

ISRAEL: THE EPICENTER OF GOD'S PLAN WEEK 3

Psalm 48:2 – the psalmist called Jerusalem “the joy of the whole earth.” But today Jerusalem is a global burden – in the world’s perspective. What is God’s perspective? AND, what is our response as believers in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus?

Zechariah 2:8 - *“For thus says the LORD of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.”*

God is protecting Israel because He has them positioned at the center of His plan. AND – woe to those who come against Israel!

Has God promised Israel the land?

Lev. 25:23 – *“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.”*

Gen. 17:8 – *“Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”*

Deut. 30:5 – *“Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.”*

Jer. 25:5 – *“Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.”*

“forever and ever” – min olam v’ad olam – which is used in explaining our eternal God’s eternal attributes. God has made a promise to give the land to the Jewish people FOREVER!

Ezekiel 47:13-48:29 lays out the land given to Israel during the Millennial Kingdom – a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Who was in the land first? The Canaanites. But, where are the Canaanites now? They disappeared approx. three millennia ago. No one knows if any of their descendants survived or, if they did, who they would be.

Abram entered the Land of Canaan – the Promised Land – promised to the Jewish people by God – circa 2000 BC.

Where are the people that the world is labeling “Palestinians” in this history? The use of the term *Palestine* in identification with the Land of Israel officially took root under the Roman Empire Hadrian when he drove the Jewish people out of Jerusalem and renamed the city of Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina, and renamed Israel, *Palestine*, in his attempt to wipe away all memory of the Jewish people and to give honor to their enemies, the Philistines. It is from the term "Philistine" that the name "Palestinian" has been taken.

Even though the Romans attempted to sever a connection between Palestine and the Jewish people, *Palestine* remained identified with Israel. In the first century and thereafter, Greek and Roman writers used the terms *Palestine* and *Palestinian* to refer to the Land of Israel and its Jewish inhabitants. Therefore, the name *Palestine* has more of an historical link with the land and people of Israel – the Jews:

The newspaper in the land was called the *Palestine Post* before it was known as the *Jerusalem Post*.

The philharmonic orchestra was known as the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra which then became the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Palestine Exploration fund was established in Great Britain to survey the land of the Jewish people!

Palestine never appears in the Qur'an, which refers to the area as simply "the holy land." Jerusalem is not mentioned in the Qur'an.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Arabs rejected the term *Palestinian* because it was thought to refer to the Jewish people. That was evident when the 1917 Balfour Declaration referred to the land of Palestine as the place for a "national home for the Jewish people."

When the Peel Commission under Great Britain proposed the partitioning of Palestine in 1936 – into an Arab state and into a Jewish state, a local Arab leader, Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, told the Commission, "There is no such country [as Palestine]! Palestine is a term the Zionist invented! There is no Palestine in the Bible. Palestine is alien to us; it is the Zionists who introduced it. Our country was for centuries part of Syria."

In 1946 when the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry met in Jerusalem, an Arab Historian, Professor Philip Hitti testified: "There is no such thing as Palestine in [Arab] history, absolutely not." He opposed the use of the name Palestine on area maps because it was associated in the mind of the average American and Englishman with the Jews.

In interviews with the Arab press in 1981 and 1984, the late King Hussein (grandson of King Abdullah of Jordan) stated, "The truth is that Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan." Yasser Arafat stated the same: "What you call Jordan is actually Palestine." Great Britain gave 78% of the land they had originally promised to the Jewish people for a Jewish homeland and created Transjordan for the Arabs.

Since the formation of the Palestinian Authority in 1993, the Israeli-Arabs adopted the name *Palestinians*. Since that time, the term has been used to refer exclusively to the Arab residents of the West Bank.

What is the origin of the modern Palestinians? The Palestinians of modern history surfaced in the late nineteenth century. In 1878, harsh conditions forced many groups to immigrate into Palestine, where work was available. According to historical surveys, these migrant workers, from which the Palestinians of today are descended, came from

many nationalities: Balkans, Greeks, Syrians, Latins, Egyptians, Turks, Armenians, Italians, Persians, Kurds, Germans, Afghans, Druzes, Sudanese, Lebanese. . . and many others.”

Migrant workers were imported by the Ottomans who had conquered the land (since 1919) and by the British authorities.

Arab laborers were attracted by the relative boom, stimulated by Jewish immigration which expanded labor-intensive enterprises (construction, agriculture, etc.) – as the desert began to blossom like a rose (Eze. 36:6-11 - *“Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne the shame of the nations.”*”⁷ *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame.*”⁸ *But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.*”⁹ *For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.*”¹⁰ *I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.*”¹¹ *I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.”*)

Who are the Palestinian Refugees?

The Palestinians claim that the Jews forcibly exiled millions of native Palestinians from their homes in 1948 and in 1967. However, once the UN proposed the vote for partition in 1947, (Arab state and a Jewish state), the Arabs were bent on destroying all the Jewish settlements and began to attack them immediately. The Arab population did not want partition because they would then need to recognize the right for the Jewish people to exist. Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, said on the radio: “This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre.” By March 1948 over 1,200 Jews had been killed, half of them civilians, in Arab attacks.

From 1920, the Jews had refrained from terrorist attacks on Arab settlements, though the innumerable Arab attacks had sometimes provoked heavy-handed reprisals (Paul Johnson’s *History of the Jews*, p. 528).

When the fighting began in the winter of 1947-48, Deir Yassin, an Arab quarrying village of less than 1,000 people, made a non-aggression pact with a nearby Jerusalem suburb (Givat Shaul). But two Jewish settlements nearby were overrun and destroyed and the Jewish desire for revenge was strong. The Stern Gang (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) proposed to destroy Deir Yassin to teach the Arabs a lesson. Menachem Begin, leader of the Irgun (National Military Organization that operated between 1931 and 1948) agreed to the operation but ordered a loudspeaker van must be used to give the villagers a chance to surrender without bloodshed. The loudspeaker van fell into a ditch and was never used. The Arabs chose to fight and were actually stronger and better armed. The Irgun-Sternists had to send for a regular platoon with a heavy machine-gun and 2-inch

mortar, and it was these which ended Arab resistance. The fighting got out of control. An Israeli spy described what followed as a “disorganized massacre.”

The Arabs of Palestine left their homes in 1947-48 for a variety of reasons. According to UN figures, 656,000 Arab inhabitants fled from the land to avoid being killed in the fighting, and because they were ordered to or misled or panicked by Arab radio broadcasts. Arab sources of the time reported this exodus and criticized it as an abandonment of the Arab objective.

The Jaffa newspaper, *Ash Sha'ab*, reported on January 30, 1948, “The first of our fifth column consists of those who abandon their houses and businesses and go to live elsewhere. . . . At the first signs of trouble they take to their heels to escape sharing the burden of struggle.”

These retreats were also reported in another Jaffa newspaper, *As Sarih*, on March 30, 1948. The fleeing Arab population was excoriated for “bringing down disgrace on us all by abandoning the villages.”

Thousands of others left because they were heeding Arab leaders’ warnings to evacuate before the arrival of their advancing soldiers. According to the Jordanian newspaper *Filastin* (February 19, 1949), “The Arab States encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies.”

Some were expelled by Jewish troops, as would be expected in a war, but most simply fled to avoid being caught in the crossfire of battle.

In both Tiberias and Haifa, the Haganah (an underground military organization in the Yishuv [Jewish community in Palestine]) issued orders that none of the Arabs’ possessions should be touched and warned that anyone who violated the orders would be severely punished.

By the end of January 1948, the Arab exodus had grown to such numbers that the Palestine Arab Higher Committee asked neighboring Arab countries to seal off their borders to prevent further flight.

The Arab governments surrounding the new nation of Israel, with the assistance of the UN, kept the Arab refugees in camps, pending a reconquest of Palestine which never came.

The UN discussions on refugees had begun in the summer of 1948, before Israel had completed its military victory; consequently, the Arabs still believed they could win the war and allow the refugees to return triumphant. The Arab position was expressed by Emile Ghoury, the Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee: “It is inconceivable that the refugees should be sent back to their homes while they are occupied by the Jews, as the latter would hold them as hostages and maltreat them. The very proposal is an evasion of responsibility by those responsible. It will serve as a first step towards Arab recognition of the State of Israel and partition.”

[Jordan](#) was the only Arab country to welcome the Palestinians and grant them citizenship (to this day Jordan is the only Arab country where Palestinians *as a group* can become citizens

How important is it that Israel exists today?

- It proves God’s faithfulness – Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:18-20; Deut. 30:1-3; Isa. 62:7; Jer. 31:35-37; Eze. 36:24-27; Eze. 37. . . .
- It has to be in existence so that the prophecies re: its restoration will be fulfilled.

Jeremiah inseparably links the existence of the universe with the existence of God’s covenant relationship with the nation of Israel.

Jeremiah 31:35-37 – *“Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name): ‘If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.’ Thus says the LORD: ‘If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.’”*

Recommended Reading:

Exodus – Leon Uris

It Is No Dream – Elwood McQuaid (former Executive Director of Friends of Israel)

The Unholy War – Randall Price