

The history of the Lachish region occupies a significant part of the history of the Land of Israel and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Joshua conquered the region from the kings of Lachish and Eglon. To the west, the area was held by the Cherethites (the Philistines) throughout the periods of the Judges, the Prophets and the Kings. It was in this region that David defeated Goliath in battle.

Rehoboam, the first king of Judah, fortified the region's cities – Gath, Mareshah and Lachish – to defend Jerusalem from the south-west. King Amaziah fell near the new settlement that bears his name. Sennacherib visited the area during a war, and Nebuchadnezzar laid waste to the region along with the entire Kingdom of Judah. After the destruction, nomads and shepherds settled in the area.

The Crusaders also left their mark during the Crusades, and the Ottomans conquered the region in the 16th century. The wide plains attracted Bedouin shepherds and Arab farmers. Zionist settlement kibbutzim also took root in the region in the 1940s, and a Hebrew plough tilled its soil in the fields of Gal'on, Kadima, Negba, Yad Mordechai, Gvaram, Nitzanim and Gat.

During the War of Independence, the region witnessed fierce battles – in Operation Yoav, the Israeli army encircled the Egyptian forces in the notorious Fallujah Pocket. The completion of the conquest of the Negev and the armistice agreements marked the transfer of the entire region to Israeli sovereignty. Some six years later, the region's capital – the city of Kiryat Gat – was established.

The capital of Lachish: David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister, tasked Aryeh (Luba) Eliav with establishing a regional town between the Gaza Plain and Mount Hebron, as part of a policy to increase the Jewish settlement in the northern Negev. Eliav set up a team of experts who swiftly drew up urban plans for the establishment of an urban centre in the heart of the agricultural region.

By September 1955, the first foundation stone had already been laid, and in January 1956 the first residents arrived – 18 immigrant families from Morocco, brought directly from the ship. The urban centre was intended to provide the region's residents with public administration, education and cultural services.

This rapid development served as an economic catalyst, and the new town – which had been planned as a town for some 4000 people – already had a population of over 10000 by 1961. From a small town where employment centred on the collection and processing of agricultural produce, Kiryat Gat transformed into a vibrant industrial city.

The 'Polgat' textile conglomerate became an integral part of the city's pulse and the lives of thousands of its residents. The town grew into a major city in Israel, and its geographical location also convinced 'Intel' – the global manufacturer of computer chips – to establish a bustling and dynamic industrial complex there.

Today, dozens of international high-tech firms operate in Kiryat Gat; multinational companies have set up shop here, and even the Americans have decided to establish a command centre within the city limits. The city welcomes visitors from all over the world and is developing at a rapid pace. Little by little, it is growing – a pioneer of 'roof agreements' in Israel – with commercial complexes, innovative parks and communities from all over the world arriving to start new, high-quality lives in the city of Kiryat Gat.

Kiryat Gat is an inspiring melting pot of Israel's diverse communities and a prime example of successful absorption of new immigrants and Zionism without quotation marks!