establishment of the State of Israel, when their status was redefined. On November 24, 1952, the Knesset passed the "Zionist Organization - Jewish Agency for Israel Status Law", and later a covenant was signed between the government of Israel and the Zionist Executive, according to which the organizations' main areas of responsibility remained those related to aliya, immigrant absorption and settlement.

In August 1970, an agreement was signed modifying the structure and functions of the Jewish Agency and the WZO. Half the members of the Assembly of the expanded Jewish Agency are representatives of the WZO; 30 percent represent the UJA (US); and 20 percent represent organizations affiliated with *Keren Hayesod* in the rest of the world. With regard to immigration, the following division was set forth: the Jewish Agency would deal with immigration from countries of persecution and the WZO would deal with immigration from affluent countries. The Jewish Agency and the WZO signed two new covenants with the government of Israel in June 1979. The Jewish Agency retained its responsibility for initial absorption of the immigrants in Israel; support for educational activities and work with youth; immigrant absorption in rural settlements; immigrant housing; and welfare services. The WZO concentrates on work in the Diaspora and that relating to Diaspora Jewry: Jewish education, work with youth and so forth.

**Youth Movements** - see "Youth Movements", Centenary of Zionism series.

**Zion Mule Corps** - see "From Hashomer to the IDF", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Zionist Congress**

The supreme institution and legislature of the World Zionist Organization, it formulates policy and elects and oversees the organizations's institutions. The Congress meets once every four years. It has approximately 600 delegates, 38 percent Israelis, 29 percent from the US and 33 percent from the rest of the world. Since 1951, delegates have been chosen by means of country-wide agreements. The Israeli delegation is also not elected directly; it is appointed according to the relative number of each Zionist party's Knesset members.

The Zionist Congress elects the Executive, which runs WZO affairs in Israel and in the Diaspora, and the Zionist General Council, which meets once a year and to which the Executive is subordinate.

At the First Zionist Congress (1897), the Zionist Organization was founded and the first Zionist program, known as the Basle Program, was approved.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, Zionist Congresses are held in Jerusalem, and the bulk of the deliberations revolve around Israel - Diaspora relations, the centrality of Israel for the Jewish people, and immigration as a Zionist obligation.

**Zionist Movements** - see "Zionist Philosophies", Centenary of Zionism series.

### **Zionist Shekel**

The name of the certificate of membership in the Zionist Organization, given to every Jew who paid annual membership dues. The name comes from the unit of weight and currency used in the First Temple period. Purchasing the Zionist shekel expressed identification with Zionism and its goals. It was a prerequisite for voting for the Zionist Congress. Any Jew 18 years of age or over could buy a shekel, and from the age of 21 could be elected as a delegate to the Congress. The revenue from the sale of the shekalim was used for Zionist activities. The number of delegates that each country sent to the Congress was determined on the basis of the number of shekalim sold in that country.

After the establishment of the state, the sale of the shekel was discontinued, and elections to the Zionist Congress were conducted on the basis of a census of members of Zionist federations. The decision to abolish the shekel was made official only at the 27th Congress in 1968.