FREEMASONRY IN ISRAEL, LEBANON, SYRIA AND JORDAN

Introduction

This paper is about Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and their Masonic histories.   This is a turbulent and unsettled area of the Middle East but an iconic centre for some of the world's oldest religions.

These lands have been occupied by a variety of tribal groups, the Romans, the Byzantine Greeks, Arab conquerors, the Crusades, the Ottoman Empire and by the French or British as mandated protectorates until they gained their independence.   Their ethnic and religious mix is complex with Maronite and other Christians, Jews, the Druze and Shi'a and Sunni Muslims and displaced Palestinians.   Their early history is of biblical record.

Of particular interest, since the creation of the State of Israel, is the role that Freemasons have played in relationships between Israel and their neighbours of the Arab world.

Israel

History of Israel

The State of Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948, after almost two millennia of Jewish dispersal and persecution around the Mediterranean and elsewhere. From the late 19th century the Zionist movement worked towards the goal of recreating a homeland for the Jewish people.

Israeli independence has been marked by massive immigration of Jews, by conflict with the Palestinians and by wars with neighbouring Arab states.   Since about 1970 the United States has been the principal ally of Israel.   In 1979, an uneasy peace was established with Egypt and in 1994, with Jordan.   About 42% of the world's Jews live in Israel today.

Modern Israel is roughly located on the site of ancient Jewish kingdoms that were the birthplace of Judaism and Christianity and contains sites sacred to most of the world's principal monotheistic religions.   The Jews were mostly driven out of the country by the Romans over the course of centuries of conflict, although some Jews remained.   In the Middle Ages the area formed the focal point of conflict between Christianity and Islam.   The expulsion of the Jews from Spain led to an increased, though still small, Jewish presence.   In more modern times, persecution in Europe led to the creation of the Zionist movement, which was able to win international support and establish the world's only Jewish-majority state[1].

Freemasonry in Israel

The first Lodge in the Holy Land[2] was the *"Royal Solomon Mother Lodge"* No. 293, under the Grand Lodge of Canada in Ontario, whose first meeting was held in the King Solomon's Quarries of Jerusalem in 1873. Earlier, an occasional assembly of Masons performed a Secret Monitor ceremony in the same location in 1868.   The next Lodge to be formed in Israel was officially established in Jaffa.   Around 1890, a group of Arab and Jewish Brethren petitioned the Misraim (Egypt) Rite, based in Paris, but active in Egypt, and founded the Lodge "the Port of King Solomon's Temple", working in French.

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[1] Wikipedia

[2] "*General History of Masonry*" Georgy Zeidan

Not long after its creation, the Lodge received a large influx of affiliate members, French engineers who had come to build the Jaffa-Jerusalem railway. In 1906 it changed its name to "*Barkai*" (Dawn), and joined the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel.

Three other Lodges were constituted before World War I, when the country became a British Mandate. Under British rule, a number of Lodges were chartered by the Grand Lodges of Egypt, Scotland, and England, and the Grand Orient of France.

A special case is that of the five German-speaking lodges founded in Israel in 1931 by the Grand Master of the symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, M.W. Bro. **Otto Müffelmann,** who, realizing that the rise of Hitler sounded the death knell for Freemasonry in Germany, went to Israel and founded Lodges in the three main cities: Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, and Haifa.

The first National Grand Lodge in Israel was constituted on 1933[3], even before the creation of the State, and brought together all the Lodges that had been working under Egyptian or French jurisdictions. The English-speaking lodges refused to join the new Grand Lodge.

Lack of recognition by the United Grand Lodge of England resulted in almost complete international isolation. But in 1953, Brother the **Earl of Elgin and Kincardine**, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, consecrated the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel with 30 Lodges and M.W. Bro. **Shabetay Levy**, Mayor of Haifa, was installed as its first Grand Master.

Lodges founded before the Independence of the State of Israel in 1948 were as follows:

Lodge	No	City	Founded	Languages
Carmel	*1085*	*Haifa*	*Circa 1911*	*English, then Arabic, currently English*
Jordan	*1339*	*Jaffa*	*1925*	*Hebrew, later Arabic in Jordan*
Holy City	*1372*	*Jerusalem*	*1931*	*English*
Rueben	*1376*	*Haifa*	*1931*	*Hebrew*
Mitzpah	*1383*	*Jerusalem*	*1933*	*Hebrew*
Sharon	*1381*	*Tel Aviv*	*1935*	*English*
Prophet Elijah	*16*	*Haifa*	*1936*	*Hebrew*
Aviv	*1397*	*Tel Aviv*	*1940*	*English, later Hebrew*
Menorah	*19*	*Haifa*	*1944*	*Hebrew*

Most Israeli Lodges work in Hebrew and the vast majority of their members are Jewish. Arabic-speaking Brethren, whether Christian, Muslim, or Druze, work in five Lodges, in Acre, Haifa, Nazareth, and Jerusalem.

An Arab lawyer, M.W. Bro. **Jamil Shalhoub**, was elected Grand Master for 1981. Three Volumes of the Sacred Law are opened side by side upon the altar in Grand Lodge:- The Hebrew Bible (Tanach), The Christian Bible, and the Koran. Frequently, joint meetings are held between lodges, so that sometimes three or more different languages are heard in the course of a single meeting.

King Solomon's Quarries are used several times a year to conduct Masonic meetings, generally in the Mark Degree. The Jubilee celebration took place on October 20, 2003 in Tel Aviv.

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[3] "Israeli Freemasonry" Leon Zeldis, on the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel website

Today the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel has 55 Lodges working in all centres in 9 different languages as shown in the following table.

Language	Location				Total
	Tel Aviv	Jerusalem	Haifa	Other	
Hebrew	12	4	6	13	35
English	1	1	1	3	6
French	1	1	-	-	2
German	-	1	1	-	2
Russian	1	-	-	-	1
Spanish	1	-	1	1	3
Turkish	1	-	-	-	1
Romanian	1	-	-	-	1
Arabic	-	-	-	4	4
Total	18	7	9	21	55

Famous Israeli Freemasons[4]

Shabtai Levy (1876–1956), was a lawyer, the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel and the first Jewish mayor of Haifa. When the British established a Haifa city council in 1920, **Levy** was elected as an independent. Starting in 1934 he served until he became Haifa's first Jewish mayor in 1941. During the Israeli War of Independence, he used his influence on the Arab community to try to keep Arabs from leaving the city. The **Shabtai Levy** Home was established in Haifa, providing a wide range of services to under-privileged children.

Nadim Mansour is a Palestinian Arab of Orthodox Christian religion. He is Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel until 2013 and is the third Palestinian Grand Master - **Yakob Nazih**, (1933-1940) and **Jamil Shalhoub**, (1981-1982). A Grand Master of Arab origin shows that peace between Palestinians and Israelis can prevail.

Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) was initiated in Moira Lodge in 1812. He was knighted in 1837 by Queen Victoria. In August of 1840, together with the French Lawyer and high-ranking Masons **Adolphe Cremieux**, he led a delegation to Turkey and secured the release of the captives of the Damascus blood libel. In 1863, supported by the British government, **Sir Moses Montefiore** successfully petitioned the Sultan of Morocco to guarantee the safety of Morocco's Jews. His carriage and his windmill are in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Leon Templo (1603-1675) brought to London models of the Jerusalem Temple and the Tabernacle in 1675, which he had been exhibited in Amsterdam. **Leon Templo** was also an expert in heraldry. His work so impressed **Laurence Dermott**, the first Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Ancients, that he took a design by **Leon Templo** as the basis for the coat of arms of the Ancients. When the two Grand Lodges of England merged to form the present UGLE (1813), this design was incorporated in its coat of arms.

Yitzhak Rabin (1922–1995) was an Israeli politician, statesman and general. He was the fifth Prime Minister, serving two terms in office, 1974–77 and 1992 until his assassination in 1995. In 1994, **Rabin** won the Nobel Peace Prize together with **Shimon Peres** and **Yasser Arafat**. He was assassinated by right-wing Israeli radical Yigal Amir, who was opposed to **Rabin**'s signing of the Oslo Accords.


Rabin was the first native-born Prime Minister of Israel, the only prime minister to be assassinated and the second to die in office after Levi Eshkol. He was a Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel.

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[4] Wikipedia
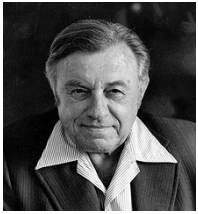
Theodor "Teddy" Kollek (1911–2007) was mayor of Jerusalem from 1965 to 1993, and founder of the Jerusalem Foundation. **Kollek** was re-elected five times, in 1969, 1973, 1978, 1983 and 1989. After reluctantly running for a seventh term in 1993 at the age of 82, he lost to the future Prime Minister of Israel, **Ehud Olmer**t. During his tenure, Jerusalem developed into a modern city, especially after its reunification in 1967. He was once called "the greatest builder of Jerusalem since Herod."

Benjamin "**Bibi**" **Netanyahu** (1949-) is the first Prime Minister of Israel who was born in Israel. He served in Israel's special forces and also as the Chairman of the Likud Party, as a Knesset member, as the Health Minister of Israel, as the Pensioner Affairs Minister of Israel and as the Economic Strategy Minister of Israel. **Netanyahu** served as the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations from 1984 to 1988, member of the Likud Party, and was Prime Minister from June 1996 to July 1999.
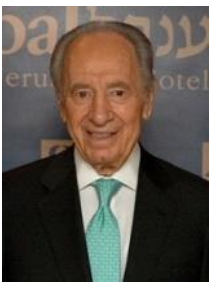
Shimon Peres GCMG (1923-) is a President of the State of Israel. **Peres** served twice as the eighth Prime Minister of Israel and once as Interim Prime Minister, and has been a member of 12 cabinets in a political career spanning over 66 years. **Peres** was elected to the Knesset in November 1959 and, except for a three-month-long hiatus in early 2006, served continuously until 2007, when he became President. He held several diplomatic and military positions during and directly after Israel's War of Independence. **Peres** won the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize together with **Yitzhak Rabin** and **Yasser Arafat** for the peace talks that produced the Oslo Accords.

Ehud Olmert (1945-) is an Israeli politician and lawyer. He served as Prime Minister of Israel from 2006 to 2009, as a Cabinet Minister from 1988 to 1992 and from 2003 to 2006, and as Mayor of Jerusalem from 1993 to 2003. **Olmert** and his government enjoyed healthy relations with the Fatah-led Palestinian National Authority, which culminated in November 2007 at the Annapolis Conference. However, during his tenure as Prime Minister, there were major military conflicts with both Hezbollah and Hamas.
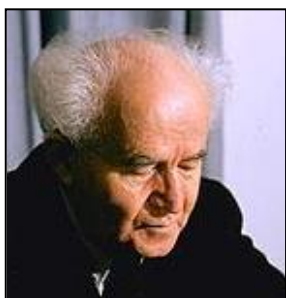
David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973) was a founder and the first Prime of Israel. He was Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization in 1946. As the *de facto* leader of the Jewish community in Palestine in 1948, he formally proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, and was the first to sign the Israeli Declaration of Independence. **Ben-Gurion** led the provisional government of Israel during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and united the various Jewish militias into the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). Following the war, **Ben-Gurion** served as Israel's first Prime Minister. **Ben-Gurion** was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Important People of the 20th Century.

Ehud Barak (1942-) is an Israeli politician who served as Prime Minister from 1999 to 2001. He was leader of the Labor Party until January 2011 and held the posts of Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister in **Binyamin Netanyahu**'s government. He is a graduate in physics, mathematics, and economics from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Stanford University. He served as an officer in the Israel Defense Forces and became Chief of General Staff in 1991, serving until 1995.

Ariel Sharon (1928-) is an Israeli statesman and retired general, who served as Israel's 11th Prime Minister. He has been in a permanent vegetative state since suffering a stroke on 4 January 2006. Sharon was a commander in the Israeli Army since its inception in 1948. As an army officer, he participated in the 1948 War of Independence, the Qibya massacre of 1953, the 1956 Suez War, the Six-Day War of 1967, and the Yom-Kippur War of 1973. After retiring from the army, Sharon joined the right-wing Likud party, and served in a number of ministerial posts including Israel's Prime Minister from 2001 to 2006.

Lebanon

History of Lebanon

The coastal plain of Lebanon is the historic home of a string of coastal trading cities of Semitic culture, which the Greeks termed Phoenicia, whose maritime culture flourished there for more than 5000 years. Its people roamed the Mediterranean seas, skilled in trade and in art, and founded trading colonies.

Phoenicia was conquered by Persia then by Alexander the Great. The area was conquered by the Roman Empire in the first century and remained Roman until the advent of the Caliphate.

Christianity was introduced to Phoenicia from neighbouring Galilee soon after the time of Jesus of Nazareth. The Arab advances brought Islam soon after the death of Muhammad and, during the Middle Ages Lebanon was heavily involved in the Crusades. Lebanon was in the main path of the First Crusade's advance on Jerusalem.

Saladin eliminated Christian control of the Holy Land around 1190 but the Crusader states in Lebanon and Syria were better defended, Nevertheless Muslim control of Lebanon was re-established in the late 13th century under the Mamluk sultans of Egypt. Then the Ottoman Empire solidified authority over the eastern Mediterranean and this was uncontested until World War I. The Lebanese coast had become important for its contacts and trades with Venice and other Italian city-states.

The mountainous territory of Mount Lebanon has long been a shelter for minority and persecuted groups, including Maronite Christians, the Druze and Shi'a Muslims. During the nineteenth century the town of Beirut became the most important port of the region and the French began to have a great impact in the region but there were many conflicts between the Druze, and the Maronites. The Ottomans attempted to create peace by dividing Mt Lebanon into a Christian district and a Druze district, but this plunged the region back into civil conflict.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the League of Nations mandated the five provinces that make up present-day Lebanon to the direct control of France. The boundaries changed and the demographics of Lebanon were altered containing people who were predominantly Muslim or Druze. Lebanese Christians now constituted barely more than 50% of the population, while Sunni Muslims in Lebanon saw their numbers increase eightfold and Shi'ite Muslims fourfold.

Lebanon gained independence in 1943, while France was occupied by Germany. The Vichy authorities in 1941 allowed Germany to move aircraft and supplies through Syria to Iraq where they were used against British forces. So Britain sent its army into Syria and Lebanon. Later in 1941 it became independent under the authority of the Free French government. The allies kept the region under control until the end of World War II when the last French troops withdrew in 1946.

Lebanon's history from independence has been marked by alternating periods of political stability and turmoil interspersed with prosperity built on Beirut's position as a freely trading regional center for finance and trade. In the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Lebanon became home to more than 110,000 Palestinian refugees.

Additional Palestinian refugees arrived after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Starting in 1968, Palestinian militants of various affiliations began to use southern Lebanon as a launching pad for attacks on Israel. Lebanese society polarized over the Palestinian question with the Muslims supporting the Palestinians and Maronites the anti-Palestinians and this led to the outbreak of civil war in 1975 which lasted until 1990.

Between 1985 and 1989, heavy fighting took place as the Shi'a Muslim Amal militia sought to rout the Palestinians from Lebanese strongholds.

Lebanese civil society generally enjoys significantly more freedoms than elsewhere in the Arab world. However, there are continuing sectarian tensions and unease about Syrian and other external influences. In the late 1990s, the government took action against Sunni Muslim extremists who had been accused of being partnered with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

On October 7, 2004, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reported to the Security Council that Syria had failed to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. Mr. Annan concluded his report saying that "It is time, 14 years after the end of hostilities and four years after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, for all parties concerned to set aside the remaining vestiges of the past. The withdrawal of foreign forces and the disbandment and disarmament of militias would, with finality, end that sad chapter of Lebanese history."

The Palestinian group Hezbollah called for a "massive popular gathering" against UN Resolution 1559 saying "The resistance will not give up its arms ... because Lebanon needs the resistance to defend it". In opposition to this call, Monday, March 7 saw at least 70,000 people gathered at central Martyrs' Square to demand that Syria leave completely.

The following day a pro-Syrian demonstration set a new record when Hezbollah amassed 400,000 protestors at Riad Solh square in Beirut, most of them bused in from the heavily Shi'ite south Lebanon and eastern Beka'a valley. In reply an enormous anti-Syrian rally gathered at Martyr's Square in Beirut. Multiple news agencies estimated the crowd at between 800,000 and 1 million, being a show of force for the Sunni, Christian and Druze communities. On April 26, 2005, the last 250 Syrian troops left Lebanon.

The 2006 Lebanon War was a 34-day military conflict in Lebanon and northern Israel. The principal parties were Hezbollah paramilitary forces and the Israeli military.

Timeline of Lebanese Territorial Occupation
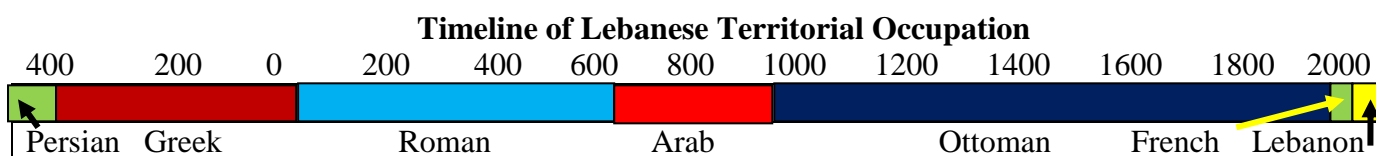
Freemasonry in Lebanon

Lebanon has a long Masonic history. The Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Grand Lodge of New York have been generally governing most of the regular lodges located in the country. The first Masonic Lodge to be erected in Lebanon was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1861 and was given the name Palestine Lodge No. 415. This lodge was operating in Beirut but it became dormant in 1895.

Four other Scottish lodges were erected in Lebanon up until the time of the First World War, but only some of these revived after the war. The "Irregular" Grand Orient of France was next into Lebanon, forming a lodge in 1869, working in Arabic. Two further lodges followed. None survived the First World War.

Other new lodges formed before the Great War were the Lodges at Beirut under the Grand Lodge of Turkey, and a Lodge under the National Grand Lodge of Egypt, erected about 1914. A number of other Egyptian-warranted lodges were chartered thereafter, and after the First World War these were formed into a District Grand Lodge. By the end of World War Two, it would seem these lodges were extinct, merged, or hived off into various spurious 'Masonic' bodies.

The first Grand Lodge of New York-chartered lodge was the *Syrio-American* Lodge #1, formed in 1924 by returning American-Lebanese immigrants. Several further lodges were erected prior to World War II, and subsequently. With the exception of one lodge originally erected in Syria, all New York chartered lodges in its Syria-Lebanon District (twelve in total) have operated in recent times.

During the Lebanese Civil War, most lodges became dormant, although at least *Syrio-American* Lodge No. 1 continued to meet intermittently and still exists today and is considered among the most active Lodges in the country.

Since the cessation of the civil war, five of the Scottish lodges have re-commenced work. All the New York lodges revived subsequent to the civil war and currently twelve lodges are operating in Lebanon. It is worth noting, that at one time, one additional mainstream lodge was chartered in Lebanon under the Grand Orient of Italy called Fraternità Italo-Libanse, erected at Jounieh in 1989, but this lodge lost its charter in the 1990s. In October 2010, the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia chartered their first Lodge in Lebanon, Lodge *Phoenix* 1001 in Al Fanar, Beirut, raising the number of regular Masonic Lodges in Lebanon to 19 Lodges divided among three Grand Lodges:

In summary there are three regular Grand Lodges currently working in Lebanon as follows:

The Grand Lodge of Scotland first chartered Lodges in 1862. Now there are 6 in Lebanon.

No	Lodge Name	Location
908	Peace	Beirut
1002	Kadisha	Beirut
1047	Zahle	Zahle
1130	El-Mizab	Tripoli
1312	Mount Lebanon	Beirut
1830	Harmony	Beirut

Grand Lodge of the State of New York. Number of Lodges: 12. Year of first chartered lodge: 1924

Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. Number of Lodges: 1. Year of first chartered lodge: 2010

In addition there exists 54 other Grand Lodges in Lebanon classified as irregular and unrecognized. For instance, the National Grand Lodge AFAM of Egypt, which is not recognized by UGLE, has the following Lodges in Lebanon.

Lodge	Location
London Lodge No.1	Tripoli
Lodge King Solomon No.2	Beirut
Lodge Wisdom No.3	Tyre
Lodge Heliopollis No.4	Baalbek
Lodge Knights of Aql No.5	Mount Lebanon

The Grand Lodge of The Cedars supports three Lodges – the Respectable Lodge Acacia 1, East of Beirut, which was founded in 1982, Lodge "Acacia 3" and Lodge "Son of the Cedars" founded in 2005. The "Grand Lodge Bet-El" has three Lodges - "Heliopolis No. 22" founded in 1986, Lodge "Meleager" founded in 1987 and Lodge "Akhenaten" founded in 1988. It works "Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite" and has been a member of CLIPSAS since 2005.

Famous Lebanese Freemasons

Charles Debbas (1885 - 1935) was a Greek Orthodox Lebanese political figure. He was the first President of Lebanon and served from September 1, 1926 till January 2, 1934, under the French Mandate. He also served as speaker of the Lebanese Parliament from January 30 to October 31, 1934.

Camille Nimr Chamoun (1900–987) was President of Lebanon from 1952 to 1958, and one of the country's main Christian leaders during most of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990).

Bachir Gemayel (1947–1982) was a Lebanese politician, militia commander, and president-elect.   He was a senior member of the Phalange party and the commander of the Lebanese Forces militia amid the first several years of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90).   He was elected president on August 23, 1982 while the country was torn by civil war and occupied by both Israel and Syria.   He was assassinated on September 14, 1982, along with 26 others, when a bomb exploded in the Beirut headquarters of the Phalange.

Riad as-Solh (1894–1951) was the first Prime Minister of Lebanon (1943–1945), after the country's independence.   Like all of his successors as prime minister of Lebanon, he was a Sunni Muslim.   He later served as prime minister of Lebanon again from December 14, 1946 to February 14, 1951.   Several months after leaving office, he was assassinated in Amman, Jordan by a member of the Syrian Nationalist Party.   He was known as one of the most important personalities in Lebanon's struggle for independence and as a person able to unify Lebanon's various religious groups in the struggle for independence.

Rashid el-Solh was a Lebanese politician and former Prime Minister, kin of one of the most powerful Sunni families in the country.   He was elected to the Lebanese Parliament as a MP for the first time in the Beirut riding in 1960 and was appointed as prime minister in 1974.   He resigned in 1975, a few weeks after the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war.

Emir Majid Toufic Arslan (1908–1983) was a LebaneseDruze leader and head of one of the two traditional feudal Druze ruling families, the Arslans against the rival family, the Jumblatts.   **Emir Majid Arslan** was the leader of the Yazbaki faction.   **Majid Arslan** was a national political figure with a role in Lebanon's independence, a long-running Member of the Lebanese Parliament and a government minister several times with a number of important ministerial portfolios, most notably Defense, Health, Telecommunications, Agriculture and Justice.

Khalil Gibran (1883–1931) was a Lebanese-American artist, poet, and writer.   Born in the town of Bsharri in modern-day Lebanon, he immigrated with his family to the United States where he studied art and began his literary career.   He is chiefly known in the English speaking world for his 1923 book "*The Prophet"*, an early example of inspirational fiction including a series of philosophical essays written in poetic English prose.   The book sold well despite a cool critical reception, and became extremely popular in the 1960s counterculture.   Gibran is the third best-selling poet of all time, behind Shakespeare and Lao-Tzu.

Jorje Ayden (1861–1914) was a prolific Lebanese novelist, journalist, editor and teacher most noted for his creation of the journal "*al-Hill*", which he used to serialize his 23 historical novels.   His primary goal as a writer and intellectual was to imbue the common Arabic population with knowledge of their own history through the entertaining medium of the novel and enjoyed a widespread popularity that remains today.

Anton Sade (1904–1949) was a Lebanese Syrian philosopher, writer and politician. He taught at the American University of Beirut. The same year, he founded the Syrian Social Nationalist Party to oppose the French division of the region and push for unity. Following imprisonment by the French, he emigrated to Brazil and Argentina. **Sade** returned to Lebanon in 1947, after the country's independence from France but, following a revolution he was executed. He published numerous books, treatises, and articles during his lifetime on a wide range of topics. He emphasized the role of philosophy and social science in the development of his social ideology.

Charles Habib Malik (1906-1987) was a Lebanese philosopher and diplomat. **Malik** represented Lebanon at the San Francisco conference at which the United Nations was founded. He served as President of the Economic and Social Council and he helped to draft the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He was ambassador to the US and UN until 1955. **Malik** had been appointed to the Lebanese Cabinet and was Minister of National Education and Fine Arts in 1956 and 1957, and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1956 to 1958. While a Minister, he was elected to the National Assembly in 1957, and served there for three years. A Greek Orthodox Christian, he was the only non-Maronite among the top leaders and he served as President of the World Council on Christian Education from 1967 to 1971, and as Vice-President of the United Bible Societies from 1966 to 1972.

Others were:

Khalil Motran (1872–1949), nicknamed "*The Poet of the Two Countries*", is a renowned Lebanese-Egyptian poet. He is famous for deep rooted meaning poetry which mixes between Arabic and western concepts and structures. He wrote many history tests and translated international books. **Motran** advocated modernizing the Arabic literature and poetry

Ibrahim al-Yaziji (1847–1906) was a Lebanese philologist, poet and journalist. He belonged to the Christian Catholic population in Lebanon.

Mikha'il Na'ima (1889 1988) was a Lebanese author and poet of the New York Pen League.

Sami Solh (1887–1968) was a Lebanese Sunni politician. He served as Prime Minister of Lebanon 7 times (1942–43, 1945–46, 1952, 1954–55, and 1956–58).

Adel Osseiran was a prominent Lebanese politician and statesman, a former Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, and one of the founding fathers of the Lebanese Republic. He played a significant role at various points in the history of modern Lebanon, such as the struggle for independence (1943), the mini-civil war of 1958, and the Lausanne Conference for Peace (1984).

Syria

History of Syria

The Persians took control of Syria as part of their general control of Southwest Asia; this control transferred to the Greeks after Alexander the Great's conquests and from thence to the Romans and the Byzantines. Syria was a Roman (Byzantine) province from 64 BC to 636 AD. Antioch was the capital of Syria and was one of the largest cities in the ancient world, with a total estimated population of 500,000. Syria is significant in the history of Christianity as Paul was converted on the Road to Damascus and emerged as a significant figure in the first organized Christian Church at Antioch in ancient Syria, from which he left on many of his missionary journeys.

Still during the Byzantine period, when the province was conquered by the Muslims the first Omayyad caliph chose Damascus for his Capital. In 750, it came under Abbasid dominion, and the Abbasid capital shifted to Baghdad. The invasion by Turks in the latter half of the 11th century put an end to Byzantine Syria. Nonetheless the majority of the population remained Christian. The Islamic part of Syria expanded up to the Orontes River and became a center of anti-crusader activity, especially for Zengi, Nur ad-Din and his successor and rival, Saladin. Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire from the 16th through 20th centuries, and found itself largely apart from, and ignored by, world affairs.
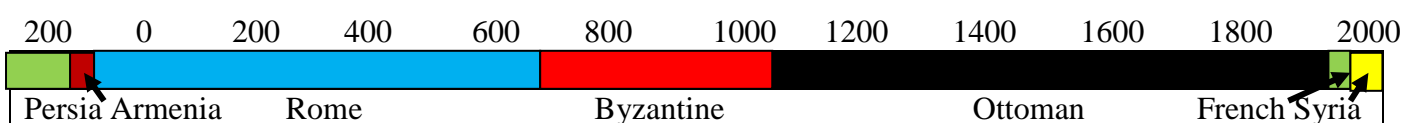
After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was dissolved with help from the United Kingdom, France and the Arab nation itself, and in 1922 the League of Nations split the dominion of the former Syria between two countries - the United Kingdom received Transjordan and Palestine, and France received what was to become modern-day Syria and Lebanon.

In 1920, an independent Arab Kingdom of Syria was established under King Faisal of the Hashemite family, however, his rule over Syria ended after only a few months, following the clash between his Syrian Arab forces and regular French forces who occupied the country. Syria and France negotiated a treaty of independence in September 1936, and Hashim al-Atassi, who was Prime Minister under King Faisal's brief reign, was the first president to be elected under a new constitution, effectively the first incarnation of the modern republic of Syria. However, France reneged on the treaty and refused to ratify it.

With the fall of France in 1940 during World War II, Syria came under the control of the Vichy Government until the British and French occupied in July 1941. The Free French declared the conditional 'independence' of Syria again in 1941, but it wasn't until 1943 that Syria gained any real measure of independence. In 1945 Syria declared war on Germany and Japan.

Syria fought in the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, and remained in a state of political instability during the 1950s and 1960s. In a coup of 1970, the Baath Party took power. Syria was ruled autocratically by **Assad** during 1970–2000, and after Hafez al-Assad's death in 2000, he was succeeded by his son Bashar al-Assad. In the context of the Arab Spring of 2011, Bashar al-Assad's regime faces the ongoing 2011 Syrian uprising

Timeline of Syrian Territorial Occupation

200	0	200	400	600	800	1000	1200	1400	1600	1800	2000

Persia Armenia   Rome   Byzantine   Ottoman   French Syria

Freemasonry in Syria

The British Counsel to the Ottoman Empire, **Sir Alexander Drummond**, opened a lodge in Aleppo (now in modern Syria) on the 3 February 1748, but it would appear to have been short-lived. It has been claimed that **Drummond** was appointed District Grand Master (EC) for the Orient in 1747. There are also claims that a Syrian prince, who was initiated in Egypt, introduced Masonry into Syria in the 1860s, but evidence appears scant. The Grand Orients of Italy and France established lodges at Damascus in Syria (then part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire) in the 1860s, but details of both are sparse. The French lodge, Loge le Liban, in particular, seems to have involved itself in political activities.

The Italian and French lodges appear to have to expired by the turn of the century, although there are also suggestions that Egyptian and Turkish-chartered lodges were working in Damascus by that time. There is evidence of a lodge being formed in Damascus under the National Grand Lodge of Egypt in late 1936. This lodge appears to have promptly split itself into three, whereupon they then formed a Grand Lodge of Syria, under Egyptian patronage, although it may have only been a District Grand Lodge under Egypt. These indigenous lodges seem to have remained active, although they appear to have remained unrecognised outside the country, until the Craft was banned in Syria by decree, on 9 August 1965.

The first Lodge in Beirut was established in 1862 under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The Lodge number was 415. The language was French, but among the Masters who presided was the Consul General of Great Britain, and the Lodge had a membership which encompassed many Syrian notables and many foreigners. The Lodge went dormant in 1868 but renewed its activities and Charter in 1888. In 1868, another Lodge was established under the auspices of the French Grand Orient[5]. This time, the language of the Lodge was Arabic. Many of the country's notables, literary figures, and government officials were among the Brethren.

Scotland chartered Lodge Light in Damascus #1058, in 1909; and the Grand Lodge of New York had Ibrahim el Khalil Lodge #4, formed in 1924, at the same location, under its District of Syria-Lebanon. Subsequent to the Second World War and Syrian Independence, as with the unrecognised lodges, these also were closed in 1965. There was no change in this situation in the 1990s.

The Jesuits, who were among the most vehement opponents, issued a religious newspaper "*The Herald"* for the specific purpose of vilifying Freemasonry and to attack all creeds and beliefs with the exception of Catholicism. In spite of all this, several other Lodges were established in Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Inab, Alexandria, and Antioch. Most of these Lodges were under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Italy. The first Lodge in Damascus was established as a result of the efforts of the late **Prince Abdul-Kader El-Jaza'iri**, the Algerian patriot who found refuge in the East after leading a revolt against the French in his country. The Lodge was under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Italy. The National Grand Lodge AFAM of Egypt lists the Ebla Lodge No.1 working in Syria

Some Famous Syrian Freemasons

Abd El-Kader Ben Muhieddine (1808–1883) was an Algerian Islamic scholar, Sufi, political and military leader who led a struggle against the French invasion in the mid-nineteenth century, for which he is seen by some Algerians as their national hero. The first Lodge in Damascus was established as a result of his efforts.

Midhat Pasha (1822–1884) an Ottoman Turk was a dynamic, pro-Western, reformer and statesman. In 1860 he was made governor of Nis, then governor of Baghdad. In 1871 the sultan, appointed **Midhat** grand vizier. Later in 1878, he was appointed governor of Syria but the sultan again ordered him to be arrested and banished.

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[5] "*General History of Masonry*" Zaidan Grand Lodge of the State of Israel website

To great ability, wide sympathies, and undoubted patriotism he added absolute honesty, that rare quality in a vizier, for he left office as poor as when he entered it.

Ibrahim Hananu (1869–1935) was a charismatic and intriguing figure. He was an educated member of a notable family of Kurdish origin in northern Syria. He studied at the Ottoman Law Academy in Constantinople. In 1922 the Muslim elite of Aleppo coalesced around **Hananu** as a patriotic leader of the Muslim resistance to the French when the French army had landed on the Syrian coast and was preparing to occupy all of Syria. **Hananu** launched a coordinated campaign against French forces. He received aid from **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**. With the withdrawal of Turkish military assistance their struggle collapsed. For **Hanano**, the Ottoman State, Islam and modernity were not mutually exclusive. **Hanano** held office on the Constitutional Assembly that drafted the first republican constitution for Syria. **Ibrahim Hanano** is considered one of the most celebrated warriors and heroes of the resistance against the French Mandate.

Ata 'Bay al-Ayoubi (1877-1951) was an Ottoman official and at times, Interior Minister, Minister of Justice, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister. He established contacts with nationalist leaders and smuggled weapons and money to the leaders of the Syrian revolt on the West Coast and **Ibrahim Hananu** leader of the revolt of Aleppo. In Latakia he used his position as Prime Minister, to help the insurgent Syrians not to be arrested by the police, and he gave lots of information about the French garrisons to conduct ambushes. The French authorities eventually decided to negotiate independence with the leaders of the Bloc. The Syrians accepted this agreement, but not the French who feared losing a large colony in the Arab world.

Lutfi al-Haffar (1891–1968) was a Syrian businessman and politician. He was a founding member of the National Bloc and served as prime minister in 1939. **Haffar** helped found the People's Party, which was the first political party in Syria under the French Mandate. The party advocated the unity of Greater Syria, and the abolition of the French Mandate by political rather than armed means. He served as Minister of Public Works and Economy and later as Finance Minister. **Al-Haffar** helped draft Syria's first republican Constitution.

In 1939, **al-Haffar** was appointed prime minister but his cabinet lasted less than two months being faced with a growing opposition under **al-Haffar**'s former ally, al-Shahbandar. In 1940, following al-Shahbandar assassination, **al-Haffar** was tried before a French military tribunal but acquitted. He later served as Minister of Interior and later as Deputy Prime Minister

Haqqi al-Azm (1864-1955) was a Syrian politician. He was active in the Ottoman government, and later served as the first Prime Minister in republican Syria. After World War I, **al-Azm** opposed the Arab Revolt and allied himself with the French mandate authorities. He was appointed the first governor of the State of Damascus in 1921. In 1932, following the election of Muhammad Ali al-Abid, he was invited to form a cabinet and his rule between 1932 and 1934 was met with large opposition from the National Bloc.

Jamil Mardam Bey (1894–1960) was a Syrian politician, Born in Damascus to a prominent aristocratic Sunni Muslim family. He is descended from Ottoman's general, statesman, and Grand Vizier Lala Kara Mustafa Pasha. He studied at the school of Political Science in Paris and was a founder of Al-Fatat, the leading opposition party in Ottoman Syria. He served as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Hanna Malek (1900-1991) received a law degree from the University of Damascus in 1924 and was in the service of Justice and Administration in Syria. He served several functions as a judge in the Franco-Syrian Mixed Tribunals, judge, justice of the peace, President of the Tribunal, counsel to the Court of Appeal, Advocate General at the Court of Assizes, prosecutor, Inspector of Justice, Attorney General at the Court of Cassation and the Constitutional High Court. In 1954 he was appointed Secretary General of the Presidency of the Council. Along with his duties, he played a leading role within the Orthodox Christian community.and also played a prominent role in Freemasonry in Syria and Lebanon.
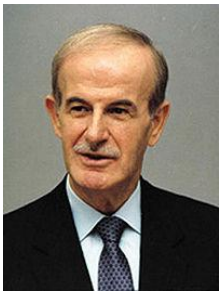
Hafez ibn 'Ali ibn Sulayman al-Assad (1930–2000) was the President of Syria for three decades. **Assad**'s rule consolidated the power of the central government after decades of coups and counter-coups, and continued foreign influence related to the cold war. His rule brought changes, including the 1973 constitution which stated that it guaranteed women's "equal status in society". **Assad** attempted to industrialize the country, and it was opened up to foreign markets. He invested in infrastructure, education, medicine, literacy and urban construction. As a result of the discovery of oil, the economy expanded.

The Syrian **General Pasha Mohammed Rashid** led Ottoman forces against the Egyptians in 1832 and **Chucri Kouatly** was a President of Syria and a Freemason.

Jordan

History of Jordan

The Nabatean kingdom with its capital at Petra was absorbed into the Roman Empire in 103 CE. During the Greco-Roman period of influence, a number of semi-independent city-states also developed in Jordan. In the early 7th century, the area of modern Jordan became integrated into the new Arab-Islamic Umayyad Empire, which ruled much of the Middle East from 661 until 750 CE[6].

After about 1250, Jordan were ruled by various powers and empires including the Mongols, the Crusaders, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks as well as the Ottomans, who captured major parts of the Arab World around 1517. During the Ottoman period, the area became largely under semi-autonomous rule of local Arab lords, with little direct interruption by the Ottoman authorities.

With the break-up of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the League of Nations and the Sykes–Picot Agreement gave birth to the French Mandate for Syria and British Mandate for Palestine, the latter of which included the territory of Transjordan.

The most serious threats to Transjordan were repeated Wahhabi incursions into southern parts of the Saudi Arabian territory. Thus the British maintained a military base, with a small air force, at Marka, close to Amman.

In 1946 the British Foreign Secretary, in a speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations, announced that the British Government intended to take steps in the near future to establish Trans-Jordan as a fully independent and sovereign state and Trans-Jordan gained full independence and became the Hashemite Kingdom of Trans-Jordan when the ruling 'Amir' was re-designated as 'King'.

Trans-Jordan was one of the Arab states opposed to the second partition of Palestine and creation of Israel in May 1948. It participated in the war between the Arab states and the newly founded State of Israel. The Armistice Agreements of 1949 left Jordan in control of the West Bank but provided that the armistice demarcation lines were without prejudice to future territorial settlements or boundary lines.

In March 1949, Transjordan announced its annexation of what has become commonly known as the West Bank. Only Britain recognized this annexation. In 1950, the country was renamed "the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" to include officially those annexed portions of Palestine. While recognizing Jordanian administration over the West Bank, the United States, other Western powers and the United Nations maintained the position that ultimate sovereignty was subject to future agreement.

Hussein Ibn Talal became king on his eighteenth birthday, in 1953 following the assassination of his grandfather King Abdullah I.

Jordan ended its special defense treaty relationship with the United Kingdom in 1957. In February 1958, following announcement of the merger of Syria and Egypt into the United Arab Republic, Iraq and Jordan announced the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan, also known as the Arab Union. The Union was dissolved in August 1958.

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[6] Wikipedia

The 1950s is often referred to "Jordan's Experiment with Liberalism".   Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association were guaranteed in the newly written constitution as with the already firmly established freedom of religion doctrine.   Jordan had one of the freest and most liberal societies in the Middle East and in the Greater Arab World during the 1950s and early 1960s.
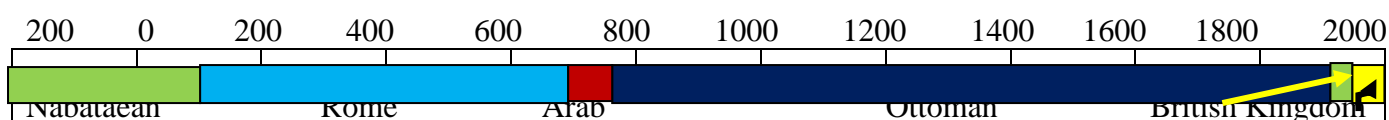
Jordan participated in the June 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq.   During the war, Israel gained control of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.   The 1967 war led to a dramatic increase in the number of Palestinians living in Jordan and in the power and importance of Palestinian militants (Fedayeen) in Jordan.   The heavily armed Fedayeen constituted a growing threat to the sovereignty and security of the Hashemite state, and open fighting erupted in June 1970.   This led to martial law which lasted until 1971 when Jordanian forces won a decisive victory over the Fedayeen in July 1971, expelling them from the country.   During the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war Jordan sent a brigade to Syria to fight Israeli units on Syrian territory.

Jordan witnessed some of the most severe protests and social upheavals in its history during the 1980s, protests in Jordanian universities and urban areas protested inflation and lack of political freedom.

In 1988, Jordan renounced all claims to the West Bank but retained an administrative role pending a final settlement.   Jordan did not participate directly in the Gulf War of 1990–1991.   After the Iraqi defeat in 1991, Jordan, along with Syria, Lebanon, and Palestinian representatives, agreed to participate in direct peace negotiations with Israel sponsored by the U.S. and Russia.   Eventually, Jordan negotiated an end to hostilities with Israel and signed a declaration to that effect on July 25, 1994; the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty was concluded on October 26, 1994.

In the late 1990s, Jordan's unemployment rate was almost 25%, while nearly 50% of those who were employed were on the government payroll.   King Abdullah II succeeded his father **King Hussein** in 1999.   Economic liberalization policies were introduced by King Abdullah II creating one of the freest economies in the Middle East.   Following the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian fighting in September 2000, the Jordanian government offered its help to both parties.   Jordan has since sought to remain at peace with all of its neighbors.   In early 2011 Jordanian protests began in Jordan's capital Amman and are expected to continue for several weeks because of increasing food prices

Timeline of Jordanian Territorial Occupation

| 200 | 0 | 200 | 400 | 600 | 800 | 1000 | 1200 | 1400 | 1600 | 1800 | 2000 |

Nabataean   Rome   Arab   Ottoman   British Kingdom

Freemasonry in Jordan

Jordan has never possessed many Lodges[7].   After the National Grand Lodge of Egypt had been closed in 1964 by **Abdul Nasser**, many lodges in the Middle East working under this Grand Lodge were closed and the remaining ones lost their recognition by the other Grand Lodges in the world.   However, the Jordanian Freemasons, under the leadership of **King Hussein**, tried to establish a new Arabic Masonic Authority working independently in Jordan and Lebanon, but political and religious pressures prevented that.

The many prosperous Lodges in the Kingdom of Jordan came to an abrupt end when the Fundamentalist members of the Jordanian Parliament, who were normally a minority, found themselves almost alone in the Parliament building, legislated and promulgated a law banning Freemasonry in the Jordanian Hashemite Kingdom.[8]   Freemasonry is still banned in Jordan, despite attempts to amend this Law, because some Islamists Members of the Parliament, members of the Muslims Brotherhood, insist on keeping the Prohibition.

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[7]   *"Masonic World Guide"* Henderson ISBN 0 85318 139 X
[8]   "*General History of Masonry*" Zaidan Grand Lodge of the State of Israel website

Yet the Jordanian lows do not punish individuals if they become Freemasons, but some Government jobs require that employees must not to join any social, political or other group.   Speaking about Freemasonry in public is reported to be difficult.

The first lodge in Trans-Jordan was Lodge Quraish founded by an Egyptian Freemason in 1923[9].   The lodge subsequently changed its affiliation and name to Lodge Al-Naser ("Victory").   In 1956 it united with another four lodges that were working in Palestine prior to 1948 on the West Bank of Jordan, to form Beit Al-Maqdes (Jerusalem) Lodge.   In 1956, a Grand Lodge of Jordan was self-constituted, with all its lodges on the West Bank.   The origin of these lodges is obscure.   These lodges (now in the area politically under the Palestinian National Authority), then numbering five, ceased operation after the annexation of the West Bank by Israel in 1967.   The Palestinian Lodges were subsequently revived, but ceased operation in 1994 in the face of political opposition.   In 1995, there were evidently attempts to revive the West Bank lodges, but the result is unknown, although anecdotal evidence suggests at least some are operating.

Petra Lodge No. 1 is working in Jordan under National Grand Lodge AFAM of Egypt but is not recognized by UGLE.   The only recognized Lodges in Lebanon and Syria are those working under the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the District Grand lodge of Syria & Lebanon working in Lebanon under the Grand Lodge of New York.   Lodge Jordan No 1339 SC which was chartered by Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1925 at Jaffa (Tel Aviv) moved to Amman in 1935.   It has the distinction of being the only British Warranted Lodge still working anywhere in the Middle East outside of Israel.

Some Famous Jordanian Freemasons

King Hussein bin Talal (1935–1999) was King of Jordan from the abdication of his father, King Talal, in 1952, until his death.   Hussein's rule extended through the Cold War and four decades of Arab-Israeli conflict.   He recognized Israel in 1994, becoming the second Arab head of state to do so.   Hussein's family claims to descend from the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his clan.   He was the Grand Master in Jordan.

Prince El-Hassan bin Talaal (1947-) is a member of the Jordanian royal family. He is brother to the late **King Hussein** and was Crown Prince from 1965 to 1999.   He studied at Harrow School in England as well as Christ Church, Oxford University.   In 2002 Prince Hassan was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of York, in recognition of his contribution to the field of post-war reconstruction and development. In 2004 he was awarded an honorary fellowship by York St John University, for his lifelong contribution to peace initiatives in the Middle East, humanitarian projects and inspirational leadership in interfaith dialogue.

Yasser Arafat (1929-2004) was a Palestinian leader and a Laureate of the Nobel Prize.   He was Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and leader of the Fatah political party, which he founded in 1959. **Arafat** spent much of his life fighting against Israel in the name of Palestinian self-determination.   Originally opposed to Israel's existence, he modified his position in 1988 when he accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242.   **Arafat** and his movement operated from several Arab countries. In the late 1960s he was forced out of Jordan and into Lebanon,

Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein (1962-) is the reigning King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.   He ascended the throne on 7 February 1999 upon the death of his father **King Hussein**.   **King Abdullah**, whose mother is Princess Muna al-Hussein, is a member of the Hashemite family.   Since 1993, Abdullah has been married to Queen Rania of Jordan.

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[9]"*The Craft in Islamic Countries - An Analytical Review*" delivered in the Victorian Lodge of Research in 2000

Conclusions

The fourth quarter of the 19th century saw Freemasonry flourish in the Arab world, due to the expanding influence of European countries into the domains of the Ottoman Empire. Freemasonry brought some of the best aspects of European civilization and Freemasonry spread quickly[10]. In the 20th century the nations of the region sought and gained independence from these European countries, mainly France and Britain and Freemasons helped secure this freedom and establish the independent nations.

The melting pot of the region has always been in Lebanon. Its people were a mixture of Mediterranean cultures and from the seventh century its mountains had been a refuge for Christian and Muslim sects escaping persecution[11]. These included the Maronite Christians from Syria and the Druze, a secretive Islamic sect, sometime allies and sometime enemies, as well as Sunni and Shiite Muslims, Byzantine Christians as well as traders from many Mediterranean countries.

The formation of the State of Israel also brought people from many different countries and cultures into this region. The Palestinian people, although barely welcome in the nations to which they emigrated, nevertheless served as a focus for Arab anti-Zionist action. It is interesting to see how Freemasons were involved in the resolution, or otherwise, of the ensuing conflicts. Israeli Freemasons have helped to forge the State of Israel in politics, business, arts and the military. Although the formation of the State of Israel created tensions in the region, it is also obvious that Freemasons have attempted to ease racial and religious tensions not just in Israel but in the whole region.

When the current unrest in Syria is resolved, Freemasonry will have a role to play in restoring calm.

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[10] "*Historic Freemasonry in the Middle East*" Isaac Bar-Moshe Grand Lodge of the State of Israel website
[11]"*The Arab – Journeys beyond the mirages*" David Lamb ISBN 4000-3041-2