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KEY FIGURES IN ISRAELI HISTORY

MENACHEM BEGIN (1913 - 1992)

Born in Poland, Begin was a leader of the Jewish underground group Irgun in the days before independence. While serving as prime minister, he made peace with Egypt, sharing the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize with Anwar Sadat.

DAVID BEN-GURION (1886 - 1973)

It was Ben-Gurion who proclaimed the Jewish state on May 14, 1948. Born in Poland, he arrived in Palestine in 1906 and eventually became chairman of the Jewish Agency, and later Israel's first prime minister. He resigned his office several times to return to his home at Sde Boker in the Negev, only to rejoin the government, finally retiring in 1963.

MOSHE DAYAN (1915 - 1981)

Born on the first kibbutz, Deganya, Dayan grew up in the agricultural village of Nahalal. He served as chief of staff of the army, defense minister, and foreign minister and was among the chief architects of Israel's strategies of the 1967 and 1973 wars. Throughout his life, he pursued a serious interest in archaeology.

ABBA EBAN (BORN 1915)

Born in South Africa and educated at Cambridge University, Eban, who is fluent in many languages, was considered by many to be the "voice of Israel" for many years. Among the many positions in which he served the state were ambassador to the United Nations (Israel's first), ambassador to the United States (Israel's second), foreign minister, Knesset member, and deputy prime minister.

LEVI ESHKOL (1895 - 1969)

The Russian-born prime minister followed Ben-Gurion in office and served during the Six Day War. Previously, he had been finance minister under Ben-Gurion.

THEODOR HERZL (1860 - 1904)

Considered the founder of political Zionism, Herzl was a journalist, playwright, and author of *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*). He was born in Budapest and grew up in

Vienna. In 1897, he convened the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland.

CHAIM HERZOG (1918 - 1997)

Born in Northern Ireland, Herzog was an officer in the British army during World War II and became a general in the Israeli army. He served as president of the State of Israel for 10 years. As Israel's representative to the UN in 1975, when the resolution equating Zionism and racism was passed, in a dramatic moment he stood up before the General Assembly and tore up the text.

GOLDA MEIR (1898 - 1978)

Born in Russia, Golda Meir immigrated to the US with her family and became a teacher in Milwaukee before moving to Israel in 1921. One of the 25 signers of Israel's Declaration of Independence, she served as the first minister to the Soviet Union, a Knesset member, minister of labor, foreign minister, under Ben-Gurion, and later as prime minister.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU (BORN 1949)

Born in Israel, he spent part of his youth in Philadelphia and attended university in the United States. Before serving as prime minister, Netanyahu had been Israel's ambassador to the UN, deputy foreign minister, and spokesperson for Israel during the Gulf War.

SHIMON PERES (BORN 1923)

A protégé of David Ben-Gurion, Peres, born in Poland, was appointed director-general of the Ministry of Defense in the 1950s. He has been involved in Israeli politics ever since, serving as prime minister, foreign minister, and defense minister. He shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Rabin and Arafat.

YITZHAK RABIN (1922 - 1995)

A soldier turned statesman, Rabin was assassinated during his term as prime minister. He had also served as commander in chief of Israel's armed forces in 1967, ambassador to the United States, a member of the Knesset, and minister of labor. He was Israel's youngest prime minister—age 52—during his first term in 1974, and

the first one to have been born in the country. He shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Peres and Arafat.

YITZHAK SHAMIR (BORN 1915)

Born in Poland, Shamir was prime minister for several terms in the 1980s and 1990s; previously, he had been foreign minister. A leader of the Stern Gang, one of the key resistance groups before 1948, he later served in the Mossad, Israel's intelligence service.

MOSHE SHARETT (1894 - 1965)

Born in the Ukraine, Sharett was foreign minister of the shadow cabinet that operated in the days prior to statehood, and was one of the signers of Israel's Declaration of Independence. He was Israel's first foreign minister and second prime minister, serving a brief term.

CHAIM WEIZMANN (1874 - 1952)

Born in Russia, Weizmann was a chemist and chairman of the First Zionist Commission in 1918; he served as a moderating force among the many Zionist factions. The provisional government named him the first president, and his first official act was to visit President Harry Truman and appeal for arms. He was also the first president of the state.