

The Arab Israeli conflict is a Modern phenomenon which began around the turn of the 20th century. Although both sides have different religions, the Israelis being mainly Jewish and the Arabs containing Muslims, Christians and Druze, it is fundamentally a fight over land.

Land has always been a fundamental issue between the Zionists and the Palestinian-Arabs. The Jewish claim to the land goes all the way back to biblical times when God promised Israel to “Abraham and he’s seed forever”. This promise has stayed with the Jews, prompting many of them to think that Palestine is meant to be there homeland. However the Jews were expelled from Israel by the Romans in 135AD and afterwards spread out in Europe, this is more commonly known as Diaspora. While in Europe they experienced many anti-Semitic attacks such as the Pogroms in Russia it was this that motivated Theodore Hertzle to unite Jews in the Zionist movement. This was to bring Jews together into a homeland.

The Arabs also have a valid claim to the land. After the Roman Empire fell many Arabs drew together and conquered Palestine in the 7th century. These Arabs became know as the Palestinian Arabs. They lived there for hundreds of years until the Turks took over the area and the Arabs came under Turkish rule in the 16th century, this lasted until 1914 and it was this that made Arabs dream of an independent Arab state.

There have always been Jews and Arabs living in Palestine but until the turn of the 20th century they have always lived peacefully with each other and I believe that it was the huge influx of Jews into Palestine in the first world war, the inter war period and just after the second world war, this angered the Arabs because the Jews came into their home and took over, they bought up the alot of the land that was considered valuable. They first started emigrating in large numbers around 1917 when the Balfour declaration became known. This was Britain supporting the Jewish idea of a homeland in Palestine. However Britain didn’t just support the idea of a Jewish homeland they also supported the Arabs dream of an independent state in the McMahon- Husayn understandings in 1915. Instead of doing either, after the war Britain and France carved up the Middle East between them as agreed in a secret arrangement that had been decided before either the Balfour declaration or the McMahon understandings. This betrayal caused hatred of the British and of the opposing side because the Arabs didn’t get the independent state they had dreamt of for centuries and the Jews didn’t get the homeland they needed to get away from the anti-Semitism in Europe. After world war one Britain ruled Palestine under a mandate and allowed a steady flow of Jews in to the area that bought land and settled. This added to the tension because it angered the Arab peasants even more mainly because they became very fearful that this would eventually lead to the creation of a Zionist homeland. Throughout the twenty’s many clashes broke out between the Arabs and Jews caused by the increasing Jewish emigration. The British didn’t even feel responsible for what they had built on in the middle east in fact in 1927 Winston Churchill said, and I quote, “I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, a more worthily wise race, to put it that way has come in and taken their place.” I believe it was this attitude that the Israeli’s adopted towards the Palestinians, they didn’t believe they were doing anything wrong, they believed the Arabs to be inferior and this increased the violence each side felt because the Jews thought the were doing their duty and the Arabs began to feel inferior and they felt that they could rule this land better than anyone.

The next major influx of Jews was just after Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 leading to new land purchases and Jewish settlements that angered the Arabs even more this climaxed in 1936 with the Arab revolt which lasted for three years. Britain did suppress it but afterwards reconsidered their governing policy and let out a white paper statement that limited future Jewish immigration. This however caused more agro because the Zionist believed it a betrayal of the Balfour declaration and thought this insensitive considering what the European Jews were going through

under Hitler's rule in Germany. By the end of the second world war there were 1269000 Arabs living in Palestine and 608,000 Jews living under the British mandate and the Jews had bought 6-8% of the land which was 20% of the arable land.