

#133 JEWISH HISTORY OF PALESTINE AND ISRAEL THROUGH HOLY LAND PHILATELY

This slide show will touch on both the history of Palestine and Israel and on the philately of Palestine and Israel. The slides were auction lots in past NEGEV HOLYLAND auctions. The maps were taken from various web sites.

Holy Land Philately is a most interesting and challenging part of the hobby of stamp collecting. There is room in it for the novice collector as well as the most advanced philatelist. It also shows the history of the area. The Holy Land is defined as the area on the Eastern Shore of the Mediterranean Sea stretching to the Jordan River. Holy Land Philately includes Palestine prior to 1948, the modern State of Israel, the West Bank of the Jordan River from 1948 to date, and (by extension) the Sinai and Gaza from 1948 to date.

There are distinct periods involved: Ottoman, Mandate, Interim, and Israel. The actual postal history (that is, the history of the mails) is very extensive. I will just skim over the topics. Otherwise we could be here all night and still not get done.

Prior to World War One, most of the area now known as the Middle East was part of the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire. The empire lasted from around 1300 to the end of World War One

Slide 1: Ottoman Empire 1580

Slide 2: Ottoman Empire Largest Borders

Slide 3: Ottoman Empire In 1683

Slide 4: Map of Ottoman Empire 1885. Compared to other areas, Palestine was a dusty sparsely populated backwater of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey had its own post offices in Palestine. Many Europeans frequently were in Palestine for business or religious purposes. As modes of travel improved, this trend grew. As the Ottoman Postal System had very poor service, the visitors preferred that their own governments handle the mails.

Slide 5: One of the earliest Jewish communities in Palestine was Petach Tiqvah. It was founded in 1878 by a group of pioneers from Jerusalem. The local government issued its own stamp **PETACH TIQVAH**. Rishon Le Zion was founded in 1882 by Russian Jewish immigrants.

During the latter half of the 19th century, as the Ottoman Empire grew weak, the European powers were able to obtain Capitulation Treaties from Turkey. Under these treaties, five nations (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Egypt) were able to expand their postal systems into Palestine. The first such post office opened around 1850. This is called the FORERUNNER PERIOD.

Slide 6: Austria These nations either overprinted their regular stamps or issued stamps for usage in Palestine

Slide 7: Italy

Slide 8: Russia. They used their own postmarks. In brief, an overprint is defined as a stamp that, after being printed, has additional printing such as a change in value or a country name. The study of these postmarks (the devices used to cancel the stamp) is quite extensive.

Slide 9: Last Christmas in 19th century

Slide 10: Turkish

Slide 11: French

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The Ottoman Empire was nearly bankrupt during the latter part of the nineteenth century. One way to raise money was to require the usage of revenue stamps on nearly everything. Again, the revenue stamps are an interesting study in and of themselves. I will just show you three examples

Slide 12: Court Fees

Slide 13: Hejaz Railway – to help pay for the railroad

Slide 14: Stamp Duty

During World War One, the Ottoman Empire collapsed. All foreign post offices were closed at the end of the war, in 1917.

Under British command, the military Egyptian Expeditionary Forces occupied and controlled Palestine at the end of the war.

Slide 15: Autographed Photo of General Allenby

Slide 16: General Allenby Entering Jerusalem

The League of Nations mandated Palestine to Great Britain in June 1922. For philatelic purposes, the MANDATE PERIOD is considered to have begun at the end of World War I. By the way, the Mandate area also included TransJordan (what is now called Jordan) which is on the East bank of the Jordan River. TransJordan was to be the Palestinian state and Palestine was to be the Jewish state.

On November 2, 1917, Lord James Balfour wrote a letter to Walter Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community. It contained what has come to be known as the BALFOUR DECLARATION. In part it read, "His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

Slide 17: The first set of British stamps for Palestine, called the BLUES, was issued in 1917. In lieu of country name, they had in the design EEF which stands for Egyptian Expeditionary Forces

Slide 18: Second stamp overprinted to change value

Slide 19: Civilian use of military posts lasted until 1920.

Slide 20: Typograph stamp. The next set, called the TYPOGRAPHS were issued in mid to late 1910 Typography is a method of printing stamps. We will not get into that tonight.

Over the next 10 years, these stamps were re-issued with various overprints. The top line is Arabic for PALESTINE. The second line is in English. The third line is in Hebrew. It reads PALESTINE. After that word are the Hebrew letters ALEPH and YUD. These stand for ERETZ ISRAEL – The Land of Israel. There are two main types of overprints.

Slide 21: Jerusalem The first overprint was made in JERUSALEM. The letters have serifs. There are three sub-types. The second type was made in LONDON.

Slide 22: London The letters do not have serifs. There are two sub-types. Here is a "cheat sheet" showing how to tell them apart.

Slide 23: Cheat sheet.

Specialists – with very good eyesight and/or a powerful magnifying glass – have field days checking these stamps for the many varieties and errors. I will not delve into this.

Slide 24: Pictorials. In 1927, the PICTORIAL issue began. These remained in use till the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Four views of Palestine were used: Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, The Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) in Jerusalem, The Tower of David on the Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, and the city

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of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. There are many color shadings and FIVE types of paper: thin, vertical ribbed, wove, horizontal ribbed, and transparent. There is also a coil.

In this time period, the population of Palestine grew. Many Jews decided to move there. New towns and kibbutzim were founded. Commerce grew quite rapidly.

Slide 25: Business use. Here is an advertising cover from a business in Tel Aviv The word COVER means the envelope used to mail the letter. It includes the stamps and any postal markings.

Slide 26: Levant Fair label; International trade fairs were also held

Slide 27: Levant Fair special postmark

Religious schools were established. One interesting area of these is what collectors euphemistically call SHNORER COVERS. By SHNORER we mean the response envelopes for a religious establishment asking for money.

Slide 28: Schnorer. Some religious or service organizations also issued fund raising labels.

Slide 29: Kern Tel Chai Charity label. One of these was KEREN TEL CHAI

The various postmarks used in each city (Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa) are also the subject of detailed study. These can be quite complicated as the spellings of some of the town names were changed and new canceling devices used. The various postal rates are also studied.

Slide 30: Jerusalem

Slide 31: Tel Aviv as well as those used in the smaller towns

Slide 32: Bait Vegan

Slide 33: Metulla

Slide 34: Safad

Many stationery items were also issued: postal cards, registered entires and various types of letter sheets. Here are is example of a registered entire.

Slide 35: Postal Stationery. Stationery was provided by the post office to mail valuables. We now move the clock forward to World War II.

The war had an effect on Palestine. Prior to the start of the war, mail for the United States and England was sent thru Europe. But, during the war, some mail had to take the long way route – via the Pacific Ocean.

Slides 36 & 37: Pacific Route; this went via Singapore to England

Slide 38: Jewish Brigade. Members of the YISHUV (the Jewish Settlements in Palestine) volunteered for service. They formed the Jewish Brigade

Slide 39: Usage of a British military envelope

Now, please permit me to go off subject for a moment. I would be remiss if I did not mention the Holocaust. While in the various concentration camps, the inmates could send and receive a very limited number of mail pieces or packages a month. The Germans had some very strict regulations regarding the mail. Here are two examples.

Slide 40: Dachau letter sheet

Slide 41: Ravensbruk

After the war, many former inmates were in Displaced Person Camps. While there, they wrote letters to various organizations that aided them. I will show just two items.

Slide 42: Red Cross Form – inquiry about a relative

Slide 43: Aid to Jewish Victims

Many Displaced Persons tried to reach Palestine. Unfortunately, the British intercepted many of the ships and sent the refugees to camps in Cyprus. Here is a document in Hebrew related to a Displaced Person camp

Slide 44: Cyprus camp document Oct 1946 to Histadrut, listing total of inhabitants.

Slide 45: Camp In Gilgil, Kenya. The British also sent refugees to a camp in Gilgil, Kenya where the British were also sending those who were intercepted.

On November 17, 1947, the United Nations General assembly voted to partition Palestine into two states: Jewish and Arab. The end of the British Mandate rule was set for May 14, 1948. The British, instead of providing for a gradual and orderly takeover of the administration of the postal system (as well as the government itself) by the new state, abruptly closed all post offices between April 15 and May 14, 1948. These four weeks are known as the INTERIM PERIOD.

Let me go back in time for a moment. During the Mandate, the Jewish Agency was formed. It provided for the needs of the Jews and acted as a Provisional Government for Jews in Palestine. To raise funds, the agency as well as various cities and towns issued numerous revenue stamps. These were used for nearly everything.

Slide 46: Hotel

Slide 47: Chocolate

Slide 48: Singer Sewing Machine

Slide 49: Safad

Now, we need to go further back in history. Dr. Theodore Herzl founded the modern Zionist movement. The first Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland in 1897. At the fifth Zionist Congress in 1901, a fund raising arm was established: The Jewish National Fund, or JNF. In Hebrew it is Keren Kayemet Le Yisrael or KKL. Its main aim was to raise funds for the purchase of land in Palestine. One of the methods used to raise funds was the issuance of stamps (or labels), tags, and other items. The first stamps were issued in 1902.

Slide 50: Bar Ilan

Slide 51: Diaspora Jewry

Slide 52: Various Tags

Ok back to 1948. It was the Jewish Agency (or MINHALELET HA'AM in Hebrew) that stepped in to fill this void in government and the postal services. The Jewish Agency ordered all postal employees in the proposed Jewish areas of Palestine to remain on the job after April 15, 1948. The Agency took various JNF stamps and overprinted them with the Hebrew word for posts or mail DOAR.

Slide 53: Tel Aviv. There are two basic types of overprints. Those made in Tel Aviv have a straight line. This stamp shows the map of the proposed Jewish State.

Slide 54: Haifa. Those from Haifa have DOAR in a circle.

These were valid for domestic postage only. However, some did get used in international mail. These stamps were used in 80 different cities and towns to mail letters.

Slide 55: From Ramat Gan

During this time many areas of the country were under Arab siege. In order to provide postal services, the local authorities printed their own stamps and set up their own postal systems. The siege cities included:

SAFAD, north of the Sea of Galilee, NAHARIYA north of Haifa, RISHON LE ZION south east of Tel Aviv, and JERUSALEM.

Slide 56: Safad.

Slide 57: Rishon Le Zion

Be careful if you collect the INTERIM material. There is much fraudulent and faked material in this period. There is also much philatelic material. That is many covers have the stamp and postmark only – they did not go thru the mails. Pure commercial usage (like the one I showed you from Ramat Gan) is hard to find. More often than not the covers that you see, even though they may have gone thru the mail, were created by or for the philatelist. In fact, if it were not for these covers, we may not have anything.

Two areas I want to show you are the EMERGENCY POST and PATCO labels. The Mandate pictorial stamps were overprinted in Hebrew, EMERGENCY POST in NAHALAL, AFULA, and TIBERIAS

Slide 58: Emergency Post

Slide 59: PATCO. Labels featuring a plane were overprinted PATCO for Palestine Air Transport Company. These are pure philatelic creations. However, they are collected. Be very careful if you should buy any of this material.

We now come to the MODERN ISRAEL period. The Jewish state of Israel was proclaimed on Friday May 14, 1948. This was also a time of war. The nascent state was invaded by five Arab armies. The military set up its own postal service. This is a story in itself.

Slide 60: MILITARY MAIL

The production of Israel's first postage stamps is a most interesting story. During the Interim Period, a few people gathered at the Government Printing Press factory and worked hard under the dangers of war to prepare and produce stamps for the new State soon to be proclaimed. The stamp designs chosen were those of the ancient coins from 1800 years ago when the Jews were struggling for freedom from Rome. They started printing the stamps on May 4th by typographical process. As the new name of the State had not yet been decided, they inscribed the words DOAR IVRI, "Hebrew Post", in Hebrew and Arabic and the value was printed in figures only. At the time, the unit of currency was in milliemes (or mils).

The people creating the stamps were not experienced printers and had very little technical equipment or the appropriate paper and ink for the job. They collected whatever stocks of paper were available locally. The printing and perforation of the stamps was primitive, as the situation prevented them from paying much attention to the process of printing. As a result, there are many printing and paper varieties.

As the proclamation was not issued until later in the day on Friday May 14 and no work could (or would) be done on the Sabbath, the first stamps were issued on Sunday May 16.

Slide 61: First Issue on presentation sheet

As many people would not understand the words on the ancient coins, it was decided to print a description of the bottom row of the selvege – what collectors call the margins around the sheet of stamps. Thus the TAB was born. In the early years, collectors did not know what to make of the tabs so many tabs were torn off.

These tabs continue to this day. Now please note this. On some early issues the tab came in two parts: the descriptive tab itself and a small piece of selvege. BOTH must be kept.

Slide 62: Two Part Tab

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Slide 63: Blank Tab. On POSTAGE DUES and OFFICIAL stamps, nothing was printed in the selvege. Nevertheless, the blank selvege is collected as if it were a tab.

Since 1948 there have been a few currency systems in Israel. The government kept dividing by 10, 100 or 1000. The current currency, in use since 1986, is NEW ISRAEL SHEKELS (NIS).

In its 60 years, Israel has issued many beautiful stamps. The most frequent topics have been the various Jewish Holidays, Memorial Day, Independence Day, many personalities, and history.

Slide 64: Petach Tikvah

Slide 65: Negev Camel

Slide 66: High Holidays

Slide 67: Clock Towers

Slide 68: 3000 Years Jerusalem

Slide 69: Personalities

Slide 70: 770 Eastern Parkway or Chabad

Israeli stamps can be divided into two categories: commemorative and definitives. The commemoratives are issued just once. Commemoratives as the name implies, mark an event.

Definitives are regular issue stamps. The definitive are issued many times. These are quite collectible as there are differences in paper and most notably phosphor tagging, used by the automated sorting and cancelling machines. The same basic stamp can have no phosphor bars, a bar on the right, a bar on the left or two bars. The differences were required due to changing postal rates.

Slide 71: Coin Stamp

Slide 72: Shekel

Slide 73: Landscape Elat

Slide 74: Stationery. Israel has also issued stationery. These include air letter sheets, postal cards, picture postal cards, and envelopes. I wrote the book on the subject many years ago. It is in desperate need of an update.

Slide 75: Jordan. After the War of Independence, Jordan was in control of the West Bank of the Jordan River. Between 1948 and 1967, Jordan overprinted their stamps for the West Bank of the Jordan.

Slide 76: Egypt. Egypt did likewise for Sinai and Gaza. These stamps and the covers are considered as part of Holy Land Philately. After the June 1967 War, Israel won Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank of the Jordan from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Israel has also issued many revenue stamps. These are used on nearly every thing.

Slide 77: RADIO REVENUES

Slide 78: PURCHASE REVENUES

There are special revenue stamps for the areas won in 1967

Slide 79: MILITARY REVENUES FOR WEST BANK

Slide 80: EXIT PASS FROM WEST BANK WITH ISRAEL REVENUES

Holyland Philately is a very rich area for collecting and study. You can get a good knowledge of Jewish history from the stamps and mails. It spans hundreds of years and includes some very nice collectible material. In this slide show, I did not cover every aspect. I hope that I have given you a small taste of what is involved.