

The Blue Plaque

David Ben Gurion

Nick Rennison

Born in Plonsk in 1886 in what is today Poland and was then part of the Russian Empire, Ben Gurion's original name was David Grün. Surrounded by prejudice and anti-semitism he was, from an early age, a committed Zionist and an ardent socialist.

In 1906, at the age of twenty, he moved to Palestine where he adopted the Hebrew version of his name, Ben Gurion, and worked initially as a journalist. His commitment to the Zionist cause remained firm. He wrote in a letter to his father that, 'settling the land is the only real Zionism; everything else is merely self-deception, empty verbiage and no more than a pastime'.

Palestine, under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, was not a safe place for a man of his views. He was expelled from the region in 1915 and settled in New York for a number of years, only returning to Palestine after the First World War when the land had come under the rule of the British.

For the next thirty years Ben Gurion was at the forefront of political Zionism. During a period when Zionist labour movements were of central importance to the cause, Ben Gurion was Secretary-General of the General Federation of Labour. From 1935 to 1948, he was also Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive which worked to orchestrate the often illegal immigration to Palestine of tens of thousands of European Jews.

When the state of Israel was created in 1948, the politically experienced Ben Gurion was the clear choice for prime minister. He served two terms in the office, from 1948 to 1953 and from 1955 to 1963, and was responsible for overseeing the creation of many of the new state's political and social institutions.

During his period out of office Ben Gurion had announced his intention of settling on a kibbutz and, after his retirement from politics at the age of eighty four, he finally took the opportunity to do so. He died there three years later.



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