

UK - ISRAEL

A RELATIONSHIP OF SHARED VALUES



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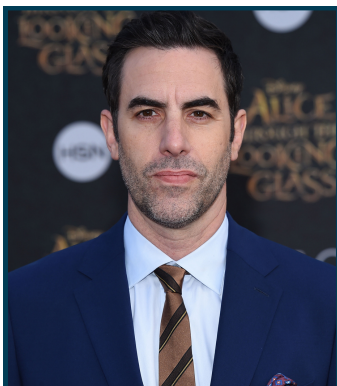
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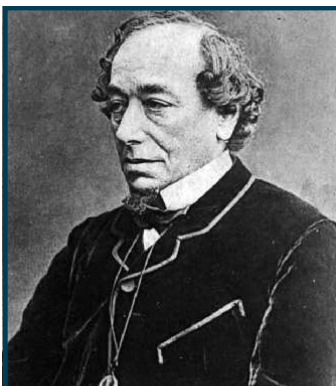
Modern History Timeline **11** **(1915 – Present)**

NOTABLE BRITISH JEWS



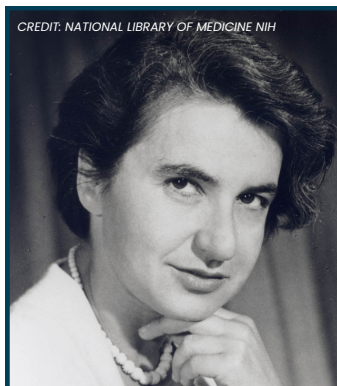
SACHA BARON COHEN
BORN 1971

AN ACTOR AND COMEDIAN WHO HAS INFLUENCED MODERN POP CULTURE WITH HIS FICTIONAL SATIRICAL CHARACTERS INCLUDING ALI G, BORAT, AND ADMIRAL GENERAL ALADEEN



BENJAMIN DISRAELI
1804-1881

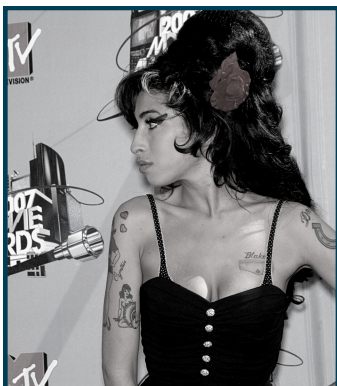
THE ONLY JEWISH PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM IN ITS HISTORY, HOLDING THE POSITION FROM 1874-1880



CREDIT: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE NIH

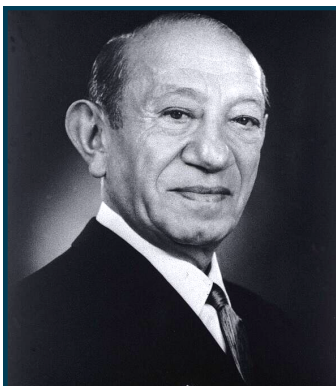
ROSALIND FRANKLIN
1920-1958

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SCIENTISTS OF ALL TIME, WHOSE MOST NOTABLE WORK WAS THE DISCOVERY OF THE STRUCTURE OF DNA



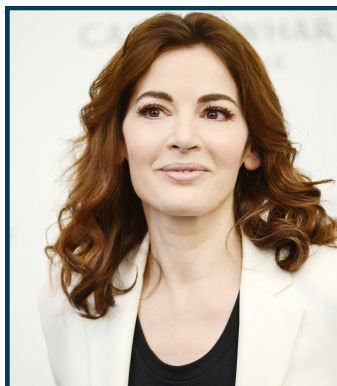
AMY WINEHOUSE
1983-2011

AN ICONIC SINGER AND SONGWRITER, AMY WINEHOUSE WAS HUGELY POPULAR DURING HER BRIEF CAREER AND WON MULTIPLE BRIT AND GRAMMY AWARDS



JACK COHEN
1898-1979

WORKING AS A GROCER UNTIL HE FOUNDED THE FIRST TESCO IN 1924, LEADING IT TO BECOME ONE OF THE UK'S MOST POPULAR SUPERMARKET CHAINS



NIGELLA LAWSON
BORN 1960

A POPULAR TV COOKING PERSONALITY, AS WELL AS A SUCCESSFUL AUTHOR, NIGELLA LAWSON HAS AMASSED A HUGE FANBASE WITH HER ENGAGING STYLE AND TALENT

THE JEWS OF THE BRITISH ISLES

The history of the Jews of England and the British Isles is a great example of how a minority community was fully welcomed into society after enduring much persecution. Whilst the Jewish community today has enjoyed being a core part of British society for over 300 years, the awful discrimination of the 600 years beforehand cannot be ignored. With antisemitism on the rise again, it is also a reminder of the need to stand with British Jews and ensure they can continue to thrive.

Whilst there are some Anglican texts that suggest some Jews were brought to the British Isles by the Roman Empire, the earliest record of Jewish people in England is in 1070, when William the Conqueror invited Jewish merchants from Rouen to travel over the channel to settle in his new kingdom.



Second assault of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, illustrated by Gustave Doré c. 1883

Despite early Monarchs of England declaring that Jews should be treated equally, many held hostilities to the Jewish people on the basis that they were not Christian. During the reign of Richard I, antisemitism increased greatly, accompanied by the ongoing Crusades through Europe to Jerusalem.

English Jews were prohibited from many professions and were essentially forced to become money lenders due to Catholicism forbidding the charging of interest. With money lenders primarily being Jews, the animosity towards them was great, with this being the origin of the antisemitic myth of Jews being obsessed with money and control.

English Jews suffered much antisemitism throughout the Middle Ages. In 1144, Norwich became the location of the first ever Blood Libel, a false allegation made against the city's local Jews that they had murdered a Christian boy and used his blood for ritual purposes.

Further blood libels, taxation, demarcations (yellow badges) and massacres were common. Notable incidents include the York Massacre of 1190 and the multiple Statutes of Jewry, which were rules that discriminated against Jews. The relentless antisemitism against English Jews came to a head when King Edward I expelled them entirely in 1290.



An image of Jews being beaten from a thirteenth-century English manuscript. The figures in blue and yellow are wearing a badge in the shape of two tablets, identifying them as Jews.

In 1655, following the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell led the decision to resettle the Jews in England nearly 400 years after their expulsion by Edward I. This marked the start of a much more successful era for the English Jewish community, who enjoyed greater freedoms and prosperity than in other countries in Europe.

This was likely due to a Protestant emphasis on the Old Testament, a shared self-perception as the chosen people and a distrust of Catholicism. Britain's early adoption of constitutional government reduced conflict and secured civil liberties.



Whilst this was certainly a much better time, it must be noted that antisemitism very much still existed and there was an expectation that Judaism should be practised discreetly.

During this early period of resettlement, a small synagogue opened in London on Creechuch Lane, which would become the Bevis Marks Synagogue in 1701, currently the oldest active synagogue in the United Kingdom.



Bevis Marks Synagogue, opened in 1701 and is the UK's oldest working synagogue today.

The most significant of British Jews was Benjamin Disraeli, who in 1868 became the first (and to this day only) Prime Minister of Jewish descent. Disraeli held a very close relationship with Queen Victoria and is an iconic figure in British politics.



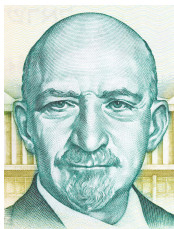
The Jewish community continued to flourish, and the population increased fivefold at the turn of the 20th century following full emancipation for the Jews of England in 1890. Notable families such as the Rothschilds and Montefiores gained prominence and influence in the United Kingdom.



Over time antisemitism was less tolerated, with the greatest moment coming at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, when an estimated 100,000 Britons physically fought against the British Union of Fascists, in a show of great solidarity with the Jewish community. As well as this, Britain rescued 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust, mainly children via the Kindertransport.

Today, there are a little over 270,000 Jewish people in the UK, accounting for just 0.46% of the population, contributing to society and enjoying great freedoms.

DIPLOMACY AND SECURITY



In the late 1800s, Jews created modern Zionism, a liberation movement aimed at achieving freedom and self-determination in Israel – the ancestral home of the Jewish people. Positive relations between the UK and Zionist leaders began with Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann was a British citizen and scientist who assisted the Allies during WWI, allowing him close contact with British leaders.

A year before the end of WWI, Weizmann helped secure the Balfour Declaration – a commitment by the British government to support a "Jewish national home" in the Land of Israel (then widely referred to as Palestine).

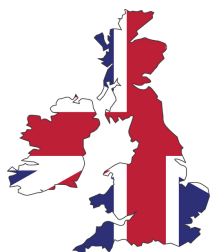


Area Allocated for Jewish National Home San Remo Conference, 1920

After 400 years of Ottoman rule, Britain had conquered the territory in 1917. It was officially granted control in 1920, when the League of Nations created the British Mandate for Palestine.

In 1922, Britain separated Transjordan from the Mandate, which would allow it to become an independent state over time.

Despite its initial support, by the 1930s the British Foreign Office reversed course and began severely restricting Jewish immigration to the British Mandate for Palestine. These restrictions remained even as Jews desperately tried to escape the Nazis before and during the Holocaust. This led to intense violence between Jews and the British Mandate Authorities. At the same time, Britain was unable to resolve the rising ethnic and nationalist strife between Jews and Arabs in the territory.



The UK did not support Israel as it declared independence and fought for its survival in 1948. However, it did officially recognise the Jewish state in 1950. Relations remained tense through much of Israel's early history, as the UK Foreign Office prioritised alliances with Arab states.



King Charles and former Israeli President Shimon Peres at Clarence House, 2008 (Credit: GPO)



Two great statesmen, former Prime Ministers of the UK and Israel, Winston Churchill and David Ben-Gurion, 1960



Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the Western Wall, 2015 (Credit: Flash90)



British-Canadian Recruitment Poster, 1918



The 'Iron Ladies,' former Prime Ministers Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher, 1976 (Credit: GPO)

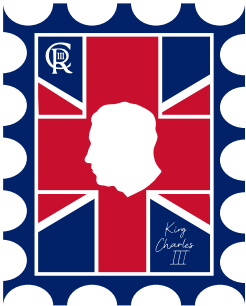


Lord Arthur Balfour celebrates the Balfour Declaration in Israel, 1925

DIPLOMACY AND SECURITY

Israel and the UK drew closer together in the context of the Cold War, and have had more cooperation over time in trade, humanitarian programmes, scientific research, and more. However, the UK has been an inconsistent ally of Israel at the UN, regularly voting against Israel. A current concern is the UK's support for the Iran Nuclear Deal, which Israel sees as too weak to prevent Iran's regime from building a nuclear weapon

In 2017, the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) made an unprecedented acknowledgement of its very close ties with Israeli Intelligence Services, proclaiming that the two countries' strong relationship was saving lives against the threat of terrorism.



Despite the late Queen Elizabeth II never having visited Israel, her husband Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, became the first Royal to travel in 1994. Prince Philip's mother, Alice, was a Righteous Among the Nations and is buried at the Mount of Olives. Prince William visited Israel in 2018 as part of an official visit. King Charles III visited as Prince of Wales in 2020, and there are rumoured plans for another visit in the near future.

Despite past differences, the UK and Israel share security concerns and have developed a strong alliance. This was cemented in October 2023 following the Hamas atrocities, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak publicly declaring his support for Israel by saying, "We stand with Israel, the United Kingdom stands with Israel against this terrorism today, tomorrow and always."



COMMERCIAL RELATIONS



Israel is the UK's third-largest arms supplier



Israel provides 1/7 of all drugs used by the NHS



Over 500 Israeli companies have a presence in the UK



29 Israeli firms are on the London Stock Exchange



The UK is Israel's second-largest trading partner after the US



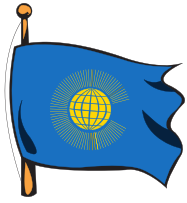
Israel was the first country to sign a post-Brexit trade agreement with the UK



Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity

DID YOU KNOW?

Throughout history, Israel and the UK have shared much with each other, bringing normal Israelis and Brits together.



In 1951, Ben-Gurion requested that Israel join the Commonwealth. After years of discussions, Israel's application was formally rejected in 1956 due to British fears of upsetting Arab nations.



Col. John Henry Patterson commanded the Zion Mule Corps, a Jewish Legion of the British army in WWI made up of Jewish volunteers. This was the first Jewish fighting regiment for nearly 2000 years.



Much of Israeli law is based on English Common Law, which was used during the British Mandate and still has a large influence on Israel's legal system.



Israeli cuisine has had a great effect on the UK, with top Israeli chefs opening high quality restaurants such as The Palomar and Ottolenghi in London, and enjoying great success.



Arutz 1, Israel's first main public TV channel, was based off the concept of the BBC and was funded through TV licensing. Arutz 1 was shut down and relaunched in 2017 as Kan.



UK music is very popular in Israel, with some of the biggest names in pop royalty having performed in the Jewish State including The Rolling Stones, Elton John and Robbie Williams.



Manor Solomon, Israeli and Tottenham Hotspur football star (Credit: Twitter @SpursOfficial)



Dana International wins Eurovision in Birmingham, the first transgender artist to win the contest, 1998 (Credit: imdb)



Robbie Williams performing in Tel Aviv, 2023 (Credit: Photo by Koko/Flash90)



The 'Zion Mule Corps', Jewish Legion soldiers set up to support the Allies in WWI, 1919



Ottolenghi restaurant in Chelsea, one of a number of the popular chain owned by the Israeli chef

MODERN HISTORY TIMELINE

1915–17: Jews and the British begin defence and political cooperation

The British assisted the Nili spy ring and helped establish the **Zion Mule Corps**, the first Jewish army regiment in the Jewish homeland since ancient times. The corps evolved into the Jewish Legion, which fought in WWI and advanced strategic relations between the British and Zionist leadership. Via the **Balfour Declaration**, the British expressed support for creating a “Jewish National Home” in Palestine whilst protecting the rights of non-Jews there.

1930–39: Relations decline

Conflict escalated between Jews and Arabs in the Palestine Mandate and British authorities initially helped the Jews set up units for self-defence. However, an Arab revolt and support for the Axis powers by Arab leaders led Britain to change course. It issued the infamous **White Paper of 1939**, curtailing Jewish immigration as Jews were trying to escape the Nazi genocide in Europe. Jews rallied against the White Paper, believing it to be an existential threat.



1950: Britain recognises Israel

Britain finally recognised Israel in full, establishing normal diplomatic relations. However, the government prioritised alliances with Arab monarchies such as Jordan and Iraq, which it was instrumental in establishing.



1920: British Mandate for Palestine

The League of Nations creates the **Palestine Mandate** during the **San Remo Conference**, giving Britain responsibility for governing the territory and facilitating the creation of a Jewish National Home. In the years 1917–29, the Jewish population expands from 55,000 to just over 162,000 and eventually to 806,000 in 1948.

1939–48: Jewish Insurgency in Mandatory Palestine

While some Jews joined Britain's war effort against the Axis, others attacked British government, police and military headquarters, responding to the White Paper. This led to a crackdown on Zionist militias by British forces and support for Britain's occupation waned. Attlee's government handed the Mandate to the United Nations and abstained when the UN voted in favour of **partitioning the land into Jewish and Arab states in 1947**. After Arab leaders rejected partition and **declared war**, some British officers fought alongside Arab forces against Israel. Britain did not recognise Israel when it **declared independence in 1948**.



1960: Warming relations

After the Suez crises, Israel was seen as a stabilising force, able to hit back at powers that were seen as hostile to British interests. The fall of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1958 underscored the failure of Britain's policy, which aimed to keep a distance from Israel and preserve Arab monarchies. **Britain began to sell arms to Israel** but did not mobilise support for the Jewish state prior to the 1967 War.

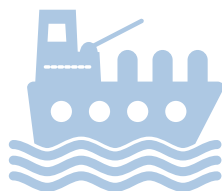


1970s-80s: Criticism of Israel grows

Concerns grew as Arab states warned they may cut off their oil supplies if the West supported Israel. Europe sought a foreign policy independent to the US and in 1973, the European Council expressed support for Palestinian self-determination. As the Yom Kippur War began, **Britain embargoed Israel, Syria and Egypt**. The Arab states were supported by the U.S.S.R. whilst Israel was not and it struggled with a shortage of spare parts and munitions. Though it overcame this challenge and defeated the invading Arab forces, Israel suffered heavy losses.

1956: The Suez Canal Crisis and a military alliance

Following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian government, France, Britain and Israel jointly invaded Egypt. Immense political pressure from the US and USSR soon forced the three nations to withdraw, marking the **end of Britain as a world superpower**. Regardless, Israel proved itself a valuable military ally.



1970: PFLP Hijackings and UK response

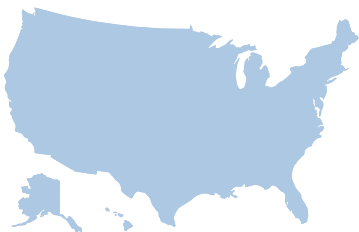
The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked four civilian aeroplanes. On one plane a hijacker was killed and another, Leila Khaled, was taken into custody in Britain. A few days later, the PFLP hijacked another aircraft, took 300 hostages (65 of them British) and demanded Khaled's return. Britain negotiated with the terrorists and released Khaled among others and later admitted the episode seriously harmed Western credibility in the event of future negotiations. Britain also refused to support Jordan in its conflict with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).





1990s: Ties strengthen with both Israel and the PLO

With the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Oslo peace process, Britain pursued a policy of relations with Israel and the Arab world. In 1994, Britain's arms embargo on Israel was rescinded and Prince Philip became the first Royal to visit. In 1995, Prime Minister John Major led a business delegation to Israel, announcing **Britain would no longer feel constrained by Arab League boycotts**. He also visited the Palestinian Authority (PA) and sent over eighty million pounds worth of aid and assistance to the PA and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).



1980: Relations stabilise

European Middle East policy crystallised in the Venice Declaration in the wake of the Camp David Accords. It marked a clear desire for European involvement in the peace process and legitimised the PLO, which at the time had not recognised Israel and was committing terrorist attacks against civilians. In 1986, **Thatcher became the first sitting Prime Minister to visit Israel**. However, closer relations with Saudi Arabia resulted in restrictions on arms sales to Israel, continuing until 1994.



1997–2000: Rising economic ties and support for US peace

Israel became the UK's biggest trading partner in the Middle East. The BRITech Fund was founded, investing £15 million into joint projects. Israel Aircraft Industries and the RAF closed on a £20 million deal – the first major Israeli entry into the British arms market. In the EU, Britain took a middle ground between France, Spain and Italy, which supported unilateral actions by Palestinian leaders – and Germany, which staunchly supported Israel. Britain firmly supported US efforts for peace, blocking EU attempts to pursue an independent agenda.

2000–2010: British Diplomacy

Some EU member-states called for freezing or rescinding agreements that gave Israel economic benefits for trading with Europe (its largest economic partner), as a way to oppose Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank. Britain helped to prevent such sanctions from being imposed but continued to meet with the leaders of Syria, Iran and others. Security coordination slowed as Britain became concerned about Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza. However, **Israel remained the UK's biggest export market and largest trading partner in the region, and the UK's 22nd largest trading partner worldwide.**



2010–Present: The enhanced UK-Israel relationship

Israel has emerged as an “innovation nation” and the UK has become its **third largest export market, with goods totalling £3.6bn.** Between 2012 and 2018, the UK-Israel Tech Hub generated 175 partnerships worth £85m, which is estimated to have boosted the UK economy by £800m. At the same time, Britain has maintained diplomatic relations with Iran and the Palestinian Authority to which it has provided significant amounts of financial aid. In recent years, British trade unions, NGOs, churches and universities have become hostile toward Israel. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission even found that the Labour Party was “responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination,” towards Jews, mostly relating to Israel. Despite these issues, Israel and the UK have become strong strategic and financial partners. Currently, both countries are working on a bilateral relations roadmap until 2030 to improve the UK and Israel's cooperation on a multitude of platforms.

“

It is manifestly right that the scattered Jews should have a national centre, and a national home to be reunited, and where else but in Palestine, with which for three thousand years they have been intimately and profoundly associated?

**The Right Honourable Sir
Winston Churchill, 1921**

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