

Israel

Since its establishment in 1948, the state of Israel has not ceased to be a unique and controversial entity: vehemently opposed by some, and loyally supported by others. In this novel and original study, Colin Shindler tells the history of Israel through the unusual vehicle of cartoons – all drawn by different generations of irreverent and contrarian Israeli cartoonists. Richly illustrated with a cartoon for every year since Israel's establishment until 2020, the book offers new perspectives on Israel's past, politics and people. At once incisive and hilarious, these cartoons, mainly published in the Israeli press, capture significant flashpoints, and show how the country's citizens felt about and responded to major events in Israel's history. A leading authority on Israel Studies, Shindler contextualises the cartoons with detailed timelines and commentaries for every year. Sometimes funny and sometimes tinged with tragedy, *Israel: A History in 100 Cartoons* offers a new, visually exciting and accessible way to understand Israel's complex history and, in particular, the Israel–Palestine conflict.

Colin Shindler is Emeritus Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He became the first Professor of Israel Studies in the UK in 2008 and was the founding chairman of the European Association of Israeli Studies (EAIS) in 2009. He has published twelve books and his most recent publications include *Israel and the European Left: Between Solidarity and Delegitimisation* (2012) and *The Rise of the Israeli Right* (2015).

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A History in 100 Cartoons

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For my cousin Zelda Harris, and in memory of
my friend Sylvia Becker, who both fought so courageously for
many years to secure the emigration of Jews from the
Soviet Union

Contents

<i>The Cartoonists Featured</i>	page ix
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction: Jews: Caricatures, Cartoons, Comics	1
Zionism: Ideology and the Building of the State	27
On Zionism	29
Before Israel: the Road to 1948	47
The Road to 1948	49
A History of Israel: 1949–2020	63
1949	64
The 1950s	69
1950–1959	70
The 1960s	111
1960–1969	112
The 1970s	153
1970–1979	154
The 1980s	195
1980–1989	196
The 1990s	237
1990–1999	238
The 2000s	279
2000–2009	280
The 2010s	321
2010–2020	322
<i>Collections of Works of Early Israeli Cartoonists</i>	366
<i>Index</i>	367

The Cartoonists Featured

Yehoshua Adari (1911–66)

Born in Poland, immigrated to Palestine in 1932, contributed to *HaYarden*, *Herut*, *HaBoqer*, *Ha'aretz*

Arnon Avni (1957–)

Member of Kibbutz Nirim, graduate of Bezalel, contributor to *HaDaf HaYarok*

Noah (Birzowski) Bee (1916–92)

Born in Warsaw, immigrated to Palestine in 1934, contributed to *Ha'aretz*, *HaBoqer*, *Jerusalem Post*, author of several books, left for the USA, contributor to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency

Amos Biderman (1952–)

Member of Kibbutz Kfar Glikson, daily cartoonist for *Ha'aretz*, contributor to *Kol Ha'Ir*, Dosh Prize 2002

Shay Charka (1977–)

Contributor to *Makor Rishon*, *Otiot*, book illustrator, comic book author

Shlomo Cohen (1943–)

Graduate of Bezalel, daily cartoonist for *Israel Hayom*, contributor to *HaOlam Hazeh*, *Hadashot*, *Yediot Aharanot*, written many books

Zach Cohen (1983–)

Graduate of Shenkar College, daily contributor to *Calcalist*, illustrator and animator

Itamar Daube (1975–)

Graduate of Bezalel, contributor to *Yediot Aharanot*, head of illustrations and animation programme at Shenkar College, Senior Vice-President Creative of US media channel *babyfirst*

Eyal Eilat (1964–)

Graduate of Haifa University, contributor to *Walla News*, *Yediot Aharanot*, Schocken Books, illustrator of children's books

Ya'akov Farkash (Ze'ev) (1923–2002)

Born in Budapest, participant in death marches in 1944, Buchenwald inmate, interned by the British on Cyprus, immigrated to Palestine in 1947, started with *Ma'ariv* in 1953, given a weekly page in *Ha'aretz* in 1963

Kariel Gardosh (Dosh) (1921–2002)

Born in Budapest, immigrated to Israel in 1948, started with *Ma'ariv* in 1953, contributor to *Ha'aretz Shelanu*, creator of national symbol, Srulik

The Cartoonists Featured

Avi Katz (1949–)

Born in Philadelphia, graduate of UC Berkeley and Bezalel, contributor to *Davar*, *Jerusalem Report*, children's book illustrator

Shmuel Katz (1926–2010)

Born in Vienna, interned in labour camps in Hungary and Slovakia, immigrated to Palestine in 1947, founder of Kibbutz Ga'aton in 1948, contributor to *Al Hamishmar*, *Davar*, *Ma'ariv*, Dosh Prize 2006

Michel Kichka (1964–)

Born in Liège, contributor to *L'Arche*, *Regards*, 'Cafe Telad' on Channel 2, lecturer at Bezalel

Ya'akov Kirschen (1936–)

Born in New York, freelance cartoonist for *Playboy*, immigrated to Israel in 1973, originator of 'Dry Bones' strip in *Jerusalem Post*

Dani (Lucien) Levkovitz (1927–2002)

Born in Paris, interned on Cyprus where he attended art courses, immigrated to Israel in 1948 and fought at Latrun, followed Moshe Sneh into the Communist party, contributor to *Kol Ha'am* 1954–61, worked for educational television as illustrator and animator

Moshik Lin (1950–)

Graduate of Bezalel, lecturer at Ben-Gurion University, contributor to *Davar*, *Ma'ariv*, *Iton 77*, children's book illustrator, Dosh Prize 2011

Guy Morad (1975–)

Graduate of Bezalel, contributor to *Yediot Aharanot*, book illustrator, comics creator

Arie Navon (1909–96)

Born in Dunaivtsi, Ukraine, contributor to *Davar*, creator of first children's characters, Jerusalem Prize 1941, 1944, Israel Prize 1996

Meir Ronnen (Mike) (1926–2009)

Born in Melbourne, graduate of the Royal Melbourne College of Art, cartoonist for *Sunday Telegraph*, immigrated to Israel in 1949, contributor to *Yediot Aharanot*, *Jerusalem Post*

Yosef (Rosenberg) Ross (1911–91)

Born in Antwerp, immigrated to Palestine in 1935, contributor to *Ashmoret*, author of many books

Shlomo (Helmut) Sawady (1917–2003)

Born in Berlin, contributor to *HaBoqer*

Dudy Shamai (1969–)

Contributor to *Ma'ariv*, Channel 1, illustrator of children's books

Friedel Stern (1917–2003)

Born in Leipzig, graduate of the Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig, immigrated to Palestine in 1936, contributor to *Bamahaneh*, book and map illustrator, Dosh Prize 2004

Yoni Wachsmann (1975–)

Graduate of Bezalel, head illustrator for *Calcalist*

Preface and Acknowledgements

Most people appreciate a political cartoon. It gives a voice to the powerless and brings a smile to the face. The unexpected and the unimaginable evoke a respect for the cartoon creator, quietly beaver away at a sketch board.

Politicians, however, either detest cartoonists or are deeply flattered to be the focus of attention. More than one public figure has been known to arduously create a collection of their published images.

Historians, on the other hand, are allowed a window of observation into the past to view what may have been a popular perception of an episode or a noted figure.

Those who appreciate cartoons often single out one or two favourites which are particularly meaningful. For me, it is the remarkable cartoon of David Low which was published in the London *Evening Standard* in June 1940. It depicted a British soldier, standing on the White Cliffs of Dover, enveloped by threatening waves, but waving an angry fist at the Luftwaffe, high above in a black sky. Low drew this after the fall of Paris and the lightning conquest of much of Europe by the Nazis. Low's defiant caricature followed the retreat from Dunkirk and preceded the expected invasion of the British Isles. The cartoon's caption said it all. 'Very Well: Alone!' Low captured the national resolve of the British when the United States remained neutral and the Soviet Union was a fellow traveller of the Nazi state.

For me, there is another aspect to this cartoon. It is that of the outsider – and history's outsiders were the Jews. This is the underlying theme of this book, which depicts Jews as stiff-necked and contrarian rather than as the proud and compliant members of a community. It also explains why Jews were disproportionately represented as members of the fraternity of cartoonists and satirists.

The book's central focus is, of course, as its title states, a history of Israel which builds on sections about the rise of Zionism and the struggle for independence in 1948. It views Israel, not as an international pariah, but as the dissident of the nations – a revolt against the place allocated to the Jews by the international community.

In one sense, it is represented by Arie Navon's caricature of a traditional 'Iudaea Capta' coin of Vespasian or Titus after the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 CE. This shows a standing Roman soldier looking down upon a seated, but dejected and weeping Jewess. The obverse, however, is not the head of one of the Flavian emperors, but instead that of an Israeli kibbutznik, wearing a kova tembel hat, bearing the inscription 'Iudaea Libera'. The establishment of a Hebrew republic in the Land of Israel in 1948 symbolised a fundamental transition in the flow of Jewish history. Navon's cartoon was entitled 'From Occupation to Liberation'.

This book begins with an exploration of depictions of Jews during the nineteenth century, drawn to amuse the reader. These were often superficial in their racism, but they were precursors for the demonisation of the Jews which proliferated in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. While those regimes have passed into a well-deserved oblivion, the persecution of cartoonists in general has continued unabated in today's

Preface and Acknowledgements

authoritarian states. Neither have anti-Semitic tropes from the past been laid to rest. While some cartoonists have wished to criticise Israeli policies, they often forget that a majority of Israelis just happen to be Jews – and this sometimes tips over into unintended anti-Semitic stereotypes. On the other hand, the country with the largest population of Jews in the Muslim world, Shi'ite Iran, has not been reticent to exhibit Holocaust denial in the guise of cartoon contests.

Even so, there have been marvellous depictions of the seemingly intractable Israel–Palestine imbroglio by both Israelis and Palestinians. Those outside the Middle East often attempt to reduce the complexity of this struggle into an attractive simplicity – and this does not always work. Even so, a few years ago, the British artist 'Banksy' produced a Christmas card cartoon which showed a bewildered and bemused Joseph and Mary, barred from entering Bethlehem by an Israeli army roadblock.

This book looks at political and cultural figures such as Ben-Gurion, Weizmann and Jabotinsky who were active in the Yishuv, the Jewish settlement in Palestine before 1948, and in the Jewish Diaspora. This leads on naturally to cartoons during the last years of the British Mandate and the first years of the state of Israel. However, the bulk of this work looks at the history of Israel, year by year, from 1949 until 2020.

Each year consists of four pages: a cartoon with an explanation, a timeline of that year and two pages of narrative which relate to the main events of that particular year.

This book features a hundred cartoons by solely Israeli cartoonists and finishes in 2020. However, the world moves on – as must cartoonists. Therefore this work does not include the fall of Benjamin Netanyahu and his replacement by the Bennett–Lapid administration, a pantomime horse of eight disparate parties sitting in an ideologically diverse coalition.

So this work is not a full-blown history of Israel – there are many detailed histories including my own rendition which can be consulted. Neither is it an art book of brilliant sketches which utilises the history of Israel as little more than a vehicle. Yet both are present in this hybrid, which hopefully will open a window for many on recent Jewish history and the onward odyssey of a state of the Jews. This unusual approach will provide food for thought for further exploration.

Why then select one specific cartoonist for a specific year – and not another one? My first port of call was to select a cartoon which illustrated a central event in that year rather than the cartoonist. For example, the depiction of Netanyahu as a haughty Roman emperor, reflecting on his conduct during the 2015 election, would have been a wonderful choice. Yet, as I have discovered, there is an abundance of insightful cartoons from a plethora of brilliant caricaturists which could easily have been chosen. In such a book, however, only one can be chosen for each year – and it becomes almost a question of personal choice. There could have been as many parallel histories, featuring different cartoonists and cartoons, as there are readers. My choice implies no judgement on those which have been omitted. There is an immense number of brilliant cartoons out there.

Another question emerges from the choice of cartoon: why this event and not another one to characterise a particular year? Again, it is not easy to make a decision, but hopefully other events are mentioned in both the timeline and the narrative.

The restriction of space in such a work essentially produces a snapshot history of a year. There are therefore borders in terms of detail and explanation. I did not have the luxury of explorative meandering into a particular episode, but I have tried my best to be as comprehensive as possible.

I delved into the press reportage of the time and checked the reports for their accuracy. This was often a difficult exercise. An Israeli government minister would tender his or her resignation, but this might only become official some forty-eight hours later. So which date should register the event?

Preface and Acknowledgements

Indeed, access to relevant information was made more difficult by being unable to travel and to visit archives during the pandemic. All this became heavily time-consuming. Despite the corroding addiction of social media, the internet, however, was a boon during this period. The digitised newspaper collection of the Yishuv and the state of Israel in the National Library of Israel was an enlightening discovery. It allowed me to identify the date and place of publication of several cartoons. However, it is still a work in progress. For example, *Ma'ariv* starts in 1948, but finishes in March 1991 with a few months added for good measure for 2020.

There are occasional lacunae where I have been unable to locate the details surrounding the publication of a cartoon.

It has proved difficult to find the date and place of publication of Yosef Ross's English-language cartoons for the period 1945–8 – although he published his Hebrew-language work in the daily *Hatsofeh* after 1949. One explanation is that the British authorities censored unfriendly caricatures during the final years of the Mandate.

I was fortunate to be in contact with the following cartoonists and to utilise their work in this book: Amos Biderman, Shay Charka, Shlomo Cohen, Zach Cohen, Itamar Daube, Eyal Eilat, Avi Katz, Michel Kichka, Ya'akov Kirschen, Moshik Lin, Guy Morad, Dudy Shamai and Yoni Wachsmann.

I would also like to thank the families of many cartoonists who have since passed on: Gideon Ross (Yosef Ross); David Navon (Arie Navon); Sarah Levkovitch (Dani Levkovitz); Nili Praiz (Yehoshua Adari); Naomi Farkash ('Ze'ev'); Daniella, Nancy and Miki Gardosh ('Dosh'); Dorit Katz, Yael and Roi Khenin (Shmuel Katz); Michal Safdie ('Mike').

My thanks also to the Israeli Cartoon Museum in Holon for drawing my attention to the wonderful work of figures such as Arnon Avni, Noah Bee, Shlomo Sawady, Friedel Stern and many others.

My thanks also to my good friend Amira Stern of the Jabotinsky Institute for her expertise in identifying specific cartoons, featuring Jabotinsky, from the 1930s.

I am grateful to the Israel National Library, Archives Department, for their help in accessing the Dosh Archive. The Library's Hebrew newspaper website proved to be an excellent tool for locating dates of publication.

I am deeply indebted to Hila Zahavi who is in charge of the archive at the Israeli Cartoon Museum. During the difficult time of the pandemic, I could not have completed this book without her expertise, help and good will. She answered all my questions and provided everything that I requested. She was a pleasure to work with.

I am also indebted in a broader sense to the Cartoon Museum itself. It is a marvellous institution which I first visited many years ago. It is a revelation to all Israelis who visit, both adults and children, and indeed to anyone who is interested in Israeli history.

I am deeply indebted to Ari Roth and his colleagues at the Israel Institute for their support in this work. The Israel Institute has valiantly supported academics who teach Israel Studies internationally – it has really put Israel Studies on the map as a genuine discipline in academia.

I would also like to thank Maria Marsh and Natasha Whelan of Cambridge University Press for smoothing the way and for their willingness to find solutions to the most insoluble of problems.

The eighteen months of isolation during repeated lockdowns allowed me the space to complete this project. This work would not have seen the light of day if it was not for my wife, Jean, my best friend and inspiring life partner.

I have tried to use a transliteration of other languages which is consistent. However, where familiarity occasionally trumps convention, then I have utilised the former. Of course, any errors of fact and interpretation are entirely my own.