

WHAT IS PALESTINE, AND WHOSE IS IT?

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What is Palestine, and who is a Palestinian? Whose land is it, and who is invading whom?

Let's go back about 3,500 years and see how it all began.

About 1,500 BC God gave to the Jews the area which, much later, would be known as Palestine. The Promised Land, then called Canaan, was populated by 7 pagan nations who were conquered and driven out as the Jews, led by God, settled the land. Those pagan Canaanite nations the Israelites conquered and displaced no longer exist; they are today simply extinct-- in every sense of the word. The Jews lived in the land for the next 900 years.

By about 600 BC most of the Jews had been carried off into captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians. About 500 BC the Jews returned to their Promised Land, and were controlled by Persia, and then Greece, until the area was conquered by the Romans.

In 63 BC the Promised Land of the Jews became a Roman colony, and they called the area "Palestine" (Palestina). The name has stuck. The Romans derived the name from the people called "Philistines," who then lived along the coast of Israel's Promised Land. Under the Romans, "Palestine" was a geographic area that they ruled; it was a region, not a culture.

Are today's Palestinians descended from the ancient Philistines? Definitely not.

The people now calling themselves Palestinians cannot claim any descent from the Philistines, neither genetic nor cultural, for the real Philistines were not Arabs--they were Phoenicians. The Phoenicians, a Semitic people, migrated into the coastal area from the north and east. Being a seafaring people, they settled only a narrow strip along the Mediterranean coast, strategically located on the trade routes between Egypt and Asia. The area known in the Old Testament period as Philistia is today called the Gaza Strip (for ancient Gaza, one of the principal Philistine cities, which still exists there). The Phoenicians also settled the kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon, farther north on the coast; these were also strategic coastal centers of shipping and trade. The ancient Philistines fought, periodically, with the Israelites around them; prominent among their Israelite enemies were Sampson and David. The Philistines no longer exist.

Jewish Revolt and Banishment. Following Jewish revolts against Rome in the 1st Century AD, many Jews were driven from Palestine and scattered over the Old World in a great dispersion (diaspora). To spite the Jews, the Romans changed the name of Jerusalem (to Aelia Capitolina), and Jews who remained in Palestine were forbidden to enter their ancient capitol on pain of death. By the end of the 2nd Century the Roman colony of Palestine included only a scattering of Jews, along with Samaritans and Arabs; much of the area was a wasteland. This situation continued until the final collapse of the Roman Empire in the early 7th Century.

During the **Middle Ages**, the area was controlled alternately by Christian Crusaders and Muslims. **Muslim Conquest:** In the middle of the 7th Century, Muslims led by Mohammed invaded from Arabia and controlled the area for the next 400 years.

Conquest by the Ottoman Turks. In 1516 the area was conquered by the Ottoman Turks (Muslim, but not Arab), and they held it for 400 years.

During **World War I**, the British, under General Allenby, defeated the Turks and assumed control of the area, calling the entire area by its Roman name, Palestine.

In **1917 the Balfour Declaration**, acknowledging the Biblical mandate, established Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people. Although founded on Scripture (Exodus and Joshua), this was a political move by the British to court Jewish support during the war. Following WW I, the League of Nations gave the British permanent control of Palestine (along with Egypt and Iraq) as a British protectorate, and this arrangement continued until after WW II. The area of the Jewish homeland given by the British included the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, land on both sides of the Jordan River, and the part of Syria known as the Golan Heights. The entire area was assigned to the Jews, including Transjordan (which is now the Kingdom of Jordan). Thus the Jewish homeland of 1917 was essentially the original area - the Promised Land -- given to the Israelites by God in 1500 BC.

In **1922, the League of Nations** reduced the size of Palestine, making the area east of the Jordan River a separate protectorate, still under Britain; this region was called Transjordan. The British ruled this desert area through Arab tribal sheiks.

In **1923**, the League finalized the recognition of Palestine as the Jewish homeland, and Britain began to allow immigration of European Jews into Palestine. The British encouraged representative government, and a parliamentary government was set up, protecting the rights of both Jews and the Arabs who were living there; however, the Arabs rejected both the concept of representative government, and a Jewish homeland, and intermittent conflict began.

In **1939**, in an effort to placate the Arabs, the British enacted restrictions on Jewish immigration, to last 5 years. This **abrupt policy change was published as a "white paper" by the government of Neville Chamberlain, the great appeaser; it essentially gutted the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and provided for a complete halt to Jewish immigration at the end of the 5 years. At the same time, Chamberlain was also appeasing Hitler, trying to buy "peace in our time"; six months after issuing his white paper on Palestine, WW II had begun, and Chamberlain was out of office in disgrace. During those war years the British turned away many Jews fleeing Hitler's "final solution," and found themselves increasingly unpopular with both Arabs and Jews.**

The United Nations (UN) Enters the Picture. Following the close of WW II, the United Nations entered the picture and overrode both the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations mandate. The UN carved up Palestine, giving most of it to Arabs, with Jerusalem in the midst of Arab territory, but under UN control.

In 1947, the UN approved nationhood for the bizarre sliver of land left to the Jews. The Jews accepted the plan, but the Arabs rejected it, and conflict began afresh.

In 1948, under the UN mandate, tiny Israel declared itself an independent nation and the last of the British withdrew to the coast; the next day the surrounding Arab nations attacked. When the war ended in 1949 Egypt held the Sinai and Gaza, Jordan held the "West Bank" and Syria held Golan; Israel held the rest.

In 1949, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which had never before existed, was created by the UN out of whole cloth, from what had been the British protectorate of Transjordan. Its boundaries are artificial, and are still disputed by its Arab neighbors. Having been given what is now called the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), and the eastern half of Jerusalem, the Jordanians drove all Jews from that area and destroyed

their synagogues.

In **1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** was organized in Cairo; one of its 3 stated purposes is the destruction of Israel as a nation and the killing of all Jews there. In spite of occasional public claims to want only a peaceful settlement, its stated purposes remain the same, and the terrorist killing has continued.

In 1967, tiny Israel was again attacked by the surrounding Arab nations and, against all odds, conquered them all. At the end of that **Six Day War**, Israel had recaptured Sinai, Gaza, the "West Bank" (Judea and Samaria) and the Golan Heights above Galilee.

War Between Jordan and the PLO. In 1970-71 the PLO, operating from east of the Jordan River, fought with the Jordanian army for control of the immediate Transjordan, intending to make it a "Palestinian homeland." Jordan said, in effect, "Never," and attacked the PLO. Although the PLO terrorists were supported by Syrian tanks, they were defeated by their Jordanian brothers, and driven from Jordan. With Syrian support, the PLO settled in Lebanon.

The PLO in Israel. More recent negotiations have seen the PLO headquarters established in Israel and given increasing concessions as part of a futile "peace process." In this process, Israel has given away more and more of its land, in return for empty promises of peace, as the PLO demands more and more, and the terrorist killings continue. Today. The current situation should be common knowledge, in spite of the anti-Israel propaganda poured out daily by the establishment media.

Possession by Conquest. In order to understand all this, one last point needs to be made: it is the principle of possession by conquest. It is an historic, universal, principle of human affairs (and please don't talk to me about "international law"-there's no such thing except in the rhetoric of politicians and the longings of globalist dreamers) that territory obtained by conquest in war is the possession of the conqueror. If the "Gaza Strip," the "West Bank," and the Golan Heights aren't rightfully Israel's, then we must give Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California back to Mexico. In fact, Israel has a much more legitimate claim to the Arab-occupied land within its borders than the US has to its own states. Palestine was given to the Jews by God in 1,500 BC, by the British in 1917, and the League of Nations in 1923. In 1948-49 and 1967, they recaptured it by military conquest in wars they didn't start. No one gave us the territory of the USA; we just took

about two thirds of it, and bought the rest. Think on this.

Summary. In summary, in 1917 the British gave back to the Jews essentially what God had given them in 1500 BC. In 1922 the League of Nations took away the land east of the Jordan River. Under the British the Jews were willing to share the land with Arabs, under democratic, representative government; the Arabs said "No!" After WW II the UN took away almost all of the land and gave it to the Arabs; they still weren't happy, and attacked. The Arabs lost some of what they had been given. In 1967 they attacked again, and lost still more. They, of course, still want it all; but, we must ask ourselves, honestly, whose was it to start with, who has a legitimate right to it, and who is occupying whose territory? And even if Israel resumes control within its current borders, she still won't have the Sinai and Transjordan, given to Israel in 1,500 BC and again 1917.

Today, we are besieged with propaganda calling the Israelis invaders of their own land; we hear of "occupied territories," "the West Bank," and "the Gaza Strip" as if they were foreign countries. These terms, I believe, are illicit and their use deliberately deceptive;* I can find for them no basis in history, nor in current reality.

What is a Palestinian Today?

It is critically important to understand that what the anti-Israel voices call a "Palestinian" is simply an Arab. He originated in Arabia, descended from Ishmael, son of Abraham and Hagar; he speaks Arabic. There is no such thing as a Palestinian culture**, nor a Palestinian history, nor a Palestinian language. Yasser Arafat was not a "Palestinian"—he was an Egyptian*** terrorist. His terrorist Palestine Liberation Organization dates only from 1964.

If any group has a right to the name "Palestinian," it is the Jews. During WW II, the Jews fought alongside the British as the Palestinian Brigade. Prior to 1948 there was a Palestinian Symphony Orchestra (Jewish), and a Jewish newspaper called the Palestine Post. While the Jews were fighting for the Allies as the Palestinian Brigade, the Arab leaders were in Germany, making plans with the Nazis to kill all the Jews.

And, finally, it is my hope that this will make the current situation more clear and breathe the fresh air of truth into the prevailing propagandized confusion. This deadly situation is overcharged with emotional sloganeering and blind accusations; it cries out for

two commodities in extremely short supply these days: published facts, and common sense. That this may provide some of both, is my prayer. (Numerous, Incl. Encyclopedia Brittanica/World/Nobel Foundation)

*Some journalists are not deliberately deceptive; they simply believe the party line of establishment journalism. They are sincere, but sincerely wrong.

**Although Arabs have lived in Palestine for 2,000 years, some of them fine, peaceful people, and some of them Christians, there is no established Palestinian culture in the sense of that of the British, French, Germans, Egyptians, Chinese, Japanese, etc.; any claim to a separate culture and heritage, however tenuous, could date only from 1964 when the PLO was organized.

***Although Arafat had at times claimed to have been born in Jerusalem, and at other times in Gaza, he was actually born in Cairo in 1929, and was educated at Cairo University. In addition to being the only person ever to address the UN with a pistol on his hip, he was also unusual (if not unique) in that, although he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994, he had never submitted his requested biography to the Nobel Foundation. If there was nothing to hide, why hide it?

CHRISTIAN ARABS IN ISRAEL

In the long article above, in the interest of brevity, I dealt only with Zionist Jews and Muslim Arabs. There is a third group in the area, however, one that is never mentioned in news coverage or political statements. This group is that of the Arab Christians, and in the Arab-Israeli conflict, these Christians have been displaced and brutalized by both Jews and Muslims. Some of these Arab Christians can trace their local church histories back to apostolic origins in the 1st Century. On this subject, I recommend the book "Blood Brothers," by Elias Chacour with David Hazard, Chosen Books/Zondervan, Grand Rapids 1984.