

Today in Israeli History

Aug. 16, 1966: Operation Diamond, the plan to obtain a Russian-made MiG-21 fighter jet, succeeds when disillusioned Iraqi-Christian fighter pilot Munir Redfa lands an Iraqi air force MiG-21 at Israel's Hatzor Air Force Base. Redfa, escorted in by two Israeli Mirage jets, had cut a deal with the Mossad that included a \$1 million payment, Israeli citizenship for himself and his family, and guaranteed full-time employment.



Central Zionist Archives photo // (Clockwise from bottom left) **Yehoshua Ravnitzky**, **Mordechai "Ben-Ami" Rabinowich**, **Hayim Nachman Bialik** and **Ahad Ha'am** are shown in 1926.

Aug. 17, 1898: A few weeks before the Second Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, 160 Zionists from 93 cities and towns in Russia meet secretly in Warsaw, where organizer Ahad Ha'am rallies support for a Jewish cultural renaissance before any political actions. Ha'am, who attended the First Zionist Congress but

not the second, writes to scholar Yehoshua Ravnitzky that the young Zionists at the Warsaw meeting are excited to hear someone stand up to political Zionists such as Theodor Herzl.



Photo by Michael Eisenberg // Claire Epstein led excavations of the ancient city of Hippos (Susita) on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the 1950s.

Aug. 18, 2000: Archaeologist Claire Epstein, a London native who participated in many archaeological surveys and excavations in Israel, including discovering the culture of the Chalcolithic Period (4500 to 3300 B.C.E.) in the Golan, dies at age 88 at Kibbutz Ginossar. She began her archaeological work at Susita, an ancient Roman city near Kibbutz Ein Gev, where she lived, as an assistant to Michael Avi-Yona during the War of Independence. She didn't pursue a doctorate in archaeology until the 1960s.

Aug. 19, 1856: Scholar and writer Michah Joseph Berdichevski is born in Ukraine. He writes short stories, novels

and essays in Yiddish and German, but is best known for his Hebrew writings, including a lengthy debate with Ahad Ha'am about the nature of Hebrew literature. Berdichevski's insistence on the value of secular Hebrew literature inspires younger writers. He also spends years recording Jewish folklore.



The Hebrew-language medical journal *Harefuah* has been published in the Land of Israel for 99 years.

Aug. 20, 1920: The first Hebrew-language medical journal in Palestine, *Harefuah* (Medicine), begins publishing on a quarterly schedule under the auspices of the Jewish Medical Association of Palestine. The editor is ophthalmologist Aryeh Feigenbaum, who as a teenager in Poland told a friend that he would become a doctor, move to Palestine and found the first medical journal there in Hebrew. The journal is still published monthly by the Israel Medical Association and is distrib-

uted free to all its members.

Aug. 21, 1982: American, French and Italian troops arrive in Lebanon's capital to supervise the evacuation of about 14,000 PLO fighters through Sept. 1. Yasser Arafat leaves Beirut on Aug. 30. Eight countries agree to offer asylum to the PLO: Syria, Jordan, Iraq, South Yemen, North Yemen, Sudan, Algeria and Tunisia, the last of which becomes Arafat's headquarters. Driving terrorists and Syrian forces from Beirut is one of Israel's principal goals in the 1982 Lebanon War.

Aug. 22, 1952: The Development Corporation for Israel, now commonly known as Israel Bonds, brings 22 Jewish leaders to Israel on a 15-day American Champions of Israel Bonds mission, the first of its kind. They report to the Economic Conference for Israel in mid-September in Atlantic City, N.J., where the 600 delegates pledge to raise \$130 million in bonds. The launch of American-purchased Israel Bonds in 1951 helped stabilize the economy of the young state. ■

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