

Rehovot was founded in 5650 (1890) on the southern coastal plain by the 'Menucha ve-Nachala' Society from Warsaw, which intended to establish, using the society's funds, an independent settlement that would not be dependent on the goodwill of the Baron's administration. At that time, Yehoshua Hankin succeeded in acquiring more than 10'000 dunams of 'Khirbat Doran' (identified with 'Doran', an active Jewish settlement during the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods which was renowned for its peach cultivation; archaeological finds also indicate the presence of vineyards there).

Six thousand dunams were sold to the Menucha ve-Nachala Association; the remainder to 'private individuals'. In the summer of 1890, 31 men settled in the place henceforth known as Rehovot.

The name Rehovot was adopted following a suggestion by Israel Belkind, based on the verse: 'For now the Lord has made room for us, and we have borne fruit in the land' (Genesis 26:22).

Vineyards were planted as early as the first year. By 1981, some 150'000 vines and thousands of almond, fig and olive trees had been planted. Jewish labourers, drawn to the independent settlement, worked alongside Arab labourers on the plantations.

Rehovot initially suffered from a severe housing shortage. The granting of building permits was delayed, and it was not until 1892, after a number of houses had been built without a permit, that the much-needed permits were obtained. Furthermore, the settlement was accompanied by clashes with the Arabs of Zarnuga and the Bedouins over grazing rights and land cultivation.

In the early years, Rehovot underwent a continuous process of expansion and growth, thanks to successful fundraising which was used for both expenses and bribes. An energetic public committee operated in the colony; initially, it comprised landowners, but from 1907 it also included those who paid taxes, and from 1921 women were granted the right to vote. This committee was responsible for the physical planning of the colony, medical services, the running of the school, and so on.

Ya'akov Street was the first street in Rehovot and was named after Ya'akov Broida, head of the 'Menucha ve-Nachala' association. On this street, at the top of the hill, next to the beautiful Dondikov House, stood the colony's bell for 40 years, which served as a 'clock' for a variety of activities.

Next to the bell stood a small wooden hut intended for the guards, through which the post arriving from Jaffa was distributed every evening. Naturally, this spot served as a meeting place and a place of recreation for young people waiting for the post.

Rehovot managed to maintain its independence whilst, economically speaking, relying on the Baron's generosity. The winery in Rishon LeZion purchased the grape harvest at a subsidised price, making vine cultivation profitable. In 1904, the first citrus orchard was planted, covering an area of 150 dunams (by Zalman Minkov on his own land); this marked the beginning of the development of the citrus industry, which became synonymous with Rehovot and earned it the nickname 'the City of Citrus'.

Despite the daily hardships, there was great enthusiasm amongst the settlers and labourers, as expressed in songs such as 'Hushu, Achim, Hushu' and 'Yah Halili Yah Amali', which were composed in Rehovot at that time.

In 1907, immigrants from northern Yemen joined the colony. Immigrants from further caravans from Yemen, mainly from Za'ada and Hudan, mostly joined their predecessors in Rehovot. The immigrants from Yemen faced many difficulties in settling in: the farmers did not speak Hebrew;

working the land was unfamiliar to them; wages were low; the Arab labourers, fearing competition, harassed them; the farmers treated them with contempt; and their accommodation consisted of huts in the woods during the summer and barns, stables and chicken coops during the winter.

The Yemenites' rapid mastery of all types of farm work led to a change in attitude. Land was purchased for them – one dunam per family – and they built their own homes: initially huts and mud-brick structures, and later from kurkar stones quarried on site and bound with honey. Thus was founded the Yemenite Quarter (Kafra, Shabazi and Shabtai Streets), followed by Sha'arim, which originally comprised small subsidiary farms and went on to become the largest Yemenite neighbourhood in the country (alongside Kfar Marmorek).

During the Second Aliyah, Rehovot expanded, with new houses and streets added. Most of the houses were built in the style of the original dwellings, with the exception of the clay houses in the Yemenite Quarter and the grand houses on Menucha ve-Nachla Street.

The northern section of Menucha ve-Nachla Street is therefore known as 'Millionaires' Street'. Three houses belonging to the colony's former wealthy residents still stand there – the house of Ephraim Zaks, which was used for receptions and events (Ephraim Zaks himself lent the colony money to install a water supply system for the houses, as well as funds for the land in Sha'arim);

the house of Yaakov Broida, head of the Menucha ve-Nachala Association (with his funds, a bathhouse, a mikveh, a Talmud Torah and the Great Synagogue), where the poet Rachel lived for a time; and the Slutsk House (belonging to an Australian Jew who lived half the year in Israel and half abroad), which today houses the administration of the Amos De-Shalit High School.

After the First World War, the citrus industry began to play a significant role in the colony's economy, and citrus trees were planted across vast areas of the colony. In 1920, the Rehovot railway station was established, and mechanical packing houses were built nearby; Rehovot became the country's largest centre for packing citrus fruit and shipping it to ports. All of this contributed to Rehovot being dubbed the 'City of Citrus'.

On the eve of the Second World War, there were nine packing houses operating in Rehovot, and 40 per cent of citrus shipments abroad were dispatched from its railway station. In the 1950s, the 'Citrus Festival' was celebrated annually.

Writers and poets lived and worked in the Rehovot colony, describing the colony and its people in their works. Among them were Moshe Smilansky, David Shimon, Yehoshua, Nahum Gutman, Binyamin Tamuz, S. Yizhar and others. In addition to these, scientists lived in the colony who authored important research books.

In 1932, the Agricultural Experiment Station was moved from Tel Aviv to Rehovot. Thirty years later, the station became the Faculty of Agriculture of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In 1934, Dr Chaim Weizmann founded the Daniel Ziv Institute in Rehovot, which later became the Weizmann Institute of Science. Dr Chaim Weizmann, the first President of the State of Israel, who was also a world-renowned scientist, built his home there. The house was designed by the architect Arik Mendelssohn in 1937 and was known as 'the President's House'. The garden surrounding the house contains the graves of Vera and Chaim Weizmann. In 1978, the building was converted into a museum.

In 1942, the Faculty of Agriculture of the Hebrew University was established, and in 1970, the School of Nutritional Sciences. In 1949, the Weizmann Institute of Science was founded in

Rehovot, and in 1963 the Centre for Settlement Research was established. In addition to these, the city is home to the Institute for Biological Control of Citrus Pests and the Israeli Wine Institute. All of these have earned Rehovot the title of 'City of Science'.

Citrus, science and the arts – these are the three defining characteristics of the settlement, which is why the coat of arms of the city of Rehovot features a citrus fruit, a microscope and a book.

Rehovot was granted city status in 1950, when its population reached 18'000. The city serves as a regional centre for government and public services.

The history of Rehovot has been updated using the Rehovot History Archive, courtesy of Dr Amiad Barzner, a historian and long-standing volunteer at the archive, and the families of the founders.

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