

# The State of Israel

## AN APPRAISAL



# The State of Israel: An Appraisal

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# Foreword

In 2011, Dennis Wrigley, co-founder and leader of the Maranatha Community, identified five subjects of key importance to the Church: Secular Humanism, Islam, Persecution of Christians, The Occult & New Age, and Israel. Groups of people with experience and expertise were formed to consider each topic. These groups were each asked to produce a short statement to inform church members on their subject and advise on how the people of God might pray effectively in the light of their considerations.

The title chosen for the group considering the subject of Israel – The State of Israel – is a deliberate double meaning. The group was asked to review the existing data and produce a statement on the Christian attitude to Israel for use in the churches, taking into consideration the following points: Britain has a unique historical relationship with Israel going back to the Balfour Declaration in 1917; the Christian Church has deep Hebraic roots and thus has a special relationship with Israel; the Jewish people have always been vulnerable to the most appalling rejection and persecution instanced in the Holocaust and international anti-Semitism; today the tiny state of Israel is surrounded by rich and powerful Islamic states, many of which deny her right to exist; owing to the volatility of the region it is internationally recognised that Israel could be the sparking point for a major war which would inevitably involve all the major nations.

The State of Israel Spearhead Group met regularly for the next seven years. The group which initially came together consisted of several people representing a very wide spectrum of views. The group embarked upon a journey which became as much about the securing of good relationships as the writing of a document. The necessary starting point was that the unity of the group depended upon their being one in Christ, as members of His Body. True unity based on any other position would not be attainable in the consideration of this subject which, arguably, is the most divisive in the Church today. Sadly, despite the affirmation of oneness in Christ, two members of the group chose to leave before completion of the document. By then there had, thankfully, been considerable progress as all members of the group listened to one another with respect, debating, discussing and praying together with no compromise of their relationships or their personal views. The Israel Spearhead Group became, in consequence, a working demonstration that it is possible to hold in tension differing passionate beliefs and perspectives whilst affirming love for one another as Christians and maintaining a united, overarching allegiance to Christ with a deep desire for peace and justice. As part of the work of this group, a Private Consultation of around 30 people was held, in Manchester, in 2014. Contributors included Rev Stephen Sizer, Dr Howard Morgan, Rev David Elms, David Carter, two of the Evangelical Sisters of Mary, and members of the Spearhead Group.

This report considers in some depth the factors which have contributed to the current situation in the Middle East today and in particular the fragile and potentially volatile conditions in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Whilst every effort towards a political solution must continue, there is also need to address the spiritual dimension of what is happening. There is no other place in the world where the three major monotheistic religions converge and contend. With this recognition, it must surely fall to the worldwide Christian community to unite in praying for God's will to be done.

Over many years the Maranatha Community has been engaged in the healing of relationships and the building of bridges across the troubled communities of Northern Ireland. This experience has provided insights into the current situation in the Middle East, particularly for the Arab Israelis, Jews and Palestinians living in and around Israel. Dennis Wrigley, sadly, died before the completion of this report. Some of the reflections and prayers he wrote as a peacemaker in Northern Ireland are included at the beginning and the end of this document in the hope that they might also be of inspiration and help for all those concerned with the State of Israel.

Linda Stalley, Juan Fernandez-Arias, John Manwell  
Maranatha Community Co-Leaders

We invite you to consider the following reflection before reading this document.

## Resolving Conflict

"I am right  
they are wrong.  
I am good  
they are evil.  
I will stand strong  
and I will fight  
because truth  
is on my side.  
I will not change  
I will not surrender  
I will remember  
I will never forgive  
I do not want to understand  
I will not yield".

This is a lie  
that I am living  
which leads to dying  
which fails to see  
the roots of conflict  
are also in me.

This is a mask  
that I am wearing  
which hides my face  
which gives me  
false security  
which cuts me off from  
those I name as enemies  
and blinds me  
to their humanity.

Deep down  
within me  
pain brings resentment  
unease brings suspicion  
hurt brings hatred  
anger brings outrage  
bitterness brings violence.  
Can I admit that  
buried in me there is  
real anguish and sorrow,  
unfinished business,  
unforgiveness,  
unresolved conflict?

Am I ready  
to reject the lie  
and admit the truth  
and be set free?  
Will I forever  
be held by the  
chains of the past  
which prevent  
peace  
within me  
peace  
with the others  
peace with God?

# Introduction

There is probably no more divisive subject in the Western Church today than the attitude of the Church towards Israel. The group who came together to produce this report represents all views and has had to face all the issues in depth, rigorously testing all presupposed ideas.

Our hope is that we can place something in the hands of the Church which informs those who currently have no view, and provoke fresh insights among those who have already formed an opinion. Our experience in producing the document is that this is a subject of enormous complexity and, if the Church is to fulfil any useful role rather than merely contributing to one side or the other of the dispute, it must be one of bringing insight and a sense of opportunity to the situation. To do otherwise is merely to cement already entrenched opinions and to widen an already significant division within the Church. The challenge is to ask how to discern the mind of Christ, and how then to fulfil His vision for this issue. In such a scenario, it will be impossible to please everyone, and there will no doubt be many who have done much research of their own and come to a different view. We equally hope that you will not be frustrated if we appear not to go far enough in any particular direction.

## Defining the Issues

Part of the difficulty in presenting this subject is that many of its facets tend to become confused with one another. The major example is the way in which any proposed Biblical justification for Israel becomes tangled with arguments about security and justice. In this document, all the issues are separated and dealt with sequentially and distinctly. In this way, the various threads, which in themselves can be highly complex, are more easily explored.

The second problem in examining the Biblical position about Israel is that there is a tendency for those who care deeply about the subject to present their case in a passionate and exclusive way. This can tend to dissuade others, who hold the opposite view, from examining the situation for themselves. It may also dissuade others of no view from becoming involved. Equally, the use of scripture in advocating a position can unwittingly go beyond accurate exegesis. Without wishing to dampen convictions, we ask that the reader be willing to reconsider the situation with us, to assist the Church in making a reasoned and informed response.

We are aware of alternative theologies, which we have sought to acknowledge and to understand. We are also aware that many sincere Christians do not see the relevance of the subject, or shy away from its complexity, and therefore relegate it to the side-lines. We therefore seek to present a considered view that defines the parameters of the subject and its history, looking carefully also at its theology.

Furthermore, the conflict over the existence of the modern State of Israel, and its jurisdiction over the West Bank, has spiritual roots intermingled with the politics of the situation. Two world religions are in conflict over this land. Unless we are aware of this fact then politics will generally fail. This is explored in the Security and Justice section.

## An Outline of the Document

There are multiple layers to this subject and so in this document we attempt to explore the subject layer by layer. We begin by examining the roots of the modern State

of Israel, tracing the story through the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to the founding of the modern State and its early years, to the present day.

We then examine the Biblical promises surrounding Israel and the land according to the Old Testament, followed by an examination of the teaching concerning the Jews and the land in the New Testament. In this section, we attempt to define the theological boundaries of the Church vis-à-vis Israel, an exercise rarely attempted, but vital to a nuanced Christian understanding. We then briefly examine the post-first-century 'diaspora' period, including the way in which theology concerning Israel developed in the largely Gentile Church.

This leads us to look at the dilemma of security and justice in this present day, examining why it is so difficult to reach a consensus about justice in this situation, summarising some of the aspects of the conflict which remain unresolved. Finally, a short section on reconciliation hints at a way forward for the Church. Some prayer points are included to help individual Christians and the Church as a whole to pray and to contribute positively to dialogue.

In all of recorded history, no ethnic group has received more blessing from God than the Jews, and no ethnic group has experienced more of God's curses<sup>1</sup>; and their tale is not yet fully told. A wise Jew once said, "We are human, only more so!"

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<sup>1</sup> See Deuteronomy 30:1, which pertained specifically to the people of Israel.

# I. Modern Era

## The Early Modern Era

During their long time out of the Holy Land in the Church era, religious Jews came to believe that it would take the coming of their Messiah - whom they denied was Jesus of Nazareth - to lead them back and rebuild the Temple. The Reformation triggered wider change, however. In England, the Puritan movement took root in the 17th century. After the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell convened the 'Whitehall Conference' in 1655 to consider the possibility of Jewish residence in England. Cromwell was sympathetic, but the only firm conclusion was that there was no ban in English law, Edward I's expulsion of all Jews in 1290 being viewed as a one-off event unbacked by any Parliament. A few Jews were already living quietly in England by Cromwell's time. After he died, the restored Stuart monarchy confirmed his policy. Many English Puritans believed that the Holy Land was still reserved for Jews<sup>2</sup> and, with the Church of England gaining ecclesiastical monopoly following the Stuart restoration, this viewpoint flowed into its evangelical sector; then, after 1688, into the many chapels that sprang up as other protestant movements were permitted. By this time Britain was gaining its Empire, and ultimately the capability to act on the Zionist viewpoint.

With secularisation arising in the 18th century 'Enlightenment' movement, Jews in many Western European lands were invited to take their part in national life. Following this emancipation they proved highly influential, and have enriched most aspects of Western culture.<sup>3</sup>

In 1799 Napoleon invaded Syria (including Palestine) in a campaign from Egypt, and invited the Jews to live in the Holy Land in a protectorate of France.<sup>4</sup> His motivation was secular, for he planned to use the eastern Mediterranean as a base to dislodge the British from India. That plan had already been dealt a blow by Nelson's naval victory over the French in the Battle of the Nile, and the

Ottoman Turks soon forced Napoleon out of Syria and back to Egypt.

## The British Empire and the rise of Zionism

During the 19th century the desire to return to Palestine and for political self-determination had been growing among the Jews of Europe, in a movement known as Zionism. Its leader was Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), a secular Jew who in 1896 published a book, *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) advocating return, on the grounds that although Jews were tolerated in many places they were welcomed almost nowhere. Herzl organised World Zionist Congresses that were held every one or two years from 1897. By then Jews were moving systematically, albeit in small numbers, to Palestine, which was then part of Syria within the Ottoman (Turkish) empire. The Ottomans had ruled the area for nearly 400 years, and Islamic regimes had ruled it for much longer. During that time Palestine had undergone various upheavals. In particular, it had been invaded and administered by Egypt from 1831 to 1840, when many Egyptians settled and many local Arabs left to avoid high taxes and conscription into Egyptian armed forces. Palestine comprised about 1% of the Arab land area held by the Ottoman Empire.

One motivation for Zionism was Jewish history and identity, both conditioned by religion. From the Middle Ages the annual Passover commemoration ended with the phrase "next year in Jerusalem". Another motivation was persecution. The Zionist movement was strongest (and Judaism most distinctive) where Jewish communities were oppressed, in parts of Eastern Europe and Russia; significant pogroms had taken place in regions of Imperial Russia, corresponding to Ukraine and Belarus today, during 1881-4 and 1903-6. Those pogroms also triggered the migration to America of some two million Jews - at least one-quarter of world Jewry - until the USA limited all immigration in the first half of the 1920s. Where there was no persecution, European Jews typically deprecated the Zionist movement as undermining their hard-won citizenship of the nations they lived in. Conversely, a small number of fervent Zionists tacitly welcomed persecution as providing a boost to their cause. The Zionist movement of the 19th

<sup>2</sup> For the early history of this strand of Puritan thought, see *'Albion and Ariel'* by Douglas Culver (Peter Lang publishers, New York, 1995).

For its continuation and culmination, see Barbara Tuchman, *'Bible and Sword'* (New York University Press, 1956), ch. VII.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Pease, *'The Golden Age of Jewish Achievement'* (Deucalion Press, Sonoma, California, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *ibid.*, ch. IX.

century comprised Jews across the entire political spectrum.

Through a supportive chaplain at the British Embassy in Vienna, Herzl gained an audience with the German Kaiser, but Kaiser Wilhelm was not willing to disturb Germano-Turkish relations with the issue. Herzl then gained access through a prominent British Jew, Lord Rothschild, to the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. Herzl asked Chamberlain for land in the Sinai, adjacent to Palestine, since Egypt was effectively under British control as a result of British interest in the Suez Canal - gateway since 1869 to India and other British territories in the Far East. Chamberlain was sympathetic to Herzl's proposal but believed that it would damage Britain's relations in the Middle East. Britain offered instead, in 1903, part of Uganda and Kenya to Herzl. Britain regarded this area as under-populated by British settlers and could afford to ignore local objections; Britain presumably also hoped that Jews would be grateful proxies.<sup>5</sup> Herzl put the offer to the next Zionist Congress, held in Basel in August 1903. Some Jews argued that any homeland was better than none and that this was the first serious offer they had received; others held out for Palestine. Herzl, who felt the same tension acutely, died in 1904. The next Zionist Congress, in 1905, politely declined the British offer. Leadership of the Zionist movement fell to a research chemist, Chaim Weizmann, originally from eastern Europe, who was working in Britain; he provided vital assistance in British explosives manufacture during World War I.

## The Balfour Declaration

During the later 19th century Britain had been supportive of Turkey against Russia, which was Britain's great rival in central Asia. In World War I, however, Turkey allied itself with Germany against Britain and Russia. The Middle East was a major theatre of war, and it became clear that the Ottoman Empire would crumble. Zionists recognised an opportunity if Britain won, for Britain would wish to occupy Palestine as a buffer zone in order to protect its interests in the Suez Canal. The British were also aware that a pipeline from the oilfields of Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean would be an important strategic asset; this was built after the war,

and it terminated at Haifa. Britain also wanted diplomatic pretexts to keep the French, who had their own forces in the Middle East, out of Palestine. A motivation for occupying Palestine that did not appear purely selfish would suit the British, who invited Jewish leaders to make a proposal. Britain was further aware of the influential Jewish community (including financiers) inside its enemy, Germany, and its allies, the USA and Russia, the latter convulsed by revolution. Whatever the weightings of these factors, the 'Balfour Declaration' was finalised in Britain's War Cabinet on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1917 and sent in a letter signed by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour<sup>6</sup> and dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November to Lord Rothschild as British troops fought their way into Palestine. It stated that:<sup>7</sup> *"His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"*.

The extent to which evangelical Christianity motivated this declaration is unclear, but almost all of the members of Lloyd George's War Cabinet at the time had strong protestant (and, unusually, non-Anglican) backgrounds; this was the church sector where the Zionist view was strongest.

Britain had earlier encouraged the Arabs to rise up against their Ottoman overlords by stating that it was *"prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca"*. That was in a letter of 24<sup>th</sup> October 1915 from the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Henry McMahon, to Hussein bin Ali. Hussein was, under the Turks, the Sherif or ruler of the Hejaz, an area that includes the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina; he had proposed a wide Arab State in the Middle East. McMahon made one reservation: *"portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of*

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<sup>6</sup> Balfour was Prime Minister 1902-5, during which an Aliens Act was passed preventing Jews fleeing the pogroms from coming to Britain. The present story contains many ironies.

<sup>7</sup> The text was published a week later in 'The Times' newspaper (London, 9<sup>th</sup> November 1917).

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<sup>5</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *ibid.*, ch. XVI.

Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo... must... be excepted". McMahon restated what land he had referred to in a letter<sup>8</sup> to Sir John Shuckburgh of the British Colonial Office, indicating that he had made it clear to Hussein that Palestine was excluded from the future Arab kingdom: "My reasons for restricting myself to specific mention of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo... were (1) these were places to which the Arabs attached vital importance and (2) that there was no place I could think of at the time of sufficient importance for purposes of definition, further south of the above.<sup>9</sup> It was fully my intention to exclude Palestine as it was to exclude the more northern coastal tracts of Syria. I did not make use of the Jordan [river] to define the limits of the southern area because I thought it might possibly be considered desirable at some later stage of negotiations to endeavour to find some more suitable frontier line east of the Jordan...I have no recollection of ever having anything from the Sherif of Mecca... to make me suppose that he did not also understand Palestine to be excluded from independent Arabia". McMahon later repeated publicly<sup>10</sup> that he was confident Hussein understood what he had meant.

Years later, dissatisfied Arabs disputed whether the 'district' (*vilayet* in the Arabic part of the correspondence) of a town referred to the town and its immediate satellite area, or a larger district of which a town was regional capital.<sup>11</sup> As Damascus was the capital of Syria, which then included Palestine, the issue is whether McMahon had indeed reserved Palestine. The Ottoman understanding of *vilayet* is an entire administrative region, whereas the Arabic

understanding is the local suburban area. McMahon stated that he intended the Ottoman meaning. This assertion is also obvious from mention in the letter of the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra; Britain was not interested in these cities in themselves, but as centres in oil-rich Mesopotamia, a land which Britain also insisted on administering after the war. Whether Hussein - an Arab accustomed to dealing with the Ottomans - took McMahon's intended meaning can be inferred from subsequent events. If Hussein and his son Faisal believed that Palestine had been allocated to them then they would have complained bitterly against the Balfour Declaration two years later. Yet, far from complaining, they specifically excluded Palestine (and Lebanon) from Arab national aspirations at the main post-war Peace Conference held in Paris in 1919.<sup>12</sup> Clearly they understood that Palestine was to be reserved for British administration<sup>13</sup> (although not, perhaps, for Jewish self-rule). To assert that Palestine was not reserved by the British because of the ambiguity of *vilayet* is to repudiate Hussein and Faisal. None of their own people showed any sign of taking a different meaning from them. In sum, no promise of autonomous Arab rule in Palestine was ever made to Arab leaders by the British government or its authorised representatives.

During the war, Faisal and his brother Abdullah had organised the Arab insurrection in collaboration with the British army officer T.E. Lawrence 'of Arabia.' This had been particularly useful in tying down Ottoman forces, and Faisal's forces helped to capture Damascus at the end of September 1918, following which Syria declared loyalty to Hussein. Britain and France did not intend to quit the region, however, and in 1916 had made a secret treaty about their intended spheres of influence after the Ottoman Empire had collapsed, the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>14</sup> Under the Sykes-Picot agreement Arab rulers in many areas would be subject to French or British oversight; Palestine was reserved for further consideration. Russia had been told of this

<sup>8</sup> Dated 12<sup>th</sup> March 1922. This letter is reproduced in: 'Palestine: A Twice Promised Land? The British, the Arabs and Zionism' 1915-1920 by Isaiah Friedman (Transaction publishers, New Brunswick, NJ, USA, 2000), p. xl.

<sup>9</sup> The Holy Land is to the south of these towns but all parts of it are west of them and it was part of Syria at the time. Had McMahon added Jerusalem to his letter to Hussein then he would have been failing to reserve the land running east of Jerusalem to the Jordan River, which was obviously part of Palestine. McMahon even left matters open to reserve the fertile eastern bank of the Jordan River, as his letter explained. He specified the Hejaz railway (which runs north-south a few dozen miles east of the river) as a possible eastern border, as Weizmann had requested to Churchill, but this was not to be; see 'Churchill and the Jews' by Martin Gilbert (Simon and Schuster, London, 2007), pp. 48-50.

<sup>10</sup> Letter to 'The Times' (London, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1937).

<sup>11</sup> The question was raised in the book 'The Arab Awakening' (Hamish Hamilton publishers, London, 1938) by George Antonius, a Christian Arab. Antonius also traces the birth of Arab nationalism to the invasion of Syria (including Palestine) and parts of Arabia by Egypt in the 1830s.

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah Friedman, *ibid.*, p. xlviii.

<sup>13</sup> Lord Curzon briefly misunderstood this point, although not in dialogue with the Arabs. Curzon's confusion was caused by inconsistent memos written by Arnold Toynbee, later a historian but then a civil servant. This issue and the *vilayet* controversy are covered in detail by Friedman, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> In 1915 Britain had made a secret treaty with Russia to carve up the Ottoman empire. The failure of the Dardanelles campaign, then the revolution in Russia, rendered it obsolete before the war ended.

agreement, which came to light after the Bolsheviks, who won power in the Russian revolution of October 1917, found a copy among Russian State papers. They made it public less than a month after the Balfour Declaration, embarrassing Britain and France and causing uncertainty among the Arabs as to whether the British promise of Arab independence (outside Palestine) would be honoured in return for their insurrection against the Turks. The Arabs had a later date on the promise they had received through McMahon than was on the Sykes-Picot agreement. Britain and France revised their plans in the Anglo-French Declaration of 7<sup>th</sup> November 1918; they would now “*further and assist in the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia*”.

The Russian revolution also triggered the migration of many Jews from the ‘Pale’, the region to which they had been restricted in Imperial Russia, to Moscow and to other cities. The Pale comprised what is now the west of Russia, and a good deal of Eastern Europe. Under the atheist communist regime the religious persecution of the Jews ended. Many Jews initially welcomed and served the new regime.

## **Aftermath of World War I**

Following the end of hostilities, Palestine was run by a British OETA (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration) while international agreements were reached. Much British blood had been lost in clearing the Turks out of Arab lands, which the British regarded as justifying an influence in the region. Meanwhile the USA, whose president Woodrow Wilson had stated in one of his ‘fourteen points’ in January 1918 that “*the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured... an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development*”, sent representatives to the Middle East to gauge local attitudes. This was the King-Crane Commission. It found that Muslim Arabs were strongly in favour of full independence, wishing not to be under any form of colonial (or Jewish) rule. Christian Arabs were more divided about colonialism. Hussein and Faisal made statements welcoming Jewish migration to Palestine, regarding Jews as relatives of old who would help to develop the land with their expertise in modern technology. Faisal

and Weizmann forged an accord in 1919, which included a commitment to implement the Balfour Declaration.

In April 1920, Muslim religious leaders speaking at an annual festival in Jerusalem incited riots against Jews in which hundreds were injured and about ten people died. Desire to join the Arab kingdom recently proclaimed in Syria, to the north, was part of it. According to the British administration’s Chief Political Officer, the ringleaders had been encouraged by anti-Zionist British Army officers. For several hours British forces were withdrawn from policing Jerusalem; this withdrawal was criticised by the British ‘Palin’ Report into the incident. Had the Jews not foreseen trouble and organised themselves for self-defence, their fatalities would have been far greater.

At a conference held at San Remo in Italy later that month (April 1920), one of a series called to determine the shape of the post-war world, it was resolved that Britain should implement the Balfour Declaration. In July 1920 London enacted (ahead of any peace treaty with Turkey) a change from the OETA to civilian government and tactlessly sent a British Jew, Herbert Samuel, to be High Commissioner. In the British Cabinet, Samuel had promoted Zionism, but in Palestine he proved impartial; he even approved Haj Amin al-Husseini, a militant anti-Zionist who had been involved in stirring up the riots, as Mufti of Jerusalem. Haj Amin soon gained the presidency of the Supreme Muslim Council, the highest body in charge of Muslim community affairs in Palestine. He emphasised the anti-Jewish strands of Islam, a political and originally Arab creed which acted as a unifying factor for Middle Eastern peoples as Western powers decided their fates above their heads. Haj Amin later became friendly with leading Nazis; on Berlin radio during World War II he exhorted Arabs to “*rise as one man and... kill the Jews wherever you find them*” (on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1944).

## **The San Remo Conference**

The conference at San Remo was attended by the Prime Ministers of Britain, France and Italy and representatives from Japan, Belgium and Greece, with observers from the USA. In regard to the Middle East, it declared on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1920:

*“The High Contracting Parties agree to entrust, by application of the provisions of Article 22, the administration of Palestine, within such boundaries as may be determined by the Principal Allied Powers, to a Mandatory, to be selected by the said Powers. The Mandatory will be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 8, 1917, by the British Government, and adopted by the other Allied Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country...The terms of the mandates in respect of the above territories will be formulated by the Principal Allied Powers and submitted to the Council of the League of Nations for approval. [Then, in French:] The Mandatories chosen by the principal allied powers are: France for Syria, and Great Britain for Mesopotamia and Palestine”.*

This resolution resolved that the mandatory power, Britain, should enact the Balfour Declaration by arranging *“the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”*. It referred to Article 22 of the Covenant of the newly formed League of Nations, which stated that *“Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone”*. By invoking this Article, the signatories of San Remo indicated that they regarded it as applying to Palestine and its inhabitants. As in the Balfour Declaration, the civil and religious rights of the inhabitants of Palestine were to be upheld but no mention was made of their political rights. A French proposal to include the phrase ‘political rights’ was rejected after British assertions that it raised multiple issues more appropriate to the League of Nations, and that San Remo should simply echo the wording of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>15</sup>

As for Syria, France demanded after World War I that it be a French region of influence, and Britain quickly put the Transjordan area, east of the Jordan River, into its Mandate for Palestine, to limit this French-controlled region; see Map 2. This action caused some Jews to assert that Transjordan too was promised them by the British at San Remo, even though much of Transjordan has never been known as Palestine. Following San Remo, France demonstrated that it would use military force to control Syria if necessary, and Faisal reluctantly gave up hope of ruling it as an independent Arab nation. He became king of Iraq (Mesopotamia), overseen by Britain for its oil and its strategic position, until his death in 1933. The Arabian peninsula, meanwhile, became the desired independent Arab region, although it was not united politically. Faisal’s father Hussein was overthrown as ruler of the Hejaz in the mid-1920s by Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, who had grown after seizing power from the al-Rashid clan in Riyadh. He was of the ‘Wahhabite’ strain of Islam which can be described as militantly traditionalist, and he went on to found the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Britain maintained relations with him through a British Army officer (W.H.I. Shakespear) who was killed in battle with ibn Saud’s forces against the Ottoman-allied al-Rashidi in 1915, then through the diplomat Harry St John Philby (whose son later proved to be a double agent working for Russia inside MI6). London had to remind Philby that it preferred Hussein to ibn Saud, but after World War I the British were unwilling to intervene militarily in Arab tribal warfare in order to back up Hussein.

## **The League of Nations Mandate**

Two years later (24<sup>th</sup> July 1922) the then 51 members of the League of Nations passed unanimously a resolution similar to the San Remo draft. Turkey would eventually accept reduced borders, in return for an ending of the formal state of war between itself and the Allies, in the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923. Many of the League’s 51 member nations were not under British influence, including many Latin American countries, but there was no Arab voice, for independent Arab nations did not exist at that instant. The USA was not a member of the League because Woodrow Wilson, to his disappointment, had failed to persuade the legislature in Washington. The League’s resolution of 24<sup>th</sup> July 1922 opened by referring to Article 22 of

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<sup>15</sup> Transcripts of the San Remo discussions can be found at <http://www.israellegalfoundation.com/sanremominutes.html>

the League's Covenant. The preamble then included the statement: "*recognition has... been given to the historical connexion of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country*".

Article 2 of the resolution stated: "*The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home... and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of the inhabitants of Palestine, regardless of race and religion*".

Article 6 charged the Mandatory power (specified as Britain in the Mandate's preamble) with promoting Jewish migration to Palestine: "*The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage...close settlement by Jews on the land...*"

Article 7 stated: "*The Administration of Palestine shall be responsible for enacting a nationality law. There shall be included in this law provisions framed so as to facilitate the acquisition of Palestinian citizenship by Jews who take up their permanent residence in Palestine*".

Whereas the San Remo declaration was unilateral by the victorious powers, the League resolution was a formal assent to San Remo's content by many nations. Its effect was to rubber-stamp the Balfour Declaration by the League of Nations.

Article 25 of the July 1922 resolution stated that the Mandatory Power shall be entitled, subject to ratification by the League of Nations, to postpone or withhold provisions of the mandate in the Transjordan area. So as not to extend beyond Palestine the promise made to the Jews, Britain promptly invoked Article 25 in the 'Transjordan memorandum' passed by the League of Nations on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1922. Transjordan was ruled under the British Mandate by Hussein's son Abdullah, and from 1946 as the independent country of Jordan.

The Mandatory resolution is apparently vague about two issues: does 'national home' mean an independent nation state; and does 'in Palestine' mean 'in part of Palestine' or 'in all of Palestine'? Under the British Mandate all land west of the River Jordan was open to Jews, and under the Transjordan Memorandum Transjordan was not a region to which Jewish immigration would be facilitated. The inference is that all of Palestine was intended as the Jewish national home. Partitioning of Palestine itself would be floated by the British government in the 1930s in response to deteriorating relations between Arabs and Jews, and the idea was flatly rejected by the Arabs.

Did the Mandatory resolution imply a Jewish State? What counts is the public Mandatory resolution, not private British comments. The word 'state' was likely avoided in the Mandatory resolution because of its specificity, but Article 22 of the League's Covenant, invoked in its opening sentence, advocates the oversight of a mandatory power "*until such time as they are able to stand alone,*" referring at this point to the inhabitants of Palestine. What was ultimately implied was, therefore, a single independent State that functioned as a Jewish national home. That is the operational definition of a 'Jewish State', although the British never foresaw it not being part of their Empire, within which London would paternalistically oversee the civil and religious rights of Palestine's non-Jewish residents. Meanwhile, the Mandate charged Britain with facilitating a national home for the Jews and with safeguarding the civil and religious rights of the Arabs living there (Article 2), ensuring also that the 'rights and position' of these Arabs were not prejudiced (Article 6). What does 'rights and position' mean here? Article 4 stipulated that "*An appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognised as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine*". Obviously the Mandatory power would liaise informally with Arabs under its governance, but there was no requirement in the resolution for political liaison with them. 'Rights' therefore refer here to civil and religious rights rather than political rights,

consistent with the Balfour and San Remo declarations; while ‘position’ cannot mean the continuation of the Arabs as the only significant ethnic group in Palestine, for the resolution was about a national home for the Jews. The Arabs had not, moreover, had self-determination under the Turks, against whose rule they willingly rebelled. Taken as a whole, this resolution is what the League of Nations voted for, unanimously although without Arab representation. The modern State of Israel regards that vote as part of its claim to legitimacy. Arabs regard their absence from the League as rendering the vote illegitimate.

The League of Nations resolution was influenced by a British government ‘White Paper’ policy document published on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1922. This was Britain’s first amplification of how it saw the Balfour Declaration and how it wished to govern Palestine. Winston Churchill was responsible for it. He had been pressed by Herbert Samuel, who was concerned about Arab violence if the Palestinian Arab delegation that had been lobbying in London were to return with no concessions; Samuel had already argued for restrictions on Jewish immigration. Churchill was personally committed to the Zionist policy,<sup>16</sup> and the White Paper was emphatic in supporting Jewish immigration and residence in Palestine, but it was also intended to reassure Arabs. It included the following passage: *“Unauthorized statements have been made to the effect that the purpose in view is to create a wholly Jewish Palestine. Phrases have been used such as that ‘Palestine is to become as Jewish as England is English.’<sup>17</sup> His Majesty’s Government... have no such aim in view. Nor have they at any time contemplated... the disappearance or the subordination of the Arabic population, language or culture in Palestine. They would draw attention to the fact that the terms of the [Balfour] Declaration referred to do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should*

*be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded ‘in Palestine.’ In this connection it has been observed with satisfaction that at a meeting of the Zionist Congress... in September 1921, a resolution was passed expressing as the official statement of Zionist aims ‘the determination of the Jewish people to live with the Arab people on terms of unity and mutual respect, and together with them to make the common home into a flourishing community’... When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality on the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride. But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance. That is the reason why it is necessary that the existence of a Jewish National Home in Palestine should be internationally guaranteed, and that it should be formally recognized to rest upon ancient historic connection”.*

The sentence about Palestine not being converted into a Jewish national home can only mean, long before partition was envisaged, an exclusively Jewish national home. The phrase denying subordination of the Arabic population evidently means equal civil and religious rights for Jew and Arab, together with means for the grievances of Arabs to be considered. The White Paper also spoke of excluding politically undesirable persons from Palestine. In context, that meant communist Jews.

## **British Mandatory Palestine; friction rises between Jew and Arab**

In 1922 there were 84,000 Jews in Palestine, making up 11% of the population. By 1931 this figure had increased to 175,000, or 17%. During the Mandatory period the word ‘Palestinian’ applied to any inhabitant of the Holy Land, Jew or Arab. The *Palestine Post* was a Zionist newspaper of the time.

<sup>16</sup> See ‘Churchill and the Jews’ by Martin Gilbert (Simon and Schuster, London, 2007), ch. 7: ‘Building on the Balfour Declaration’.

Churchill’s attitude to the Arabs of Palestine appears to have been “develop it or lose it”, and he had no qualms about the long-term emergence of a Jewish State, although he would have foreseen it as part of the British Empire rather than fully independent.

<sup>17</sup> This was a reference to a comment of Weizmann’s at the post-war peace conference, in which the American representative, Lansing, asked him whether “Jewish national home” meant an autonomous government. Weizmann answered in the negative and went on that under a Mandatory Power it would be possible “to build up gradually a nationality which would be as Jewish as... the British nation [was] British”.

In August 1929, major rioting broke out over the issue of access by Jews to the Western ('wailing') Wall of their ancient Temple in Jerusalem for prayer. The wall had been a growing point of friction. Across Palestine more than 100 Jews were killed (mostly by Arabs), and more than 100 Arabs were killed (mostly by British forces seeking to restore order). The underlying issue, according to the Shaw Commission which reported on the episode for Britain, was concern by the Arab community that the Jewish community was growing in size and purchasing land. Most of this land was purchased from absentee Arab owners, who received offers; in the 1920s it consisted mainly of marginal land that was not used for agriculture and was therefore cheaper, such as sand dunes, or swamp which the Jews drained and made productive. But Arab tenant families were given notice to quit, because Jews generally lived on - or employed only other Jews on - land that they owned. This trend increased in the 1930s when no more dunes or swampland was available, and Jewish agencies made purchases of smaller plots that were already in agricultural use.

The Shaw Commission was followed by a report by Sir John Hope Simpson into British governance of Palestine. The resulting 'Passfield' White Paper issued by the British government in October 1930 (named after the Colonial Secretary) included this statement: "*attempts have been made to argue, in support of Zionist claims, that the principal feature of the Mandate is regarding the Jewish National Home, and that the passages designed to safeguard the rights of the non-Jewish community are merely secondary considerations qualifying, to some extent, what is claimed to be the primary object for which the Mandate has been framed. This is a conception which His Majesty's Government have always regarded as totally erroneous*". There were indeed protective conditions for Palestine's Arabs which might impede the creation of a Jewish national home, but the Mandate resolution is clear that the creation of that home was its primary object, as with the Balfour Declaration. The assertion in the White Paper that the British government never regarded the creation of a Jewish national home as primary is simply untrue. The White Paper went on to contemplate restrictions on Jewish land purchase and it

recommended restriction of Jewish immigration, citing the caveats in Article 6 of the Mandate: "*The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions...*" Jewish immigration had already been temporarily restricted in May 1930, as the White Paper noted.

Winston Churchill highlighted the shift by pointing out that the British obligation under the Mandate was to Jews worldwide, who had no homeland, whereas the obligation to Arabs, who did, was limited to those in Palestine.<sup>18</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> November 1930 a heated debate took place in the House of Commons in which Lloyd George called the Passfield White Paper anti-Semitic. The furore led Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to write publicly to Chaim Weizmann,<sup>19</sup> affirming the purpose of the Mandate in facilitating Jewish immigration while holding to the caveat in Article 6. MacDonald wrote that Article 6 meant the rights and position of "*the non-Jewish community... are not to be impaired or made worse. The effect of the policy of immigration and settlement on the economic position of the non-Jewish community cannot be excluded from consideration. But... the obligation to facilitate Jewish immigration and to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land remains a positive obligation of the mandate and it can be fulfilled without prejudice to the rights and position of other sections of the population of Palestine*". The hope was the same as that of Hussein and Faisal at the start of the Mandate: that migration of Jews, with modern European know-how, would boost the economy and that all would welcome the benefits. This letter also stated that Article 2, "*safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race or religion*", would be taken to mean no discrimination on grounds of race or religion. Britain reserved the freedom to amend the civil rights of Jew and Arab together as it deemed necessary.

Following the 1929 riots the Jews concluded that they could not depend on the British authorities for protection. They

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<sup>18</sup> In an article titled "Fair play to the Jews", *'Sunday Chronicle'*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1930.

<sup>19</sup> Letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> February 1931.

quietly organised their community, the *Yishuv* (settlement), for self-defence. British policy was to keep Jews and Arabs unarmed, to make policing easier. Many Jews had had military experience in World War I, and the Jewish organisation that resulted was called the *Haganah*, meaning 'the defence'. The kibbutz movement (collective farms) facilitated defence training. A militant faction soon split from the Haganah, the Irgun, which espoused an extreme 'revisionist' form of Zionism that sought all of Transjordan as well. The Irgun would provide two Prime Ministers of Israel, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. The latter was also associated with the 'Stern Gang' or Lehi, which split from the Irgun in 1940 to sabotage British forces during World War II on the grounds that Britain was throttling Jewish immigration. The Lehi were even prepared to cooperate with the Nazis, Mussolini and Stalin. They assassinated the Resident British Minister in Cairo in 1944, Lord Moyne, and the UN diplomat Count Folke Bernadotte while he was mediating between Arab and Jew in their conflict in 1948.

Jewish migration to Palestine accelerated after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, and led to Arab rioting in October of that year. In 1936, growing Arab dissatisfaction with an increasing Jewish population and a British administration that oversaw land purchases by Jews, led to a general strike of Arab labour over the summer. The Peel Commission that was sent to report on the problem now proposed that the land should be partitioned between Arab and Jew. The Arabs were strongly against partition. The 1937 Zionist Congress, held in Zurich, declared that "*the partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission is not to be accepted*", but the Jews proposed "*to carry on negotiations in order to clarify the exact substance of the British Government's proposal for the foundation of a Jewish State in Palestine*". Revised partition plans by the Woodhead Commission (1938) found no favour with either side. From 1937, Arab unrest and sporadic violence against Jews escalated into guerrilla warfare against the British administration and its forces, while the Irgun began to undertake similar operations against Arabs. Some collaborative operations between Jews and British took place, organised by Orde Wingate (who went on to lead the Chindit guerrilla force against the

Japanese in Burma during World War II). Haj Amin, the Grand Mufti, was prominent in fomenting this Arab uprising, and he left the country to avoid arrest. The British were vigorous in putting down the Arab uprising, but it went on until 1939. During this time Jewish immigration was restricted in number (1935 - 66,000; 1936 - 30,000; 1937 - 11,000; 1938 - 31,000). In contrast there was relatively unrestricted illegal Arab immigration into Palestine, upon which the British Governor of the Sinai, C.S. Jarvis, passed comment to the effect that: "*This illegal Arab immigration was not only going on from Sinai, but also from Transjordan and Syria, and it was very difficult to make out a case for the misery of the Arabs if at the same time their compatriots from adjoining states could not be kept from going in to share that misery*".<sup>20</sup> (For estimates of numbers, see A.L. Avneri.<sup>21</sup>) Jarvis states that Arabs worked harder on their own projects, while Avneri shows that the Jewish economy benefited Arabs also. Trading relations between Arabs and Jews were plentiful, but they did not employ each other; the Passfield White Paper had complained that Jews did not employ Arabs.

In July 1938 the Evian Conference took place in France to consider the increasing numbers of Jewish refugees from Hitler's policies. Between Hitler's accession in 1933 and the Holocaust about 60,000 of Germany's Jews would migrate to Palestine, or 10%; the Nazis fully approved of this flow. At Evian the major countries, including the USA which had instigated the conference, declined to accept large numbers of Jewish refugees. In November 1938, when the Woodhead Commission's failure demonstrated that partition was impracticable, the British government of Neville Chamberlain (Joseph's son) stated that it wished to end the Mandate within ten years and invited Jewish and Arab representatives to join in a conference in London. The background included not only the problems in Palestine, but Britain's wish for Arab support in the likely event of war with Hitler. At this conference, held in February-March 1939, there was little accord between the Arab and Jewish delegations.

<sup>20</sup> Report of a discussion, in: '*United Empire*' magazine (London), vol. 28 pp. 632-3 (1937).

<sup>21</sup> '*The Claim of Dispossession: Jewish Land-Settlement and the Arabs, 1878-1948*' by A.L. Avneri (Transaction publishers, New Brunswick, NJ, USA, 1984). This book also examines the continual flux of distinct Arab-speaking peoples in and out of Palestine during Turkish rule.

The Jewish delegation was led by Weizmann and David ben Gurion, who at that time was shifting to the view that a Jewish State would unavoidably involve a fight against the Arabs. Britain, having made clear that it would do what it chose in the event of deadlock, published a White Paper in May 1939. It represented a fundamental change of view.

### **The MacDonald White Paper of May 1939**

This document is known as the 'MacDonald' White Paper after the British Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald (son of Ramsay MacDonald). The three indents in italics below are quotes from it, and are followed by comments on them.

*“Neither the Arab nor the Jewish delegation felt able to accept these proposals, and the conferences therefore did not result in an agreement. Accordingly His Majesty’s Government are free to formulate their own policy”.*

That freedom was circumscribed by the British Government’s previous pledges, including its agreement to enact the League of Nations Mandatory resolution of July 1922.

*“His Majesty’s Government believe that the framers of the Mandate in which the Balfour Declaration was embodied could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country... [The British government] would indeed regard it as contrary to their obligations to the Arabs under the Mandate...”.*

It was hoped that the Arab population would be happy with the improved economic situation of Palestine that Jewish immigration might induce. But the stipulations in the Mandate regarding the Arabs were that their civil and religious rights should be safeguarded (Article 2), and their 'rights and position' not prejudiced (Article 6). Under the Turks their position had not been autonomous and their political rights were limited. The White Paper stated:

*“His Majesty’s Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish[-run] State”.*

Britain now proposed a joint Arab-Jewish government over the whole of Palestine, with heads of administrative departments appointed in the same ethnic proportion as the population. The White Paper estimated that Palestine’s approximately 450,000 Jews comprised nearly 1/3 of the population, meaning that such a government would have been Arab-dominated - and would have remained so, for the White Paper proposed also to restrict Jewish immigration. The plan was to admit a total of not more than 75,000 Jews over the next five years, after which further Jewish immigration could be vetoed by Palestinian Arab leaders. The 'national home for the Jewish people' would have a guaranteed 2/3 Arab majority. The reason was stated in the White Paper: so as not to further antagonise the Arabs of Palestine. Britain claimed that this was merely a 're-interpretation' of its Mandate, but the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations issued a report, following its meeting of 8-29th June 1939, which stated: *“The policy set out in the White Paper was not in accordance with the interpretation which, in agreement with the Mandatory Power and the Council, the Commission had placed upon the Palestine Mandate”.*

The restriction proposed upon Jewish immigration also ignored the situation of Jews who foresaw their persecution under Hitler becoming intolerable; illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine increased as a result. Clearly the British Cabinet was not willing to uphold the promises of its predecessors when war against Hitler was looming and Arab support in the Middle East would be important. Churchill, who was not then in the Cabinet but would soon replace Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister, criticised the White Paper in the debate on it in the House of Commons on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1939: *“I could not stand by and see solemn engagements into which Britain has entered... set aside for reasons of administrative convenience or... for the sake of a quiet life... I would feel personally embarrassed... if I lent myself... to what I must regard as an act of repudiation”.* Of the proposed Arab veto on Jewish immigration after 1944, Churchill lamented, *“there is the violation of the pledge, there is the abandonment of the Balfour Declaration, there is the end of the vision”.* The White Paper was nevertheless

accepted by majority vote of the Commons later that day.<sup>22</sup>

Arab reaction was that the White Paper was insufficient, although the leader of the Palestinian Arab delegation to the 1939 London conference, Jamal Husseini, quietly signed up to it in 1940. The Jewish Agency for Palestine responded as follows: *“The new policy for Palestine... denies to the Jewish people the right to rebuild their national home in their ancestral country. It transfers the authority over Palestine to the present Arab majority and puts the Jewish population at the mercy of that majority. It decrees the stoppage of Jewish immigration as soon as the Jews form a third of the total population... The Jewish people regard this policy as a breach of faith... The new regime now announced will be devoid of any moral basis and contrary to international law... The Jewish people have no quarrel with the Arab people [but] the Arabs are not landless or homeless as are the Jews. They are not in need of emigration... It is in the darkest hour of Jewish history that the British Government proposes to deprive the Jews of their last hope and to close the road back to their Homeland... The historic bond between the people and the land of Israel cannot be broken. The Jews will never accept the closing to them of the gates of Palestine”*.

The White Paper had the effect of denying Hitler any option of expelling the Jews to a place that would accept them.

## **The Holocaust; the Mandate during and after World War II**

In the Holocaust inflicted by the Nazis on the Jews during the second half of World War II, one-third of all Jews on earth died, millions in extermination camps in eastern Europe. The effect was to convince surviving Jews that they would never be safe even in the new, largely secular societies that no longer inflicted religious discrimination against them, so that they would have to take responsibility for their own security.

During the hostilities, ben Gurion's view was that Jews should fight the war as if there were no White Paper, and fight the White Paper as if there were no war. Mandatory Palestine was in a strategic position between

continents and near the Suez Canal. For a year, up to summer 1941, its northern neighbour Syria was under the control of the Vichy French regime that collaborated with the Nazis. Then in 1942 the Germans moved east through Egypt, but were stopped west of the Nile at el Alamein. Palestine was never captured during the war, and Jews there remained safe from Hitler. Some 30,000 of them chose to join British armed forces to fight the Nazis.

After the war ended, the Jewish battle against the White Paper restrictions grew into guerrilla actions, because Jews - many of whom had lost their pre-war homes in Europe - were still not permitted to migrate freely to Palestine. At this point ben Gurion prevailed over the more conservative Weizmann in being active against British policy. That policy was administered by Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary in Clement Attlee's Labour administration and no friend to Jews. The USA supported migration of displaced European Jews to Palestine, and the 1946 Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, aiming to coordinate policy, found a uniformly strong wish of European Jews for the freedom to migrate there. Many of them were homeless and came from lands that had collaborated in the Holocaust; in the summer of 1947 one ship carrying Holocaust camp survivors to Palestine, the *Exodus*, was turned back by the British. Its passengers were interned in - ironically - secure camps in occupied Germany. Many stateless Jews were placed by the British in camps in Cyprus. But in the aftermath of World War II the British were tiring of occupying a land in which they were increasingly unpopular with both Jew and Arab and in which they had little remaining interest; Suez was theoretically protected by a 1936 treaty with Egypt, India was to become independent, and Aden was retained as a military base. The Arabs wanted independence and believed they could fight off the Jews; the Jews wanted unrestricted Jewish immigration and were willing to fight the Arabs to secure it and their own future. Both were prepared to use guerrilla tactics against the British. In July 1946 the Irgun set off a bomb in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which housed the headquarters of the Mandatory authority. It killed nearly 100 people.

In 1947 Britain stated that it proposed to end the Mandate unilaterally. By this time the

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<sup>22</sup> Hansard, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1939.

United Nations organisation had replaced the League of Nations. Article 80 of the UN charter protected the rights of “*any peoples or the terms of existing international instruments to which members of the United Nations may respectively be parties*”. Only if a trusteeship agreement had been made between the relevant parties would this clause become invalid (as Article 80 explains). As no such agreement had been signed since the UN was founded in 1945, the UN was bound to the original League of Nations mandate for Palestine. In practice it set that commitment aside, sending a fact-finding mission (UNSCOP) to Palestine and then proposing a ‘two-State solution’, to partition Palestine into Israeli and Arab States; both would be parliamentary democracies, with Jerusalem (including Bethlehem) run as an international zone; see Map 3a. Under this plan each State would grant civil rights equally to Arabs and Jews. Private land ownership was to be respected. At the time Jews owned 7% of the area of Mandatory Palestine; not all of the rest was in Arab hands, as there was extensive public land. The Arab State was to comprise 43% of Mandatory Palestine and, if people stayed put, contain 725,000 non-Jews (mainly Arabs) and 10,000 Jews. The Jewish State was to comprise 56% of Mandatory Palestine and contain 498,000 Jews and 407,000 others (mainly Arabs). The International Zone contained about 200,000 persons and was roughly half Jewish, half Arab. The Arab State had one-third of the coastline and took in the highlands (except for Jerusalem). The Jewish State was where most Jews in Palestine lived. It included three fertile areas - the coastal Sharon plain and the upper Jordan and Jezreel valleys - but much of it was the Negev desert in the south, and its borders would be difficult to defend.

This plan was accepted by the UN General Assembly on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1947 upon gaining more than 2/3 of votes cast, and became UN Resolution 181. Both the USA and the Soviet Union voted in favour of it; President Truman was pro-Jewish and there were many left-wing Jews in Israel which the Soviets saw as potential allies in the region. Britain abstained. The Jewish Agency in Palestine accepted the proposed partition and its terms. Arab national governments rejected them and were hostile to the principle and details of partition; the Arab Higher

Committee (representing Arabs in Palestine) had refused to cooperate with UNSCOP. After the vote, the sporadic violence between the two communities grew into civil war. In a newspaper interview weeks before the UN vote, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, stated that he hoped the Jews would not force war, but said any hostilities against them would be “*a war of extermination, a momentous massacre*”.<sup>23</sup> Did the Jews force war? Jamal Husseini, the Palestinian Arab leader, candidly told the UN Security Council during the fighting: “*The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight*”.<sup>24</sup>

### The Civil War of 1947-8

The departing British had little appetite to intervene. By then a date had been set: the British Mandate would end at midnight between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> May 1948. In the civil war the Jews, some of them veterans of World War II, began by defending themselves. Their elite fighting force was named the *Palmach*. Then, by organising themselves more effectively, they gained the upper hand. In the half-year to 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948 the Jews won most of the land in the north assigned to them under the UN plan, which is where most Jews lived at the time; they did not at this time gain the southern desert, the Negev. The later part of their northern campaign was conducted under ‘Plan D[alef].’ Its stated aim was to take control of the territory assigned to the Jewish State, ensure connectedness of Jewish-controlled areas, and defend its borders and people - including Jews in Palestine beyond those borders - from attack by irregulars, and in expectation of an invasion by regular Arab armies. Under the heading ‘Consolidation of Defence Systems and Barricades’ the plan stated that, “*for the fixed defensive system to be effective and the rear of this system to be protected*”, operations must be mounted against “*enemy population centres located inside or near our defensive system in order to prevent them from being used as bases by an active armed force*”. Two types of operation were proposed: destruction of villages, and expulsion of inhabitants from

<sup>23</sup> *Akhbar al-Yom* (Egypt), 11<sup>th</sup> October 1947.

<sup>24</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> April 1948.

villages showing armed resistance. Arab irregulars from outside had embedded themselves in many villages.<sup>25</sup> No explanation has emerged of why villages were placed in one category or the other; lists were simply handed to operational commanders. It remains in dispute whether permanent expulsion of Arabs was a tacit war aim of the Jews, to be justified publicly on military grounds; Jewish leadership was ambivalent about the destruction of Arab villages after it had begun.<sup>26</sup> Arabs who were permitted to stay in their homes - and did so - were given Israeli citizenship (although martial law was lifted from them only in 1966). They were thereby guaranteed freedom of worship whether they were Christian or Muslim.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> David ben Gurion declared the State of Israel. The Declaration did not specify borders. Ben Gurion became Israel's first Prime Minister and Weizmann became President, a figurehead position.

### **The Mandate Ends: Declaration of the State of Israel and its invasion**

That night the new State's Arab neighbours declared war on it and began an invasion. Egypt, Syria (two years independent of France) and Jordan (formerly Transjordan and two years independent of Britain) sent their armies in. Syrian troops crossed directly into part of Palestine assigned by the UN plan to the Jews. Some of the Jordanian army was already in Palestine by British arrangement, ostensibly to keep the peace, because it was led by British officers and provided with British weaponry under an agreement between Britain and King Abdullah of Jordan. That arrangement obviously suited Abdullah, who now sought to annexe the area of land assigned by the UN to the Arabs of Palestine, bounded to the east by the River Jordan between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee - the 'West Bank'. After May 14<sup>th</sup> those British officers who wished to fight with the Jordanian Army, the 'Arab Legion', concealed their involvement or resigned their British Army commissions; Anglo-Jordanian relations have remained friendly to this day. Iraq, now fully independent, also sent a sizeable

contingent of troops to fight, and other Arab countries sent smaller numbers.

At the start of this international war the Jewish forces were essentially an extended militia. The newly named Israel Defence Force (IDF) had fewer guns than men, almost no dedicated heavy weaponry or tracked vehicles, and no dedicated military aircraft. They now faced regular armed forces. Initially both sides put a few tens of thousands of active combatants into the field. At stake was the survival of the Israeli State, for its opponents had rejected its existence at the UN and gone to war to prevent it. The Jews were, as a result, more motivated than the non-Palestinian Arabs whom they now fought. They also proved better able to gear their European-style society to the war effort, and were able to circumvent a UN arms embargo imposed on both sides by covertly acquiring military hardware from Czechoslovakia (mainly).

On the Arab side there was disunity, as Arab leaders mistrusted each other's ambitions. Syria and Egypt never committed more than half of their armies. Syria mistrusted Jordan, and Egypt needed to keep a considerable force at home because the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 as an Islamic reaction to Western ways and to colonialism, was stirring up unrest. British agents such as the Army officer Iltud Clayton, acting under only loose political control from London, were prepared to use the Jews as pawns in order to maintain British influence in the region through preferred Arab rulers, whom the British played off against each other.<sup>27</sup>

On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1948 the Jews announced that all land they took control of within Palestine would remain part of their State. Thousands of Jewish soldiers had died in battle by then. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1949, following the breakdown of several ceasefires, the IDF reached the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, where Eilat now stands. This strategic point had presumably been included in Mandatory Palestine to divide Egypt from Arab lands to its east and for possible development as a naval base, as the Israelis have since done. By this point the Jews held 78% of the area of Mandatory

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<sup>25</sup> The occupation by Jewish forces of the strategically placed Arab village of Deir Yassin, just west of Jerusalem, on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1948 was unusual for the indiscriminate killing of Arab women and children. It remains in dispute whether a massacre of rounded-up unarmed Arabs took place.

<sup>26</sup> Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), ch. 6.

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<sup>27</sup> Meir Zamir, *The Secret Anglo-French War in the Middle East: Intelligence and Decolonization, 1940-1948* (Routledge, 2014).

Palestine, excluding only the Gaza strip and West Bank. The latter extended west from the River Jordan to take in the eastern part of Jerusalem; it included much of ancient Judea, including Bethlehem, and Samaria. Hostilities then ceased, because the Jews did not intend to exert jurisdiction over land taken from any pre-existing sovereign State, and because the West Bank and Gaza were areas of large Arab population which would have been hard to control and had borders with neighbouring Arab countries. The West Bank was held by Jordan's powerful Arab Legion, moreover. The ceasefire line became known as the green line, from its colour drawn on a conference map; see Map 3b. It ran through Jerusalem; the eastern part of the city, including Temple Mount, was in Jordanian hands.

### **The State of Israel established; Refugees Arab and Jewish**

So the State of Israel was established, and by the end of hostilities in March 1949 many Palestinian Arabs found themselves refugees from their homes of 16 months earlier when the civil war began. Arabs call this outcome the catastrophe, *al nakba*. How many refugees were created? The last British census, held in 1945, found about 1.2 million Arabs living in Mandatory Palestine, of whom 756,000 were resident in the area that became the Israeli State although such figures were liable to be inflated by Arab village headmen, who supplied numbers on the basis of which they received rations. On this figure is based an estimate of 809,100 at the end of November 1947 on the eve of the civil war.<sup>28</sup> In 1949, after hostilities had come to an end, an Israeli government census counted 160,000. So not more than 650,000 Palestinian Arabs could have been made refugees in the fighting. The only estimate of the maximum figure based on summing numbers from every town and village comes to 609,000,<sup>29</sup> a number corresponding to about 3/4 of the Arab population of the area that became Israeli-administered.

Why did so many Arabs leave their homes? A combination of reasons was at work. Wealthy Arab community leaders, together with those having roots in nearby countries,

and nomadic Bedouin - a significant number - left in anticipation of war. Of village residents, some were expelled by Jewish fighters or subjected to terror propaganda. Most simply fled as fighting approached; whereas the Jews had nowhere else to go, Arabs could flee to centres of Arab population within Mandatory Palestine such as the West Bank or Gaza, or cross into neighbouring Arab nations. Palestinian Arab society suffered a collapse of morale as the Jews advanced, giving rise to an atmosphere of chaos and apprehension in which panic readily spread; the Islamic convention which governed Arab expectation was that the losers of a battle might be put to death or enslaved by the victors. According to General John Glubb 'Pasha', commander of the Arab Legion, "*Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of war*".<sup>30</sup> The Arab Higher Committee in Palestine had issued instructions on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1948 as a result of which the Arab National Committee in Jerusalem ordered women, children and the elderly in parts of the city to leave their homes, stating that "*Any opposition to this order is an obstacle to the holy war and will hamper the operations of the fighters*".<sup>31</sup> The Arab Higher Committee also ordered the evacuation of "*several dozen villages, as well as the removal of dependents from dozens more*" in April-July 1948, while "*the invading Arab armies also occasionally ordered whole villages to depart, so as not to be in their way*".<sup>32</sup> Musa Alami, a prominent Palestinian Arab leader, a year later wrote of evacuation, rather than expulsion: "*...in the first phase, between November 1947 and the middle of May 1948, which ended with the evacuation and the incredible collapse... If ultimately the Palestinians evacuated their country, it was... because they had lost all confidence in the existing system of defence... they were told that the Arab armies would be coming... and they placed their confidence and hopes in that*".<sup>33</sup> In the town of Haifa, which the Jews took over in April 1948, the departing British

<sup>30</sup> 'Daily Mail', London, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1948.

<sup>31</sup> Benny Morris, 'The causes and character of the Arab exodus from Palestine: The Israel Defense Forces intelligence branch analysis of June 1948', *Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 22, pp. 5-19 (1986).

<sup>32</sup> Benny Morris, *ibid.*; also Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 263 & 590-2.

<sup>33</sup> Musa Alami, 'The lesson of Palestine', *Middle East Journal* vol. 3, p. 381 (1949).

<sup>28</sup> A.L. Avneri, *ibid.*, p. 272. This book is based on the work of demographer Roberto Bachi and on British censuses.

<sup>29</sup> *How many Palestinian Arab refugees were there?* Appendix in 'Palestine Betrayed' by Ephraim Karsh (Yale University Press, 2010).

had been a major source of Arab employment; those jobs vanished, while *Time* magazine<sup>34</sup> reported that Arab leaders had ordered Arabs to leave in the hope of paralysing the town. Certainly a large proportion of the Arab population had left well before the battle took place.

Neighbouring Arab nations sent mixed messages to the Arabs of Palestine. Early on, the message was to leave - or at least send the women and children away - so as to keep the battlefield clear. The then Prime Minister of Syria later stated: *“Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves are the ones who encouraged them to leave”*.<sup>35</sup> The current Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas, wrote that *“The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny but, instead, they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and leave their homeland, and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live”*.<sup>36</sup> When Arab victory did not come about, many Arabs, facing life under Jewish rule and without the support of their families, left to rejoin those families outside Palestine’s borders. Once the flow of Palestinian Arabs into Egypt, Lebanon and Syria became a flood, however, those countries reversed their policies of welcome.

After hostilities ceased the Jews had no wish to re-admit large numbers of people who had recently been part of a civil war against them. The new State could not be a democracy run by Jews if the full number of Arabs returned, moreover. Israel did float the possibility of return as part of a peace treaty, but Arab nations declined to sign one. The emptied villages were, or had been, demolished, making return impossible in practice. Moreover, increasing numbers of Jews were being forced to flee Arab lands after facing persecution in reprisal; between 1948 and 1951, 260,000 arrived in Israel, and by the Yom Kippur war of 1973 nearly a million had been resettled in Israel. Most had had to leave their possessions in Arab lands and arrived penniless. Israel links compensation for the Arab refugees to compensation for them.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (known as UNRWA) grants refugee status not only to Arabs who left Israel in 1948 but also their descendants.<sup>37</sup> According to this irregular definition the number of refugees is growing without anybody moving, and had swollen to approximately 5 million in 2014.<sup>38</sup> Lebanon and Syria maintain large long-term refugee ‘camps’ - actually towns - near their borders with Israel, refusing their inhabitants citizenship although they share the same Arabic culture, and using their plight as a propaganda weapon against Israel. UNRWA provides services to these camps. Some refugee camps are maintained in the West Bank and Gaza.

### **Peace proves elusive: two more Arab wars against Israel**

A peace conference in Lausanne from late April 1949 failed to change the status quo regarding borders and refugees. Jew and Arab blamed the other for not giving what each wanted. During this conference Israel was admitted to the United Nations. The Israelis, as the British had hoped thirty years earlier, built a modern industrialised society that has provided much high-tech innovation. In the 1950s, Jewish migration to Israel continued from Europe and Arab lands; the latter remained politically faction-riven. In 1950 Jordan annexed the West Bank, an action unrecognised even by most Arab countries, although Britain did so. In 1956 Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal. Britain, France and Israel mounted a coordinated military action to remove its socialist leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and regain control of the canal. Israel invaded the Sinai and engaged Egyptian forces; Britain and France entered on Israel’s side, using the pretext that the fighting was a threat to the canal. They were forced to withdraw by the superpowers, the USA and USSR. Following this action Nasser became a hero among Arabs. Israel enjoyed good relations with France for the next 11 years, buying its Mirage jet fighter.

In June 1967, after a period of rising tension and skirmishes, Egypt amassed its army on the border with Israel. To do this, Egypt had expelled UN peacekeepers from the Sinai. Israel responded by striking at Egypt’s

<sup>34</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1948.

<sup>35</sup> *Mudhakkarat [Memoirs of] Khalid Al-Azm’ (Al-Dar al-Muttahida lil-Nashr, Beirut, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 386-7.*

<sup>36</sup> *Falastin a-Thaura*, March 1976.

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions>

military airfields, aiming to maintain air superiority in the coming land battle. False reports of Egyptian victory led Syria and Jordan to join in. In the 6-day war that followed, Israel won the battle for East Jerusalem - including Temple Mount - and gained the rest of the West Bank area as Jordanian troops retreated across the River Jordan. Israel also won the Gaza strip and the Golan Heights, the hilly area to the east of the River Jordan north of the Sea of Galilee. These areas came under Jewish control for the first time in the modern era. It was found that, during the 19-year Jordanian occupation, Jewish religious sites had been desecrated. In November 1967 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 calling for withdrawal of armed forces from territories occupied during the fighting and acceptance of the sovereignty of every State in the area. This resolution is the origin of the phrase 'occupied territories' used by the Arab side to describe areas won and subsequently controlled by Israel. The Arab League had set out its position in a meeting held at Khartoum in the wake of the war: there would be "*no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it*" - the 'three No's'. Agreements with Israel were in the nature of a ceasefire rather than a peace treaty.

Israel declined to withdraw, but, extraordinarily, returned everyday control of Temple Mount to the local Muslim council. This was probably because Israel's largely secular leadership foresaw public arguments within Judaism about what to do with the site, possibly including proposals to demolish the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque that would inflame the Muslim world. Israel now constructed modern infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza, and permitted Arabs there to cross the green line and work in Israel. As a result the economy of these places grew rapidly between 1968 and 1980, by an annual average of 7% or 9% in real per capita GDP and GNP respectively. Life expectancy increased and infant mortality fell. Between 1980/81 and 1986/87 growth continued more slowly; real GNP per capita increased by a total of 12%, and real GDP per capita by 5%.<sup>39</sup> But from the outbreak of the first intifada (uprising) in 1987, periodic

border closures by Israel for security reasons, and strikes, disrupted economic relations with Israel. Exports fell sharply.

In the 1967 war Israel also gained the Sinai peninsula. Sporadic hostilities with Egypt rumbled on for three more years, until President Nasser died in September 1970 and was succeeded by Anwar Sadat. Meanwhile Yasser Arafat was growing in influence as the leader of the Palestinian Arabs. He became chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1969, five years after its formation. In 1970-71 he and his followers were ejected from Jordan, which they had essentially sought to take over after large numbers of Palestinian Arabs had fled eastward across the River Jordan as a result of the 1967 war. In September 1970 ('Black September'), following the hijacking of airliners to Jordan and several attempts on King Hussein's life due to Palestinian Arabs, Hussein launched an assault against the PLO. By the next summer it had been forced out, in an action controversial within Arab politics. Arafat shifted his base to the Lebanon, making the refugee camps in the south of that country his personal fiefdom, as he had part of Jordan. In 1972 Palestinian Arab terrorists calling themselves the 'Black September' organisation perpetrated a terrorist attack on the Israeli squad at the Munich Olympic Games that killed 11 of them.

In October 1973 Egypt and Syria again struck at Israel in a war which began on *Yom Kippur*, the Jewish Day of Atonement.<sup>40</sup> Egypt had gained much weaponry from the Soviet Union but had terminated close relations with Moscow the year before; Syria under Hafez Assad was still close to the Soviets. They hoped at least to regain the Sinai and the Golan Heights, respectively. Each put at least 800 tanks into battle. Israel depended for replenishment of arms on its main backer, Washington - which faced an Arab oil embargo. Early in this war the Israelis were in danger of being overrun. Israel took heavy casualties but then launched counter-attacks and advanced far towards Cairo and Damascus. Russia and America demanded an end to hostilities, and Israel had no wish to retain much of the land behind the battlefield, so fighting ended after three weeks. This war led to a quadrupling of world oil prices, and the European Economic

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<sup>39</sup> These details are all taken from the World Bank report *Developing the Occupied Territories: An investment in peace, vol. 1: Overview*, September 1993, pp. 4-5; online at <https://bit.ly/2HEaks1>

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<sup>40</sup> Leviticus 16

Community (the forerunner of the European Union) thereafter took an expedient pro-Arab stance.

## Continuing turbulence between Arab and Jew in the Holy Land

In 1978 Israel invaded Lebanon briefly to deal with PLO forces, who had staged repeated cross-border attacks. By then Lebanon was in a state of civil war, largely between Maronite<sup>41</sup> and Palestinian factions, the latter backed by the local Muslim community. Later that year, following the 'Camp David accords', President Sadat of Egypt negotiated a peace treaty with Israel in which the Sinai would be returned to him. Three years later he would be assassinated by Islamists for making that peace treaty. In 1982 Israel again invaded Lebanon in response to repeated attacks by the PLO, this time pressing as far as Beirut and also taking on and defeating Syrian armed forces that had become involved.<sup>42</sup> Yasser Arafat evacuated to Tunisia where he made his base. Israel would maintain, until the year 2000, a buffer zone in southern Lebanon, in which Hezbollah, a Shi'ite Muslim movement, was founded and acted as a resistance movement against the Israelis. Israel has never shown interest in expansion beyond defensible borders that roughly match the British Mandate, and which therefore - with the Golan Heights - match the old covenant zone; see Map 4.

In 1987 the 'first intifada' broke out, an uprising of Palestinian Arabs against Israeli rule. Gaining strength in this uprising was Hamas (an Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement). It is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which began in Egypt, adjacent to Gaza. Hamas' charter<sup>43</sup> blames

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<sup>41</sup> Maronites comprise an eastern Christian community in full communion with the Roman Catholic church. They dominated the government of Lebanon at that time.

<sup>42</sup> During this campaign Israel was in alliance with Maronite-associated militia, who were permitted by the IDF to enter the Sabra area of Beirut containing a camp (named Shatila) of Palestinian and Shi'ite refugees shortly after a Maronite president-elect had been assassinated (it was presumed, inaccurately, by Muslims). A massacre took place of between 750 and 3500 civilians. This event forced the resignation of Ariel Sharon as Israeli defence Minister.

<sup>43</sup> In English at: [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp) Hamas' charter likens the Israelis to Nazis; asserts Jewish responsibility for the French Revolution, communist revolutions, the Balfour Declaration, both World Wars, the League of Nations and the UN; accepts (like many Arabs) the authenticity of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion', an anti-Semitic hoax document about how Jews aim to take over the world; and quotes a saying attributed to Muhammad that Muslims should scour even behind trees and under stones to kill Jews 'Sahih Bukhari' vol. 4, paragraph 94, saying (hadith) 2926 of

Jews for most of the world's evils and conspiracies, and calls for *jihad* to restore Palestine to Islamic rule and put an end to the State of Israel. Hamas is more religious than Fatah, which is essentially the continuation of Yasser Arafat's organisation and is more secular. The sporadic violence of the first intifada lasted six years; during it, the Israelis fenced Gaza off. During this time the Soviet Union crumbled and, over the next 15 years, about a million of its Jews migrated to Israel. Many of them were a further generation removed from traditional Judaism. They came foremost as economic migrants and had a weaker sense of Israeli identity, as their family stories did not include the wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973.

In 1988 Jordan renounced all claims on the West Bank, in favour of the PLO. In 1993-5, as part of the 'Oslo accords', Yasser Arafat committed his organisation, as the 'Palestinian Authority', to acceptance of Israel's right to exist.<sup>44</sup> In return Israel handed the day-to-day running of the main Arab population centres in Gaza and the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority; Arafat moved there. From 1988 Jordan had renounced its claim on the West Bank, regarding the numerous Arabs loyal to Arafat there as a threat to its own ruling classes. Israel still exercises considerable control over the West Bank, which it divides administratively into three regions denoted A, B and C; see Map 5. In region A the Palestinian Authority has full civil and security control; it comprises eight cities and their surrounding areas, which the IDF sometimes enters on raids to arrest suspected militants. Although Region A is a small area of the West Bank, it contains a majority of its Arab population. It is not a contiguous area, however. Region B is under Palestinian Arab civil control and joint security control and comprises about one-quarter of the West Bank, upon which there are some 440 Arab villages and about 40% of the Arab population. Region C, which is largely in the east of the West Bank area and includes the Jordan River valley, comprises about 2/3 of the West Bank; it has a small Arab population and is under full Israeli civil and military control. Israel controversially permits the

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Muhammad Muhsin Khan's translation). Part of Article 13 states that "so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement".

<sup>44</sup> This was in a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 1993. In 1994 Rabin also signed a peace treaty with Jordan.

building of Jewish settlements in region C; these currently house some 500,000 Jews. Israel has constructed an extensive system of barriers and checkpoints in the West Bank to prevent free passage of terrorists, but which also severely restricts the movement of peaceable Arabs.

Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995 by a Jew who was against the Oslo accords. From 1996-99 Israel's Prime Minister was Benjamin Netanyahu, who based his policies on the belief that the Arabs were interested in peace only as a tactical manoeuvre toward the aim of destroying the State of Israel. In 1999 he was replaced by Ehud Barak and the next year, at the Camp David summit, US President Bill Clinton brokered a proposal in which Israel would give Yasser Arafat a Palestinian Arab State including more than 90% of his territorial demands. Barak was prepared to offer all of the Gaza strip, a Palestinian capital in part of east Jerusalem,<sup>45</sup> and 73% of the West Bank (excluding eastern Jerusalem) rising to 90-94% after 10-25 years. However, the proposed Palestinian State would have been demilitarised, and the Jordan valley - its eastern border - would have been patrolled by an international force, while Israel would retain overall control of water supplies. The deal would have excluded the return of most Arabs who left Palestine in the 1948 war and their descendants (several million), although they would receive 30 billion US dollars (not all from Israel). Clinton was nevertheless astonished at how much the Israelis, pressed by him, were willing to put on the table in search of a definitive peace agreement - for they also required a pledge from the Arabs of no further demands. Clinton was further astonished when Arafat rejected the proposal. The Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar, who had liaised between Clinton and Arafat, had also urged Arafat to accept, or at least keep haggling.<sup>46</sup>

Two months after the Camp David summit a second intifada began, the trigger being a visit to Temple Mount by Ariel Sharon, who was by then the Israeli opposition leader. In 2002 the Arab League proposed a peace settlement by which it would recognise Israel

provided that Israel withdrew to the pre-1967 demarcation lines - which would mean giving up Temple Mount and the rest of East Jerusalem - and offer return or compensation to the refugees. Israel, facing the second intifada, was uninterested. That same year a constitution or 'Basic Law' was instituted for a future Palestinian State; according to its Article 4, Islamic Sharia law would be the main source of legislation. Later in 2002, the 'Quartet' - the USA, Russia, the EU and the UN - sought to build on the Oslo accords and established a 'roadmap for peace' based also on a 'two-State solution'. There proved to be insufficient trust between the two sides for any progress toward that outcome, however. The USA and Israel refused to negotiate with Yasser Arafat, regarding him as untrustworthy after Camp David and the subsequent outbreak of the second intifada, which could not have occurred without his tacit support. His diplomatic sidelining boosted the standing of Mahmoud Abbas as a Palestinian Arab spokesman; Abbas was promoted by Arafat but then fell out with him. Arafat died in 2004 and Abbas took over his organisation. That second intifada, which included more than 100 suicide bombings, ended in 2005 after Israel constructed barriers between many Arab-run and Jewish-run areas.

In 2005 Israel handed administration of the Gaza strip to its Arabs, forcibly evacuating nearly 10,000 Jews from settler villages there; their collective security could not be guaranteed in the event of an Arab uprising in Gaza. In 2006 Hamas won power from Fatah in elections held in the West Bank and Gaza, but rivalry between the two groups escalated into fighting. Israel and the Quartet threatened sanctions against any Hamas-led government. In 2007 Hamas forcibly gained control of Gaza, while Fatah held control of the West Bank; they forged an accord in 2014. Israel inspects all goods moving into Gaza in order to check for weapons in transit, and maintains sea patrols off its coast. Israeli restrictions on goods flowing in and out of Gaza obviously hamper its economy. The border between Gaza and Egypt is essentially closed; until 2005 it was severely restricted by Israel, and it is now restricted by Egypt, which does not want a highly militarised concentration of 1.8 million people on its border. Rocket fire into Israel from Gaza prompted a three-week Israeli search-and-destroy action in the winter of 2008/9 and

<sup>45</sup> There was a surge of applications for Israeli citizenship from East Jerusalem's Arabs when it looked as if they might be transferred to Arab jurisdiction; see *Middle East Quarterly* vol. 12, p. 43-50 (2005).

<sup>46</sup> *The New Yorker*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003, pp. 48-63. Interview-based profile of Prince Bandar.

the development of interceptor missiles - the 'iron dome' system. A further IDF incursion into Gaza took place in 2014 that destroyed more rocket launchers and a network of tunnels from Gaza which exits inside Israel, intended for terrorist use. Hamas placed many of its rocket launchers next to high-value civilian targets in Gaza in a tactical game of dare with Israel. Israel did not seek to harm civilians but prioritised its own security and more than 2000 Arabs were killed.

In 2006, in response to a Hezbollah raid into Israel with the kidnap of two soldiers, Israel again invaded Lebanon but failed to deter Hezbollah, which now had backing from Iran.

In 2008 Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who had taken over after Ariel Sharon was felled by a stroke, made a two-State offer to Abbas that gave him most of the West Bank and divided Jerusalem so as to be the capital of each State, with Temple Mount under international administration.<sup>47</sup> According to an astonished US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Abbas declined the offer because it did not permit the Palestinian refugees, who by then had grown in number in the camps to several million, to move into the areas which their families had occupied before 1948. The next year, Olmert was replaced as Prime Minister by Netanyahu.

Since 2007 Israel has received approximately 3 billion US dollars per year in aid from the USA, or about 1% of Israel's GDP. This money is largely tied to the US defence industry. Before 2007 Israel's aid from the USA had been larger. Israel has undoubtedly had nuclear weapons since the 1960s, although it has never commented publicly. Today Israel lives among States that increasingly face a choice between military dictatorship under nominally Muslim strongmen, or militant Islam with its *shaheed* (martyrdom) tradition.<sup>48</sup> Iran is governed by a Shia Islamic regime and claims that the uranium it has been enriching is for use in nuclear power plants rather than weapons, although the country is rich in oil. Chemical weapons with delivery systems capable of

reaching much of Israel have been amassed in Syria, where Hafez Assad's son Bashar fights Sunni Islamic State militants for power. Sunni Saudi Arabia fights Shia Iran by proxy. These battles among Muslims are unrelated to Israel's presence.

The Arabs of Gaza and the West Bank seek UN recognition as a distinct country, Palestine. The United Nations Human Rights Council was set up in 2006, and up to 2013 a total of 45 of the 98 country-specific condemnations it has issued were against Israel,<sup>49</sup> while in 2013 the UN General Assembly passed three times as many resolutions critical of Israel as about Syria, Iran and North Korea combined.<sup>50</sup> In view of the human rights record of such places it is apparent that Israel is held to higher standards than other nations. This is clearly because there is one Jewish State but many Islamic ones. The election of Donald Trump as US President assures Israel of a friend in the UN Security Council, the only organ of the UN which can issue binding resolutions. Unlike his predecessors, Trump is not necessarily committed to a partition of the Holy Land. In 2017 he recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Arabs in the land have responsibility to behave well, and Jews should do their best to distinguish between peaceable Arabs and terrorists, and not oppress the peaceable ones. Attitudes of the Jewish authorities to the Arabs varies according to who holds power in Israel.

## Constitution of Israel

Israel, like the UK, has no written constitution. The official languages of Israel are Hebrew and Arabic. Use of Hebrew as a common tongue among the Jews in Israel was furthered by the arrival of Jewish immigrants from many countries with differing languages. Constitutionally, Israel is a parliamentary democracy - rare in the Middle East - although what would happen if Arabs came to outnumber Jews in Israel is not clear. If Gaza and the West Bank were included, Arabs would be in the majority. All adult citizens of Israel are eligible to vote, and Arabs born and raised in Israel may register as citizens and vote. This does not apply in the West Bank or

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<sup>47</sup> Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of my Years in Washington* (Crown publishers, New York, 2011), ch. 50: *Olmert makes an offer*.

<sup>48</sup> In the West Bank and Gaza, families of Arab suicide bombers receive a dedicated pension.

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<sup>49</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_UN\\_resolutions\\_concerning\\_Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_UN_resolutions_concerning_Israel)

<sup>50</sup> David Cameron (UK Prime Minister), speech in the Knesset, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

Gaza. Many eligible Arabs currently do not vote, regarding registration as *de facto* recognition of the Israeli State. Israel's parliament, the Knesset, has members belonging to parties which are elected under a proportional representation system. The vow of Members of the Knesset (MKs) is similar to that in many other democratic countries: "*I pledge myself to bear allegiance to the State of Israel and faithfully to discharge my mandate in the Knesset*". The Prime Minister is the principal executive figure, although there is a figurehead president.<sup>51</sup> Through religious courts the Chief Rabbinate has exclusive jurisdiction over Jews in matters of marriage and divorce, and has parallel competence with district courts in some other family matters.

Apart from exemption of Arabs from national service in the IDF, there is no racial discrimination within Israel's law - although discrimination may of course take place on finer scales than the law deals with. Migration to Israel is, however, restricted to Jews and their close relatives.

## Ethnic groups and beliefs in the Holy Land

Who is who in the Holy Land today? The main ethnic groups are Jews and Arabs, with subdivisions within each. Israel's present population is about 8 million: 3/4 are Jewish, 1/5 are Arabs. Israel's Jews comprise 1/3 to 2/5 of world Jewry, depending on definition. More than 40% of the population of Israel lives in Tel Aviv, a modern city. The population of Gaza is about 1.8 million, almost all Arab; the population of the West Bank is about 2.7 million, comprising about 2.1 million Arabs who are rigorously separated from about 500,000 Jewish settlers, including 200,000 in the priority area (for Israel) of East Jerusalem. The main belief systems are secularism (with some New Age), Judaism, Christianity and Islam; these all have their own subdivisions. For each belief, adherents range from fervent to weakly committed and practically secular (i.e. nominal).

**Jews** - The majority of Jews in the Holy Land today are secular, their families having migrated in living memory from largely secular lands. That is why secular evils such as abortion are commonplace in Israel

today.<sup>52</sup> A considerable proportion of Jews, however, are religious. Of these, many are Orthodox and rabbinical, the spiritual descendants of the Pharisees. Orthodox Judaism gives the opinion of ancient rabbis equal weight with the scriptures, for the traditions built around Mosaic Law are held to have been given by God at the same time at Sinai, and transmitted orally until they were written down in the Talmud and other Jewish literature of the era.<sup>53</sup> Rejection of Jesus is built into Orthodox Judaism, and the Old Testament prophecies that fit him are given tortuous interpretations. Between secular Jews and ultra-Orthodox Jews is a spectrum of practice and belief, but all Jews who accept the Old Testament claim the eternal promises of the land of Canaan to the Patriarchs and their descendants. A few Jews are 'karaites' who accept only the Old Testament as having divine authority and are willing to question the Talmud, much as Jesus did. A small number of Jews accept Jesus as Messiah and divine, and the New Testament as equally authoritative with the Old. In Western terminology these are Christians and many of them call themselves 'messianic' Jews; 'messiah' is the Hebrew word translated as 'Christ' in Greek. Their numbers are growing,<sup>54</sup> due partly to conversions within the Holy Land and partly to inward migration of Jews who believe in Jesus.<sup>55</sup> Orthodox Jews regard them as heretics and also traitors in view of historic persecution of Jews in Europe by people that identified as Christian. Messianic Jews face discrimination in various parts of Israeli society.

In areas under Jewish administration there are some congregations in which Jewish and Arab believers in Jesus fully accept each other as brothers. It may be hoped that these

<sup>52</sup> For details, see: <http://www.beadchaim.com>

<sup>53</sup> These traditions refer to the Pentateuch countless times but not vice-versa. The asserted line of oral transmission is given in *Pirkei Avot* ('*Sayings of the Fathers*'), written down two centuries after Jesus.

<sup>54</sup> A brief history of this community is given in '*Through my enemy's eyes: Envisioning reconciliation in Israel-Palestine*' by Salim Munayer and Lisa Loden (Paternoster publishers, Milton Keynes, UK, 2014), ch. 5: '*An Introduction to Israeli Messianic Jewish Identity*.' Before 1967 the number of ethnic Jewish believers in Jesus in the Holy Land never exceeded 200; by the mid-1970s it was estimated at 300; by the end of the 1980s it was estimated at 2500-3000; by the end of the 1990s it was approximately 5000; today it is between 10,000 and 23,000. There has been no detailed survey since that of K. Kjaer-Hansen and B.F. Skjøtt in 1999, '*Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel*' (Caspari Center, Jerusalem).

<sup>55</sup> Those whom Israeli law considers Jews - someone who has not converted to another religion and who has a mother regarded as Jewish - are likely to be screened out if they believe in Jesus; but the present Law of Return allows in certain close relatives of such Jews regardless of their personal faith.

<sup>51</sup> Israel's presidency was declined by Albert Einstein after Chaim Weizmann died in 1952.

believers and their congregations act as kernels for reconciliation, for *'in Christ is neither Jew nor Arab'* (Galatians 3.28, with 'Greek' replaced by 'Arab').

**Muslim Arabs** - Most Palestinian Arabs in the Holy Land identify themselves as Muslims, specifically Sunnis. There is a spectrum of commitment to Islam, from minimal keeping of Islamic practice to total adherence to the Quran and the Hadith; Hadith are ancient traditions about Muhammad that Sunni Muslims aim to emulate. We gladly accept that many Muslim Arabs wish to live in peace, but they do not set the agenda in their community. Islam, like Judaism, but unlike Christianity as expounded in the New Testament, is political, for it commands 'jihad' to impose Sharia law worldwide, and it commands force if Islam is not accepted freely.<sup>56</sup> The Quran states that Abraham was willing to sacrifice Ishmael, his son by the servant girl Hagar (Q37.100-113) and the father figure of the Arab peoples, rather than his son Isaac by his wife Sarah as the Bible relates. The Quran also demands the retaking of any land once held by Muslims (Q2.191), as the Holy Land has been, and it likens Jews to apes and pigs (Q5.60). Palestinian Arab leaders today deny that any Jewish history is associated with Jerusalem and Temple Mount, despite the name of the city being in the Old Testament more than 600 times.<sup>57</sup>

**Christian Arabs** - A significant proportion of Palestinian Arabs identify themselves as Christian, although in the West Bank and Gaza this number is falling with a decline that is historically unprecedented. For the West

Bank the figure has fallen in the last few years from 8% to less than 2.5%.<sup>58</sup> One cause of this decline is that the West Bank has become a worse place to live as a result of the strife and its effects. There is also continuing corruption in public life, but a further reason is awareness by Christians of the rising persecution they face under Islamic rule. Much of the Islamic Middle East is undergoing a brutal 'religious cleansing' of Christians and by May 2014 the Arab-run parts of the Holy Land had risen to become the 34th most inhospitable administration in the world for Christians,<sup>59</sup> generating large-scale Christian emigration.<sup>60</sup> A greater proportion of the Christian community there than of the Muslim community has the financial resources to emigrate and, once emigration has begun, there is incentive to go and join relatives. Arab Christians who remain are consequently the poorest and/or the most willing to undergo persecution.<sup>61</sup> Christian Arabs in Israel, in contrast, remain safe, although they are generally seen in a negative light by Jews (for being Arab) and by Arabs (for being Christian). Increasing numbers of them are volunteering to serve in the IDF.

## Palestinian Arab leadership and identity

For several decades until his death in 2004, Yasser Arafat was the dominant figure among Palestinian Arabs. Matching the viewpoint stated (above) by Azzam Pasha and Jamal Husseini in 1947/8, Arafat called for warfare to overthrow the Jewish State and set up an Arab State throughout the whole of Mandatory Palestine. In 1979 he insisted that no Jews would remain: *"When the Arabs set off their volcano there will be only Arabs in this part of the world... Our people will continue to fuel the torch of the revolution with rivers of blood until the whole of the*

<sup>56</sup> e.g., Q8:39, 9:5, 9:29, 9:41, 9:111, 47:4. Much of sharia is the legal code of the early mediaeval Middle East. The testimony in court of a woman counts as half that of a man. Renunciation of Islam is punishable by death (Q4:89). Islam is a call to believe in the creator God, made when many Arabs were pagan. Islam accepts that the Bible is about the true God but holds that His word in it has been distorted by Jews and Christians (Q5:13-15), who are known as 'people of the book' in contrast to pagans and other outright unbelievers. The call to believe in Allah (meaning 'the god') is accompanied by a call to obedience, but there is no emphasis on the fallen human state, and the character of God is portrayed in the Quran as arbitrary and remote compared to the portrayal in the Bible. Muslims view Jesus as a holy prophet (Q3), but deny that he is divine (Q4:171) or that he died while on the cross (Q4:157). Many verses in the Quran extol peace. These verses are understood to come mainly from the Islamic prophet Muhammad's early years in Mecca, whereas the verses sanctioning force are from Medina, later on. In response to the problem that the Quran contradicts itself in such places, Muslims quote a verse (Q2:106, the 'doctrine of abrogation') stating that Allah may cancel earlier verses with later ones that are better (although this is not consistent with authorship by an omniscient deity). This means that the bellicose verses take precedence.

<sup>57</sup> This is an example of tactical lying, known within Islam as *taqiyya*. Muslims are even permitted to deny Allah under duress (Q16:106).

<sup>58</sup> According to the CIA World Factbook, which is regularly updated; see <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

<sup>59</sup> According to the Open Doors charity that ministers to the persecuted church worldwide. The situation will be worse in Gaza than in the West Bank.

<sup>60</sup> The relative importance of the causes of emigration is unclear. We do not know of any systematic interviewing program of Christian Arabs who have emigrated from the West Bank or Gaza, nor of any comparison of rates of emigration of Christian and Muslim families having similar financial resources.

<sup>61</sup> It is not for us to judge which self-proclaimed Christians are committed or nominal, but the Middle East does suffer from problems similar to Northern Ireland, in which some self-proclaimed Christians have committed terrorist actions at odds with the gospel of Christ. The action at Sabra was of that sort; see also *'Light Force'* by Brother Andrew (Hodder and Stoughton publishers, London, 2004), ch. 10.

occupied homeland is liberated...".<sup>62</sup> In 1996 he reiterated that Jews were not welcome in his plans, contradicting his formal recognition at Oslo in 1993 of Israel's right to exist; he said, "We plan to eliminate the State of Israel and establish a purely Palestinian State. I have no use for Jews".<sup>63</sup> Arafat solicited international aid for his people, but this money was not used to build a functioning society for them.<sup>64</sup> In the year before his death he appeared on the Forbes rich list as sixth wealthiest among 'despots, kings and queens',<sup>65</sup> setting an unhappy example of corruption. Historically, Arabs living in the Holy Land considered themselves to be Syrian Arabs; the notion of a specifically Palestinian Arab identity does not have roots more ancient than their time under the British Mandate,<sup>66</sup> and the borders of the Holy Land given in the Old Testament were not of interest to Arabs.<sup>67</sup>

Within the Palestinian Arab community, dissent from the communal narrative of blameless victimhood is not tolerated.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Quoted by The Associated Press (a major news-gathering organisation), 12<sup>th</sup> March 1979.

<sup>63</sup> Speech to Arab diplomats at the Grand Hotel, Stockholm, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1996, reported in the 'Jerusalem Post', 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1996.

<sup>64</sup> The EU has provided approximately 5.6 billion Euros since 1994. In a case study, EU auditors found extensive anomalies in the use of its money. Their report is at

[http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR13\\_14/SR13\\_14\\_EN.pdf](http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR13_14/SR13_14_EN.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> 'Forbes' magazine, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

<sup>66</sup> When the first Congress of Muslim-Christian Associations met in Jerusalem in February 1919 to choose Palestinian representatives for the Paris Peace Conference, they adopted a resolution stating that "we consider Palestine as part of Arab Syria, as it has never been separated from it at any time. We are connected with it by national, religious, linguistic, natural, economic and geographical bonds". Testimonies to the Peel Commission in the 1930s (by Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, a Palestinian Arab leader) and to the UN in May 1947 by a representative of the Arab Higher Committee said the same thing. Even in 1977, a decade after the PLO had been formed, Zuheir Mohsen, a Palestinian Arab who led a faction of the PLO underwritten by Hafez Assad of Syria, stated that "for political reasons we carefully underwrite our Palestinian identity, because it is of national interest for the Arabs to advocate the existence of Palestinians to balance Zionism. Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity exists only for tactical reasons" (Interview in the Dutch newspaper 'Trouw', 31<sup>st</sup> March 1977).

<sup>67</sup> Some Palestinian Arabs have claimed that they are descended from the Canaanites or the Jebusites, two of the peoples whose land was promised to the Israelites in the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:18-20). This claim presumably aims to further the Arab claim to the land on the basis of ancient prior occupancy. But on that basis the Jewish claim becomes valid if the Canaanite connection is invalid – and the Canaanites vanished from history several thousand years ago yet the Arab claim is modern, leaving an unbridgeable gap. The claim is also inconsistent with Arab descent from Ishmael, because Abraham and his son Ishmael are on a different branch of the ancient family tree from the Jebusites and Canaan (Genesis 10&11).

<sup>68</sup> Jewish dissenters are tolerated within Israel, in contrast. Benny Morris, for one, holds a university position in Beersheba.

## Conclusion

What is going on in the Middle East today? Jerusalem was prophesied to become a cup that would send its neighbours reeling (Zechariah 12). As history reaches a climax an army of all nations will one day be sent against Jerusalem after the Jews have returned from all lands (Joel 3). Israel's Muslim neighbours hate the Jewish State. But the West, whose culture is distributed worldwide, must engage with Islam because of oil and immigration. As a result, world politics is moving to focus on an area of land no larger than Wales, and within it on one city, Jerusalem, just as the Old Testament prophets said. Jerusalem is consistently the stumbling block in negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. Islam and Judaism are both territorial religions - one claiming the whole world, one a particular area - and here they clash.

Please pray for all leaders who seek a just peace in the Middle East; for brothers in Christ there, Jew or Arab; that nominal Arab Christians shall commit deeply to Christ; that Muslims turn to him; and that Jews shall know him as their divine Messiah.

## 2. Old Testament Era

### Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Israel is the name given by God to Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham. Abraham received a promise from God, which God gradually filled out to him. First, God promised that Abraham's descendants would become a great nation: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing; I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12.1-3). Then, in a formal covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15), God promised that his descendants would possess land between the "river of Egypt" and the Euphrates, specifically land then occupied by ten peoples, including the Canaanites. This 'promised land' is not necessarily the whole area between the rivers - a specification which is anyway unclear in the headwaters regions - as on the Exodus the Israelites are described as passing through land between

the Nile and Euphrates *on the way to* the area they have been promised. It cannot therefore be the whole area between the two rivers.

These descendants of Abraham would be enslaved for 400 years in a foreign land (Genesis 15.13-14); the details match the Exodus of the Israelites. God later confirmed this covenant to Abraham: *"The whole land of Canaan where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your seed"* (Genesis 17.8).

In this covenant God commanded Abraham and his descendants to keep faith (Genesis 17.8b-9), but no explicit link was made between faith and the gift of the land (as Romans 11.28-29 confirms). God said only that any uncircumcised descendants of Abraham would be cut off from the blessings of this covenant (Genesis 17.13-14). The promise to Abraham is everlasting, as Mary confirmed centuries later upon being chosen to bear the Messiah: *"He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful, as he promised to our fathers, Abraham and his descendants forever"* (Luke 1.54-55).

Isaac was Abraham's son by his wife, Sarah. Abraham also had a son, Ishmael, by his wife's servant girl Hagar; the Arab peoples generally regard Ishmael as their ancestor. Ishmael will indeed be the ancestor of a great people, but God's promise to Abraham is inherited only through the line of Isaac: *"Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant with his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will surely bless him... I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac"* (Genesis 17.19-22). God later confirms this to Isaac: *"I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me"* (Genesis 26.4-5). The promise then runs specifically through Isaac's son Jacob, who became Israel, and not through Jacob's older twin brother Esau, who rashly renounced his birthright to Jacob - *"I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, and to the north*

*and the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring"* (Genesis 28.13-14). Psalm 105 sums up the promise and its heirs by saying that God *"remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: 'To you I will give the land of Canaan, as the portion you will inherit'"*. (Ps 105.8-11).

What exactly does God mean by saying that he gives this land to the descendants of Jacob/Israel? Who owns it? In Leviticus 25.23 God states that the land is His - for He created it - and that the Israelites would be tenants. God may also exile them from it for misbehaviour (Deuteronomy 28.15,36,64). Yet the permanent nature of the covenant on the land with Abraham suggests that exile will not be permanent (Deuteronomy 30.1-6). It is clearest to say that God has *reserved* this land indefinitely for the Israelites.

## The Exodus

Jacob/Israel and his wives had twelve sons. These are the direct ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Jews take their name from Jacob's son Judah. Another son of Jacob, Levi, became the ancestor of Israel's priests. Jacob's family left Canaan during a famine to live in Egypt. There they grew in number and maintained their identity, but they were made slaves by the Egyptians.

After 400 years, and now a people, they escaped back to Canaan, the 'Promised Land', led by Moses with God's powerful supernatural help. This escape is told in the book of Exodus, which begins with the story of the 'Passover', which the Jews still celebrate annually. The Israelites nevertheless wasted 40 years wandering the desert, because they feared the Canaanites and the other tribes instead of trusting God for victory over them.

The Canaanites had become so degenerate that God himself determined on their annihilation at the hands of the Israelites; this is stated in Genesis 15.16 and Leviticus 18.27. The same chapter of Leviticus tells us that their sins included incest, bestiality and child sacrifice. The moral degeneracy of the region has been confirmed by manuscripts recovered since 1928 from the site of the

ancient town of Ugarit on the coast of northern Syria.<sup>69</sup>

On the way to Canaan, God proposed a covenant with Moses and the Israelites: He will look after them; they will worship Him and obey laws He gives. They accept. God planned a model society, peaceful, stable and happy. It would also bear witness to Him and His character; individuals from outside who heard of God and believed in Him should be welcome to come and join it. The socio-legal system that God planned for Israel begins with the Ten Commandments. The socio-legal system of a people or a culture relates to every part of life; normally it grows symbiotically with the life of the nation, but the gift of a divinely written, hence better, blueprint would kick-start Israel's national life to a high standard, provided it was adhered to. Many of the moral facets of these laws are models for Gentile legal systems today, because human nature has not changed.

When the Israelites approached the area occupied by the ten peoples named to Abraham, exact borders were needed. God duly specified these borders using lines between towns and geological features, recorded in Numbers 34.1-12; see Map 1. (In verse 5 one boundary is the 'water of Egypt,' but a different word is used from the 'river of Egypt' in Genesis 15, which clearly means the Nile; the statement in Numbers 34.6 that the Mediterranean Sea will be the Israelites' western border clearly implies that the 'water of Egypt' refers to a wadi comprising the Egyptian border at that time.) The geographical details in Numbers 34 would have been chosen to be obvious at the time, but since then habitations have come and gone and places have been renamed. Renaming sometimes recycles ancient names from the Bible, but not necessarily with certainty that the name is attached to the original location unless an unbroken tradition exists. The land God gave to the Israelites corresponds roughly to interwar Mandatory Palestine, lying west of the Jordan River, plus some land to its north, and a little land north and east of the Jordan River. Gaza is within the borders specified in Numbers 34, but the most southerly part of the Negev desert extending to Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba is not. Today's 'West Bank' is included within the

boundaries stated in Numbers 34, since the West Bank extends to Jerusalem. Much of the West Bank was the heartland of Judea.

## **In the land; invasions and exiles**

The Israelites already had laws and they did not need a king to maintain the law in their land and defend them from outsiders, for God had given them laws and promised them security in return for obedience. Only priests and judges were needed to run the religious and legal systems. The priests maintained the system of animal sacrifice for human sin, in the Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem. But the Israelites did not keep the laws well, worshipping idols and oppressing their poor, and the nation experienced continued turbulence as a result. After several centuries the people clamoured for a king, 'to be like other nations' in spite of the differences. God did permit them a king (Deuteronomy 17), but he warned the people through the prophet Samuel of the problems associated with a kingship. In succession they had one bad king (Saul), one good king (David) and one further king (Solomon). When Solomon's son increased the already heavy taxation that Solomon had laid on the nation from Jerusalem, in Judah's territory, all of the tribes except Judah's neighbour Benjamin rebelled. This civil war caused a division of the nation into two kingdoms, a federation of the northern tribes, which called itself 'Israel', and the southern kingdom which took the name of its dominant partner, Judah. Meanwhile, idolatry (paganism) grew among the people, to God's disgust. Not one king of the northern federation was Godly, or heeded the prophets whom God sent. Eventually, in 722BC, the northern tribes were overrun by the Assyrians. They were carried north into slavery and, apart from a few individuals who fled south, they have not been seen since.

In the south, the Jews carried on with some good kings and some bad. But the people continued to live corruptly and worship false gods. Prophets through whom God sent warnings of the situation were ignored, or the reforms they triggered were short-lived. In 586BC God acted, chastening the people by letting the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and carry them off into exile, in Babylon. Only after the Persians had conquered the Babylonians did they return, by decree of the Persian king Cyrus. Back in

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.theology.edu/canaan.htm>

Jerusalem, the Jews rebuilt the Temple. They inaugurated it 70 years after its destruction, as prophesied by Jeremiah (25.11, 29.10).

There is no record that, after their return from Babylon, the Jews ever again worshipped false gods in their land, although they still did not greatly honour God - and as a result they knew little security, and often laboured under foreign domination. Israel was conquered by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC. After he died his generals divided his empire amongst themselves. Two dynasties founded by those generals thereafter contended for the Holy Land: the Ptolemies, based in Egypt, and the Seleucids. In the second century BC the Jews rose up against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV ('Epiphanes'), after he determined to impose Greek culture on them. Antiochus outlawed the Sabbath holiday and possession of the Jewish scriptures and, on pain of death, the circumcision of newborn boys; he also desecrated the Temple. In the resulting 'Maccabean' wars, named after the family that led the Jewish revolt, the Jews regained their freedom, but at heavy cost in blood. A century later, in 63BC, the Romans annexed the Holy Land to their empire. Provided that order was kept and taxes were paid, the Romans permitted the Jews their distinctive religious practices. Significant Jewish communities also existed outside the Holy Land by this time, in Mesopotamia and in Alexandria in Egypt.

## Prophecies

Let us consider some of ancient Israel's prophets. Christians often take any unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament, such as a golden age for Jerusalem (as in Isaiah 2.1-3, Micah 4.1-2), to apply in a spiritual sense to the Church. The New Testament does draw specific analogies between ancient Israel and the Christian believer; for instance, instead of the Temple in Jerusalem, Christians become living Temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3.16). And, although Israel's Law still applies to Israelites, the sacrifices are radically reinterpreted in Christ.<sup>70</sup> This process of 'spiritualisation' of God's Word to Israel has often been used uncritically (and even anti-Semiticly) to assert that the Church has replaced Israel in God's purposes. Yet a prophecy given to ancient Israel about

Israel has to mean the people of Israel, or else God would, impossibly, be failing to keep his Word to them if it never came true for them. This principle does not rule out a wider interpretation that applies to Christians, as with the covenant with Abraham, but any wider interpretation of this sort must hold as well as the original meaning applied to Israel, not instead of it. Prophecies about Israel can be expected to come true as accurately and visibly as the prophecies that Christians take to refer to events in Jesus' life.

Jesus mixed His words about the destruction of the Temple with words about the cataclysms that lead to His return at the end of the age. This is a common feature of prophecy: events widely spaced in time, but having features in common, are often spoken of in conjunction. Daniel, for instance, sweeps to the End of the Age without taking note of the Church era in any specifics. Is it possible, therefore, that some of the prophecies of return of the Jews to the Holy Land involve the return that has taken place in the last 150 years, not the return from Babylon? Of the prophecies of return - all portrayed positively - some accurately match the details of the return from Babylon. Others are phrased generally, and are equally consistent with that return and the modern one. These might apply to one or the other or to both; the principle of dual fulfilment of some prophecies is well established. Some of the prophecies, however, are consistent with the present return (to date), but inconsistent with the return from Babylon.<sup>71</sup> Let us examine some of these.

Amos (9.13-15) speaks of a permanent return: "*I will return from captivity my people Israel, and they will rebuild and live in the ruined cities, and plant vineyards... I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them...*". This is the clearest statement, although not the only one, in the Old Testament that a permanent exile is incompatible with the words of the prophets. 'Israel' here refers almost certainly to the northern federation, to whom Amos was sent, but regardless of whether it refers to the northern tribes or the whole nation, no previous return - including that from Babylon

<sup>70</sup> A fuller discussion of the church in relation to Israel is set out in the New Testament section of this document.

<sup>71</sup> The subject is explored in depth in Arthur Kac's book *The Rebirth of the State of Israel: Is it of God or Men?* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1958), chapter 2.

with perhaps a smattering of descendants of the northern tribes - has yet proved permanent.

Isaiah (11.11-12) specifically prophesies a second return of a remnant, in which the people of Judah are gathered from the four corners of the earth, not just from one region, Babylon: *"In that era God's hand will a second time recover a remnant of his people, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath and from maritime regions; he will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth"*. The first time that a remnant was recovered was from Babylon. This second time is from all parts of the earth. The question remains: in which era? The earlier part of the chapter makes it clear that this is the era in which the Messiah will set the world aright. Whatever the detailed sequence of events and, so far as Orthodox Jews are concerned, whoever be the Messiah!, it cannot refer to the Babylonian episode, but it is at least consistent with the present return.

What of prophecies of exile? Some must refer to the exile to Babylon, some are broadly phrased. But, right at the start of Israel's life as a nation, Moses warned of the exile of a Jewish kingdom to one region: *"The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your ancestors"* (Deuteronomy 28.36) and of an exile to all parts of the earth, in: *"The LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other"* (Deuteronomy 28.64).

Deuteronomy 30.1-5 strongly suggests that these warnings will be activated. The end of the kingdom of Israel led to a localised exile, and the post-apostolic dispersal was not the end of a kingdom, so they must refer to distinct events. A clear prophecy of a second exile from the land was given by Jesus Himself on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21.20-24). To His words and to the New Testament we now turn.

### 3. New Testament

Many Christians do not look to the New Testament for words about the future of Israel, with the possible exception of the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple in AD70 and the subsequent scatterings of the people. However, a more in-depth analysis reveals some interesting insights. These are examined in this section.

#### Reference to Israel in the New Testament

In the New Testament all but one of the references to 'Israel' apply to the Jewish people. This single exception refers to 'Israel' as the land of Israel (Matt. 2.21)<sup>72</sup>.

Jews are all descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and take their name from Jacob/Israel's son Judah, which means 'praise'. The words 'Jew' or 'Jews', referring to those of this ethnic origin, occur in the New Testament nearly 200 times. There is a single occurrence where the word, is used in a different way, Romans 2.28-29<sup>73</sup>. Here, Paul states that a true Jew must have the inward condition of heart that earns him or her the praise of God.

#### Israel and the Church

##### The Jewish roots of the Church

Jesus was by birth a Jew. His genealogies are found in Matthew 1.1-17 and Luke 3.23-38. He was descended from the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of the tribe of Judah (whence 'Jew') and the family line of King David. The Gospel was preached first to the Jews, for Jesus declared that He was *"sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matt.15.24). Jesus' initial followers were largely Jews. The first leaders of the Church were Jews. The Old and New Testaments were both written by Jews with the probable exception of Luke's Gospel and Acts. The origins of the Church are Jewish in that Jesus fulfils hundreds of Messianic prophecies set out in the Old Testament. Jesus himself claimed to be the Messiah (John 4.25,26) and said, *"salvation is of the Jews,"*

<sup>72</sup> Matthew 2:21: *"Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel"*.

<sup>73</sup> Romans 2:28-29: *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God".* (NKJV).

(John 4.22). On only two recorded occasions did He minister to Gentiles. All of the Apostles were Jewish.

When Gentiles became a part of the Church, its new character had to be defined. Some Jews insisted that the Gentiles be circumcised and keep Jewish Law, even insisting that salvation was dependent upon it. The Council of Jerusalem was called, and pronounced that Gentile believers in Jesus are accepted by God without having to be circumcised or keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15).

### **Is there one way of salvation for the Jew and another for the Gentile?**

There is a teaching known as Dual Covenant Theology which states that, whereas Gentiles receive salvation by entering into the New Covenant through faith in Christ, Jews already have salvation through the Old Covenant if they keep the Law of Moses.

Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"*. (John 14.6). Paul wrote, *"There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time"*. (1 Tim 2.5-6) and proclaimed, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the gentile"* (Romans 1.16). The New Testament teaches that the only sure way of salvation, for Jew and for Gentile alike, is through Jesus Christ.

### **Does the Church replace Israel in God's purposes?**

A teaching that has remained widespread since the early days of Christianity asserts that the Church has permanently replaced Israel as God's chosen people, and has become the 'New Israel' or the 'Spiritual Israel'. All of the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament then apply to the Church, under the New Covenant. This view is often called 'Replacement Theology' or 'Supersessionism'. For further comments on this doctrine, please see Appendix 1.

In the nearly 80 appearances in the New Testament of the words 'Israel' or 'Israelite(s)', 'Israel' is never used as a

synonym for the Church. Nor does the phrase 'New Israel' occur anywhere in the New Testament". 'Israel' in the New Testament, therefore, does not mean the Church.

Even if the purposes of God in the current age are worked out largely through the Church, there are no indications in the New Testament that the promise made to Israel concerning the covenant upon the land is at any point revoked, or that God has no further use for the Jews. Indeed, there remain promises to the people of Israel which are yet to be fulfilled. These are briefly explored below.

### **Is the New Testament silent about the continuing purposes of God for the Jewish People and the Land?**

#### **The Jews - God's destiny for them**

Paul explains the seeming paradox as to how the Jews - the privileged, chosen people of God, a divinely cultivated nation, through whom the promised Messiah would come - could reject the very One who came to save them (Rom 9).

Paul looks back at Israel's history to reveal what he calls 'election'. Paul explains that the election process does not depend on man's effort but on the mercy of God (Rom 9.16). The children of Israel tried to earn salvation through the Law but they did not attain it, because *"they pursued it not by faith but by works"* (Rom 9.32). In this way Israel had spurned God's love, and Paul writes that he longs for the Israelites to be saved. He continues to assert that outside of Christ there is no salvation. Jews still need faith for salvation, because nobody keeps the Law perfectly.

Paul then deals with the question, *"Did God reject his people?"* (Rom. 11). He answers it immediately, *"By no means!"*, which is very emphatic in the Greek (μη γένοιτο) - absolutely no way! He then repeats, *"Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!"* (Rom 11.11). Three times Paul insists that God has not rejected His people, the Jews. His language is the strongest possible.

Paul goes on to say that, just as in Elijah's day, there remains a faithful remnant of Israel, chosen by grace and not by works. The rest, Paul says, have been *"hardened"* (Rom

11.7). Paul then describes the astonishing revelation that this hardening of Israel was so that the Gentiles might receive salvation. This would, in turn, have the effect of making Israel jealous. Paul sets out the excitement of what will follow, *“But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!”* (Rom 11.11,12, 25). Israel will ultimately turn back to God and this will bring a great blessing to the world. Even the Jews’ unbelief has been used by God to save the Gentiles. The blessings of the Kingdom are for the whole world, and when Israel returns to the Messiah it will be *“greater riches”* for the world and *“life from the dead!”* (Rom 11.15).

### Paul’s Image of the Olive Tree

The olive tree, described in Romans 11, represents Israel. Its holy root represents the patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. From this root grew the Jewish people, represented by the *“branches”*. The Gentiles were a wild olive tree, without the same rich roots, unattended by any caring farmer, and largely fruitless, *“...without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”* (Ephesians 2.12).

Some of the branches of the olive tree *“have been broken off”* - meaning unbelieving Jews (Rom 11.20). The Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus are now the living continuation of the olive tree. The Gentiles, the *“wild olive shoots”*, through their faith in Jesus, have been grafted in among the other branches and *“now share in the nourishing sap”* from the olive root. Thus, rather than **replacing** Israel, the Gentile Church is **engrafted into** Israel’s tree and shares its roots. Emphatically Paul says, *“You do not support the root, but the root supports you”* (Rom 11.18). Twice Paul warns the Gentiles, *“Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either”*. Gentiles who do not continue in His kindness are in danger of being broken off. However, the broken branches of Israel, if they do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted in again by God (Rom. 11.23-24).

### All Israel will be saved

Paul continues, *“Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in”* (Rom 11.25). Their hardening, described as a mystery, is temporary and partial, not permanent and total. Paul then rises to a crescendo and prophesies, *“And so all Israel will be saved”*. (Rom 11.26). What does this mean?

In the midst of many suggestions we assert that there will be a significant national recognition of Jesus as their Messiah, and a turning to him. We note that more Jews are coming to Christ in our time than at any point in history.

*“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”* (Romans 11.29).

### God’s Ultimate Destiny for the Land

Paul upholds the Old Testament Covenants and their promises. He uses the present tense about these in Romans 9.4, showing that they still apply. The New Testament does not rescind the promise of the land being given to the Jewish people as a permanent possession. Paul writes, *“No matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ”*. (2 Cor 1.20). Among those promises there are over 200 giving the land of Canaan to the physical seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

### The Return of the Jews to the Land

There are three New Testament scriptures that suggest a physical presence of the Jews in the land:

- *“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by gentiles until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled”*. (Luke 21.24)

Jesus is the only one to prophesy the diaspora that occurred in AD70 and AD135. Two groups of people are involved, Jews and Gentiles. Either Jerusalem remains in its trampled state indefinitely, once the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, or the Jews return. Which is it?

- *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ...See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ”* (Matthew 23.37-39)

In this passage, Jesus was addressing Pharisees, religious Jews of his day, in Jerusalem. His words imply that Jews will be living in Jerusalem at the time of His return, who will welcome Him. This also alludes to Zechariah's prophecy "*They will look on me, the one they have pierced...*" (Zech 12.10).

Taken together, these passages clearly show that there will be Jews inhabiting Jerusalem at some point in the future, to hail the Lord when He returns.

- "*Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1.6)

The disciples asked Jesus this question, and He appears in his reply not to deny that the kingdom would one day be restored to Israel. In Jesus' day, the Jewish people and their leaders, and indeed the disciples, expected a political Messiah who would free them from Roman oppression and rule. In this verse we have a glimpse of this expectation.

This single question reveals four points uppermost in the minds of the disciples:

1. Israel used to be/have a kingdom. That is, it had its own territory, ruled over by a monarchy.
2. Israel had lost its kingdom. For centuries, since the Babylonians destroyed their kingdom, the Jewish people had been ruled over successively by Persians, Greeks and Romans.
3. The kingdom would be restored to Israel. This expectation was based on the prophetic promises made to them in the Old Testament and has been considered elsewhere in this document.
4. Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel. They believed in His divine power and ability to do so.

The disciples were sure that Jesus would agree. The only uncertainty was the timing. *When* is He going to do this - imminently; or when He comes again? (Matt.24.1-31).

In His reply, Jesus appears to endorse the validity of their enquiry by going straight to their question about timing. They were not to know when, as this is the prerogative of the Father. He then tells them that, in the meanwhile, they have work to do once they have been empowered with the Holy Spirit. They have a Gospel to preach to all the world.

## 4. The Diaspora

Three decades after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection the Jews rose up against the Romans. They were defeated by legions under the command of the emperor's son Titus, and in 70AD Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed amid great bloodshed. This event took place within a generation of Jesus' crucifixion, as he had prophesied (Matthew 24.34). On the arch of Titus in Rome depicting his triumphs is an image of the Jewish branched ritual candleholder, the *menorah*, close to the Colosseum which was constructed largely by Jewish slaves taken captive at this time.

Another sixty years later the Jews in the Holy Land proclaimed as Messiah a man called Simon bar Kochba. Jewish believers in Jesus distanced themselves from this claim and from his followers. The uprising led by bar Kochba was soon defeated by the Romans, and further reprisals followed. Many Jews fled before Hadrian's legions and quit the Holy Land, which the Romans renamed *Palestina* after the Philistines. The Romans rebuilt Jerusalem (as Aelia Capitolina), but they forbade the city and the area around it to Jews except for one day each year.

The failure of the bar Kochba revolt marked the start of 18 centuries of mass Jewish exile. If they were exiled to Babylon for 70 years for idolatry and callousness, what could cause God to exile them for 25 times that length? According to Jesus' elliptical phrase as he wept over Jerusalem, it happened because they "*did not recognise the time [they] were visited*" (Luke 19.44). Their exile would activate the curses for disobedience specified in their national covenant: Jews would be oppressed and robbed (Deuteronomy 28.29), their women raped (v.30), they would be the butt of jokes (v.37), finding no peace but only anxiety (v.65-7). Yet, remarkably, the Jews maintained their identity in this long dispersion (something that unfulfilled prophecies about them would necessitate). During this exile, the '*galut*,' their separateness was maintained by their keeping of as many of the distinctive laws of Moses as they could. Gentile jealousy at their success in trading, and antipathy to their religion, meant that they were often persecuted.

Persecution in turn made them stick together more closely.

Early in the fourth century the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian. He put an end to persecution of Christianity within the Empire. The Jews regarded Christianity as a heresy of Judaism and they had often got Christians, particularly ethnic Jews who had converted, into trouble with the authorities; now the boot shifted with scant magnanimity to the other foot. Constantine founded the city of Constantinople on the site of a settlement called Byzantium (today Istanbul), to which he relocated from Rome. The empire had already been divided administratively into two, and the Greek-speaking eastern part was now run from Constantinople, while the Latin-speaking western part was still run from Rome.

A final pagan Roman Emperor, Julian 'the Apostate', encouraged the Jews to rebuild the Temple in AD363. Work began, but a large earthquake stopped the project and killed or injured many workers. Resumption of work was then halted when fire burst spontaneously from the foundations. This event is recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus, a pagan historian writing less than 30 years afterwards,<sup>74</sup> and Sozomen, a Christian historian writing 80 years after the event who said he had interviewed eye witnesses.<sup>75</sup>

After Julian, the ban on Jews entering Jerusalem was enforced again. Constantine's successors made Christianity the only religion recognised by the authorities throughout the Roman Empire. By this time the Jews were writing down their traditions and commentaries on the Old Testament so as to preserve them in their exile; the result is a large work called the *Talmud*. There is a 'Jerusalem Talmud' compiled in the 4th century by Jews who had remained in Palestine, and the larger Babylonian Talmud compiled by Jews living in Mesopotamia (in the Persian Empire), which was completed a century later. Various rabbinic schools had contended around Christ's time; the Talmud conveys principally the views of Rabbi Hillel's school, which prevailed.

The Western half of the Roman Empire now crumbled into a Dark Age. The eastern

half, the Byzantine Empire, contended with the pagan Persians for power in the region east of the Mediterranean. The politicised Christianity of the Byzantines was markedly anti-Semitic; this tone was characterised in a notorious set of sermons delivered by John Chrysostom late in the 4th century.

The Persians captured Jerusalem in AD614, with the aid of a significant number of Jewish soldiers. They held it until AD629, when the Byzantines regained it. A new power then arose out of Arabia: Islam. In AD637 the first generation of Muslims captured the Holy Land. These changes of overlordship all match Jesus' prophecy that "*Jerusalem shall be downtrodden by the gentiles, until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled*" (Luke 21.24). Byzantium kept Islam out of Eastern Europe, but the Persian Empire was overrun and its Zoroastrian religion supplanted by Islam. Muslim rulers permitted Jews to move to and live in Jerusalem.

In 1071 Byzantium lost a major battle against Muslim forces, and was forced to ask Western Europe, newly emergent from its Dark Age, for help. By then the papacy and the 'Orthodox' Christianity of Byzantium - respectively the Latin- and Greek-speaking churches - had fallen out, and the papacy turned the Byzantine request into a campaign to recapture the Holy Land for Christendom. These were the Crusades. As a response to centuries of Islamic campaigning against Europe, and as an episode in the ebb and flow of empires, the Crusades are unexceptional - although from the theological standpoint, Jesus had said that his kingdom was not of this world. In 1099 Crusaders took Jerusalem from Islamic control, massacring all Muslims and Jews in the city. A lifetime later Muslim forces regained Jerusalem, and soon took back the rest of the Holy Land. Further Crusades proved futile, and Palestine would remain in Islamic hands until the 20th century.

In the 11th century one group of Jews had reached the Rhineland. At that time they comprised perhaps 3% of worldwide Jewry. They then spread eastward into central and Eastern Europe. These are the 'Ashkenazi' Jews who, including their offshoots in the USA, grew to 92% of Jewry between the two world wars. In mediaeval Europe Jews were often persecuted, as 'Christ-killers', by people who professed the Christian faith, yet

<sup>74</sup> 'Roman History', book 23, chapter 1.

<sup>75</sup> 'Ecclesiastical History', book 5, chapter 22.

who turned a blind eye to Jesus' Jewish identity. At various times Jews were restricted to living in specific parts of cities (ghettos), forced to wear distinctive clothing (in the 1555 papal bull *Cum nimis absurdum*), subject to arbitrary property confiscation, forbidden to gather for Jewish religious worship, and ordered to convert to institutional forms of Christianity or leave the country, on pain of death. Those who converted were often monitored minutely for adherence to Jewish practices - even practices having little to do with religion - and might be accused of heresy and taken before the Inquisition merely on suspicion. Heresy was regarded in mediaeval Catholic Europe as treason and was often punished by death; inquisitorial trials were far from impartial. Ultimatums expelling all Jews were issued in England in 1290, Spain in 1492, Portugal in 1496/7, and France four times between 1254 and 1394 (with readmission of Jews in between, facilitating repeated ransom). Whenever a deadline for expulsion became imminent, Jews were unable to sell their properties at normal market value.

The Jews who quit Spain in 1492 (the year it also expelled the last Muslim rulers of its south) and Portugal in 1497 were known as Sephardic Jews. They settled in various places, including the Ottoman Empire - which by then had overrun Byzantium (in 1453) and expanded into the Balkans.

In the 16th century Martin Luther hoped that a better presentation of the Gospel would convert the Jews to Christianity, but when they still did not convert he turned on them with fierce polemic. The Reformation did not at first improve the situation for Jews in protestant lands. Nonetheless the monolithic form of Western Christianity with its anti-Semitic characteristics was splintered, and soon Jews could avoid religious persecution by moving from one European country to another.

The religious freedom that ultimately grew out of the splintering of a monolithic and politicised Church in Western Europe was abused in a secularising movement that grew in the 18th century in Western Europe, known as the Enlightenment. Religious persecution of Jews dwindled in lands where secularisation was significant. They were permitted to become citizens, and since then they have been influential in Western

civilisation out of all proportion to their number.<sup>76</sup> Between 1901 and 2007, for example, Jews won 48 of the 181 Nobel Prizes awarded in physics - more than one-quarter, despite comprising 0.2% of the world's population and perhaps 1% of the population of the developed world at the time. Their influence triggered resentment against them, culminating in the Holocaust.

The modern State of Israel was founded in 1948 in the wake of World War II. The proportion of the world's Jews who live there has slowly increased and is today a little less than half, with as many again in the USA. Less than one-tenth of the number living in the USA reside in any other country, although these smaller Jewish communities exist across many nations today.

## 5. Security and Justice

The issues of security and justice within the borders of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank are among the most contentious in the world at this time. These aspects of the conflict often dominate all others and affect any discussion of the theology of the restoration of Israel, or its possible eschatological purposes.

Discussions on the theology of Israel become intermingled with views on security and justice. If we separate out the theology from issues of justice, emotive responses based on our own position on justice do not, quite rightly, end up determining our theology (which is the great danger); and, conversely, our theology of Israel does not skew our position on justice (which it all too often does). We have, therefore, dealt with theology elsewhere in this work, and now go on to deal with justice separately.

A second point is that positions on justice and security are so strongly entrenched and polarised that there is great unwillingness to listen to anything which comes from the 'opposing camp'. We therefore try to explore this issue of competing 'narratives'.

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<sup>76</sup> See Steven Pease's book '*The Golden Age of Jewish Achievement*' (Deucalion Press, Sonoma, California, 2009).

A third issue arises out of the difficulties of agreeing on what is 'just' even when this would seem obvious. The fact that followers of three major world religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, not to mention Secular Humanism, would define what is just from different starting points, is therefore explored in a little more detail.

Finally, we set out some of the aspects and examples of the conflict from one 'narrative' or the other as even-handedly as possible, to provide the reader with more insight into the problems faced by both sides in this most difficult of conflicts.

### The problem of 'Narratives'

In their book *'Through my Enemy's Eyes'*<sup>77</sup>, Salim Munayer, an Israeli Arab Christian, and Lisa Loden, a Messianic Jew, explore a very useful concept: we tend to live our lives by 'narratives', which become very entrenched in any situation of conflict. Even those who say they live by the Bible often defend an interpretation which differs from that held by another Christian. Very briefly, the thesis is that we start by believing in a 'position' which we then defend until it becomes part of us. The more severe the conflict, and the more involved we feel ourselves to be, the more we invest in our narrative, and its defence, and the less we are inclined to give credence to any 'opposing narrative'. In its most extreme form, the very sense of identity of the individual is invested into the narrative by which they live, and to have the position challenged is then a threat to everything that the person perceives themselves to be. Alliances are formed and positions buttressed against any serious challenge to the perceived rightness of the position. No abuse is too much for the opposing view which has to be defeated at all costs. Elements of this thinking are present in many situations of conflict, ranging from a dispute with a neighbour, or an inter-familial dispute, to positions taken in international conflict.

Thus, if we believe God is behind the re-establishment of Israel, we may easily buy into the narrative that defends everything Israel does with missionary zeal, as if the very name of God were at stake, and tend to brand anything coming from the Palestinian side as lies and propaganda. Many supporters

of Israel may view the media as anti-Semitic unless it is uncritically pro-Israel, and view the Palestinians largely as ungrateful aggressors. The opposite is also true: to those sympathetic to the Palestinians, the media may appear pro-Israel, Israel is the oppressor, is accused of perpetrating war-crimes, is guilty of massive injustice. The result is claim and counter claim, much of which takes only one view.

Anyone who has had dealings with this situation is familiar with the way the arguments go! Yet in any war situation the first casualty on both sides is normally truth, and in reality, a largely secular Israeli Government is unlikely to act with Biblical justice on every occasion, while Hamas, the Government of Gaza at the time of writing, with a charter which still contains the clause about the elimination of the Jewish State, is equally unlikely always to act with pure motives and perfect justice. More openness to understand the situation from all sides will help us to explore the various aspects more constructively.

### Definition of Justice

There are difficulties in how the word justice is understood by the various groups involved. A way forward is discussed:

We probably know the Dictionary definition:

*Just: Equitable, fair, deserved, well grounded ...*

*Justice: Just conduct; fairness; exercise of authority in maintenance of right...<sup>78</sup>*

The Hebrew word commonly used in the Old Testament is MISHPAT, which means judgement that is just<sup>79</sup>.

From this simple start, we immediately run into intense argument over the practical outworking of 'Just', 'Fair' and 'Right', as applied to particular issues of law and conflict in the land, conditioned by the religious or social background of the protagonists and their narratives. What initially seemed obvious, rapidly becomes highly complex.

To better understand the difficulty, it is worth exploring the religious frameworks that

<sup>77</sup> Paternoster Press, Milton Keynes, UK. 2013.

<sup>78</sup> *'The Concise Oxford Dictionary'*, 6th edition.

<sup>79</sup> See Proverbs 1:1-3 for instance.

shape opinion as to what is considered 'just' in this conflict. All of us think we know what is just, but our 'knowing' varies from person to person. Even within a single religion, different schools of thought will influence the understanding of believers as to what is 'just' in any particular situation. This is even before we begin to explore the major differences between the three religions involved in the dispute.

### Christian definitions of what is 'Just'

We start with the Bible, since Christians and Jews alike appeal to the canon of the Old Testament. Even here, various strands of Christianity will take differing views.

The Biblical definition is given by precedence and practice, as is the normal Biblical way. Individual texts are used in the formulation of doctrine for the ordering of what is right and just, but in practice it is the cumulative outworking of these laws and precepts, with consideration given to outcomes and prophetic utterances, which actually create the culture of Biblical justice. We also note explanatory phrases such as "*for this reason, God sent a plague etc...*" in order to attribute a consequence to God's justice. These factors together inform conscience by repeated use and practice.

Biblically, the 'law of first usage' in this case takes us to Genesis 18.19:

*"For I have chosen him [ABRAHAM] ... to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just ..."*

The word is often used to describe the character and actions of God:

*"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he"* (Deut.32.4).

*"You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right."* (Nehemiah 9.13).

*"In all that has happened to us you have been just"*. (Nehemiah 9.33).

Those who must please the Lord are instructed to act likewise or are commended for doing so:

*"David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people"* (2 Samuel 8.15).

*"For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones"* (Psalm 37.28).

*"The proverbs of Solomon...for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, for doing what is right and just and fair"* (Proverbs 1.1-3).

Notice the juxtaposition of 'just' with 'right', 'upright', 'faithful' and 'fair'. The clear intention is that society in God's domain should be run with perfect justice and equity reflecting the very nature of God Himself, whose judgments are always just, right, upright, faithful and fair.

The Christian reader is then left with the personal responsibility to deduce precisely what constitutes 'right', 'upright', 'faithful' and 'fair' in situations of everyday life. What informs the conscience that such a thing is not 'fair'? At what point do we appeal to the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, and how do we then deal with the various factors that influence detailed understanding? At what point will we admit that our prejudices, aligned to our narrative are affecting a straightforward reading of scripture? Or at what point do we declare that it is the Spirit of God working in a believer who informs the conscience; in which case, why is it that disputes concerning the correctness or otherwise of such fundamental issues as divorce and remarriage, as well as many other subjects, can divide the community of Bible-believing Christians?<sup>80</sup>

It is these questions that make the subject of justice so complex, especially when the scriptures of differing religions are often in direct conflict, with definitions of the law of Allah in the Quran at variance with Biblical laws. Thus, the understanding of statements such as 'God has given the land to the sons of Abraham by ancient covenant' can

<sup>80</sup> To explore this further, as an example of the difficulty: Even within the narrow confines of Conservative Bible Believing Evangelicalism, there is a range of opinion about what is right on the issue of divorce, from no divorce and remarriage being possible under any circumstances (the passages in Matthew 5:32, and Matthew 19:3-9 being deemed to apply only to betrothal), to divorce and remarriage being permissible only to couples where adultery has taken place, taking once again those same two scriptures to apply to married people; to there being a wider permissibility, based upon arguments from Grace and appeals to what is fair and just from a human standpoint.

lead to division even among self-designated Bible-believing Christians, concerning implications for the ownership of particular plots of land, and how the rights of both Arabs and Jews should be guarded and administered. The problem is further compounded by the asymmetrical nature of the Abrahamic covenant on the land, since the true descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob, are given the land by covenant but the Arab Israelis would, under that same covenant, be ‘the foreigners living in the land’. (We will explore this further below). Fortunately there are two principles that help us through this:

Firstly, before God and His Law, the oppressed obtains the same justice as the rich man. The poor and the rich must be treated alike before Him. The concept of the poor man and the king being equal under the law, beneath which rich and powerful and poor and weak alike must stand, did not start with Magna Carta, it began with the Law of Moses given by God. Where justice fails for any section of that community under that law, the State called to administer that law fails its responsibility. Biblically, nations as well as individuals are called to account for the quality of their justice. In this context, Exodus 22.21, 23.9, Leviticus 19.34, and Deuteronomy 10.19 (among others) talk about justice for the foreigner living in the land, who is to enjoy justice and protection along with the people of God, among whom he has chosen to live<sup>81</sup>. No matter how we understand justice, it is clear from the Bible that it must be administered equally to the rich and the poor, to the ruler and the ruled alike, and it must be administered equally to the Israelite and the foreigner living in the land. Whatever informs one’s narrative, whether that be ‘Justice for the Palestinian’, or ‘Justice for the Jew’, must inform our concept of justice for all, and not just one side. This should help us. Whichever borders we assume and whatever is good for the Jewish Israeli, the same rules must be applied to the Palestinian living within the land of the Abrahamic covenant. Whatever justice we seek for the Palestinian, we must also apply equally to the Jewish Israeli. There cannot be one rule for one side and a different rule for the other. This is often where we need to

challenge our own narratives. It gives us the first step forward.

The second point for Christian understanding in this conflict is that Jesus gives us several helpful definitions and appraisals of God’s laws, which are also confirmed by subsequent apostolic teaching. When asked for the most important commandments in the Law, Jesus answered:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments”.* (Matthew 22.37-40)

Thus, we can assess what is in accordance with God’s Law on the basis of what comes from God’s definition of love. This is further developed by Jesus’ rebuke to Pharisees concerned with minute issues of the law, and tithing in particular:

*“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former”* (Matt. 23.23)

Jesus points to the overarching principles of God’s Law. He defines these as ‘justice, mercy and faithfulness’. If these are applied, then the detail will follow. He further gives a summary for behaviour as: *“Do to others what you would like them to do for you”.* (Luke 6.31 and Matt.7.12)

Therefore, the Christian may pose the question: What constitutes justice, mercy and faithfulness in this situation? We could then go further and ask what we would wish for ourselves in such a situation, recognising that to love justice and mercy, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, are crucial. In this way we might begin to find a new way of looking at the issues arising in the Middle East today.

Jesus makes no distinction about whom to love. He commands us to love our enemies who are also made in the image of God. So whichever narrative we live by, whichever side is our ‘enemy’, we must love them. And our guide is to do to them what we would

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<sup>81</sup> There is of course a great difference between the foreigner who chooses to live peaceably among the people of God, and the one who does not, but let us for now restrict our consideration to the former.

wish them to do to us. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to extend this concept to wishing for our enemies the same as we would wish for those whom we would naturally favour. God's Law is summed up in the word 'love', as Paul teaches: "*The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself". Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.* (Rom. 13.9-10)

Whether the justice, or perceived injustice, experienced by any individual or community in Israeli administered territory would seem just, or unjust, should be considered as if it were happening to ourselves or to someone from 'our preferred side'. This 'Golden Rule' applies to any two individuals, including a government official tasked with enforcing the laws and a person who opposes those laws whilst living under them. Jesus points us to the need for personal care for the individual whilst upholding the Law for all.

This then is the Biblical mandate given by Jesus, and provides us a further check on interpretation that we need:

- Firstly, whatever rule regarding justice we apply to one side, ought also to be applied equally to the other. If the one perceived as victim is of another culture, language, nationality or narrative it should make no difference.
- Secondly, to ask what we would expect for ourselves if it were ourselves or our own families who were involved. If the victim is of another culture, language, nationality or narrative it should make no difference.

These two criteria come from the Bible and are a good rule for judging if our judgments are just. Against these two criteria we are then in a better position to consider the more detailed scriptures on justice and the theology of Israel.

#### **Islamic definitions of what is 'Just'**

The laws of Islam vary considerably from those in Judeo-Christian traditions, giving rise to different verdicts on what is just. Furthermore, within Islam there are

differences in interpretation of the holy books, and the extent to which they are practised and observed. Doctrinal differences between Sunni and Shia Islam, for instance, are at least as great as the differences between Catholics and Conservative Evangelicals. The enmity is as great as that in history between different traditions within Christianity, who frequently went to war. Thus some 'Westernised', 'nominal' or 'cultural' Muslims would not hold the same views on 'jihad' (holy war) as Hamas or ISIS. Two of the groups in the Middle East with which we have to deal, Hamas and Hezbollah, are towards the fundamentalist and extremist end of the scale, whereas nominal and/or peace-loving Muslims would be viewed as apostates by such fundamentalists.

Firstly, Islam is an expansionist territorial religion. Within this is the doctrine that any territory that has once been Islamic, must remain so, or must be retaken for Allah, if necessary by force (Quran, Sura 2.191). This has an enormous bearing on the land of Israel - territory which was Islamic for centuries. Therefore, the State of Israel, not Islamic but following Judaism, is an anathema which must be corrected. Beyond any sense of injustice, this doctrine is a significant motivator for the young jihadist, willing to fight for Allah. Any territorial religion must have a doctrine of war, and this is the case with Islam. Christians need to note this, because their religion is not territorial and can expand without the need to rule over territory. Added to this, Islam can only fully operate in the context of an Islamic State observing Islamic, or Sharia Law. It is thus also a political system.

Secondly, within Islam, the doctrine concerning Israel is that God has finished with the Jews, and that Christians and Jews alike must convert to Islam, or be forced to take on second class citizenship, called 'dhimmi' status. There are indeed verses in the Quran and in the Hadith (the traditions of Mohammed) that state that Jews and Christians are to be slaughtered. These include: "*Some people (ie the Jews of Bani bin Quraiza) agreed to accept the verdict of Sad bin Muadh. So the prophet sent for him (ie Sad bin Muadh). He came riding a donkey, and when he approached the mosque, the Prophet said, 'Get up for the best of you' or said 'Get up for your chief'. Then the Prophet said, 'O Sad! These people have*

agreed to accept your verdict'. Sad said, 'I judge their warriors should be killed and their children and women should be taken captives'. The Prophet said, 'You have given a judgment similar to Allah's judgment (or the king's judgment)'" (Sahih Bukhari 5.148)<sup>82</sup>

"Allah's Apostle said, "The hour [of resurrection] will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, "O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him""". (Sahih Bukhari 4.177)<sup>83</sup>

"O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. He among you who takes them for friends is (one) of them. Lo! Allah guides not wrongdoing folk". (Quran Sura 5.51)

Thus, theologically, the mainstream view in Islamic teaching is that a State of Israel in the Muslim heartland cannot be tolerated, and cannot be allowed to prosper peacefully without being in conflict with Islam's scriptures.

Thirdly, within Islam there is no assurance of salvation, except for martyrdom in the cause of fighting for Allah. Hence the willingness of so many young Muslims to die the martyr's death and so confirm their place in paradise.

Fourthly, the doctrine of 'taqiyya' permits the Muslim to deceive his enemies in time of war. Sura 16.106 permits a Muslim even to deny Allah when under duress. Furthermore, the doctrine of 'hadnah' permits Muslims to make peace when it is advantageous to the Islamic cause, but to break any alliances once in a position of strength. This kind of politics may indeed have been practised throughout the era of Christendom, but was not done with religious permission and cannot be justified in the light of internationally accepted norms of honesty and justice. Nonetheless, it is theologically condoned within sections of Islam. This has serious

implications with regard to trust in interstate dealing.

Finally, many Muslim societies not only have systems of law upheld and administered by secular courts, but also dispense Sharia Law, which derives from the interpretation of Allah's commands in the Quran, and the principles derived from the Hadith. Judgments, therefore, as to what constitutes justice, and what is right, 'upright and true, will come from that source.

Therefore, the Muslim understanding of what is just, upright and true, differs from the Western mindset, because Islam differs from Western norms. Not all actions of the Arab citizens of Gaza, the West Bank, or UN-recognised Israel are motivated exclusively by religious observance and zeal. But it is reasonable to conclude that, where Islam is consistent with violence towards Israel, it does not act as a constraint, but forms the cultural backdrop against which decisions are made and justified.

Not all Arabs are Muslims. There are Christian groups within the Arab populations in the relevant areas of the West Bank, and Gaza. However, these groups are increasingly persecuted, and tend to follow the narrative of their host population. There are hopeful signs of attempts to reach out across populations and protagonist lines, but these are insufficiently developed as yet to make much impact.

#### Judaistic definitions of what is 'Just'

Not all Jews in Israel are devout followers of a unified set of religious precepts, and great variety again exists. The majority of Jews in Israel are secular or largely so. Within the Jewish practice of their religion, based upon the Old Testament (as Christians call it) are many interpretations and commentaries. Some sections of the Jewish population would easily compromise with the Arabs in order to have peace. Others take the various passages in the Old Testament concerning Israel's violent past as a mandate for the present. The following observations may assist us:

Firstly, Judaism is a territorial religion, but differently from Islam. It does not have an expansionist doctrine, beyond the borders of the land specified Biblically. The people of Israel are linked with the land of Israel. If

<sup>82</sup> SAHIH means that these are regarded as the most reliable category of Hadith, and Bukhari is their ancient compiler. In this case we quote: 'Sahih Bukhari', Arabic and English, translated into English by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, volume 5 (published 1978), section 58 ('The merits of the Ansar'), chapter 12 ('The merits of Sad bin Muadh'), hadith no 148; p.94. Kazi Publications, Chicago, USA.

<sup>83</sup> In this case: 'Sahih Bukhari', Arabic and English, translated into English by Mohammad Muhsin Khan, volume 4 (published 1979), section 52 ('Jihad'), chapter 94 ('Fighting with the Jews'), hadith no.177, p.110. Kazi Publications, Chicago, USA.

the religion pertains to both the people and the land, and the people are linked to the land, it follows that the religion must condone and advocate defence of the land. Thus, there is a doctrine of war. This issue must again be understood by Christians since their religion is not territorial. This is in stark contrast with modern Western thinking which generally promotes tolerance and inclusion (albeit selectively), based upon a pluralistic multi-ethnic vision of society from an increasingly humanist worldview.

Within Judaism, the land is promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, by that line, in perpetuity. This covenant has never been revoked. The most precise borders are given in the Bible, in Numbers 34, though other borders are claimed according to interpretation<sup>84</sup>. What is clear is that the whole of the West Bank and Gaza would be included in the minimum area covered by the covenant. Thus, for a sincere follower of Judaism, UN-recognised Israel, plus the West Bank and Gaza are non-negotiable. They are a part of Israel, in perpetuity. Thus, Islam and Judaism promise the same land to two different groups of people by their holy books, in mutually exclusive covenants and promises, and both holy books license their people to fight for it.

Secondly, under Mosaic law, no other religion than the worship of YHWH was permissible within Israel's borders. The stranger and foreigner had to accept the religion of YHWH to be allowed to be a part of the community, and had therefore to agree to live peaceably within the land, obeying its laws. This was the basis upon which the 'alien and the stranger' enjoyed protection and civil rights. Under Mosaic Law, the worship of another God by a population hostile to Jews, within the borders of the land, would not be permitted. This may be one factor in explaining why there is not universally a Western-style tolerance of the Arab Islamic population within UN-recognised Israel. Many Islamic states accord the populations within their territories, who follow a religion other than Islam, an unequal status in law (as exemplified by the dhimmi

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<sup>84</sup> Some mistakenly assume that the whole land from the 'river of Egypt' to the Euphrates is included, which would include all of Jordan and some of Iraq. What Genesis actually states is that 'land' is promised between those limits. Within those limits land is also promised to the sons of Lot and to the sons of Ishmael. God's Word does not contradict itself.

status offered to Christians and Jews under Sharia Law). This is not a problem exclusive to Israel.

As with Arabs and Islam, we do not suggest that the religion of Judaism is the exclusive motivator of all actions taken by the Israeli Government or of the Jewish people within Israel. But where the understanding of the State religion favours the ethnic Jew over the ethnic Arab Muslim or the Christian, then the sanction that religion might have exercised upon inequality is absent. For the Christian, who sees both the Old Testament and the New as equally the Word of God, this calls for much heart-searching and prayer.

We must also note the steadily growing number of Jewish believers in Jesus. These again are persecuted, though not as badly as their Arab Christian brothers are persecuted by their own communities. Again, the majority tend to abide by the narrative of their respective communities. Once again, there are hopeful signs of a beginning to reach over the divide in conciliation. Much prayer is needed for this initiative.

### **An overall picture - very briefly!**

Let us complete this section by painting the picture of the major upheavals involved in the founding of the Jewish State in 1948, looking briefly at it from the viewpoint of firstly the indigenous population and then from the viewpoint of the Jew.

#### **From the Arab viewpoint**

Imagine a majority Islamic area of the world, peopled for centuries by Arabs, the majority Muslims, but with significant Christian groups, and a minority Jewish population who have lived in the land for centuries, largely at peace with their Muslim neighbours.

For many centuries the land is part of the Ottoman Empire. A war takes place which is not of Arab making. Britain conquers the land. Turkish rule - which is unpopular with Arabs - ceases. Britain then encourages the arrival, within a comparatively short period of time, of many thousands of Jews, to whom Britain has promised a homeland, with the implication that this may well result in the establishing of a Jewish State. Couple this with the cultural differences of Jews coming from Europe having a European mindset, into

a traditional Arabic Islamic culture. The Jews and their Christian overseers in London maintain that this is the ancient land of the Jews<sup>85</sup>. Religious and civil rights are to be maintained for the Arabs, although political rights will now be with the Jews. How can this be done, in justice, whilst actually maintaining the religious and civil rights of the indigenous population as envisaged by the Balfour Declaration? By phrasing it this way, we catch a glimpse of the situation from the perspective of the indigenous Arab population.

### **From the viewpoint of the Jewish immigrant**

Let us now paint an alternative picture. After the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem following the bar Kochba revolt of AD 132-5<sup>86</sup>, the Jews were subsequently overwhelmingly resident in the lands of other people. In this diaspora they are subject to pogroms and persecutions throughout history. Then they are given a hope; a homeland where they can pursue their own laws and culture and be safe, and furthermore this homeland is the ancient land where King David ruled, the land promised to them in perpetuity by the God of their ancestors, as set out in scripture, by covenant with their father Abraham. Finally, the Jews of Europe are murdered on an industrial scale by the Nazis in what has come to be called the Holocaust. As they increase in numbers in that 'promised' land, the opposition of the indigenous populations turns from acceptance to hostility, then war. How can the Jews occupy their new home whilst guarding the religious and civil rights of the indigenous population, as envisaged by the Balfour Declaration, yet still be safe? By phrasing it this way, we may see things a little from the perspective of the Jew.

It isn't easy, is it? If this immigration of millions of Jews from across the Jewish diaspora is indeed at the behest of the God of the Bible, all of whose ways are just and all of whose ways are perfect, and if this God is the God of all flesh, and if this God sent His Son to be the redeemer of people of every tribe, every tongue and every nation, then how should this great act be achieved? For the God of all flesh cannot act contrary to His

own nature, and cannot be accused of being unjust.

### **God's purpose and God's means vs the purpose and means of man**

When an act, whether at individual or at national level, is achieved without perfect justice it appears to us that it cannot be in the purpose of God, who is perfectly just. But we need to be aware that human politics and human flesh often get in the way of what God has purposed. We must distinguish between what God has purposed, and whether the means of accomplishing it was the means of man or the means of God. There is a difference between overall purpose and the means of accomplishing it. Neither are the means of God the same as the means of man. Thus, where we see the purposes of God carried out with infringements of justice, we are forced to conclude that we are looking at the means of man, even though these means might be intended to fulfil the purpose of God<sup>87</sup>. There are many examples of this in scripture, such as could be argued about the reign of Joram in Israel (2.Kings 9-10)<sup>88</sup>. The purposes of God are often mixed with the means of man, but the means of God if allowed to be discovered would result in the purposes of God being achieved according to the character of God. That would then lead to irrefutable justice by God's decree. Evidence of injustice in the way a thing is carried out cannot be said to prove that the original purpose did not come from the heart of God. The resulting injustice is the result of a fallen world and of man using his own means rather than those of a just God.

This understanding is vital to a correct appreciation of the situation in the Middle East. We are at liberty to challenge injustices on the ground, without invalidating our conviction that it is God who is calling His ancient people back to this land. The purposes of God for Israel are not invalidated by the errors and sins of man, on all sides of the conflict, in accomplishing those purposes.

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<sup>87</sup> See the work by Jacques Ellul: *'The Politics of God and the Politics of Man'* published in English by Eerdmans, Date: 1977.

<sup>88</sup> Joram was anointed King. In zeal to accomplish the will of God, he murdered all the descendants of Ahab. He was also responsible for the death of the king of Judah. God had prophesied judgment upon Ahab, but was this means the purpose and the means of God?

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<sup>85</sup> Which indeed it was up to 132AD, historically and biblically.

<sup>86</sup> See the Diaspora section of the present document.

## **Current overall aspects of the conflict**

What follows is a brief description of some aspects of the conflict, and some common allegations. There is no attempt to attribute blame, merely to set out the problem.

### **Security and Justice: Which comes first?**

Although each side needs both security and justice, it is our impression that security is the predominant need for Israel, which then tends to determine its actions. The predominant need within the Palestinian communities of Gaza, the West Bank and within internationally recognized Israel, is for justice, which then motivates their actions towards Israel. Neither of these assertions are exclusive, but tend towards that end. The issue then becomes circular, because each action tends to be reaction to something earlier. Every security crack-down by Israel is seen as oppressive and unjust by the Palestinians, who then fight. This then leads to further crack-downs in the search for security within Israel. With any circular argument, the beginning is normally defined by the narrative by which any individual views the situation. The 'he started it first' principle normally applies. Yet such situations usually have beginning points which are difficult to define, and which are buried long ago. Untruths and exaggerations also slip into the narrative, further complicating the picture. Cause and effect are notoriously difficult to trace within the field of human conflict. It is more fruitful to try to break the circle than to identify where it started.

### **Religious belief**

As already explored, in this situation there are two major religions at play, both territorial in nature, both with irreconcilable aims. Judaism assigns the land to the natural children of Jacob (argued elsewhere in this document); Islam states that God has finished with the Jews and that any land once Islamic must revert to Islam (*Quran, Sura 2.191*). Both sets of scriptures demand these positions, in direct conflict with one another. Therefore, there is no human solution if both sets of religious aims are taken fundamentally from the respective scriptures. Let us also not forget the Christian populations of these territories, which are caught in the middle, but tend to follow the narratives of their respective communities. If we simply state

that God has given the land to the Jews, then this is only the beginning of the issue and does not help us in any dialogue with Palestinian Arabs who will say that God (Allah) has given it to them. If we take a secular approach, this will carry no weight with the religious of either side.

As a further complication, Christians who take a 'Replacement Theology' position, argue that there is no divine right of the Jews to be in the land. This is because they often confuse two further issues: the covenant on the land, and the covenant of salvation. The covenant on the land does not imply salvation, which is found only in Christ. Jews have to be saved by repentance and belief, as do non-Jews. There is only one name by which we are saved, and that is Christ Jesus. The covenant on the land is separate from the covenant of salvation and is not affected by the opening of the way of salvation to the Gentiles.

## **Specific areas where contention arises**

All of these issues relate to political self-determination for Jew and Arab.

### **Land use and Justice within United Nations Recognised Israel**

The argument that God has given the land to the Jews is leading to allegations of injustices regarding the rights of citizens who are not ethnically Jewish, over the ownership and administration of land. There is a big difference between jurisdiction over, and ownership of, any particular portion of land. A man may own a piece of land in the city of Manchester; the UK Government has jurisdiction, but not ownership. If the Government wishes to take ownership of that land for road improvement for instance, it must obtain a court order and offer compensation. On the other hand, ownership does not offer carte-blanc to the holder of the title; the various regulations regarding buildings etc have to be complied with. An understanding of this concept clarifies the difference between jurisdiction enjoyed by the Israeli Government and the ownership of individual plots under that jurisdiction. To declare that the land belongs to Israel by 'divine right', does not absolve the Government of Israel from observing due process and justice in dealing with cases where ownership of a particular plot is

claimed by an Arab. Israeli citizens of ethnic Jewish descent and Israelis of ethnic Arabic descent are held to be treated differently before the law in metropolitan Israel. Like all issues in this conflict, there is much dispute over this. We must raise the question: If the land has been given to the Jews, should ethnicity bear on the legality of ownership of particular plots, and is a preferential policy just? Finally, it must also be understood that this principle operates both ways, and must apply also in Palestinian areas, where plots of land have been legitimately purchased by ethnic Jewish Israelis.

### **Land 'Zoning' within the West Bank**

This is the archetypical justice versus security issue: the way in which the land is being divided in the West Bank between 'nature reserves', 'military zones', 'Zone A', 'B' and 'C', with no interconnection between autonomous Palestinian areas, is highly prejudicial against the day to day interests of the indigenous Palestinian population. The policy does not lead to any expectation that this 'occupied' land is ever going to be released to the Palestinians in any meaningful way. To the Palestinian, there appears to be a policy of making the land over permanently for the Jew at the expense of the Palestinian Arab, both here as in United Nations recognised Israel; it is an issue of justice and self-determination. The Israeli Government reasoning behind the policy is one of security, since the step-by-step hand-over to the Palestinian Authority, following the Oslo Accord of 1993, did not result in the peace that was offered. The limitations that the current situation puts on potential terrorist attacks also limit the freedom of movement of the citizens of the territory. Furthermore, Israel must ensure its own security on the larger scale. The most likely result of the P.A. having total control of the West Bank would be a threat to the very survival of the State of Israel, since any army coming out of the West Bank could cut Israel in two very rapidly. This point is widely acknowledged by military experts outside of Israel. Thus the present zoning provides security for Israel, but leads to an unjust situation for the Arab inhabitants.

### **Israeli Settlements in the West Bank**

This well publicised issue is of great importance to both sides. To both it is a symbol of Israel's intention to stay in these

territories won in war in 1967. To build settlements in this way is contentious under the norms associated with land under unresolved occupation, although no U.N. Security Council resolution declared them illegal until UNSC 2334 in December 2016. Even then the question of the legally binding nature of this resolution is not universally accepted.<sup>89</sup> The original League of Nations legislation gave the Jews the right to purchase and settle the land, including the area known as the West Bank. From 1948, the Jordanian Government administered the West Bank until 1967, when it was conquered by Israel. However, the way in which the land has been appropriated by Jewish Israelis since 1967 has not in all cases paid due respect to previous ownership, according to the principles noted above. Where ownership documentation can be produced by Arabs, the Israeli courts normally uphold the law. Regrettably, there are exceptions to this rule, and the reader may be aware of examples. Disputes of this kind are not unique to the Israel/West Bank situation. They are common where land changes jurisdiction in conflict or by other non-consensual means, as in the Turkish areas of Cyprus post-1974, and Chinese settlements in Tibet.

### **Border controls surrounding Gaza**

These give rise to much controversy. Here the circular argument highlighted above is prominent. Israel is accused of holding Gaza in a state of virtual siege. Conversely, Israel is under attack from rockets launched from within Gaza and from suicide bombers coming out of Gaza. For Israel it is a matter of security from a hostile neighbour. If Israel's neighbour wishes to attack its territory and citizens, Israel, must, in return, restrict movement of goods and personnel. Tunnels, tight check-points, restricted access for goods, rocket attacks, military invasions are the result. Incidentally, it is not just Israel that restricts access to Gaza, it is equally true of Egypt, though it tends to be the Israeli controls that attract the media attention. Gaza is a huge boiling pot of anger and resentment.

### **Conduct of War**

In war with Gaza, the casualties on the Palestinian side are much greater than those

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<sup>89</sup> Arguments turn on the relation between chapter 6 of the UN Charter, under which UNSC 2334 was passed, and chapter 7 which is the only chapter mandating enforcement.

of the Israeli military or civilian population. The Gaza Strip is densely populated, and therefore disproportionately vulnerable. Furthermore, supporters of Israel claim that the Palestinian Authority exploits its own citizens to ensure that civilian casualties are high in any conflict as part of the propaganda war. Rocket launchers are placed in densely populated areas, or even next to schools and hospitals, using civilians as 'human shields'. The evidence suggests that life is not held at such a high price by jihadist groups within the Palestinian Territories as it is within Israel. We acknowledge that the resources available to Israel are greater and more sophisticated, but there is evidence that, in war, Israel tries to minimise civilian casualties, whereas casualties are seen as propaganda weapons within the Palestinian Arab territories. Furthermore, rockets launched randomly into Israel by the Palestinian Authority are hardly aimed at avoiding civilian casualties, any more than suicide bombings. About this there can be no dispute. The longer this situation goes on, the deeper and more entrenched the hatred of Jews becomes in Gaza. There is evidence that the overall policy of the Palestinians and their Arab neighbours remains one of 'driving Israel into the sea' or removing it from the map. The Hamas charter is clear about that.

Israel is surrounded by powerful enemies. As Benjamin Netanyahu said in 2012, "*We live in a tough neighbourhood*".<sup>90</sup> It is a small country and cannot afford to lose one single war. When those on its borders continually fight it by suicide bombers, rockets and other means, it must give a high priority to its own security. Those who feel it should reach an accommodation with its enemies must also ensure that those enemies are equally sincere about wishing to reach an accommodation with Israel. Unless all sides agree to live in peace, continued conflict is inevitable.

### Use of Water

In a land where water is a scarce commodity, access to it can become a powerful political weapon and bargaining chip. The control of water is rapidly becoming such a case. In the years to come, this is likely to become a major issue.

- Water was an issue when the UN proposed a border between ethnic Jewish and Arab areas in 1947.
- The Israeli Government insists on exercising jurisdiction over a narrow strip of land on the West Bank adjacent to the Jordan river on security grounds.
- The Israelis have recently built a large desalination plant on the coast of the Mediterranean sea which assures their water supply.
- The Israelis effectively control the water supply to the majority of the Palestinian territories. They have, however, always declined to turn off the water supply to the Palestinian areas even in times of conflict.

### Refugees

There remains the issue of the refugees from 1948. This is a highly contentious issue, since descendants of refugees are not normally viewed as having a right of return. Those who have not been absorbed into neighbouring countries are counted as being refugees from Israel, whereas Jewish refugees of the period of 1948, expelled from the neighbouring countries, have all been absorbed into Israel. Clearly, if Israel, as a democracy, allowed several million Palestinian refugees into Israel then this would constitute a huge security risk. One needs to ask why, after many decades, have the descendants of the original Palestinian refugees from 1948 not been offered the possibility of integration into the Arab lands in which they reside?

### The Status of Jerusalem

Both sides claim Jerusalem as their capital city. In fact, the Jerusalem metropolitan area is expanding at the expense of the West Bank territory. The Temple Mount is the third most holy site in Islam and the most holy site in Judaism. The decision of President Trump in 2017 to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and to relocate the US embassy there, has led other countries to begin to reconsider their own position. The status of this city seems set to fulfil the prophecy of Zechariah 12.12!

### The Security Barrier

In 1995, a Commission was set up in Israel to discuss the building of a security barrier in response to terrorist attacks coming out of

<sup>90</sup> *The Times of Israel*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

the West Bank. In 2001, Government authorisation was given for work on it to begin. Most of this barrier was intended to be a fence but, in October 2000, sniper attacks on a suburb of Jerusalem called Gilo, from the Palestinian village of Beit Jala, led to the proposal that part of the fence should be a wall. Since that time, any part of the barrier fence that is near Israeli settlements, vulnerable to rifle fire, has been converted to a wall. Nevertheless, 95% of the barrier remains a fence. This again is the classic security versus justice dilemma. Israel must restrict snipers and prevent suicide bombers from coming into Israel, many of whom are motivated by their sense of injustice in living under Israeli rule, which they see as working against their freedom. The barrier is a huge difficulty for the Palestinian occupants of that area, but the Israelis need to defend themselves. The one action exacerbates the other.

## Conclusions

We have set out the main contentions above in order to briefly map the grievances and insecurities of both sides and to raise questions in as balanced a way as possible. What do we as Christians do about it?

1. A rounded understanding of the conflict is more likely to win 'neutrals' to take an interested view, than is any partisan or biased approach. Only by understanding can effective witness be made. Only by seeing through my enemy's eyes do I stand any chance of reaching out to him and preventing him from desiring my destruction. Jesus calls us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. Here is a good opportunity to practise!
2. Prayer is the need of the hour. It is not likely that a human solution can be found in such an entrenched conflict with such different religious and cultural beliefs buttressing entrenched, opposing views, and where the scriptures of two major world religions are in direct conflict. Prayer is needed for the Christian communities on the ground on both sides of the conflict, that they may be able to reach out to each other in truth and Godly love with understanding and a desire for reconciliation. Pray also that they may model the Kingdom of God and find a way

forward with people of peace on both sides.

3. Boldness is needed to recognise that justice is an essential part of love. If love for God and love for one's neighbour is the heart of the Law, we must recognise how central justice is in God's Law, and therefore how justice is related to love. Let us seek the God of love for what is just, and be sufficiently bold to promote it, no matter which side is the 'offender' or enjoys our natural sympathies. Nothing is gained by promoting justice with only one side in view. Blessed are the peacemakers, but they may be persecuted here on earth!

## 6. Reconciliation

In this seething cauldron of enmity down the generations; in the maelstrom of conflicting religious belief systems; in the outraged cry for justice by differing people groups in one tiny country, the only political democracy in the Middle East; in the focus of attention of the whole world on Jerusalem, as the Bible foretold; in the expectancy and waiting for the Messiah by all three faiths and the importance of the Temple Mount to all; in all of these, there is no obvious human answer or political solution. There is a way, however. It is as the Scriptures have commanded from the beginning:

*"Love God with all your heart, soul and strength"* (Deut 6.5)

*"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Lev 19.18)

*"Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God"* (Micah 6. 8)

*"Loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, set the oppressed free and break every yoke... Share food with the hungry and provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked, clothe him and do not turn away from your own flesh and blood..."* (Is 58. 6-7)

*"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"* (Matt 5.44)

*"Turn the other cheek, give away your coat and go the extra mile"* (Matt 5.39-41)

*"Do not judge, or you too will be judged"* (Matt 7.1)

In all our desire for justice for the poor and downtrodden, we have not been given the right to sit on the judgement seat. We do not see as God sees, and we are all influenced by the narrative of our culture and beliefs. The information, the demands, the court rulings, the political statements - national and international - upon which we base our judgements are often biased and are sometimes outright lies.

The answer is for us not to take sides, but to listen, pray and respond with love. Wherever there is conflict there are two sides to the story. Usually both sides are guilty and both are victims.

God's people are called to make a difference, to be salt and light, to bring healing and hope to dark places. God is working through many in the land, who do not know Jesus as their Saviour, as peacemakers and channels of His blessing. Obviously not all of those working for peace in Israel believe in God, but they believe in, and are committed to, coming together in mutual acceptance and tolerance, longing for peace in their nation. For many Arab Israelis this would be despite the difficulties of being a minority group in their land. They are often treated with deep suspicion by the Jewish people, partly because of continuing random terror attacks against Jews.

Many Jewish people take very seriously their call to be a blessing to the nations and put that call into practice in numerous ways, nationally and internationally.

There have been distressing accounts of Palestinian lives lost as people are held up by the Israel Defence Force (IDF) at checkpoints on their way to hospital. But there are also other less told stories of non-Israelis with medical needs, from pregnant women to wounded fighters, who have been smuggled across the well-defended northern Israeli border, picked up by the IDF, taken to Israeli hospitals for treatment and then smuggled back. Some even come with referral notes from their local doctor outside Israel.

A growing number of Christian Arabs believe that the return of the Jewish people and the establishment of the State of Israel is the fulfilment of God's purpose in the last days, before the Messiah comes. Increasing numbers of young Israeli Arab Christians are joining the IDF in their desire to defend the

freedom of their country alongside their Jewish brothers.

Not all of those working for harmony between Jew and Arab are Christian. Religious Jews and Muslims have met each other out of their desire for mutual understanding. Israeli writer Yossi Klein Halevi joined with American imam Abdullah Antepli to organise an educational program for young Muslim leaders at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Their desire is for truth to break through the traditional narrative, a narrative that seems to make the gap between Jews and Muslims impossible to bridge.<sup>91</sup>

There are increasing numbers of Palestinian Christians, Arab Israeli Christians and Messianic Jewish believers who are working and praying together, overcoming the cultural differences and the narratives of generations, as they discover a new God-given love for one another. These people do not have an easy time, but the fruit of their lives and their work is a blessing to many.

The brief stories that follow comprise a tiny sample of the things that are happening, but which rarely get into the press. They often remain hidden stories, but they cause ripples that can change the spiritual atmosphere.<sup>92</sup>

- One Arab Israeli pastor comes from a 3000-year-old village close to the Lebanese border. His family have lived there for over 600 years. The villagers chose to remain during the war of independence but were ordered by the IDF to evacuate their homes. They were never allowed to return. Even the Israeli courts agreed that this was their right, but the army disagreed. This pastor still feels the injustice and longs to go back, but God has changed his heart: "*I have the Lord*" he declares. The discrimination his children experience as Israeli Arabs is difficult, but they constantly work at making connections, building bridges with their Jewish neighbours. They now have a thriving Church, and God has given them a vision and a heart to reach the millions of Muslims around them in the Middle East

<sup>91</sup> 'How a bold American imam and his skeptical Israeli host bridged the Muslim-Jewish chasm'; Yossi Klein Halevi and imam Abdullah Antepli. 'Times of Israel' 8/9/2015, David Horowitz.

<sup>92</sup> These are just a few of the many stories collected by writer and broadcaster Julia Fisher of the Olive Tree Reconciliation Fund [www.olivetreefund.org](http://www.olivetreefund.org)

through regular radio and television broadcasts. He says *“we have a weapon that is stronger than all modern warfare - the Gospel of Love”*.

- Another Christian Arab, having shared his story of reconciliation between Arab and Jew with a fellow traveller, who turned out to be a high ranking Jewish officer, was asked for help in a deeply personal matter: *“My son fell in Gaza. Can you go to the place where he was killed and bring a stone back to put on his grave?”* The Arab counted it a great honour to be invited to enter into the pain of bereavement of his fellow Jewish traveller - a touchstone of reconciliation.
- Shevet Achim is a Christian charity, with workers from many different nations, who live as a community in Jerusalem. Their work is to bring children with serious heart conditions into Israel for treatment in Israeli specialist hospitals. These children initially came from Gaza but now they are also coming from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, including Yazidi refugees and Kurds. The hospitals charge greatly reduced rates and the doctors and nurses give freely of their time to nurture these very sick children back to health. But much more happens in the process. The parents of these children come to a country they have considered their enemy for all of their lives. They see not only the expertise but also the compassion and devotion of the medical staff, they befriend and find support amongst other parents in the hospital, who may well be Orthodox Jews, and they return to their homelands with a very different impression of the country they had been taught to hate.
- A Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem, who studied in Europe and the US, could have taken the opportunity of staying abroad rather than returning to his

hometown; many do not return, as life is very tough for Palestinian Christians in Muslim areas. He heard God telling him to *“be faithful in speaking my word; be faithful in staying”*. He did. He now pastors a thriving Church that has many opportunities to reach out to its neighbours, including many Muslims. This work is not without danger. It includes a major ministry among the young people of the area, taking the message of forgiveness by means of a puppet theatre into schools. The education department of the Palestinian Authority was so impressed it enthusiastically gave permission for this presentation to be taken into all schools under its administration.

In summary, we can do no better than to quote Labib Madanat, Coordinator for *Bible Lands Bible Societies*, an Arab Israeli Christian: *“If the Church feeds us weapons to defend our ground, encourages us to stay apart and dwell on our rights, rather than lifting our eyes to the Lord, focusing on Him, on His will, how can we, the Church be a place of healing? We have a big problem when we put an absolute value on justice. Forgiveness and peace is the better way. Forgiveness is the more solid foundation for peace than justice...My blessing is your curse. Is there a way we can receive blessing together? In this place of conflict what is the prophetic message to the land? God wants to come and bring redemption. Can we cross barriers of enmity and be a people of redemption and forgiveness?”*

Amen! And will we too, as the Body of Christ, make every effort to contribute to the work of reconciliation rather than division?

## God's Land

We give You  
this land.  
It is Yours  
not ours.  
We offer You  
the heavy burdens  
of the ages,  
the bloodshed  
and the pain.  
We offer You  
our guilt  
our bigotry  
and pride,  
and with  
our outstretched  
hands.  
We ask for  
the gift  
which will transform  
our cold, hard hearts  
into hearts  
of flesh and blood,  
that we may  
speak  
and work  
for justice,  
peace  
and love  
in the name  
of the One whose name  
is above  
all  
and is Love.

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## Sharing the Pain - Grasping the Hope

Lord we are your body, your living, loving, feeling, hurting, breathing body:  
and you call this body to walk the alien path, to choose the way we do not want to go.

You take us to the place we fear to be; into the darkness that threatens and overwhelms.  
You show us the pain we would not bear, show us the brother we do not wish to see.  
You tell us to throw away our thoughts of comfort and follow where your Cross is planted  
where men cheat and lie and kill.

You call us together to be ONE, Your presence in a hurting world.

Give me to share with you the dragging pain, the burden of domination;  
the helpless fury of being trodden down,  
the frustration of barriers across my path  
and all that denies and demeans my humanity.

Give me to share with You the isolation, the confusion of not knowing where to turn,  
or who to trust or who will listen,  
or who will speak for me.

Give me to share with You the boiling anger of justice long denied,  
of values trampled under foot and all I would hold dear snatched from my grasp.

Help me to know with You the hurt - that hurting which wants to hurt and hurt again, to  
inflict on others that which they have first inflicted upon me,  
Remove from me the desire to snatch the life of the one who squeezes life from me.

Help me to feel the suffocation of prisons, enclosing walls, controls and domination.

Give me to share the pain of a mother for her child at risk  
as darkness falls and absence threatens,  
the fear that wants to know yet does not want to know.

Help me to be torn with the tearing of those whose lives are torn apart.  
Take me to the Calvary of here and now, of pain inflicted, of retribution and of death.

Help me to tremble at the violence done to bodies, souls and minds  
and threats of worse to come.

As my nostrils are filled with the sickening stench of all the devil's fire and smoke, make me  
to know the powerlessness which alone can draw me to Your Cross.

Allow me to feel the scorn, to hear the whispering, to see the pointing finger and all You  
knew so well upon Your Cross. Help me to be one for others even,  
and especially those who are my enemies.

Help me to reach out beyond the chasms of division and dare to glance Your glance,  
and speak Your words.

Help me to know the dragging ache of love that cannot be expressed, of hospitality that is spurned, of warmth and openness blocked off, denied by cold suspicion.

May I know the anguish, inarticulate, ready to explode as masks of false smiles and smooth words of insincerity set aside the truth of who and where I am, and who they are and where they are.

Help me to bear the weight of poisoned memories tumbling down the generations, so often growing and gaining strength and crushing my dreams of better, nobler coming years.

And as I feel the desperation of those whose taunts cut deep - 'Where is your God?' may I receive the assurance of your peace and respond in love. To those whose cry is peace, where there is no peace, may I bring Your peace.

Help me in some small part to be your bruised, despised, rejected, bleeding body and find at the place of crucifixion, the love, the life, the brothers, sisters, that only you can give.

Help me to receive, to embrace, to proclaim the hope which comes of knowing that You are the God of justice, peace and love.  
The God of resurrection joy.

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# Appendix I

## The Origins of Replacement Theology (Supersessionism)

Replacement Theology is the doctrine that the Church has permanently replaced Israel as God's chosen people and is seen as the 'New Israel'. According to this view, the Jewish people are no longer Israel but are just another people group or nation needing salvation in Jesus Christ. Proponents of this view believe that, since Pentecost, Israel is the Church and the Jews have no further special place in God's plan. This view is not new, but historically well rooted in the Church, going back to the early Church Fathers, then to Luther and many of the Reformers.

At the second Jewish revolt in AD135 there was a separation between the Jews and the Christians as the traditional Jews proclaimed Simon bar Kochba as the Messiah. Jewish believers in Jesus could no longer attend synagogues with other Jews. After this, the Church became increasingly Gentile in its outlook and distanced itself from its Jewish roots.

Shortly after this separation we see the birth of Replacement Theology. The development of the doctrine is traced below in the writings of the Church Fathers. Following that, quotations are given which show the outworking of the doctrine after the Church gained political power.

### Barnabas

The (non-canonical) Epistle of Barnabas was written, based on internal evidence, between the Romans' destruction of the Temple in AD70 and the bar Kochba revolt in AD132-5. The author is not reliably known. This letter insists that Christians should not say "*the covenant is both theirs and ours*" and that the Jews lost it forever as early as Sinai,<sup>93</sup> when Moses broke the tablets of the Law after the Israelites turned to idolatry (Exodus 32.19). This confusion over covenants worsened with time and antagonism. The same letter suggests that, because the descendants of Jacob would dominate the descendants of Esau (Genesis 25.23), the Church is to be identified with Jacob, and the

<sup>93</sup> Epistle of Barnabas 4:6-8.

Jews with Esau<sup>94</sup>, even though the Jews are descendants of Jacob who is Israel!

### Justin Martyr (100-c.165AD)

Justin is regarded as one of the earliest and most distinguished apologists of the Christian Church. In his rhetorical Dialogue with Trypho written around 160AD, he develops the theme of the vocation of the Gentiles to take the place of Israel. Justin was the first<sup>95</sup> to apply the term the 'true spiritual Israel'<sup>96</sup> to the Christian Church. He puts the rhetorical question "Are you [the Church] *Israel?*" into Trypho's mouth and quotes scriptures that he considers confirm it.<sup>97</sup> Justin wrote, "*Christ is the Israel and the Jacob; even so, we who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ are the true Israelite race*".<sup>98</sup> In other words, the Jews have largely rejected Christ and now the people of the Church have become the true spiritual Israelites. As a result of this teaching the Christian Church came to appropriate the title 'Israel' for itself, with Jews no longer considered to be God's chosen people in any sense.

Replacement Theology typically heaps blame on the Jews as Christ-killers without regard to the facts that Jews were on both sides of the dispute about Christ, that the first Church was overwhelmingly Jewish, and that Christ was himself a Jew.

### Irenaeus (d. c202AD)

Irenaeus wrote against the Gnostics, the New Age movement of the time that was polluting the Church. He sought to demonstrate to them that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New were the same, which he did by emphasising God's role as Creator and Redeemer while downplaying the importance of His role as the God of Israel - a Gentile-centred viewpoint.<sup>99</sup> Irenaeus also picked up on the allegory of the Church and the Jews with Jacob and Esau.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Epistle of Barnabas 13:1-3.

<sup>95</sup> R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1996), p.35.

<sup>96</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 11.

<sup>97</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho* 123.

<sup>98</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho* 135.

<sup>99</sup> Soulen, *ibid.*, ch. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, bk. 4 ch. 21.

## Origen (AD c185 - 254)

Origen was among the most learned of the early Church Fathers. He systematically spiritualised the scriptures so that they were now not to be taken literally but allegorically, including those concerning Israel. The Old Testament prophecies could now be appropriated to the Church, as being the new Israel. By this means Origen reinforced the 'Replacement' interpretation of the story of Esau and Jacob, as did his contemporaries Tertullian and Cyprian<sup>101</sup> in a tradition that would run several lifetimes to Augustine of Hippo.<sup>102</sup>

## Eusebius and Hilary

Eusebius was Bishop of Caesarea and a contemporary of Constantine, the emperor who turned to Christianity and began its institutionalisation. From that point the Church began to gain the political power to act on its dislike of the Jews, promoted by Replacement Theology. Eusebius reported a letter which Constantine sent to the churches after he had chaired the ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which included the following words: "*Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way...let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness*".<sup>103</sup> Hatred is also manifest in, for instance, the words of Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (d. c367AD), that they are a "*people which has always persisted in iniquity, and out of its abundance of evil has glorified in wickedness*".<sup>104</sup>

Worse, though, was...

## John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407)

Chrysostom means 'golden-mouthed'. John was a great preacher and wrote much liturgy. However, he delivered eight sermons against the Jews in his See of Antioch, where Jews were numerous, and some of his flock were frequenting synagogues and Jewish homes. These sermons make false accusations and express intense hatred of Jews (not just Judaising Christians, who might wish to put

the Church under Mosaic Law, for John's words often target the synagogue itself). He said that Jews "*live for their bellies, they gape for the things of this world, their condition is not better than that of pigs or goats because of their wanton ways and excessive gluttony. They know but one thing: to fill their bellies and be drunk..*". (from sermon 1, part IV.1) and that "*the Jews themselves are demons*" (from sermon 1, part VI.3).

## Theodoret of Cyrrhus (AD c.393 - c.458)

One of Theodoret's letters<sup>105</sup> contains an early example of the phrase 'the new Israel' to describe the Church.

Is it any wonder that, with words like these, the result was Christian anti-semitism throughout the centuries? It became deeply ingrained within Christendom. It is this theology that led to the appalling history of Christian anti-semitism including the Blood Libel, the attacks on Jews in the Crusading era, the expulsions, the Inquisitions against conversos, the Pogroms and, worst of all, the Holocaust.

## Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)

Famous for being the pioneer of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther was initially sympathetic to the Jews as fellow-sufferers under Catholicism, writing in a short essay in 1523 that "*I would advise and beg everybody to deal kindly with them*".<sup>106</sup> He expected them to respond to the Gospel once it was preached in protestant ways. However, towards the end of his life and without much success in converting the Jews to Christianity, he turned against them. In his book of 1543, 'On the Jews and their Lies', he wrote "*after the devil you have no more venomous, violent enemy than a real Jew*".<sup>107</sup> He called for their synagogues, schools and homes to be burnt so that they should live in barns, that they should have no legal protections while on the highway, that their wealth should be confiscated and handed back only to those who convert, that their living should derive from hard manual labour, that their prayer

<sup>101</sup> I.J. Yuval & B. Harshav, 'Two Nations in your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages'. (University of California Press, 2008), footnote 22 on p.14.

<sup>102</sup> Augustine, 'City of God' bk. 16, ch. 35.

<sup>103</sup> Eusebius, 'Life of Constantine', bk. 3 ch. 18.

<sup>104</sup> Hilary, Commentary on Psalm 52, from 'Tractatus super Psalmos' part 81.6.

<sup>105</sup> To the monks of the Euphratensian, the Osroene, Syria, Phoenicia and Cilicia; categorised as letter 151 in 'Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series', Vol. 3, eds. Philip Schaff & Henry Wace (1892).

<sup>106</sup> Martin Luther, 'That Jesus Christ was born a Jew'.

<sup>107</sup> Martin Luther, 'On the Jews and their Lies', ch. 7.

books and Talmudic writings be taken from them and that rabbis should be forbidden to teach, summing up this passage with the words “if this advice of mine does not suit you, find better so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden, the Jews”.<sup>108</sup> Luther’s lesser-known follow-up to ‘On the Jews and their Lies’, called ‘Vom Schem Hamphoras’ [Of the Unknowable Name], was no less vituperative against the Jews. In his penultimate sermon, preached days before he died in February 1546, Luther accused Jewish doctors of poisoning people and again called for the Jews to be driven out of Germany unless they converted.<sup>109</sup>

This attitude of the German Reformer was to pave the way for the Holocaust 400 years later. In his well known book ‘The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich’, William Shirer wrote: “The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted a Germany rid of the Jews...advice that was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering and Himmler...”<sup>110</sup>

In April 1933, following his decision to establish concentration camps and promote a boycott of Jewish shops months after coming to power, Hitler stated at a meeting with the Catholic Bishop Wilhelm Berning that “The Catholic Church considered the Jews pestilent for fifteen hundred years... perhaps I am thereby doing Christianity a great service by pushing them out of schools and public functions”.<sup>111</sup>

It is no wonder that in his book ‘Mein Kampf’, Hitler could write, “I believe that I am today acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: in warding off the

*Jew, I am fighting for the handiwork of the Lord”.*<sup>112</sup>

The systematic attempt to destroy all European Jewry began as part of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and continued without respite for nearly four years. By the time Nazi Germany had been defeated, six million of Europe’s 9 million Jews had been slaughtered.

It is a sad but chilling truth that Christian anti-Semitism has led to the most horrendous stain in all Church history. It is an unfortunate and perverse truth that the development of much theology concerning the place and destiny of Israel in the purposes of God in history has grown in parallel with a strongly developed anti-Semitism. Although most modern day proponents and teachers of ‘Replacement Theology’ do not hold such anti-Semitic views, their writing on the ‘replacement of the Jews by the Church’ in God’s purposes can give succour to those holding this extreme position. Against this, we must be constantly on guard. To disagree upon theology is one thing, but to promote and support racially motivated violence is quite another.

We hope that what we have written in the main body of the text concerning the position of the Church alongside that of Israel will provide the reader with thought for prayerful consideration. The influence of Replacement Theology on what many in the Church believe about eschatology is considerable and many anomalous beliefs have arisen as a result.

### Could Replacement Theology and the Church being “The New Israel” be justified from the New Testament?

Derek Prince writes, “I have discovered 77 instances in the New Testament where the words ‘Israel’ or ‘Israelite’ occur. After examining them all I conclude that the apostles never used Israel as a synonym for the Church. Nor does the phrase ‘the new Israel’ occur anywhere in the New Testament”.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Martin Luther, ‘On the Jews and their Lies’, ch. 11.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Luther’s Works’, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown, 75 vols (Concordia Publishing, St Louis 2010), vol. 58, pp. 458-9.

<sup>110</sup> W.L. Shirer, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich’ (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1960), ch. 8, p. 236.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Akten deutscher Bischöfe über die Lage der Kirche’, 1933-1945 [Files of German Bishops about the State of the Church, 1933-1945], vol. 1: 1933-1934, ed. Bernhard Stasiewski (published by Matthias Grünewald Verlag for the Kommission für Zeitgeschichte, Mainz, 1968), pp. 100-102.

<sup>112</sup> Adolf Hitler, ‘Mein Kampf’ [My Struggle], concluding words of ch. 2.

<sup>113</sup> ‘The Destiny of Israel and the Church’ by Derek Prince p.15.

Galatians 3:28-29<sup>114</sup> has been used to argue that there is no special place for the Jews since the inauguration of the New Covenant. Paul is stating that, in contrast to Jewish practice, believers in Christ are all of equal standing irrespective of race, nationality, gender or social class. He uses three pairs of distinctions to illustrate this: Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. Paul is not saying here that the Church is a replacement for the Jews as the children of Abraham. He is saying that the Gentile believers are now also Abraham's seed because of their new identity in Christ. This passage is about individual believers and has no bearing on any covenant of the nation of Israel with God.

Paul's phrase in Galatians 6:15-16<sup>115</sup>, 'the Israel of God', has been extensively quoted by advocates of Replacement Theology as meaning the Church. Whatever this enigmatic phrase means - and it is hotly contended - there is no reason to suppose that 'Israel' refers in it to anything other than a Jewish party, as everywhere else in scripture.

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<sup>114</sup> Galatians 3:28-29: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (NKJV).

<sup>115</sup> Gal 6 15-16: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God"*.

# Appendix 2

## Timeline

**17<sup>th</sup> century:** English Puritans become the first modern Christians to assert that Zionism is Biblical. Jews officially welcome in England.

**18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> century:** The Puritans' Zionist view flows into the British Evangelical movement. Jewish emancipation in Western Europe, but not in Eastern Europe.

**18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> century:** Britain gains a large Empire (which does not include the Holy Land).

**Late 19<sup>th</sup> century:** Zionist movement grows among Jews in Eastern Europe, furthered by persecution.

**1914-18:** World War I: Britain encourages Arabs to rise up against the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, and forces the Turks out of Palestine and other traditional Arab territory.

**1917:** Balfour Declaration: British policy is that Jews should have a 'national home' in their ancient land (Britain's motivation was as much political as religious).

**1920:** San Remo declaration by victorious powers matches the Balfour declaration, and mandates Britain to act on it.

**1922:** League of Nations rubber-stamps the British Mandate for Palestine and Transjordan.

**1922:** Transjordan separated from Palestine.

**Between the wars:** Britain runs Palestine under its Mandate, first encouraging Jewish immigration, then discouraging it as Palestinian Arabs increasingly resent it and resort to violence against Jews and noncooperation with the British administration.

**1939:** MacDonald White Paper bars Palestine to Jews seeking to escape Nazi persecution.

**1939-45:** World War II: the Holocaust. Palestine comes under threat from Axis forces but does not become a theatre of war.

**1945-7:** Britain continues to restrict Jewish migration to Palestine; Jewish guerrilla actions against British overseers and in self-defence against Arabs.

**1947:** Britain proposes to quit Palestine. UN proposes (on Nov 29<sup>th</sup>) the division of Palestine between Jews and Arabs. Jews accept, Arabs reject. Fighting begins between them; the British scarcely intervene.

**1948:** Fighting between Jews and Arabs in Palestine escalates into civil war. Jews gain the upper hand and secure most of the area assigned to them in the UN plan, leaving few Arabs there; many Arab families become refugees.

**1948:** May 14<sup>th</sup> the last day of the British Mandate, on which Jews declare the State of Israel. Next day, its Arab neighbours invade it.

**1948-49:** War of Independence, won by Israel (ends 10<sup>th</sup> March 1949 as Jewish troops reach the Gulf of Aqaba). Jews take 78% of Mandatory Palestine; not the Gaza Strip or West Bank (i.e. ancient Judea and Samaria, which is held by Jordanian forces). Ceasefire line runs through Jerusalem. Jews in other Arab countries face reprisal and many flee to the new Jewish State.

**1956:** Suez crisis.

**1967:** Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours; Jews conquer the Sinai peninsula, Gaza, Golan Heights, the West Bank and reunify Jerusalem, but return the administration of Temple Mount to a local Arab council.

**1970-71:** Yasser Arafat and the PLO are expelled from Jordan, which they had sought to take over; they move to Lebanon.

**1973:** Egypt and Syria attack Israel aiming to regain Sinai and the Golan Heights, starting the Yom Kippur war; in three weeks of hostilities Israel reverses early existential danger.

**1978:** Israel launches brief invasion of South Lebanon to deal with PLO bases conducting terrorism.

**Early 1980s:** Israel returns Sinai to Egypt in return for recognition as a State - for which President Sadat of Egypt is assassinated by hardliners.

**1982:** Israel invades South Lebanon in response to PLO terror attacks, defeating Syrian forces and setting up a buffer zone that lasts 18 years (within which Hezbollah was founded). Arafat moves base to Tunisia.

**1987-93:** First intifada (Arab rebellion) begins. Gaza border fence constructed. Soviet Union falls apart and many Jews migrate to Israel.

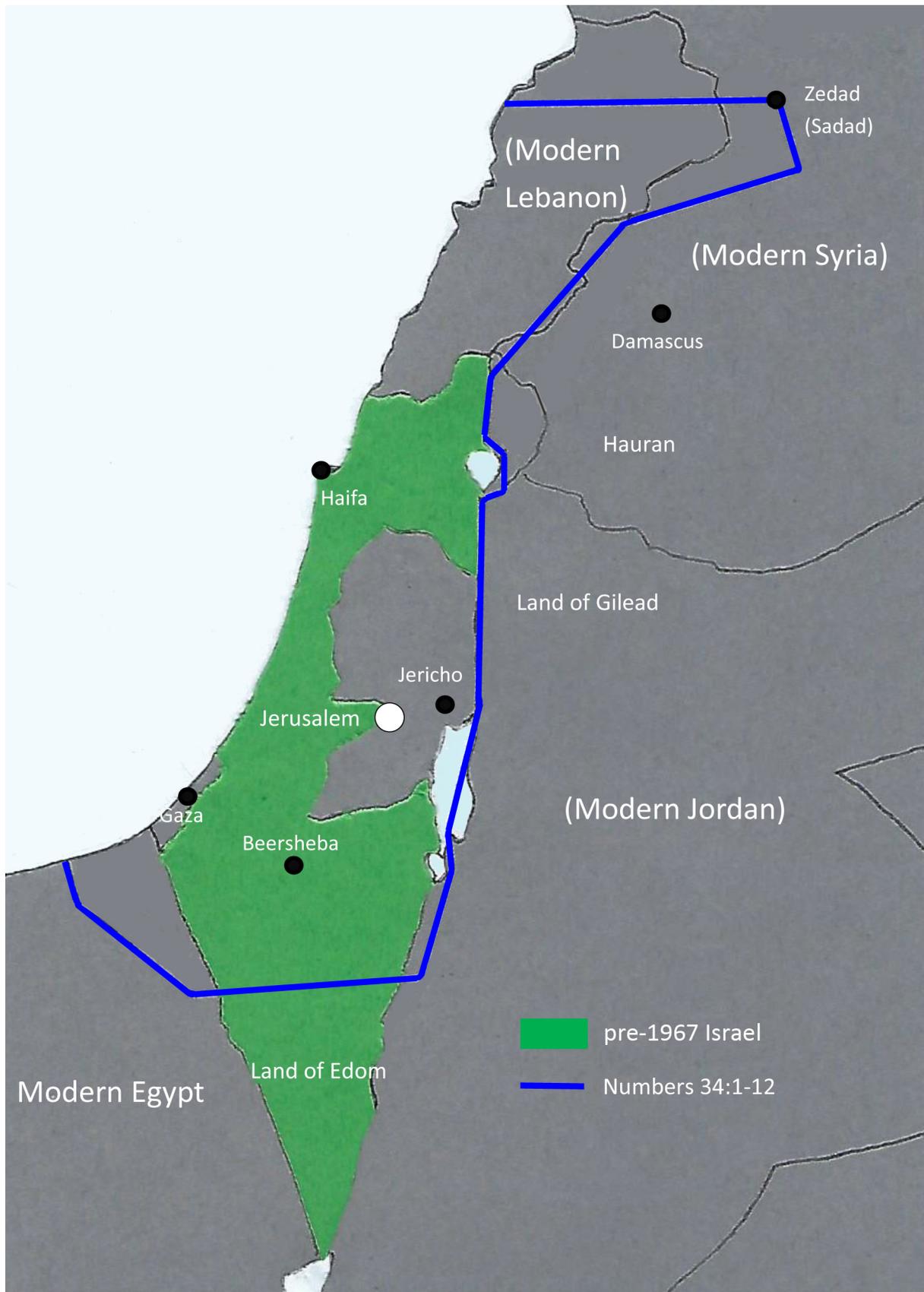
**1993-95:** Oslo accords; Gaza and the West Bank gain a measure of political autonomy; Arafat returns to the West Bank.

**2000:** A two-State solution proposed at Camp David fails (again); second intifada begins. Israel begins construction of security fence (or wall where Jewish settlements are overlooked) to separate the West Bank from Israel; terrorism declines, but also the West Bank's economy. Construction begins of Jewish settlements in secure parts of the West Bank.

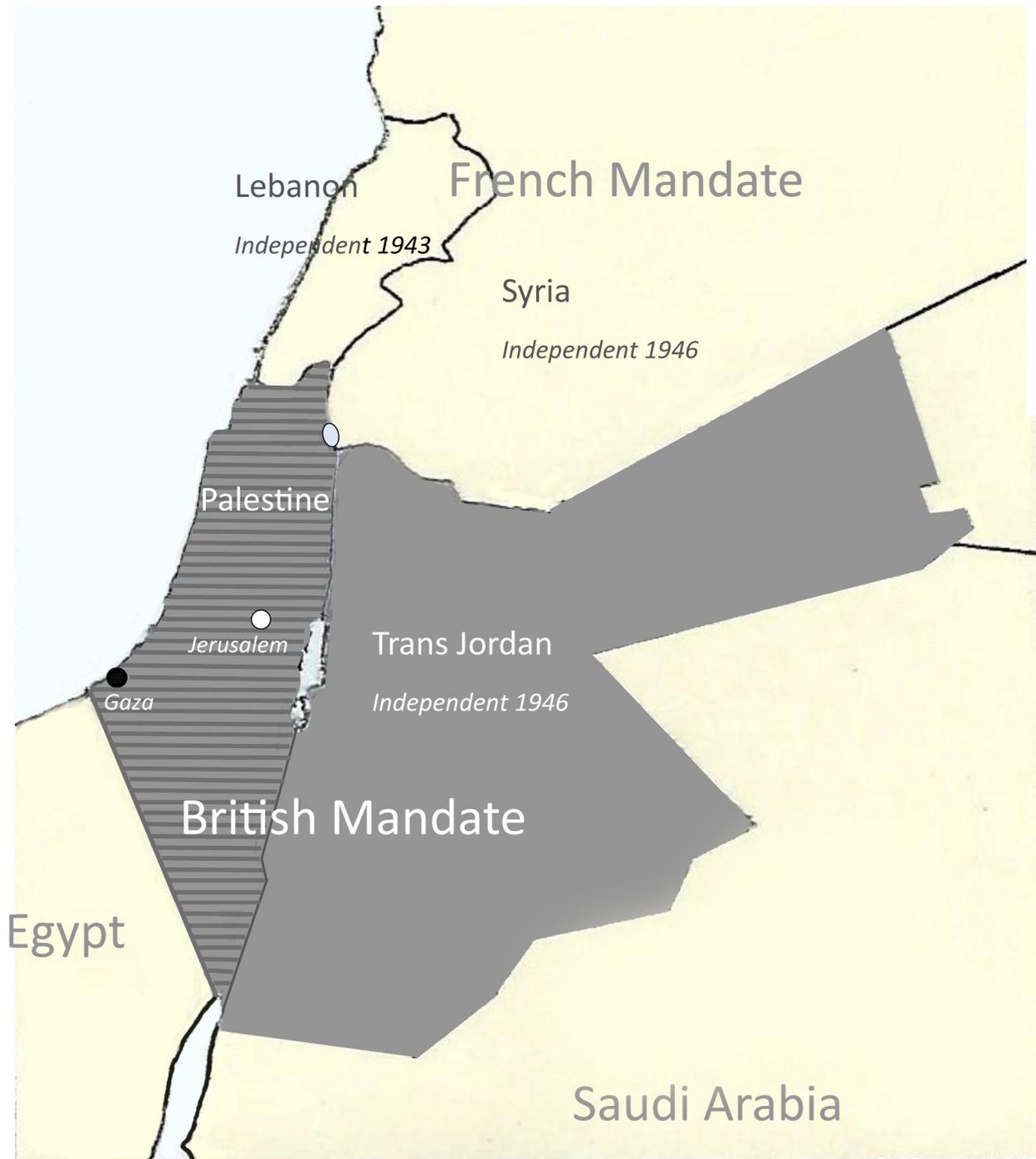
**2005:** Israel, unable to guarantee the security of Jewish settlers in the Gaza strip, forcibly evacuates them. Hamas gains power in Gaza; Israel blockades it of non-essential goods.

**2006:** Israel invades Lebanon in reprisal for cross-border raiding by Iran-backed Hezbollah, but gains no clear military victory.

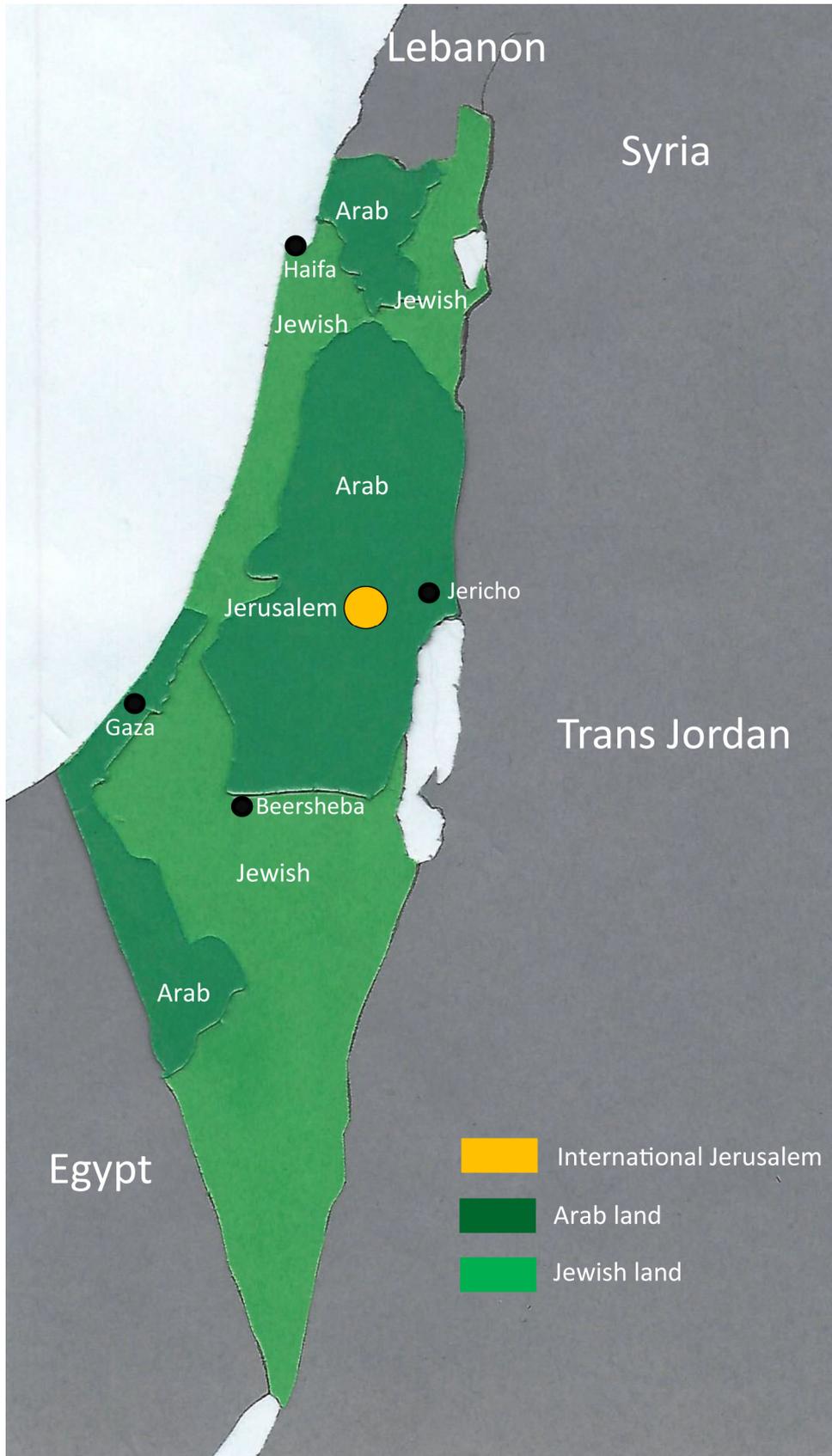
**2008 & 2014:** Israel takes military action against Gaza in response to rocket attacks into Israel.



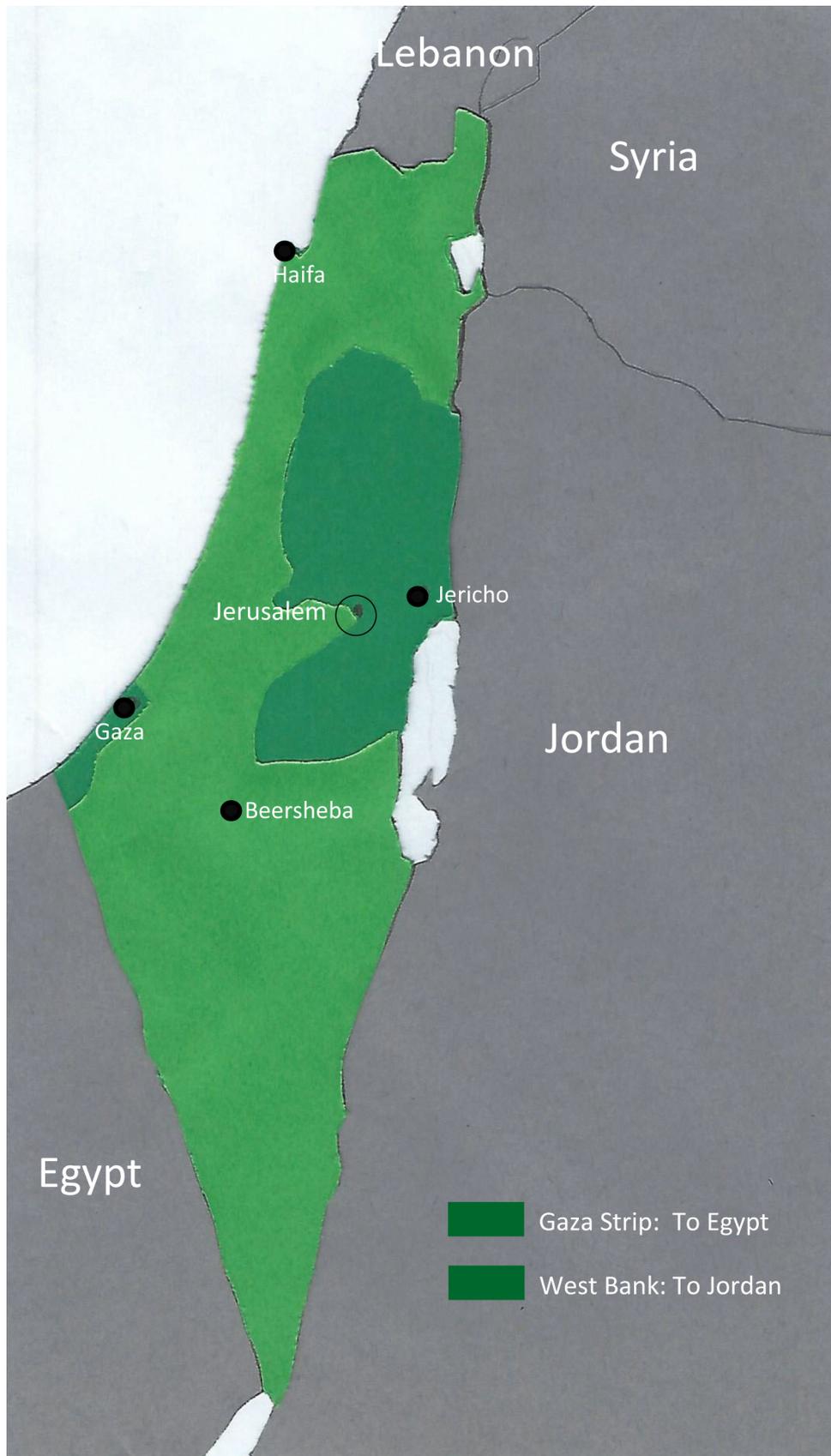
**Map 1:** Approximate construction of Biblical promise to Israel from Numbers 34.



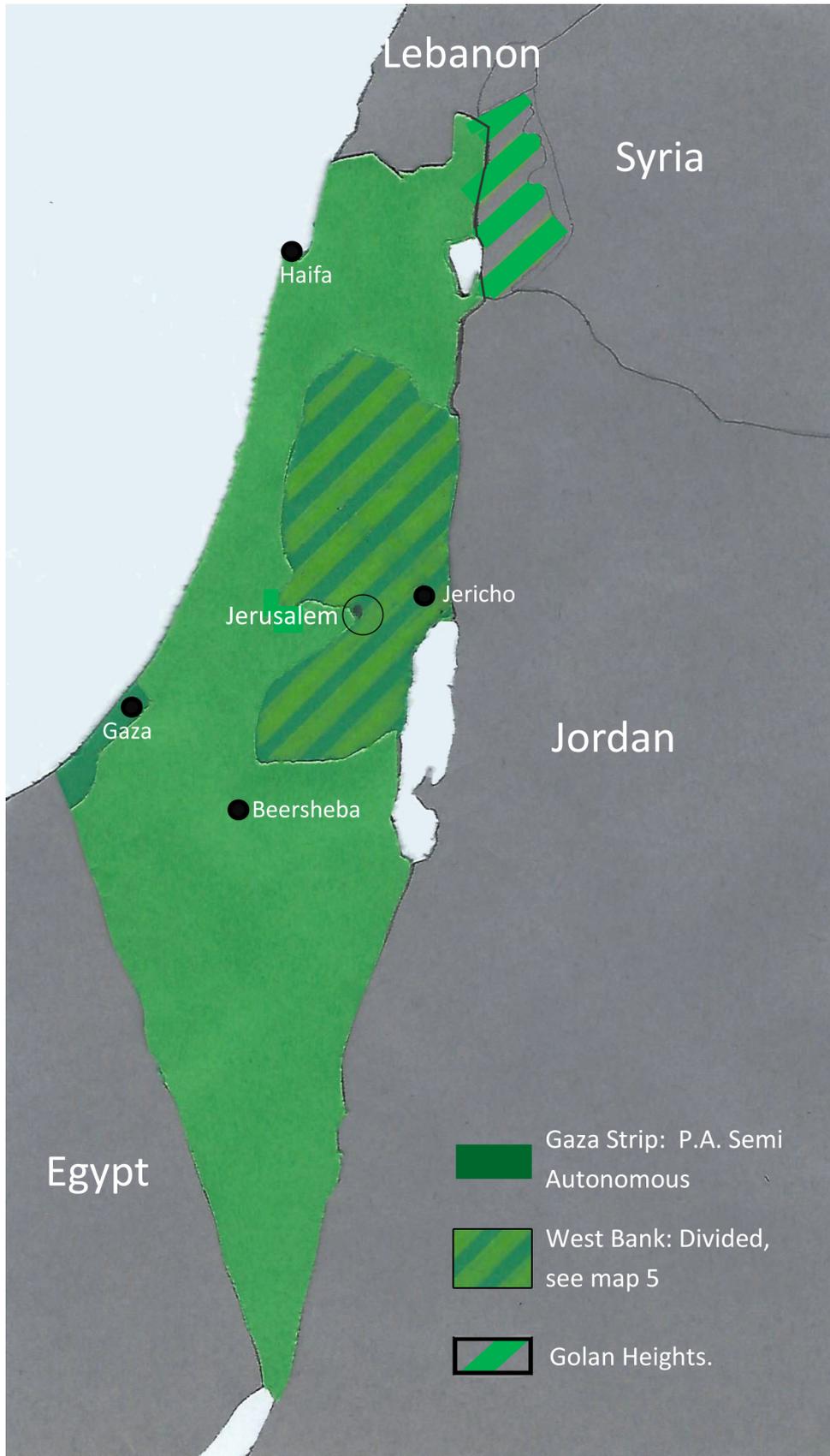
**Map 2:** British Mandate: Palestine and Trans Jordan.



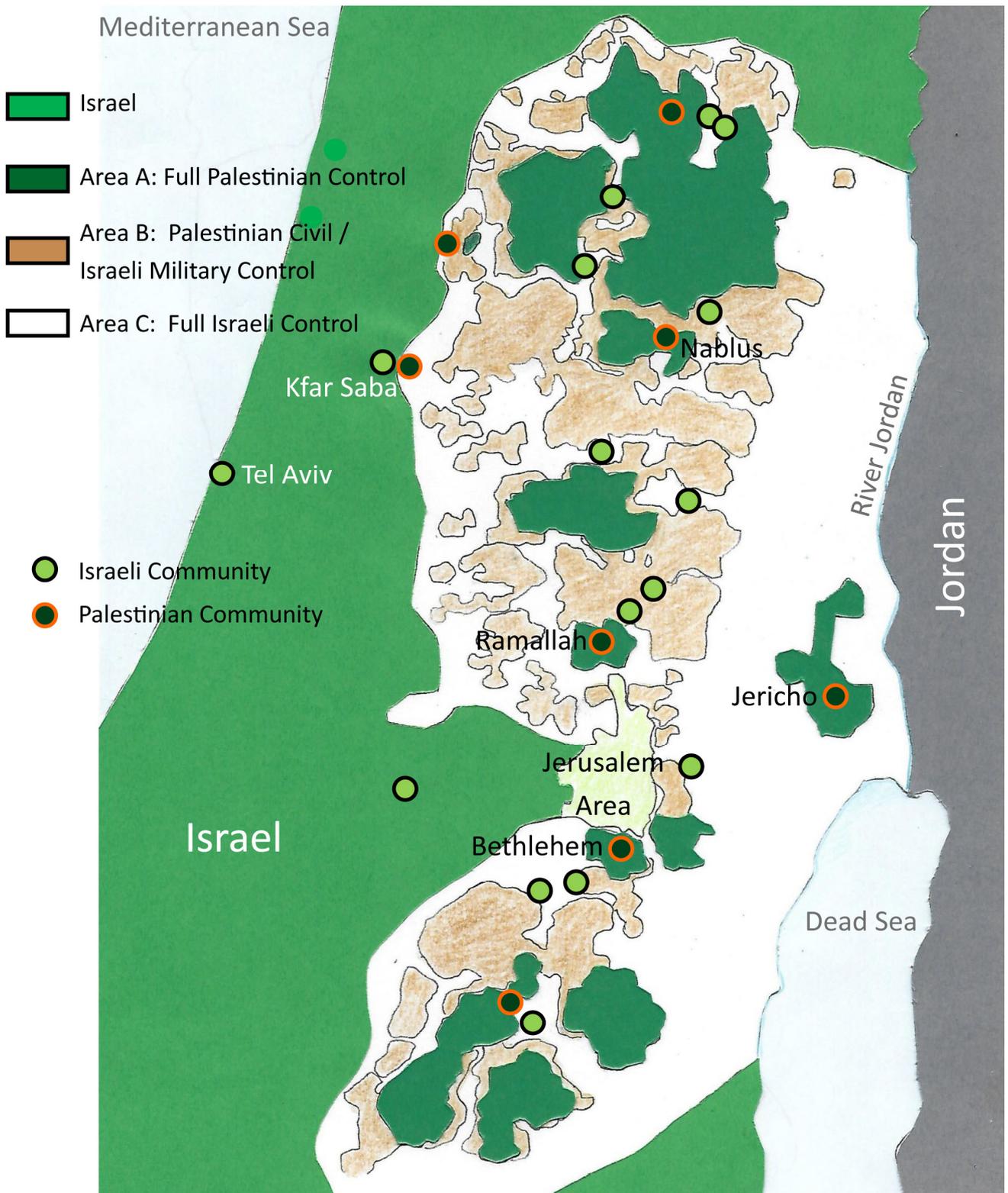
**Map 3a:** United Nations Partition Plan of November 1947



**Map 3b:** 'Green Line' Boundaries of 1949.



**Map 4: The Situation Today.**



**Map 5: Division of the West Bank**

## **The Maranatha Community**

The Maranatha Community was founded in 1981 as a Christian movement with members from all Christian traditions throughout the United Kingdom and abroad. It dedicated itself to praying and working for unity, healing and renewal in and between churches, communities and nations while pursuing a lifestyle characterised by simplicity, poverty and urgency. The Maranatha Community has been a servant ministry to the Church of Christ, claiming only to be little brothers and sisters of Jesus and holding fast to the core truths of the Christian faith as revealed in the Holy Bible. In February 2018 the Community was 'laid down' in response to God's leading. Since then members have been in a position of waiting for the next move to be made clear. The Community office and website continue to provide information on its work and publications.

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