



1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War

By Prof. Benny Morris

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This history of the foundational war in the Arab-Israeli conflict is groundbreaking, objective, and deeply revisionist. A riveting account of the military engagements, it also focuses on the war's political dimensions. Benny Morris probes the motives and aims of the protagonists on the basis of newly opened Israeli and Western documentation. The Arab side—where the archives are still closed—is illuminated with the help of intelligence and diplomatic materials.

Morris stresses the *jihadi* character of the two-stage Arab assault on the Jewish community in Palestine. Throughout, he examines the dialectic between the war's military and political developments and highlights the military impetus in the creation of the refugee problem, which was a by-product of the disintegration of Palestinian Arab society. The book thoroughly investigates the role of the Great Powers—Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—in shaping the conflict and its tentative termination in 1949. Morris looks both at high politics and general staff decision-making processes and at the nitty-gritty of combat in the successive battles that resulted in the emergence of the State of Israel and the humiliation of the Arab world, a humiliation that underlies the continued Arab antagonism toward Israel.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is the best book by far on the war of 1948."—Benjamin Kedar, Professor of History, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
(Benjamin Kedar)

"This is a wonderful contribution to the historiography of the Israel/Palestine War of 1948. Morris has written a fresh account, substantiated by a lot of new documentation."—Ronald W. Zweig, Professor of Israel Studies, New York University

(Ronald W. Zweig)

"A commanding, superbly documented, and fair-minded study of the events that, in the wake of the Holocaust, gave a sovereign home to one people and dispossessed another. . . . What is so striking about Morris's work as a historian is that it does not flatter anyone's prejudices, least of all his own."—David Remnick, *New Yorker*
(David Remnick *New Yorker* 2008-05-05)

"Morris relates the story of his new book soberly and somberly, evenhandedly and exhaustively. . . . An authoritative and fair-minded account of an epochal and volatile event. He has reconstructed that event with scrupulous exactitude."—David Margolick, *New York Times Book Review*
(David Margolick *New York Times Book Review* 2008-05-04)

"Readers can do no better than to go to a new authoritative source about the beginnings of the Israeli state, Benny Morris' *1948*."—Jonathan S. Tobin, *The Jewish Exponent*
(Jonathan S. Tobin *The Jewish Exponent* 2008-05-08)

"As [Israel] celebrates six decades of reborn existence on May 14 and books about it cascade into stores, the most important among them [is] Benny Morris's *1948*."—Carlin Romano, *The Chronicle Review*
(Carlin Romano *The Chronicle Review* 2008-05-16)

"An ambitious, detailed and engaging portrait of the war itself—from its origins to its unresolved aftermath—that further shatters myths on both sides of the Israeli-Arab divide."—Glenn Frankel, *Washington Post Book World*
(Glenn Frankel *Washington Post Book World* 2008-06-01)

"Morris, born in 1948, is among a group of Israeli 'new historians,' whose work has challenged the traditional, accepted line of the birth of Israel. In this well-researched book, he strives for balance."—Billy Heller, *New York Post* (Required Reading)
(Billy Heller *New York Post* 2008-05-01)

"A compelling 'aha' book, *1948* brings order to complex, little-understood subjects . . . with [Morris'] vivid narrative prose and masterly analysis."—David Holahan, *The Hartford Courant*
(David Holahan *Hartford Courant*)

"Morris relates the story of his new book soberly and somberly, evenhandedly and exhaustively. . . . An authoritative and fair-minded account of an epochal and volatile event."—David Margolick, *New York Times Book Review*

(David Margolick *New York Times Book Review* 2008-05-04)

"Morris's account seems admirable, because he is unafraid of upsetting both camps. . . . His commitment to the pursuit of historical truth deserves as much admiration as his dismay at Arab intransigence commands sympathy."—Max Hastings, *Sunday Times* (London)

(Max Hastings *Sunday Times* 2008-05-18)

"A considerable achievement, meticulously detailing and analyzing both Israel's war of Independence, on the one hand, and its mirror Palestinian face: the Catastrophe (*al nakba*), on the other."—Michael Bell, *Toronto Globe and Mail*

(Michael Bell *Toronto Globe and Mail* 2008-05-10)

"1948 is a superb attempt to provide a reasoned assessment of a very contentious period. It is well worth study by anyone seeking to understand the Middle East that this war helped create."—Col. Jonathan M. House, *Military Review*

(Col. Jonathan M. House *Military Review* 2008-11-01)

"Readers interested in military strategy and tactics will appreciate the book's comprehensiveness on this score, while others will be drawn in by the sheer drama of the war, with its interweaving of military and political action, told clearly and swiftly."—Joel Streicker, *Shofar*

(Joel Streicker *Shofar* 2009-01-01)

"Morris has reviewed all the revisionist literature, re-worked the shelves of the archives to make sure that nothing has been overlooked, and given us a meticulously researched day-by-day narrative of the first Arab-Israeli war."—Paul C. Merkley, *Books & Culture*

(Paul C. Merkley *Books & Culture* 2009-03-01)

"Highly recommended."—*Choice*

(*Choice* 2009-03-01)

"A commanding, superbly documented, and fair-minded study of the events that . . . gave a sovereign home to one people and dispossessed another. . . . What is so striking about Morris's work . . . is that it does not flatter anyone's prejudices . . ."—David Remnick, *New Yorker*

(David Remnick *New Yorker*)

"Morris tenders a well-documented work with more than one hundred pages of endnotes that support every major point. That fair-minded, impartial balancing of Arab and Jewish standpoints is what distinguishes Morris' work."—John W. Sutherlin, *MESA*

(John W. Sutherlin *MESA*)

From the Author

A conversation with Benny Morris

Q: How does *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* relate to your previous work?

A: In the past, I have written about one particular aspect of the war—about the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem over 1947-1949, for example—or, more generally, about the course of the Zionist-Arab

conflict from 1881 to 2000. In this book I address the whole of the 1948 War in its political and military aspects, taking in as well the international context and interventions, the Arab world, and the internal Israeli scene. I try to present a good overall picture of what happened and why, from the UN handling of the Palestine issue to the Israeli-Arab armistice agreements that ended the war.

Q: What do you think at bottom is the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

A: I would say that there is a territorial dispute between two peoples who claim the same patch of land. It is a very small, patch of land, and so the idea of dividing it between the two is extremely problematic in the technical sense. But it is also a cultural-religious conflict between the Islamic East and the West. The Islamic Arab world sees Israel—as it sees itself—as an offshoot and outpost of the West in—in their view—a Muslim area and as an infidel, invasive presence. Israel and Zionism are seen by the Islamic Arab world, and the wider Islamic world, as illegitimate. This, at root, is the cause of the ongoing conflict. Were they to accord it legitimacy, the problem in Palestine/Israel would be soluble. At present, given this mindset, it isn't.

Q: Are there any lessons to be learned from the study of the 1948 War?

A: To be sure, many Israelis will learn that they must remain strong and technologically advanced; otherwise they will be overwhelmed by Arab numbers and fervor. The Arabs might learn that they must improve themselves, at least on a technological-scientific level, and better their societies and armies, if they hope to overcome Israel, though it is possible that if they do, they may lose the desire to destroy Israel. Outsiders may simply learn about the conflict and the nature of the two contending societies, at least as they were in 1948, and perhaps with certain implications for the present and future.

About the Author

Benny Morris is professor of history in the Middle East Studies Department of Ben-Gurion University, Israel. He is the leading figure among Israel's "New Historians," who over the past two decades have reshaped our understanding of the Israeli-Arab conflict. His books include *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*; *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956*; and *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*.

Users Review

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Judith Rayl:

The book 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make reading a book 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War being your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your own capable, increase your knowledge about a few or all subjects. You could know everything if you like open and read a guide 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or other people. So , how do you think about this reserve?

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