

HAIFA RESIDENTS—A FACTOR IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE MACCABIAH GAMES.

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Capital of the North, third largest city in Israel, main port city, industrial and academic center – these are just a few descriptions of Haifa. Right at its very beginning, the city symbolized the realization of the Zionist dream and proposed merging cultural and human assets with pioneering values and hard work.

Another unique attribute of Haifa is its history; it is one of the largest cities and ports in the country that does not have an ancient nucleus. Its port is one of the only ones in the Mediterranean Basin that was not created in place of an old port.¹

The most important and oldest city at the time in the region was Acre, Haifa's neighbor to the north. With time, Acre's importance gradually declined and it made room for Haifa. Many of the roles played by Acre in the past were filled by Haifa (starting at the beginning of the 19th century), as it grew to become the largest and most important city in northern Israel, and its port replaced the Acre port, which could no longer meet the needs of modern ships. It is possible to discern four stages that made their mark on the development of Haifa.²

1. Settlement of the Templars in Haifa in 1868

The Temple Society ("Tempelgesellschaft") was established in Germany by Christoff Hoffman. The roots of the Templar faith lay in *pietism* (a religious movement that began in the Lutheran Church in Germany during the 17th century, which stressed individual deity over orthodoxy, religious principles and practice of the Pietists). In order to strengthen the faith, changes were made in the church in this spirit, and the Templars, through their diligence and energy, quickly became a decisive force in Haifa. They built a new neighborhood – the German Colony – into which they introduced industrial, commercial and agricultural methods never before seen in the country until then. Thanks to the Templars, Haifa became one of the most beautiful cities in the country.

2. Construction of the Hijazi Railway Line in 1905

Haifa was the most suitable location for constructing a railway line to the Mediterranean Sea. Within two years (1903-5), the Haifa-Dara Line (Adawi) was laid, known as the Ha'Emek Line. Since then, this line has served not only for transporting

the huge quantities of equipment that were required to lay the main line (Damascus-Medina), but also for transporting the thousands of Muslim pilgrims who arrived in Haifa via the Mediterranean Sea, from where they continued on to Mecca and Medina.

3. Establishment of the “Technikum” (today the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology) in 1912

Since Haifa’s occupation of by Taher El-Omar in 1761, and the reconstruction of the city, most of the population lived in the lower city near the sea. With their settlement in Haifa, the Templars built a new neighborhood located west of the lower city – the German Colony. During the years 1909-1912, the Jewish settlements in Haifa climbed higher up the Carmel Mountain to an area called Hadar Hacarmel. The first among them was a group of entrepreneurs headed by Shabtai Levy, who served for a lengthy period as head of Haifa’s first Jewish municipality. During the same time, Dr. Paul Nathan, President of the German “Ezra”³ visited Haifa in order to build the Technikum (Technion), a technological institute of higher education. The decision in itself to establish an institute in Haifa, of all places, was important. A residential neighborhood soon developed surrounding the Technikum, the construction of which continued until 1925. But actually its establishment represented a geographical turning point in the development of the Jewish minority in the city.

4. Haifa – the Main City during the British Mandate (1918-1948)

The British chose Haifa as the center possessing utmost strategic and transportation importance and built a deepwater port there. Important industries grew around this port, and the city soon became a manufacturing and heavy industry center, primarily for the metals, textile and chemical industries.

During the British Mandate, the masses of new immigrants who arrived in the Land of Israel had a great influence on Haifa and contributed significantly to its growth. They not only influenced the city’s physical growth, they also added to its character.

The immigration of German Jews had a great influence during the 1930s; they brought with them many new initiatives and methods that helped Haifa grow into a “City of the Future.” During this period, Mount Carmel was settled, designed in a style similar to that accepted in Europe, including pedestrian promenades, cafés, hotels, sports fields, etc.

Table 1: Population Growth in Haifa⁴

Source	Year	Jews	Arabs	Others	Total	% Jews of the Overall Population
Estimate	1914	3,500	18,500	-	22,000	15.5
Census	1922	6,230	18,240	164	24,634	25.3
Census	1931	15,923	24,148	4,332	50,403	31.6
Estimate	1944	66,000	62,500	300	128,880	51.2

During the British Mandate, Haifa's population grew five-fold. It should be mentioned that the population of Jews in Haifa grew ten-fold during the years 1922-48 compared to the population of non-Jews, which grew only by a factor of 3.5 (whereas the population of Jews in greater Haifa grew by a factor of almost 14!).

Sports and physical fitness activities commenced in Haifa with the immigration of Dr. Eliahu (Elias) Orbach in 1909, who was a member of the Bar-Kochva Club in Berlin. In the same year, he participated with his friend Ernest Herman (also a member of the Bar-Kochva Club in Berlin who settled in Haifa) in the Rehovot Festival and won two competitions – First Place in high jump (1.45 m) and First Place (3 hits) in riflingle-shooting (only standing).

In 1911, the first Gymnastics Society was established in the city, and in December 1912, Maccabi Haifa was founded.⁵

But the individual who laid the foundation for modern physical fitness and sport in Haifa was Dr. Arthur Biram (one of the founders of the Bar-Kochva Club in Berlin in 1898), when he came to serve as principal of the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa on February 14, 1914. Together with the teaching staff, he prepared the first curriculum that was based on a large amount of physical fitness and sports activities.⁶

World War I brought a stop to physical fitness activity in Haifa since all German subjects (Dr. A. Biram, Dr. A. Orbach and others) were recruited to the German army. Physical fitness activity was renewed only in 1919. After WWI, the 3rd (1919), 4th (1924) and 5th *aliyahs* to the Land of Israel in the 1930s afforded Haifa a special image, mainly to the population in their early twenties living there, who expressed the spirit of the times. Everything was in a situation of flow and creation. New life patterns were being developed by “another public.” The main, and perhaps most decisive, sector of this population were the young, single new immigrants.⁷

In the background of this period was blind faith, still unperceivable or proven in a rational fashion. But the process of creation induced a type of movement of renewal, from which an urban leadership grew; the image of a society was being formed. The creation and desire to shape a new image for life in the city were combined in a dimension of time; the actions and ideas were not frozen in time just to meet the needs of the present. Tent camps were being erected around the city, on the sides of roads that were being paved; the Hadar Hacarmel Committee also established a large tent camp for new immigrants in the city.

A study of the development of social movements proves that their success was comprised of two components: the first – defining the idea, and the second – suitable social conditions. An outstanding example of this is Germany, and it is not by chance that the “Turnen” united the various German principalities into one national country. The development of physical fitness in the Scandinavian countries was different. There, the rational approach prevailed, which fostered the development of natural sciences, medicine and psychology. But the residents of Haifa were primarily influenced by the “Sokol” movement. The Czech nation, which was surrounded by Germans on all sides, had to stress her national unity, desire and ability to work together. “We all think alike.” No one individual can respond to the national needs. From here stems the choir (without a soloist) in folklore, and the mass gymnastics performed to the sounds of music behind the belief of “strength in numbers in thoughts and deeds.”⁸

A group of youngsters from the Schuzbund (self-defense) in Austria who were filled with ideals and motivation brought the “Hapoel” Workers’ Sports Organization to Haifa in 1924. Their main objective was to “cater to the masses rather than to breed champion athletes.”

Sports in the Land of Israel, as presented until then by “Maccabi,” represented a branch of sports that belonged to the materialistic class, which believed, then and now, in placing greater emphasis on competitive sports.

Therefore, there prevailed a fierce opposition to the power of the pioneering workers’ movement, which extolled the virtue of the kibbutz undertaking and the principles of mutual help and equality within a working society. “Hapoel” not only promoted sports *per se* but also sports as a tool fostering health and unification. It aspired to instill the values of body culture into the broad layers of laborers, who were organized into the Histadrut – General Federation of Labor in the Land of Israel.⁹

In this atmosphere, a decision was made in the Maccabi congress of the World Histadrut – General Federation of Labor in June 1929 in Prague to hold the Maccabiah Games, at the initiative of Yosef Yekutieli, in the spring of 1932, 1800 years after the Bar Kochva Rebellion. The tidings bearing the Maccabiah torch reached out to the entire Jewish community throughout the world. The fire of the torch, which was brought from the cemetery of the Maccabis-Hahashmonaim, lit the hearts of many Jewish youth everywhere. The Maccabiah Games became the largest Jewish competitive sports event, leaving its mark on Jewish sports in Israel and in the Diaspora, as well as on the strength of Jewish athletes. Those who perceived the Maccabiah Games as being a layer in the national struggle of Jewish youth and the Jewish nation did not do so in vain.¹⁰

From the very moment the decision was made, every Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel was in elevated spirits and planned to host the most important event of that time in the best possible way, despite the prevailing political and economic difficulties. Haifa was given the task of organizing the heavy athletic (wrestling, boxing and weightlifting), swimming and water polo competitions, as well as the Maccabiah's Closing Ceremony. We will focus here on the swimming, diving and water polo competitions that Haifa organized, from which we will be able to understand the implications of organizing the entire event.

The first swimming department was established in Haifa in the year 1926 by Alex Epstein upon the initiative of Maccabi. Swimming activities were first held on the beach next to the German Colony (a swimming pool was at the time only a dream). Epstein, in addition to being an outstanding swimmer, was also a lifeguard. The story goes as follows: "British Governor Kitroch was dragged out to sea out by strong waves and was on the verge of drowning. After many attempts, Epstein succeeded in saving the Governor's life. The Governor invited him to his office, wanting to reward him with a prize. Epstein asked the Governor to give the prize in the form of the organization of a national swimming competition. The Governor agreed. A location was determined near the old port. Two rafts were placed at a distance of 100 meters from each other. Spectator galleries, also made of rafts, were arranged and the entire place was decorated with flags. The prizes, donated by the Governor, were laid out on a table. Thousands of spectators came to watch the competition, in which, in addition to Maccabi Haifa swimmers, swimmers participated from the "German Sports Club," the "White Star" Club, the "Carmel" Arab youth "Opera Cardinal Firerri" Club, which was affiliated with the Italian School, as well as the British Water Sports Club.

In the years 1926, 1928 and 1930, the British Club, headed by Governor Kitroch, organized swimming competitions with a rotating sports cup. Maccabi Haifa won most of the prizes until 1930 (Alex Epstein won three First Place positions).¹¹

Most of Haifa's residents volunteered to help in organizing the 1st Maccabiah Games. Organizing and Executive Committees were established. Adv. Nahum Heth (President of Maccabi Haifa) headed the Organizing Committee, and Meir Mart (a physical education teacher in the Hebrew Reali School) headed the Technical Committee. But the individual who made the most significant mark was Mordechai Yampolksi, Chairman of Maccabi's Swimming Department. Yampolksi worked as a surveyor in Haifa Port at the time. He succeeded, with the help of a group of volunteers, to build a "pool" in the new port: he arranged the area by placing rafts in deep water, bordering them with buoys, and erecting a 10-meter diving board and a 2,000-seat balcony for spectators.

After the competitions, Yampolksi, who was responsible for the construction of the pool, was invited to Nahum Teicher, Haifa Port's engineer (a member of "Hapoel" Haifa), who gave him two weeks' additional vacation in appreciation for the tremendous efforts he had made in preparing and installing the pool.¹²

Fifty-seven swimmers from seven countries participated in the swimming competitions. Czechoslovakia won First Place in the men's competition with 136 points, and Austria won First Place in the women's competition with 115 points. Paul Steiner from Czechoslovakia was chosen as the Best Male Swimmer, winning three gold medals and setting a record in the freestyle competition with 1.008 minutes. Fritzi Levy (the Austrian champion) was chosen as the Best Female Swimmer – she also won three gold medals – 100 m freestyle, 300 meter freestyle and 4x100 meter freestyle relay.

The 3-meter diving competitions were also open to non-Jews, and Abu Dumas from Egypt won the gold medal with 87.74 points.

Poland won First Place in the water polo competitions, Czechoslovakia, Second Place, Austria, Third Place, and the Land of Israel, Fourth Place (last). The Closing Ceremony and medal awarding ceremony of the 1st Maccabiah took place in the Windsor Hotel in the German Colony.¹³

The Maccabiah Games had barely ended in the spring of 1932, with the participation of about 650 athletes from 19 countries from four continents, and the Organizing Committee members were not resting on their laurels; they were already starting to organize the 2nd Maccabiah, which was scheduled for the year 1935.

The only criticism directed towards the organizers was the salt water of the Mediterranean Sea! European athletes were used to swimming in fresh water, but the swimmers at the time nevertheless made excellent achievements. When the 1st Maccabiah Games ended (they had actually only begun), eyes were already looking ahead to future Maccabiah Games.

The water celebration of the 1st Maccabiah was a resounding success, and as a result, Haifa became the swimming center of the Land of Israel.

“Hapoel,” in accordance with its beliefs, developed popular sports for the masses in particular water sports. It set up a naval company and an athletic rowing department, from which the first Hebrew shipping company grew. Maccabi made advancements in terms of swimming and took on George Flesh, a senior water polo player from the Hakoah of Vienna Club in 1933, and other outstanding swimmers. The team became the unbeatable champion of the Land of Israel during the 1930s and ‘40s.¹⁴

After the new port was built in Haifa, it was impossible to hold swimming competitions there. However, a request was submitted to hold swimming competitions in an Olympic pool in compliance with international standards. It was therefore decided to build an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Thanks to private investors, a pool complying with international standards was built in a neighborhood next to the sea: it was 50 meters long and 18 meters wide, had a 10-meter diving board and balconies on each side to accommodate 2,500 spectators. Changing rooms and an athletes club were built next to the pool in the famous Bat Galim casino.

The majority of residents, who had only recently arrived in Haifa, saw great importance in contributing and volunteer work, despite their daily difficulties and the lack of proper budgets. Nevertheless, heads of sports activities in the settlement decided to assess the overall situation to determine if the Maccabiah Games should be the essence of their work, or if emphasis should be placed on the periods in between the Maccabiah Games. Preparations for the Maccabiah Games took up so much time and barely dealt with ongoing sports activities in the country. For example, the

process of building a pool and filling it with water was completed only a few hours before the Maccabiah opened.¹⁵

Despite their fatigue, the residents of Haifa, the majority of whom could not yet speak Hebrew, warmly greeted the athletes from abroad and graciously welcomed the guests, hosting them in their homes and treating them like family.

The fencing competitions were moved to Haifa, in addition to the heavy athletics and swimming competitions. This time, the swimming competitions were held for three days (April 8-10, 1935). One hundred and forty athletes from 11 countries participated in the competitions. Austria won First Place in the overalls (women and men) with 196 points, Czechoslovakia, Second Place (127 points), the United States, Third Place (75 points) and the Land of Israel, Fourth Place (67 points).

Sailing: Ten athletes from two countries participated in the sailing competitions. Israel won First Place, Germany, Second Place.

Diving:

Men:	10-meter free	First Place	Y. Billing	Land of Israel
	10-meter artistic	First Place	N. Balash	Czechoslovakia
Women:	10-meter free	First Place	M. Lipson	United States
	10-meter artistic	First Place	M. Modran	Austria

Water Polo:

First Place	Czechoslovakia
Second Place	Austria
Third Place	Land of Israel

Despite the experience that had accumulated in organizing the Maccabiah Games and the considerable praise afforded to the hosts for their devoted treatment of the guests, Israeli athletes still were less talented than the athletes who came from abroad.¹⁶

However, the year 1935 will be remembered in the history of the settlement as a serious turning point in the lives of sports and culture in the city. Several weeks after the end of the Maccabiah, the “Hapoel” Games were held. As result of both these events, hundreds of athletes took part (1,350 athletes from 21 countries had participated in the Maccabiah). Many remained in Haifa. The most exciting event was when the entire delegation from Bulgaria, which had participated in the 2nd

Maccabiah, stayed behind in Israel. This delegation, comprised of 350 individuals, included a wind orchestra that had received high acclaim during their performances in the parades and the various events. At the end of the Maccabiah as the flags were being lowered, all the orchestra's instruments were packed up and sent back to Bulgaria. The musicians – along with the other delegation members – stayed behind in Israel.¹⁷

As a result of the Maccabiah Games, many of the best athletes stayed behind in Israel and joined Maccabi Haifa: Ernest Naigler, swimming coach of the Hakoah of Vienna Club (1933), George Flesh, a water polo player of Hakoah of Vienna Club (1933), Shlomo Hirschberg (Tinshemet, 1935), who was the settlement's rowing champion for many years. The following individuals joined "Hapoel": Adolph (Dolek) Umschweif, an outstanding multi-talented athlete (1935), Shmuel Bialik, a superb athlete (1935), Max Kalpus (Galpaz), an outstanding swimmer and water polo player from the Hakoah of Vienna Club (1935). The contribution of these six athletes was very significant, primarily off the sports field; they promoted sports and physical education activities for many years in the Land of Israel in general, and in Haifa in particular.

When the 2nd Maccabiah Games ended, the fears regarding the continuation of the Games were allayed. Everyone was convinced that this blessed activity – the Maccabiah – would continue. Even after the 2nd Maccabiah, lessons were learned from its organization and implementation, and all of the mistakes were recorded in order to ensure that they would not be repeated. No one ever thought for a minute that the 2nd Maccabiah would be the last one in the Land of Israel.

The 3rd Maccabiah was held in the State of Israel in 1950. The management of the Maccabi Histadrut – General Federation of Labor, in its meeting held in Warsaw on January 2, 1936, decided to hold the 3rd Maccabiah in the spring of 1938. Of course, a delegation from Israel was planned to participate for the first time in the 1940 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan (Israel participated for the first time in the Olympic Games in 1952 in Helsinki, Finland). But, suddenly in 1937, one year before the opening of the 3rd Maccabiah, preparations were stopped and it was decided to postpone the Maccabiah to a later, undetermined date. The Arab uprising that started in 1936 and continued until 1939 and the winds of war that were blowing over from Europe caused the British government to prohibit holding the Maccabiah Games in the year 1938.¹⁸

Up until the beginning of the 1940s, Haifa's built-up area was shaped by the historic and political events that caused a change in its position: the Carmel's unique topography; its broad and diverse economic base; the contribution of various sectors in building and developing the city – Arabs, Templars, British and Jews; its being a city absorbing new immigrants; and finally its central role as the first city of northern Israel.

These factors brought on the creation of a special urban structure in the Carmel city, which rendered it its special character in Israel.

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 - a. Yediot Bulletin of Maccabi No. 3 (File –1/4/8)
 - b. Decision made in the "Hapoel" Workers' Sports Organization's meeting on 9-10/5/1930 (File – 1.9/3).
 - c. From the presidential meeting of the Land of Israel Maccabi Organization (File – 1.111/1).
 - d. Protocol of a meeting between a representative of the Histadrut – General Federation of Labor and a representative of the World Maccabi Organization (File – 1.9/3).
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