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The Organization of the Yishuv and its Institutions

* The “national institutions of the the Yishuv” refer to the bodies that represented the Jewish people in Mandatory Palestine until the founding of the State of Israel.

Zionist Institutions (“The World Zionist Organization”)	Yishuv Institutions (“Knesset Yisrael”)
* The Zionist Congress * Zionist General Council * The Jewish Colonial Trust * The Jewish National Fund * Anglo Palestine Bank (Bank Leumi) * The Palestine Bureau * Palestine Land Development Corporation * The Zionist Commission (of the WZO) * United Israel Appeal * The Jewish Agency	* The Jewish National Council * The Assembly of Representatives * The Chief Rabbinate

* The Yishuv institutions represented the Jewish community of Palestine in the mandatory government and the Zionist organizations, and the Zionist institutions represented international Jewry before the nations of the world and the British.

The Beginnings of Yishuv Organization

* Until the British conquest of Palestine in the first World War I, there were no government bodies that represented the Yishuv, although the Sephardi subjects of the Ottoman Empire were granted some autonomy in the framework of the Millet system, which allowed them to set up their own religious community led by the Hakham Bashi, the chief rabbi.

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- * The Ashkenazi inhabitants of the Yishuv, who had for the most part immigrated to Palestine in the 19th century in the First and Second Aliyot, were still considered by the Ottomans to be subjects of their former countries.
- * The Ashkenazim divided themselves into *Kollelim*, umbrella organizations, each providing for the needs of those who came from one geographical area, e.g. the Kollel Perushim for the Jews hailing from Lithuania and the Kollel Shomrei Hahomot for the Jews from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- * The first proposal for a united committee to represent the entire Yishuv was put forward in 1917.
- * The First Constituent Assembly met in the Palestine Bureau in Tel Aviv in 1918. It was chaired by Yaakov Tahon, assistant to Arthur Ruppin, who was the head of the

Palestine Bureau. Yosef Sprinzak of Hapoel Hatzair delivered the opening benediction.

- * The discussions centered on such issues as advancing the Hebrew language and culture, Hebrew labor, Jewish jurisprudence in the court system, forming a Hebrew military force, and elections to the Assembly of Representatives.
- * The Constituent Assembly elected a "Temporary Committee for the Jews of Palestine", whose job was to prepare the bases for elections to the new representative bodies of the Yishuv.

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- * Before the first elections for the Assembly of Representatives, the Constituent Assembly met another two times to debate the issue of women's' suffrage. The Ultra-Orthodox community's delegates vociferously opposed the granting of any suffrage to women, while the majority secular delegates insisted on women's' suffrage.
- * This controversy highlighted the the source of legal authority of the new Yishuv organization: not by right of law, which did not yet exist, nor by tradition, as the Jews had not been sovereign in their land for millennia, but by the community uniting as a whole to accept the new authority willfully.
- * Therefore, it was of the utmost importance that all segments of Yishuv society participate in forming a new governing body, as defection by one segment could lead to others, until the entire enterprise would be come jeopardized.
- * Rabbi Moshe Ostrovsky, one of the delegates from the Mizrahi, proposed that women receive the right to vote, but that they would be ineligible to be elected, a compromise which kept the Ultra-Orthodox delegation within the discussions.
- * The Mizrahi leadership was surprised when the spiritual leader of Religious Zionism, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, expressed his own opinion against women's suffrage, but he still left room for compromise by qualifying his position as not being based on straight *halacha*, but rather as being antithetical to "the spirit of the nation," which is more nuanced and flexible.

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- * The 1920 riots made the matter of having official Jewish representatives to the British mandatory authorities all the more urgent, and the Mizrahi made further efforts to ensure that the Ultra-Orthodox participate in the coming elections, as without their support, the religious representation on the Assembly of Representatives would be minimal.
- * The first elections took place in 1920, with the elections in Jerusalem taking place two weeks later than those in the rest of the country. The Mizrahi reached a compromise accepted by the Ultra-Orthodox, whereby Ultra-Orthodox men would be allowed to vote at gender-segregated polls, and that some men would receive two votes in order to compensate for their non-voting wives.

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- * Of the 314 elected representatives, many were women, only 53 hailed from the Ashkenazi Ultra-Orthodox party, and only 78 from the Sephardi religious parties, results that disappointed the Ultra-Orthodox community by illustrating that they were no longer the majority power in the Yishuv.
- * After the Assembly of Representatives elected the 36-member Jewish National Council, the Ultra-Orthodox boycotted further developments, as the female members of the Assembly of Representatives participated in the council elections, although no women were elected to the Jewish National Council.
- * The Ultra-Orthodox opposition to any further political developments continued after the Assembly of Representatives, under the permission of Herbert Samuel, embarked on drafting a constitution for the Yishuv, one based on the secular values of the majority.
- * The proposed constitution would have provided for universal suffrage and other voting regulations and procedures, the right of the Assembly of Representatives to impose taxes, the right of any Jew to being a member of Knesset Yisrael, i.e. citizenship, unless he explicitly declared his unwillingness to being a member. At the time, the Mizrahi, like the Ultra-Orthodox parties, refused to participate in these developments.
- * When the Assembly of Representatives voted for permanently granting women the right to vote, The representatives of the Mizrahi, Ultra-Orthodox, and Sephardim resigned from the Assembly of Representatives.

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- * The Mizrahi movement, eager to return to political activity, convinced the Assembly of Representatives to put the question of women's' suffrage up to a vote of the people in a referendum scheduled for November 1925. The Ultra-Orthodox announced a complete boycott thereof, and from that point on the Mizrahi acceded to allowing women's' suffrage unconditionally, and to always participate in elections and the political process, starting with the next national elections, in December 1925.
- * Adopting a national constitutional infrastructure met with difficulty from two factors: obtaining allowances for Yishuv autonomy from the British, and from within, mainly from religious opposition to participating in Knesset Yisrael.
- * The British were reluctant to move along plans for an independent Jewish state, and sought to fulfill their obligation to create a Jewish National Home by setting up a system, under British rule, similar to the *kehillah* system in Europe, or the Millet system that Sephardim enjoyed under the Ottomans.
- * Agudat Yisrael, the main Ultra-Orthodox party, claimed that they were not obligated to participate in Knesset Yisrael as they were only willing to accept a Torah-based authority. The Sephardi Chief Rabbi, Jacob Meir, supported their position.

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- * Knesset Yisrael was founded in 1926 after a compromise between the Jewish National Council and the British authorities. It provided for Jewish dissenters to waive their right to participate.

- * In 1928, under the authority of Lord Plumer, the institutions of Knesset Yisrael (the Jewish National Council, the Assembly of Representatives, and the Chief Rabbinate) were finally certified as the representatives of the Yishuv. Knesset Yisrael was the forerunner of the government system of the State of Israel.

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The Yishuv Institutions

The Assembly of Representatives

- * The Assembly of Representatives was the elected parliamentary assembly of the Yishuv in Mandatory Palestine. It acted as a sort of legislature, although obviously limited in its power by the British authorities. It was also supposed to deliberate and decide on all internal issues effecting the Yishuv, impose taxes on the Yishuv in order to fund communal needs, and elect from among its members the Jewish National Council.
- * In 1920 it had 314 members; in 1925, 221 members; in 1931, 71 members; in 1944, 171 members.
- * Elections were intended to take place every four years, although extenuating factors often led to delays, or even cancellations.
- * Elections were done by list, with each party presenting to voters its predetermined list of potential representatives. The number of candidates on the list who merited to enter the Assembly was to be based on the percentage of the general vote each party received.
- * The Assembly of Representatives was the forerunner of today's Knesset.

The Jewish National Council

- * The Jewish National Council was the executive body of the The Assembly of Representatives. It was responsible for educational and cultural matters, as well as healthcare, welfare and religion-oriented services. It later took on responsibility for internal defense and security matters.

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- * The Jewish National Council was the body that had official relations with the British mandatory authority, and governed the individual municipalities and settlements through out the Yishuv.
- * Towards the end of the mandatory period, the Jewish National Council membership overlapped with the executive board of the World Zionist Organization.
- * The Jewish National Council was the forerunner of what is today the Knesset-elected government of the State of Israel.

The Chief Rabbinate

- * The High Commissioner established the Chief Rabbinate, comprising the Sephardi Rishon LeZion and a newly appointed Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, which the mandatory authority recognized as the collective religious authority for the Jewish community. In

1921, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook became the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi and Rabbi Jacob Meir became the Sephardi Chief Rabbi. Rabbis Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog and Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel were the first Chief Rabbis of the state.

- * The Chief Rabbinate was connected to the Jewish National Council and convened in Jerusalem.
- * The Chief Rabbinate was responsible for religion-oriented institutions and services throughout the Yishuv, was in charge of the family courts, and served as the supreme court of appeals for all rabbinical courts.

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Community Committees.

- * The Knesset Yisrael regulations called for every locality that had at least 30 members of Knesset Yisrael to be organized into a "community," with a maximum of one "community" in every city or town. Every community's committee was to represent its community before the British mandatory authorities and execute the decisions of the Jewish National Council,
- * "Any place that is established as a Jewish municipality or regional council, shall have its elected board or council members serve as the members of the community committee."
- * The community committee oversaw religion-oriented services in its locality: the local rabbinate, the ritual-slaughter committee, and the burial society. The varied ritual-slaughter committees were the backbone of what would become the Religious Councils in the 1930's.

The Haganah

- * After the 1920 Arab riots, The fall of Tel Hai, and the 1921 Jaffa riots, many Jews in Palestine believed that the British had no desire to confront local Arab gangs which frequently attacked Jews and their settlements. Believing that they could not rely on the British administration for protection from these gangs, pioneers of the Second and Third Aliyot created the Haganah, a Hebrew militia, to protect Jewish farms and kibbutzim.
- * Although the British tried to convince the Jewish National Council to do all it could to dissolve the Haganah in return for the British organizing their own Hebrew militia, the leadership of the Haganah declined, as it did not wish to relinquish its arms and endanger the existence of the Yishuv.
- * In addition to guarding Jewish communities, the role of the Haganah was to warn the residents of and repel attacks by Arabs. In the period between 1920–1929, the Haganah lacked a strong central authority or coordination. Haganah "units" were very localized and poorly armed: they consisted mainly of Jewish farmers who took turns guarding their farms or their kibbutzim.
- * The British opposed the existence of the extra-legal militia, but understood the Jewish need for self-defense, especially in light of the nature of the Yishuv's far-flung and isolated settlements.
- * Following the 1929 riots, the Haganah's role changed dramatically. It became a much larger organization encompassing nearly all the youth and adults in the Jewish

settlements, as well as thousands of members from the cities. It also acquired foreign arms and began to develop workshops to create hand grenades and simple military equipment, transforming itself from an untrained militia to a capable underground army.

- * By 1939, the British had issued the White Paper, which severely restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, deeply angering the Zionist leadership. Ben-Gurion, then chairman of the Jewish Agency, set the policy for the Zionist relationship with the British: "We shall fight the war [against Hitler] as if there were no White Paper, and we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war."
- * In reaction to the White Paper, the Haganah built up the Palmach as the Haganah's elite strike force and organized illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Haganah also organized demonstrations against British immigration quotas.

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The Histadrut Labor Federation

- * The Histadrut was founded in December 1920 in Haifa to look out for the interests of Jewish workers. Until 1920, Ahdut HaAvoda and Hapoel Hatzair had been unable to set up a unified workers' organization. In 1920, Third Aliyah immigrants founded G'dud HaAvoda and demanded a unified organization for all workers, which in turn led to the establishment of the Histadrut. By 1927, the Histadrut had 25,000 members, accounting for 75% of the Jewish workforce in Mandatory Palestine.
- * The initial aim of the Histadrut was to take responsibility for all spheres of activity of the workers movement: settlement, defense, trade unions, education, housing construction, health (Clalit health fund), banking (Bank Hapoalim), welfare, and even culture.
- * The Histadrut also provided insurance through Hasneh Insurance, inc.
- * The Histadrut founded cooperative firms for manufacturing and marketing (Solel Boneh, Shikkun Ovdim, Hamashbir, and T'nuva Dairy) and youth movements.
- * Eventually the Histadrut took charge of the Haganah and funded its activities.
- * The Histadrut took over economic firms operated by the workers' parties, which operated by subcontracting, and their Office of Information, which was expanded into a Labor Exchange. Within a few months, the Histadrut became the single largest employer in the Yishuv and one of the strongest pre-state organizations.
- * By 1930, the Histadrut had become the central organization of the Yishuv. It did what the Zionist Executive wanted, but was unable to do: absorb immigrants and organize agricultural settlement, defense and expansion into new areas of production. The Histadrut had become "the executive arm of the Zionist movement - but an arm acting on its own". It had become a "state in the making".

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Zionist Institutions

- * Unlike Yishuv institutions, which were founded only after the British conquest of Palestine, Zionist institutions were founded early on, the first in 1897 by Theodor Herzl.

- * Among those institutions from the list above, two were founded after the commencement of the British mandate: United Israel Appeal (Keren Hayesod) and the Jewish Agency.

United Israel Appeal

- * United Israel Appeal was established at the World Zionist Conference in July, 1920. The resolution adopted called on "the whole Jewish people", Zionists and non-Zionists alike, to do its duty to the Land of Israel, in accordance with the Balfour Declaration, through United Israel Appeal. Jewish communities throughout the world established local campaigns under the United Israel Appeal umbrella, often using local names.

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- * Until the establishment of the state, United Israel Appeal financed activities of the Yishuv relating to immigration and absorption, settlement, defense, development of water resources, and public works.
- * Since the founding of the state, most of these activities have been taken over by the government.

The Jewish Agency

- * In 1921, the Zionist Commission became the Palestine Zionist Executive and was designated as the Jewish Agency for Palestine for the purpose of Article 4 of the Palestine Mandate. In 1929, the Jewish Agency for Palestine was officially created by the 16th Zionist Congress, held in Zurich. The Jewish Agency was lead by Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion.
- * The new body was larger and included a number of Jewish non-Zionist activists and organizations who were interested in Jewish settlement in Palestine. It also included various activists and groups that did not find a home in the Histadrut.
- * The British came to recognize the Jewish Agency as the official representative body of the Yishuv. It was arguably the most important institution in the mandatory era, and served as the provisional government of the state before the first elections were held.
- * The Zionist character of the Jewish Agency was exhibited by its strong support of Jewish immigration to Palestine, purchasing lands and founding Jewish settlements, and the spread of Hebrew culture and language.
- * The Jewish Agency enjoyed the financial support of the Jewish National Fund and United Israel Appeal.