

Episode 6: Palestine: A Prehistory

Guest: Professor Simon Fuchs – Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Hosts: Alexandria & Efe

Bio: Professor Simon Fuchs is a historian specializing in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. He earned his PhD at Princeton University in 2015. He has held positions at the University of Cambridge and the University of Freiburg, and is currently an Associate Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is also a member of the German Young Academy. A scholar specializing in the intellectual history of Islam, Fuchs' research bridges the Islamic scholarly traditions of South Asia and the Middle East. His work draws on materials in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. He is currently working on a global history of the Iranian Revolution 1978-1979.

In this episode: This episode explores the long pre-history of Palestine, tracing the region's earliest human settlements and archaeological evidence, as well as genetic studies linking ancient populations with contemporary groups. Professor Fuchs also provides a first overview of later chapters of history from the emergence of Zionism until the foundation of the State of Israel, highlighting early stages of the conflict. Topics include the continuity of Jewish life after the Roman expulsion, the origins of the term "Palestine," historical interactions among local groups, the impact of monotheistic religions, the rule of successive empires, Ottoman administration, the Balfour Declaration, British mandate policies, and the contested debates around the settler colonial paradigm. This episode provides listeners with a foundational understanding of the historical, cultural, and political developments that shaped the region and preceded the conflict.

Links:

Prof. Dr. Simon Fuchs: <https://www.simonwolfgangfuchs.com/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025) / <https://simonwolfgangfuchs.huji.ac.il/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Fuchs, Simon Wolfgang. In a Pure Muslim Land: Shi'ism between Pakistan and the Middle East. University of North Carolina Press, 2019. <https://simonwolfgangfuchs.huji.ac.il/publications/pure-muslim-land> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Please also check out our other episodes to explore multiple perspectives.

On Canaanites and archeogenetics: Gudrun Krämer

On Palestinian identity and life during the Ottoman time and the British Mandate: Awad Halabi, Michael Brenner, Victor Kattan, Derek Penslar, Muriel Asseburg, Gudrun Krämer

On the history of Zionism: Michael Brenner, Awad Halabi, Victor Kattan, Oren Kessler, Derek Penslar, Anita Haviv

Dedication:

We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal's wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh's mother and siblings, to Mai's and Sima's family, to her mother Bushra.

To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.

Disclaimer:

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the

comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.