

A Brief Overview Of Holy Land Philately

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Note: This was presented at a stamp club meeting as a slide show and touches on both the history of Palestine and Israel and the philately of Palestine and Israel. The stamps and covers 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 tells 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 will not get done.

TURKISH PERIOD



Figure 1
Map of Ottoman Empire 1885

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 I. Compared to other area in the Empires, Palestine was a dusty, sparsely populated backwater. (Figure 1)

Turkey had its own post offices in Palestine. Many
The Israel Philatelist - Winter 2017

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.



Figure 2
Petach Tiqvah local stamp

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 (Figure 2). Russian Jewish immigrants founded Rishon Le Zion in 1882.

During the later 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.

FORERUNNER PERIOD

The first such post office opened around 1850. These nations either overprinted their regular stamps or issued stamps for usage in Palestine (Figures 3 – 5). 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) (Figures 6 – 8).

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.



Figure 3
Austrian stamp overprinted
for use in the Holy Land



Figure 4
Italian stamp overprinted for
use in the Holy Land



Figure 5
Russian stamp overprinted
for use in the Holy Land



Figure 9
Hejaz Railway – to help pay
for the railroad,



Figure 10
Court Fees;



Figure 11
Stamp Duty



Figure 6
Austrian post card with handstamps – last Christmas in 19th century



Figure 7
Turkish World War I field post cover and cancellations



Figure 8
French post card with Jerusalem cancellation