5 LAYERS OF HISTORY
War and Peace

Let's follow Dalia, a student from Tel Aviv, on a field trip through three thousand years of Israel's history. Dalia is interested in both ancient and modern history… and in a land like Israel, with streets named after rabbinic sages and buildings made of the same Jerusalem stone that has been used since the time of King David, there are plenty of opportunities for exploring both past and present.

"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither, let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour."

—Psalms 137:5-6

Jerusalem

Ancient History

Dalia's class gathers in the archaeology wing of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, where they are surrounded by ancient pottery and other artifacts. The Land of Israel has a very long history for the Jewish people. According to the Bible, Moses led our ancestors to the Land of Israel (then called Canaan) following the miraculous Exodus from slavery in Egypt and the forty years of wandering in the desert. Later, King Solomon built the **First Temple** in Jerusalem, and it served as the center of Jewish life and worship for hundreds of years.

▼ The **Kotel** was a supporting outer wall of the Second Temple. Jews come from all over the world to pray here, at our holiest site. Visitors often insert small slips of paper with their prayers between the stones of the Wall.

Many civilizations

The Land of Israel lies at the crossroads of important trade routes between Africa and Asia and has been subjected to one invading army after another, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. The Temple was destroyed, and a **Second Temple** was built. Over the centuries, the Land of Israel became home to many more civilizations, including the Greeks and the Romans. Jesus, whom Christians came to worship as the son of God, was born in Judea (now Israel) when it was under Roman rule, and Christianity emerged with close ties to the land.

Archaeology

Dalia notices a silver plaque inscribed with the Priestly Blessing in ancient Hebrew script. The plaque was discovered at an archaeological site near Jerusalem. Israel is loaded with artifacts that reveal its long and rich history. How incredible it would be, Dalia considers, if she were to dig up something so old and so historically significant. Maybe she'll be an archaeologist someday.

▲ **Archaeologists** uncover artifacts of earlier cultures that have become buried over time, such as tools, pottery, or wall paintings.

◄ Remains of the ancient fortress at **Masada**, where Jewish rebels are believed to have held out against the Roman army until their defeat in 73 CE.

archaeological treasures

► In the second century BCE, the Greeks outlawed all Jewish religious practices and desecrated the Second Temple, until a Jew named Judah Maccabee led a revolt. We remember this story when we light **Ḥanukkah candles**.

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c.1200-1050 BCE
Israelites settle in Canaan

928 BCE
Kingdom of Israel is divided into two states: Israel and Judah

516 BCE
Second Temple is built in Jerusalem

164 BCE
Maccabees capture Jerusalem and rededicate the Temple

950 BCE
First Temple is completed

586 BCE
First Temple is destroyed

331 BCE
Alexander the Great conquers Jerusalem

c. 4 BCE
Jesus is born in Nazareth

Diaspora

Inside the museum, Dalia and her friends walk through reconstructed synagogues from India, Germany, and Italy. They see Havdalah spice boxes from Austria, seder plates from Spain, Ḥanukkah lamps from Italy, and much more. After the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE the Jewish people dispersed around the world, forming new communities in Persia (now Iran), Syria, Egypt, Babylonia (now Iraq), and even India.

At different points in history, groups of Jews made aliyah to Israel, but the vast majority lived in the Diaspora outside of Israel. They continued to study Torah, observe Jewish tradition, and express their longing for the Land of Israel. As the centuries passed, each Diaspora community developed unique customs, styles of clothing, and even languages, such as Yiddish in Eastern Europe and Ladino, spoken by Jews of Spanish origin. Meanwhile, the Land of Israel became home to many other civilizations, especially the Arabs, who brought with them the religion of Islam, based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad.

▲ **Torah cover** from Amersterdam, 1771

Early immigration

As Jewish communities across Europe suffered persecution and even expulsion from countries like England (1290) and Spain (1492), more and more Jews returned to Palestine, as the Land of Israel was then called. These new immigrants added considerably to the Jewish population already there.

The first wave of mass immigration to Israel, known as the **First Aliyah**, began in 1882, following **pogroms** (organized attacks on Jews) in Russia. At that time, Palestine was under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. Over the next twenty years, around 35,000 Jews moved to Palestine, mostly from Eastern Europe, as the goal of creating a Jewish state took hold. Many of these pioneers established farming communities, where they struggled to survive despite poverty, disease, and lack of agricultural experience.
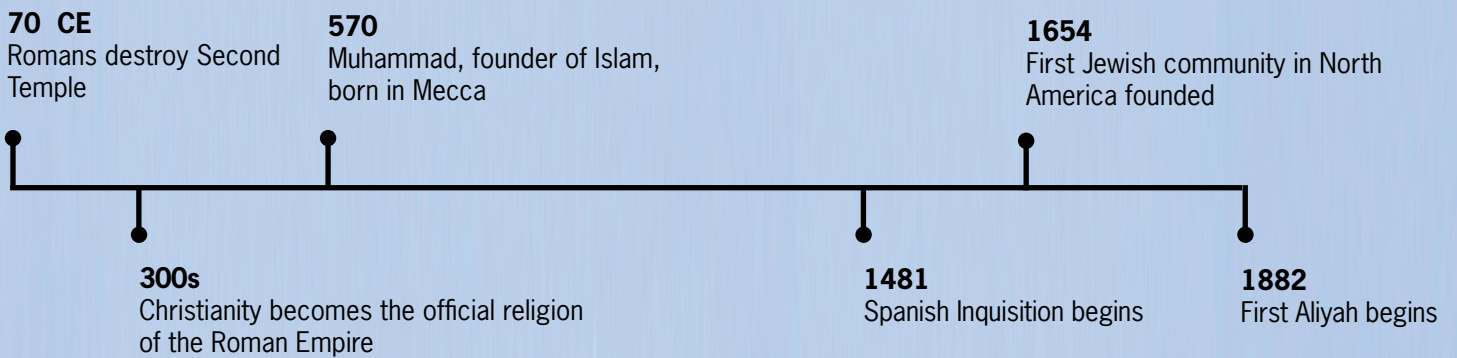

An early **pioneer** working on the farm ▶

◀ The Great Synagogue in the once-thriving Jewish community of Pilsen, **Czech Republic**

"L'shanah haba'ah biY'rushalayim! Next year in Jerusalem!" —recited at the Passover seder each year

Diaspora

Major Jewish Communities in the Diaspora During the Middle Ages

Amsterdam
Oxford London
Hamburg
Vilna
Lublin
Mainz
Prague
Worms
Vienna
Cracow
Paris
Speyer
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Troyes
Budapest

Rome

Black Sea
Constantinople

Toledo
Lisbon
Cordoba

Aleppo

Kairovan
Fez
Mediterranean Sea
Baghdad
Pumbedita
Sura
Cairo

0   200 MI
0   400 KM

N W E S

▲ Major Jewish communities in the **Diaspora** during the Middle Ages

70 CE
Romans destroy Second Temple

570
Muhammad, founder of Islam, born in Mecca

1654
First Jewish community in North America founded

300s
Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman Empire

1481
Spanish Inquisition begins

1882
First Aliyah begins

▼ At the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish pioneers settled in **Jaffa**, one of the oldest port cities in the world, where Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived side-by-side.

Zionism

In 1895, a young Hungarian Jewish journalist named Theodor Herzl was assigned to report on a breaking news story. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French Jew, was wrongly accused of spying on France. His trial and conviction, known as the **Dreyfus Affair**, was grossly unjust and openly anti-Semitic. In response to the hatred Herzl witnessed, he wrote a book called *The Jewish State*, arguing that anti-Semitism would end only if the Jews had their own land.

Herzl's idea sparked great excitement and, in 1897, Herzl held the First Zionist Congress in Switzerland, bringing together approximately 200 representatives from 17 countries to adopt his plan of founding a Jewish state. "If you will it, it is no dream," Herzl proclaimed.

Herzl has been called the father of Zionism for his role in spearheading the movement to establish and support a Jewish State in the Land of Israel.

▲ **Theodor Herzl**

Zionism

▼ **Kibbutz members** picking oranges, 1938

The kibbutz

Between 1904 and 1914, another 40,000 Jews came to Palestine in a wave of immigration called the **Second Aliyah**, mostly fleeing pogroms and increasing anti-Semitism in Russia. A group of these young Eastern European pioneers founded the first **kibbutz** (communal settlement) in 1909, called Deganyah. They were motivated by Zionist ideals of returning to the Jewish homeland and a commitment to hard work and social equality.
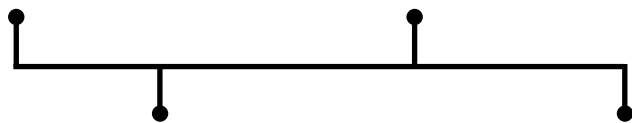

▲ The **founding fathers** of Tel Aviv. The bustling city of Tel Aviv is just over 100 years old. It was founded by Jewish pioneers on the outskirts of the ancient city of Jaffa (or Yafo) in 1909. The combined city is now called Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

1895
Alfred Dreyfus convicted of spying

1904
Second Aliyah begins

1897
First Zionist Congress held in Switzerland

1909
First kibbutz is founded

The original *kibbutzim* (plural of kibbutz) were agricultural collectives. All the members worked together to run the farm, sharing all their food, property, and resources. Kibbutz members ate all their meals in communal dining halls and earned wages based on their needs, not on their status or job title.

DEBATE IT

The Zionist goal had always been to create a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. But the Ottoman Empire rulers were not interested in giving up Palestine. With European Jews in constant danger of pogroms, the matter took on new urgency, and so, in 1903, Herzl decided to consider the Uganda Plan, a British offer of land in East Africa. A state for the Jews, even in Uganda, would provide an immediate safe haven from violence. But many Zionists believed that the only way to ensure the survival of the Jewish people and culture was to return to the Jewish homeland, the Land of Israel.

Imagine you are at the Sixth Zionist Congress and the Uganda Plan is being debated. Would you support a new Jewish homeland in East Africa? Would you only accept a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel? Why?

Have a debate.

UGANDA PLAN vs ONLY IN ISRAEL

The Uganda Plan, 1903

ISRAEL

A F R I C A

UGANDA

N
W   E
S

Emerging conflict

When the British army defeated the Turks in World War I, Palestine, home to Arabs and Jews, came under British rule. Britain's **Balfour Declaration** in 1917 promised support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Many Arabs living in Palestine, however, opposed the idea of Jewish immigration. They wanted an Arab state in Palestine, and had been led to believe they had British support.

As wave after wave of Jews immigrated to the Land of Israel, the Jewish population grew, and Jewish settlers increasingly bought up Arab land. Riots and revolts flared up in the 1920s and 1930s as Arabs reacted with anger and fear of being displaced by Jewish development. In response, Jews formed militias, such as the **Haganah** and Irgun, to defend their communities from Arab violence.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people…."
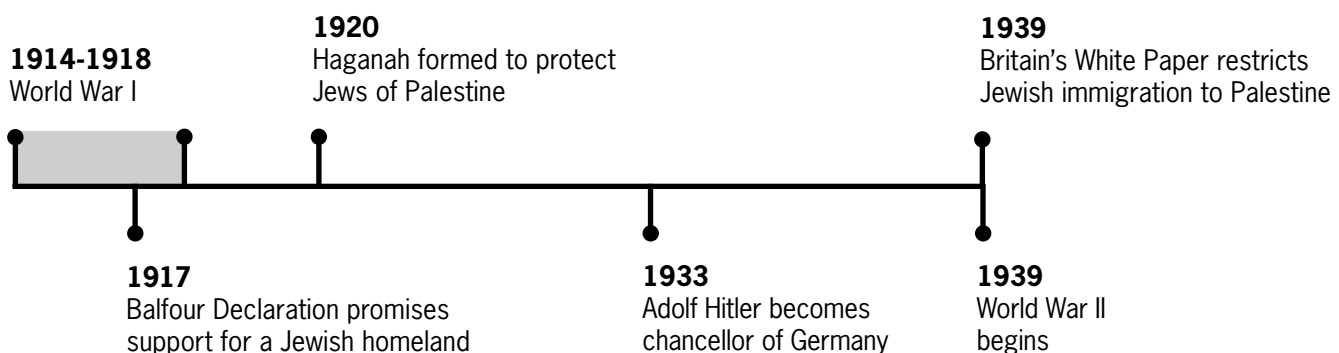
—from the Balfour Declaration, 1917

▲ The Zionist leader **Chaim Weizmann** convinced the British to issue the Balfour Declaration. He later served as Israel's first president.

British response

In 1937, determined to put an end to escalating street fights between Arabs and Jews, a British commission recommended dividing Palestine into two states—one Arab, one Jewish. But the Arabs rejected it—they wanted an Arab state that included all of Palestine.

◄ Young Arab men **rioting** in response to Jewish immigration.

1914-1918
World War I

1920
Haganah formed to protect Jews of Palestine

1939
Britain's White Paper restricts Jewish immigration to Palestine

1917
Balfour Declaration promises support for a Jewish homeland

1933
Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany

1939
World War II begins

In the meantime, World War II was brewing in Europe, and the British decided they needed Arab support to defeat Germany. So in 1939, Britain issued the **White Paper**, an official government report declaring that Palestine was to be an independent state. To ensure an Arab majority, Britain severely restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and the sale of land to Jews.

Now the dream of a Jewish state in Palestine was even further from reach, just as Adolf Hitler's rise to power threatened the Jewish populations of Germany and the rest of Europe. The Jews in Palestine were furious with the British, but they needed to ally themselves with Britain to help defeat Hitler. So, despite their anger, thousands of Jews living in Palestine joined the British military, produced weapons and supplies for the British, and contributed to the fight against the Nazis.
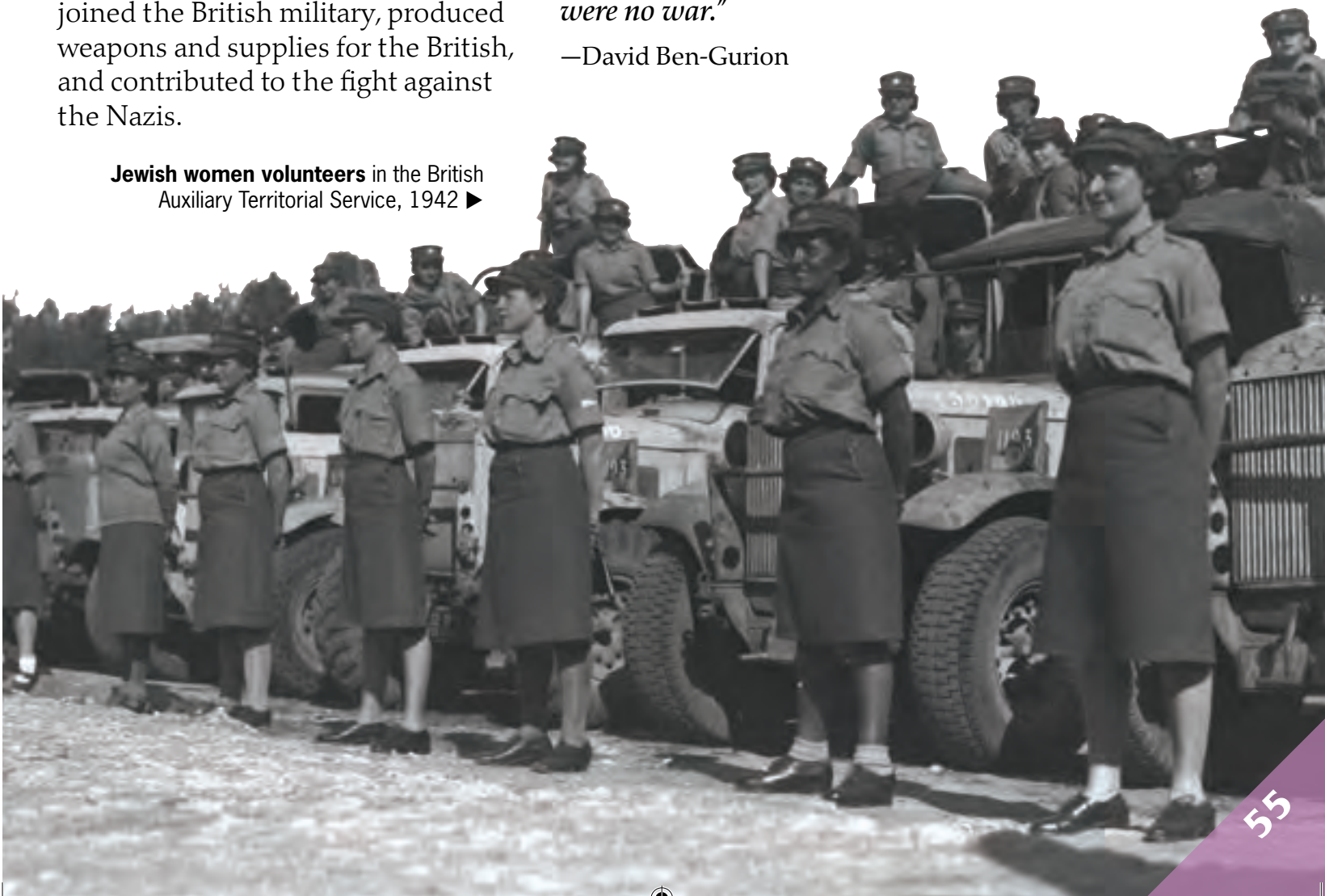
Jewish women volunteers in the British Auxiliary Territorial Service, 1942 ▶

▲ Jewish youth protesting the British **White Paper** in Tel Aviv, 1939

"We shall fight the war as if there were no White Paper and we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war."

—David Ben-Gurion

The Holocaust

By 1944, the horrific magnitude of the Nazi atrocities of the Holocaust was coming to light—the gas chambers; death camps; and the "final solution," Hitler's plan to kill all the Jews in Europe. Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, and hundreds of thousands of survivors became displaced persons (DPs, or refugees), with nowhere to go and little or no family left.

Displaced persons

With anti-Semitism still strong in Europe, many survivors who tried to return to their former villages after the war found that they weren't welcome. At the same time, the British enforced their White Paper and refused to let displaced Jews into Palestine. The Haganah tried smuggling in refugees, but 90 percent of their ships were stopped by the British. Britain decided to turn the problem over to the United Nations (the UN).

◀ Illegal **Jewish immigrants** being deported by British soldiers, from the Haifa port to Cyprus, 1947

Partition Plan

A special UN committee recommended another partition plan—dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Zionists accepted the plan, happy at the prospect of having an independent Jewish state and control over immigration. The Arabs argued that they weren't given a fair portion of the land, since they numbered twice as many as the Jews but would get less than half of Palestine. Despite Arab threats of war, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of the **Partition Plan** in November 1947, and the British prepared to pack their bags.

▲ The **United Nations** votes in favor of partition.

Statehood!

On the morning of May 14, 1948, the British left. That very afternoon, Jewish leaders gathered in Tel Aviv as David Ben-Gurion stood under a picture of Theodor Herzl and read the stirring words of Israel's Declaration of Independence, establishing the newborn State of Israel. The crowd spontaneously sang "Hatikvah," but there was little time for celebration. The very next day, five of Israel's neighbors—Egypt, Syria, Transjordan (now called Jordan), Lebanon, and Iraq— attacked the one-day-old Jewish state.

▶ **David Ben-Gurion** first set foot in the Land of Israel in 1906, as part of the Second Aliyah. He picked oranges and helped establish the first agricultural workers' group that later evolved into the first kibbutz. Ben-Gurion oversaw military operations during the War of Independence, and became the state's first prime minister.

▶ "We, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael and of the Zionist movement. . . by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael, to be known as the State of Israel."
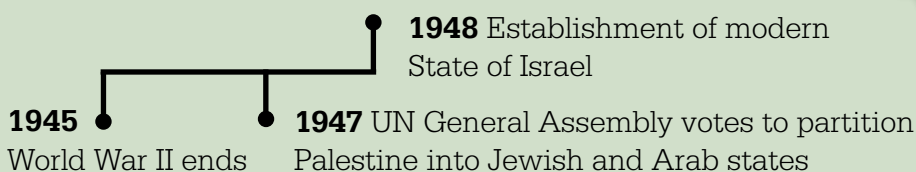—from Israel's Declaration of Independence
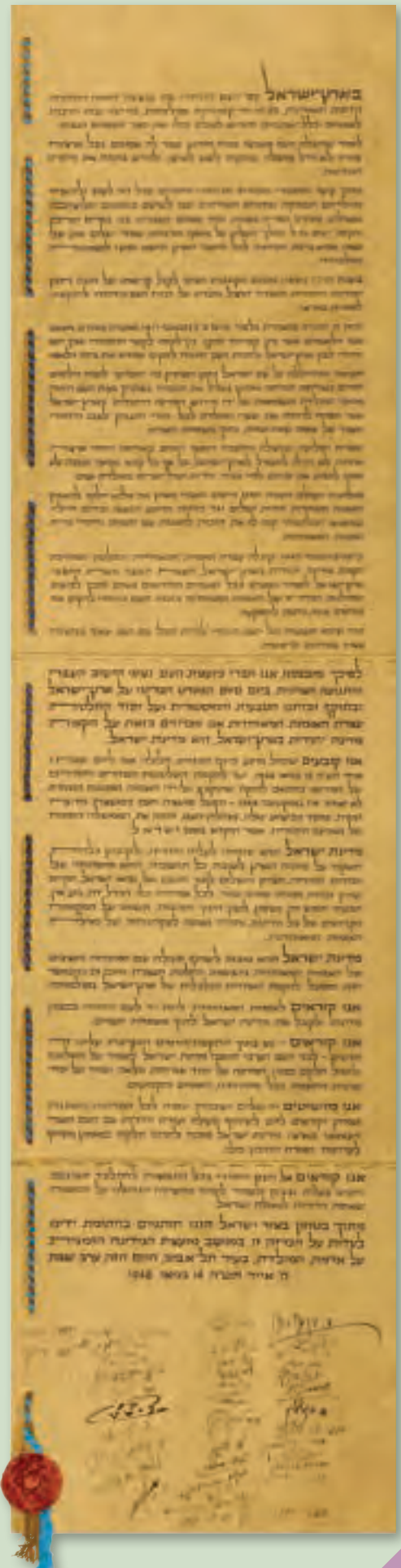
A PLACE TO CALL HOME

With the founding of the State of Israel, the Jewish people finally had a place to call home, a safe haven following the Holocaust, a land where all Jews could practice Judaism without fear. What do you think it means to be a Zionist now that the State of Israel exists?

▲ Israelis celebrate the UN vote on partition, 1947

Declaration of Independence

1948 Establishment of modern State of Israel

1945 World War II ends

1947 UN General Assembly votes to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states

War of Independence

As the bus travels along the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway, Dalia snaps photos out the window. Lining the road are burnt-out skeletons of armored vehicles, left here as a monument to Israel's fight for independence.

The **War of Independence** was brutal for both sides, and many lives were lost in the intense fighting. But Israel's soldiers were well organized and well trained, and they won that first war. By the time the fighting ended, Israel controlled more territory than it would have had under the Partition Plan. Transjordan controlled the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the Old City, and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip.
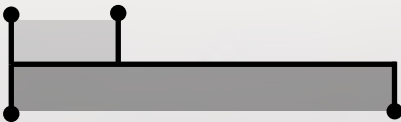
The Israeli army had triumphed over much larger Arab armies, the Zionist dream of a Jewish homeland was finally realized, and nations around the world recognized Israel's right to exist.

▲ An Israeli soldier guards a police station during the **War of Independence.**

1948-49
War of Independence

1948-52
Israel's population doubles

Palestinian refugees

But what Israel calls the War of Independence, Palestinians call *Nakba*, meaning "catastrophe." Approximately 700,000 Palestinian Arabs left their homes and became refugees. Some left before the war, others left at the urging of Arab leaders who warned them to get out of the way of advancing armies, and still others were forced to leave. Israel did not allow most of the Palestinian refugees to return after the war, out of concern that they would not support the Jewish state.

▶ As the Zionist founders of Israel built schools and synagogues, founded universities and hospitals, and planted trees in the desert, the modern State of Israel restored the pride and strength of a battered Jewish people.

BEHRMAN HOUSE

Many of those who fled became refugees in the territories known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The neighboring Arab countries refused to resettle the Palestinians in their countries, placing them in refugee camps instead. Only Jordan offered them citizenship. The 150,000 Arabs who remained in Israel, however, were granted citizenship in the new state.

▲ Immigrants arrived faster than homes could be built and so **ma'abarot, refugee camps**, crowded with tents and other temporary dwellings, were set up to accommodate the masses. Over time, the *ma'abarot* were absorbed into neighboring towns or became towns of their own, with permanent dwellings.

Population explosion

With the war over, Israel's top priority became absorbing the waves of Jewish immigrants pouring into the country. Almost 700,000 immigrants arrived during Israel's first three years of existence, doubling its population to more than 1.3 million. Half were Holocaust survivors from Europe. The other half were Jewish refugees from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa who faced persecution due to Arab-Israeli tension following the War of Independence. With their collective lifestyle, kibbutzim were well suited to absorbing new arrivals, and they grew rapidly. By 1950 there were more than 67,000 kibbutz members in Israel. By 1967, Israel would again double in population.

Israel Survives

Territory under the U.N. Partition Plan:
- Jewish
- Arab
- International authority
— Israel's borders after the War of Independence

LEBANON
SYRIA
Haifa
Tel Aviv
Mediterranean Sea
Jericho
Jerusalem
Gaza
Dead Sea
ISRAEL
NEGEV DESERT
EGYPT
JORDAN

0   30 MI
0   30 KM

◄ As a result of Israel's **War of Independence**, its borders expanded.

immigration

Fighting for survival

At the Israeli Museum at the Yitzḥak Rabin Center in Tel Aviv, a powerful film introduces Dalia and her classmates to footage of the **Six-Day War**. After the War of Independence, Israel's Arab neighbors remained hostile to the Jewish state. In the 1956 Suez Campaign, Israel and Egypt clashed over important shipping routes through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. The peace that followed was broken in 1967, in the Six-Day War, when Egypt once again blocked the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships. In response, Israel launched a surprise air attack against Egypt. Jordan and Syria joined the war on Egypt's side but were quickly defeated.

New territories

As a result of the Six-Day War, Israel gained new territories, including the Golan Heights (from Syria), the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip (from Egypt), and the West Bank and East Jerusalem (from Jordan). These territories tripled Israel's size and provided added security, since rockets launched from Egypt and Syria could no longer reach major cities in Israel. And Jews finally had access to the Old City of Jerusalem, which Jordan had controlled since 1948. Jews could once again visit their holiest site, the Kotel.

Jewish settlements

At first, Jewish settlement in the new territories was limited. But by the late 1970s, the Israeli government began to encourage these settlements, especially in the West Bank, to help serve as a buffer between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The United States, along with other countries and the UN, argues that Jewish settlements in the disputed territories make peace negotiations with the Arabs more difficult, because future peace agreements are likely to require Israeli withdrawal from at least some of the territories. As of 2009, close to 280,000 Jews lived in 121 West Bank settlements.

▼ The **Jewish settlement Ma'aleh Adumim** was established in the West Bank in 1977 as a commuter town for residents working in nearby Jerusalem.

LIVING JEWISH VALUES:

זִכָּרוֹן *Zikaron*, Remembrance

On **Yom Hazikaron**, Israel's Memorial Day, air raid sirens bring the State of Israel to a complete stop. Drivers pull over and stand at attention for a full two minutes. All movie theaters and clubs are closed, and radio and TV broadcasts focus on fallen Israeli soldiers. It's a somber day of remembrance.

Then, as the sun sets, Yom Hazikaron gives way to **Yom Ha'atzma'ut**, Israel Independence Day, joyfully celebrated with parades, barbecues, and Israeli flags everywhere. The two days are joined to make it clear: Israelis owe the very existence of their country to the people—more than 26,000 of them—who gave their lives for it.

War and a peace treaty

In 1973, on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel. At first, Israel was caught off guard and outnumbered. Casualties in the **Yom Kippur War** were high, but Israel triumphed and the war ended less than a month later with a ceasefire.
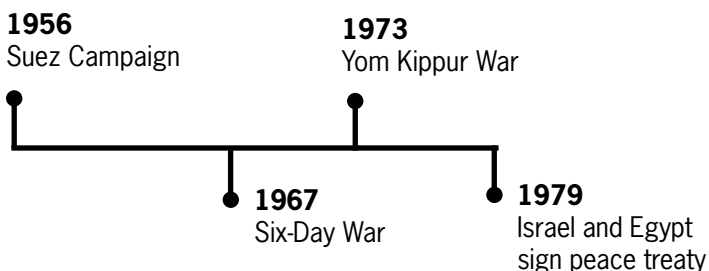
President Anwar al-Sadat visited Israel in 1977 in the first public show of friendship from an Arab state. Two years later, Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty, in which Israel agreed to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

◀ **Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat** addressed the Knesset in Jerusalem in 1977, "I declare to the whole world that we accept to live with you in a permanent peace based on justice."

1956
Suez Campaign

1973
Yom Kippur War

1967
Six-Day War

1979
Israel and Egypt sign peace treaty

▶ The area under Israeli control expanded as a result of the **Six-Day War**.

The Six-Day War

— Israel before Six-Day War
— Israeli-held territory after Six-Day War

LEBANON
Haifa
Golan Heights
SYRIA
Tel Aviv
Jerusalem
Gaza
Dead Sea
Be'er Sheva
Mediterranean Sea
NEGEV DESERT
JORDAN
SINAI PENINSULA
Eilat
Gulf of Suez
Gulf of Aqaba
EGYPT
SAUDI ARABIA
Red Sea

0   50 MI
0   50 KM

N W E S

Continuing conflict

Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew increasingly angry at the Israeli presence and settlements in the territories. In 1987, Palestinian rage exploded in an uprising called the **Intifada** (Arabic for "shaking off"), which would last for six years. Rioting and rock-throwing escalated into attacks with homemade explosives and guns.

Striving for peace

In 1993, hopes for finally achieving peace were high with the signing of the Oslo Accords. Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat, the chairman of the **Palestine Liberation Organization**, or **PLO**, for many years, and the first president of the Palestinian National Authority, renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist. In return, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzḥak Rabin agreed to extend self-rule to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

▼ **Palestinian rioters**
near Ramallah, 2000

Despite the agreement, tensions were high. In 1995, Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist who opposed the peace process. U.S. President Bill Clinton brought both sides together in 2000 with renewed hopes of negotiating a lasting peace agreement. But Arafat rejected the proposed compromise, and the territories broke out once again in violence.

▲ **Yasir Arafat** giving a speech at the White House after the signing of the Oslo Accords

Escalating violence

The **Second Intifada** brought the violence into the heart of Israel, with horrific suicide bombings targeting Israeli soldiers and civilians alike. Israel responded with counterattacks and in 2002 began building a security fence to separate the territories from the rest of Israel.

Disengagement

Two years later, as the violence began to quiet down, Yasir Arafat died, removing what many Israelis saw as an obstacle to peace. In 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon turned over the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank to the Palestinians, in an effort to advance the peace process. He pulled the Israeli army out and evicted Jewish settlers from more than twenty settlements.

But the **Disengagement Plan** didn't bring peace. A fundamentalist Islamic group called **Hamas** won the Palestinian elections in Gaza in 2006, winning support for their promises of medical care, schools, and other services. But Hamas is a terrorist group committed to destroying Israel. Soon Hamas began firing rockets into Israel from Gaza, repeatedly hitting nearby Israeli towns, such as S'derot.

▲ Remains of some of the thousands of rockets fired on **S'derot** from the Gaza Strip

Continued efforts

World leaders continue their efforts to bring peace to the region. A proposed two-state solution envisions the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, which would remain a Jewish state. Israelis are concerned, though, that Palestinians won't accept Israel's existence on any terms. Security is a constant concern in Israel, and peace so far remains an elusive goal.

The future

The history of Israel continues to unfold. Jews around the world make aliyah. The peace process develops. Arabs and Jews clash and also learn how to live side by side. Dalia decides she wants to be a photojournalist—to capture the important moments in history that are yet to come.

BACK TO THE SOURCES

"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift sword against nation, and they will no longer study warfare." —Isaiah 2:4

Rewrite this quote in your own words. _____

In small groups, brainstorm three steps you would take toward peace if you were in charge.

Write letters to your local representative and to the prime minister of Israel to convince them of your ideas.

1987
Palestinian Intifada begins in Gaza and West Bank

2005
Israel pulls out of Gaza and parts of West Bank

2000 Second Intifada begins