

*In Conjunction with*



## Israel Wars

**Instructor:** Yoav Gelber

### 1. Course Purpose

The aim of this course is presenting a survey of the Jewish-Palestinian encounters and Jewish-Arab wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This survey is supposed to give a historical framework for the present phase of the Arab-Jewish conflict in the Middle East, and to help in comprehending the roots and causes of contemporary controversial issues between Israel and the Palestinians and/or the Arab states, and the difficulties in finding a satisfactory solution to this ongoing confrontation. A subsidiary aim is giving a historical framework to the impact of successive wars on the shaping and development of Israeli society.

### 2. Course Demands

- a. Current reading;
- b. Final exam.

### 3. Course Schedule

#### Introduction

The geographical background of the modern Middle East and the historical background of the Arab-Jewish conflict: The emergence of the

two national movements, Jewish (in Europe) and Arab (in the Ottoman Empire) in the turn of the 19th century and their early encounter; the role of imperialism and colonialism.

**Background reading:** Walter Laqueur, *History of Zionism*; Albert Hourani, *A history of the Arab peoples*, parts 4-5; H.H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish people*, pp. 891-948; Yehoshua Porath, *The emergence of the Palestinian-Arab national movement, 1918-1929*, Chapters 1-3.

### **Outside threats and building a Jewish force in response to them: 1920-1947.**

The roots of the Arab-Jewish conflict; the demographic competition between immigration and natural multiplication; mutual ignorance; the transformation from neighbors' quarrels and homicides into a national conflict; From mob's outbursts to organized guerilla — the Palestinian rebellion; The *Haganah* and the Jewish dissident organizations; Palestine in World War II; The Jews' anti-British struggle.

**Reading:** Anita Shapira, *Land and power: the Zionist resort to force, 1881-1948*, chapter 3 (pp. 83-126); Yigal Eyal, 'The Arab Revolt, 1936-1939: A Turning Point in the Struggle over Palestine', in: Mordechai Bar-On (ed.), *A Never-ending Conflict: A Guide to Israeli Military History*, pp. 21-42; Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pp. 67-189.

### **The Jewish-Palestinian civil war, December 1947 – May 1948**

The outbreak of hostilities and their expansion; the Palestinians' organization for war; the intervention of the Arab League; shaping the Jews' war policy; the nature of the civil war and its outcomes.

**Reading:** Yoav Gelber, *Palestine 1948*, chapters 2,3,4,6

### **The Arab-Israeli war, 1948**

The build-up of the Arab coalition, and the invasion of Palestine on 15 May 1948; the balance of power; the containment of the invasion and gaining the initiative; the failure of the Arab coalition and its disintegration in the course of the war.

**Reading:** Gelber, 'The Israeli-Arab war of 1948: history vs. narratives' in: Mordechai Bar-On (ed.), *A Never-ending Conflict: A Guide to Israeli Military History*, Praeger, Westport 2004, pp. 43-68; Abraham Sela, 'Transjordan, Israel and the 1948 War: Myth, Historiography and Reality', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 28 (4), 1992.

### **The end of the War of Independence, the consolidation of the armistice regime and the failure of peace efforts: 1949-1950.**

The IDF offensives in the last phase of the war and the Arab armies' collapse. The disappearance of the Palestinians from the political arena. The armistice agreements and the UN Palestine Conciliation Commission failure to advance towards peace settlement. The heritage of the war: borders; refugees; Jerusalem and Arab refusal to recognize Israel. The Israeli-Jordanian dialogue after the war and its decay.

**Reading:** Gelber, *Palestine 1948*, chapters 14, 15; Gelber, *Israeli-Jordanian Dialogue, 1948-1953*, chapters 6, 7.

### **Israel border wars, 1949-1956**

The continuation of the war by other means; The "second round" in Arab and Israeli discourse; The disregard of Israel's sovereignty - innocent and sinister infiltration; Arab political and economic warfare against Israel; The impact of the Cold War on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The deterioration towards war in 1955/6.

**Reading:** Benny Morris, *Israel Border Wars*, chapters 2-3 (pp. 28-98), 6-7 (pp. 185-239); Motti Golani, *Israel in search of a war: the Sinai Campaign, 1955-1956*, pp. 1-36.

### **The Sinai War, 1956**

The shaping of Israel's defense doctrine after the War of Independence and its application in 1956; The Soviet penetration into Egypt; The Suez crisis and the French-Israeli and later French-British-Israeli alliance; the constraints of a coalition war; The IDF performance in the war; The American and Russian intervention to stop the war; the outcomes of the war from Israeli perspective.

**Reading:** Motti Golani, *Israel in search of a war: the Sinai Campaign, 1955-1956*, pp. 33-71, 100-120, 138-180; Golani's article in Bar-on, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 87-108.

### **The modernization of the IDF, 1957-1967**

The lessons of the Sinai War; the years of relative calm; the transformation of the IDF from a man-power based and mainly infantry army to a technology-based and mobile army; the development of the air force, the armor corps and the paratroopers; the deterioration towards war since 1964. The war over the water with Syria and the resumption of Palestinian small warfare, backed by Syria. The domestic crisis and depression in Israel in 1966-1967.

“Personal testimony”, Film

**Reading:** Ami Gluska, 'The War over the Water during the 1960s, in Bar-On, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 109-131; Michael Oren, *Six Days of War*, pp. 12-60.

### **The Six Day War, June 1967**

The escalation during 1967; Israel political and economic crisis in 1967 as a temptation for a brinkmanship policy. Nasser's gamble. The period of waiting and attempts to avoid war. The military campaign and its outcomes.

**Reading:** Michael Oren, *Six Days of War*, pp. 61-210.

### **The IDF between the wars of 1967 and 1973**

The transformation of the Middle East and Israel; The new dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict; "One Palestine Complete" or "Greater Eretz Israel"; the beginning of the "occupation"; Palestinian terror; from postwar euphoria to the war of attrition; the "new" IDF after the Six Day War.

**Reading:** Oren, *Six Days of War*, pp. 305-327; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, chapter 8 (pp. 347-386); Dan Schueftan, 'The Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition, 1969-1970, in Bar-On, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 147-157; Yoav Gelber, 'The Seventh Day: Israeli Society and the IDF between the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War', 1967-1973 (course website)

### **The background of the Yom Kippur War, April-October 1973**

Egypt's decision to go to war against Israel; the Egyptian preparations for war and the shaping of the Egyptian-Syrian coalition; Israel's alert in April-May 1973 and its significance. The return to normal; Intelligence alerts and emergency measures or the lack of them on the last days before the war.

**Reading:** Uri Bar Joseph, *The watchman fell asleep: the surprise of Yom Kippur and its sources*, pp. 11-24, 33-35, 45-58, 81-199.

### **The Yom Kippur War's major decisions and campaigns**

The Egyptian-Syrian opening strike; The use of the IAF; The failure of the defensive campaign and the counter attack in the southern front and its causes; The success of defense on the northern front; The decision to give preference to offensive in the northern front and its reasons; The crossing of the Suez Canal and the breakthrough from the bridgehead.

The double cease fire agreement and the battle of Suez.

**Reading:** Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: the epic encounter that transformed the Middle East*, chapters 11-21 (pp. 101-252); 24-25 (pp. 284-318), 28-33 (339-440); Shimon Golan, 'The Yom Kippur War', in Bar-On, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 159-178

### **The Israeli-Palestinian terror and anti-terror war, 1968-1982**

Terror inside Israel and the occupied territories; The border warfare along the Jordan valley; Palestinian terror across the world; Black September 1970; The move of terror bases from Jordan to Lebanon; The attack on the Israeli delegation to the Olympic Games in Muenich (1972) and the Israeli revenge; The Palestinians in the Yom Kippur War; Ma'alot and Antebe; The civil war in Lebanon and its impact on Israel and the Palestinians.

**Reading:** Benny Michelson, 'Terror and Anti-Terror, 1965-1985', in Bar-On, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 000-000.

### **Israel in Lebanon, 1976-2000**

The early history of Israel's involvement in Lebanese politics from the 1930s to 1958; Syria's involvement in Lebanon; Israel alliances with Christians of Lebanon; The war of 1982 and its immediate outcomes; The long-run outcomes of the war: The Druze and the Shi'ite insurrections; The Israeli withdrawals in 1983 and 1985, and ultimate evacuation in 2000.

**Reading:** Zeev Schiff & Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, pp. 97-285; Eyal Zisser, 'The 1982 "Peace of Galilee" War: Looking Back in Anger', in Bar-On, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 194-210.

### **From civil disobedience to terror warfare: the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, 1987-2005**

The stabilization of Israel's relations with Arab states and the return of the Palestinians to the focus of the conflict; The first Intifada and the Israeli response. The Madrid conference and the Oslo agreement; The decade of euphoria – 1990s. The second intifada and the present state of the conflict.

**Readings:** Reuven Aharoni, 'The Palestinian Intifada', in Bar-On, *A Never-ending Conflict*, pp. 211-230; Shaul Shay, 'The Israeli Palestinian Conflict, 2000-2003, Ibid. pp. 231-250.

# Bibliography

## Background

**Walter Laqueur**, History of Zionism

**Albert Hourani**, A history of the Arab peoples, parts 4-5

**H.H. Ben-Sasson** (ed.), A History of the Jewish people, pp. 891-948;

**Yehoshua Porath**, The emergence of the Palestinian-Arab national movement, 1918-1929, Chapters 1-3.

## Pre-Statehood

**Anita Shapira**, Land and power: the Zionist resort to force, 1881-1948, chapter 3 (pp. 83-126);

**Yigal Eyal**, 'The Arab Revolt, 1936-1939: A Turning Point in the Struggle over Palestine', in: Mordechai Bar-On (ed.), A Never-ending Conflict: A Guide to Israeli Military History, pp. 21-42;

**Benny Morris**, Righteous Victims, pp. 67-189.

## The Israeli-Arab Wars

**Mordechai Bar-On** (ed.), A Never-ending Conflict: A Guide to Israeli Military History, Praeger, Westport 2004

**Yoav Gelber**, Palestine 1948, chapters 2,3,4,6

**Abraham Sela**, 'Transjordan, Israel and the 1948 War: Myth, Historiography and Reality', Middle Eastern Studies, 28 (4), 1992.

**Yoav Gelber**, Israeli-Jordanian Dialogue, 1948-1953, chapters 6, 7.

**Benny Morris**, Israel Border Wars, chapters 2-3 (pp. 28-98), 6-7 (pp. 185-239)

**Motti Golani**, Israel in search of a war: the Sinai Campaign, 1955-1956

**Michael Oren**, Six Days of War

**Uri Bar Joseph**, The watchman fell asleep: the surprise of Yom Kippur and its sources

**Abraham Rabinovich**, The Yom Kippur War: the epic encounter that transformed the Middle East

**Zeev Schiff & Ehud Ya'ari**, Israel's Lebanon War, pp. 97-285