

Ottoman Rule

Ottoman Rule On the Eve of World War One

Since the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth(1) by the Romans, the land referred to as "Palestine"(2) had been ruled by a series of foreign occupiers. Each successive ruler subdivided his conquest as he saw fit, though none, since the Romans, considered "Palestine" as having a separate administrative or geographic entity.

The Ottoman Turks, who ruled this area from the year 1516 to 1917, regarded it as part of Southern Syria. The land later referred to as "Palestine" was divided into three separate districts.

The area was underpopulated and remained economically stagnant until the arrival of the first Zionist pioneers in the 1880's,(3) who came to rebuild the Jewish land. The country had remained "The Holy Land" in the religious and historic consciousness of mankind, which associated it with the Bible and the history of the Jewish People. Jewish development of the country also attracted large numbers of other immigrants - both Jewish and Arab.



1. For the Second Temple period (332 BCE-70 CE), summary, see: Professor Menahem Stern, **Israel Pocket Book Library**, in "History Until 1880" (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1973), pp.97-126.

2. The name "Palestine", from the Greek Palaistina, originally from the Hebrew Pleshet (Land of the Philistines): a small coastal strip north east of Egypt, also called Philistia. The Roman term "Syria Palaestina" in the 2nd century BCE referred to the southern third of the province of Syria, including the former Judea. The name "Palestine" was revived as an official title when the British were granted a mandate after World War I: **Encyclopaedia Britannica** ill, **Micropaedia**, vol. VII, "Palestine."

3. Among the many descriptions of Palestine's desolation prior to the Zionist immigration: "... a desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds - a silent mournful expanse ... A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action ... We never saw a human being on the whole route ... There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the

cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country:" **Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrim's Progress (1869).**