

1. Introduction

Opinions vary strongly as to which people are entitled to the land situated at the crossroads of three continents and which for many ages has been the scene of many a bloody conflict. Could there be a solution for the area named Palestine by some and Israel by others that validates the rights of all its inhabitants? This brings us to an important question. Who are the Palestines? It is easily assumed that today's Palestines are the descendants of the Philistines, a people that lived in the Middle East for centuries. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. This study is an attempt to find a historically and theologically sound answer. In the end there is a surprising solution for the current conflicts.

2. The name Palestine

The name Palestine is derived from Philistia, the name of the land of the Philistines. The person to name the area south of Phoenicia Palestine was the Greek historian Herodotus (484 - 425 BC).¹ From then onwards the Greeks and Romans used that name as well,² while the names of Judea, Samaria en Galilea were retained for the different provinces.

In 135 AD the Roman emperor Hadrian wiped out every reference to the land of the Jews by merging it with the northern land into Syria-Palaestina. It is generally assumed that he did so in response to the Jewish revolt led by Bar Kokhba. He thereby broke the bond between the Jews and the land and also prohibited the Jews from entering Jerusalem and the adjacent area.³

Does the fact that the name Palestine is derived from Philistia mean that today's Palestines are descendants of the Philistines? Let us take a look at the history of the Philistines.

3. The Philistines

a) Origin

The Philistines are the offspring of Mizraim, a son of Cham and grandson of Noah.⁴ They originate from the coast land of Caphtor.⁵ According to Deuteronomy 2:23 the Caphtorim came from there to Gaza and defeated the Avvim. According to Amos 9:7 God led the Philistines out of Caphtor. Probably they were initially called Caphtorim and later became known as Philistines. The Hebrew word for Philistine, *pelishtee*, is derived from *pelesheth*, which means *rolling* or *migratory*⁶ and points to the migration from Caphtor to Gaza.

It is not known when the Philistines landed on the Mediterranean coast but at the time of the patriarch Abraham they had settled there already.⁷ At that time their territory stretched from the southwest coast of Canaan toward Beersheba. Abraham and his son Isaac generally enjoyed friendly relationships with the Philistine ruler Abimelech who lived in Gerar. The Philistines built five cities in the coastal area, named Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron.⁸

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Around 1400 BC the Israelites moved into Canaan and defeated the nations living there. This happened according to God's promise to their ancestor Abraham that the land from the brook of Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River would be for his offspring.⁹ The Israelites also conquered the Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron.¹⁰ However, the Philistines fought back and regained control over these cities. From then onward the two nations were often at odds with each other and over the centuries many an armed battle ensued. Sometimes the Philistines were stronger and occupied parts of Israel, at other times Jewish kings ruled over the Philistines.¹¹



Map 1 Philistia

According to Egyptian sources the Philistines attacked Egypt in about 1190 BC but were later chased away.¹²

b) Their end

From about 750 until 500 BC God pronounced judgment on the Philistines by way of His prophets.¹³ Obadiah and Zephaniah prophesied that the inhabitants of the plains would possess the land of the Philistines.¹⁴ In the beginning of the 6th century BC, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Philistines. After this they are no longer mentioned in the Bible. After the fall of the Babylonian empire, the Jewish exiles returned to their land and from that time probably settled in Gaza as well. In as far as there were any Philistines left, Alexander the Great delivered the final blow,¹⁵ in fulfillment of the Biblical prophecies about the destruction of the Philistines.

Based on archeological sources, some conclude that the Philistines already lost their own culture and took over the culture of the neighboring nations between the 10th and 7th century BC.¹⁶ In that case they assimilated and disappeared as unique people.

All of this means that the current Palestines cannot be descendants of the Philistines.

4. Nations who might claim ownership

If today's Palestine didn't belong to the Philistines, who has the greatest claim to the area? Let us look at all the peoples who have occupied the land.

a) Canaanites

The Canaanites are the earliest known people living in what is today known as Israel and Palestine. They were the descendants of Canaan, a brother of Mizraim. It is written in the Bible book of Genesis that "Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and

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the Hamathites."¹⁷ From all these descendants came peoples who spread in the area from Sidon in the North to Gaza in the South and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan Valley in the East.¹⁸

At the time of the prophet Abraham this area was known as the land of Canaan.¹⁹ God said to Abraham, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."²⁰ Eventually Canaan fell into the hands of the descendants of Abraham's grandson Jacob, who later was named Israel by God. It looks as if God suddenly took the land of other peoples to give it to His beloved Abraham. However, the Bible clearly tells us that the Canaanites did so much evil that God decided to make an end to them.²¹



Map 2 Canaan

It should be noted that God promised Abraham not only the land of Canaan but also that of several neighboring peoples. God had said, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."²² The land of the descendants of Canaan – the Hittites, Hivites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites – fell in the hands of the Israelites,²³ while the bordering territories on the south and east were given to the other descendants of Abraham. For an extensive study, see www.godlovesishmael.com/land-arabs.



Map 3 Land for Abraham

b) Israelites

Around 1400 BC the Israelites entered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and defeated most of the Canaanite nations. They subdued the remaining Canaanites, and utilized them as servants. These survivors, including the Gibeonites, enjoyed the protection of Israel. Israel's neighbors, especially the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites, regularly tried to take the land from them. If the Israelites turned away from God, these enemies were able to defeat them. But if they put their faith in God again, He delivered them, even from the most overwhelming army.

During the reign of king David, who was known for his great love for God, Israel was the biggest. David even ruled over the neighbors, such as Ammon, Moab and Edom and even to the Euphrates River. His son Solomon ruled over the same territory.



Map 4 David's kingdom (shaded)

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Due to internal tensions, in 930 BC the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms, with the ten northern tribes uniting under the name Israel and the southern part being named Judea. Some two hundred years later, in 722 BC, the northern kingdom fell into the hands of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser.²⁴ This happened as a result of the disobedience of the Israelites. Therefore God didn't protect them anymore.²⁵

The southern kingdom remained intact for another one and a half century, but in 586 the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar took the Israelites into exile. Again this was because of their disobedience. God had already warned them about it through the mouth of the prophet Moses.²⁶ After the fall of the Babylonian empire in 539 BC, the Persian king Cyrus permitted the Israelites to return home. Thus God fulfilled His promise to them, which He had given through the prophet Jeremiah.²⁷ From that time Israel no longer had a king, but was a province of a bigger foreign kingdom.



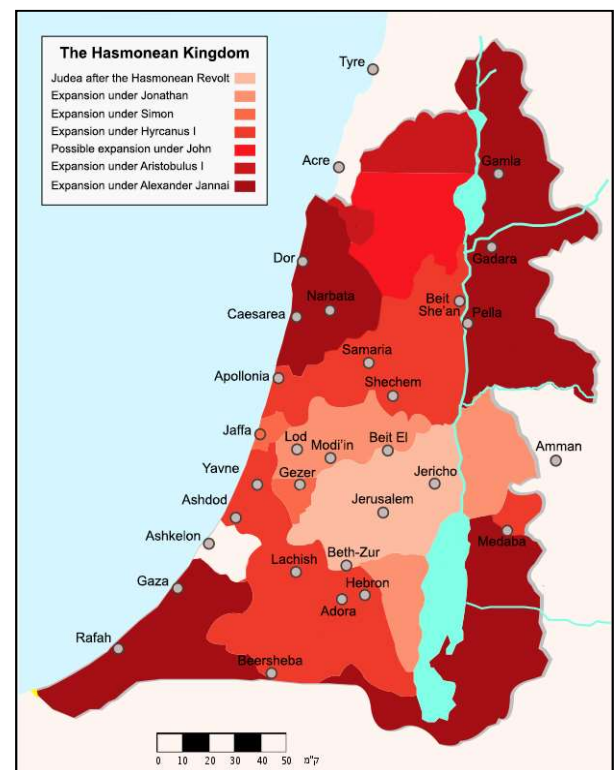
Map 5 The two kingdoms of Israel

The desire for an independent state remained and when the Seleucid king Antioch IV Epiphany forbade certain Jewish religious rites and tradition, the orthodox Jews rebelled in 167 BC. Under the leadership of the Maccabees they managed to establish an independent kingdom that at its height was nearly as big as that of king David.²⁸

In 63 BC this Hasmonean kingdom was defeated by the Roman Pompeii, who turned it into a Roman province. At that time the Jews lived mainly in Judea in the south and in Galilee in the north.

The Jews rebelled in 66 AD, but the Romans defeated them again. In 70 AD the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and three years later the Jews were completely subjected again.

In 132 AD, the aforementioned Jewish Shimon Bar Kokhba tried to establish an independent Jewish state, probably following the prohibition on circumcision by the Roman emperor Hadrian.²⁹ Three years later, this uprising was definitively suppressed by the Romans. Many Jews then



Map 6 The Hasmonean kingdom

fled to safer places, where they could fulfill the commandment of circumcision according to the laws of Moses.

Ever since the Jewish exiles during the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, there had been Jewish communities in places like Iraq and Egypt. This time the Jews fled to countries all over the world.³⁰ Historians disagree whether the Jews fled on their own accord or were exiled by the emperor. A small number remained in the area, particularly in Galilee. Over time, Jews settled again in Jerusalem.³¹

As a result of the Spanish Inquisition (1478-1834), many Jews fled from Spain to the Ottoman empire, including Jerusalem. In 1860, the first Jewish district, Mishkenot Sha'ananim, was built outside the walls of the old city.³²

Because of the persecution in Europe more and more Jews went to Palestine, with the intention of making it their homeland again. The book 'Der Judenstaat' of Theodor Herzl, published in 1887, had a major influence on this. The Jews bought land from those who claimed to be the owners and worked the soil, so that dry and barren regions were transformed into fertile areas. In 1917 the British, who ruled over the area at that time, recognized the need for land for the Jews and recorded this in the Balfour Treaty.

After the Holocaust, in which millions of innocent Jews in Europe were horribly killed, the call for a country of their own became even greater. The British government, however, did not implement the Balfour treaty, on which the Jews themselves proclaimed the Jewish State on 14 May 1948, one day before the end of the British mandate on Palestine. This opened the door for millions of Jews worldwide to return to their own country.

In the establishment of Israel and the return of the Jews, the fulfillment of God's promise to His people can be seen - that He will bring them back to the land He has given them.³³

According to *The World Factbook* of the CIA there are around 6,6 million Jews in the state of Israel and the Palestinian areas (data from 2022).³⁴

c) Samaritans

After the Assyrian king had taken the Israelites of the northern kingdom into exile, he settled peoples in the conquered area from Babylon and other places under Assyrian control.³⁵ They lived in Samaria and its surrounding cities, where they worshiped their own gods. After they got into trouble with lions, a Jewish priest was returned from exile to teach these peoples how to worship God.³⁶

At the time of Jesus the Messiah, these people were known as Samaritans. It is remarkable that Jesus spoke of them as foreigners and not as Jews who followed the Samaritan sect.³⁷

The Samaritans formed a large community under the Romans and also under the Byzantines. In 529 A.D. they tried to establish their own state, but their rebellion was suppressed. So many lost their lives that the Samaritan community was nearly wiped out.³⁸ At the rise of Islam, the Samaritans lived in the region between Egypt, Syria and Iran. During the following centuries, many were forced to convert to Islam. It is assumed that many of the current Palestinians in Nablus, the name of the ancient city of Samaria, have Samaritan roots. Today, the number of Samaritans is estimated at around 800.³⁹

d) Other peoples

After the exile in 568 B.C. , Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites moved into Judea. The Jewish Nehemia mentions Sanballat the Horonite, who was probably a Moabite, ⁴⁰ and the Ammonite leader Tobiah. ⁴¹

After the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Ammonites moved westward and settled along the Jordan. When the people of Judah were exiled, they moved further westward and lived in Israel. During the Persian and Hellenistic periods they are seldom mentioned. The last reference to the Ammonites is in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* from the 2nd century A.D., where they are described as a people in the south of Palestine. ⁴²

During the reign of the Jewish king Jehoshaphat, the Moabites tried to take possession of Judah, together with the Ammonites and Edomites. Their attempt failed, but after the Jewish exile they entered the land. Their own land fell into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and sometime during the Persian era, the name of Moab disappeared. In view of the brotherhood between the Moabites and Ammonites, the Arabs mentioned in Nehemiah 4:7 were very likely of Moabite origin. ⁴³

After the Jewish exile, the Edomites advanced from Mount Seir and settled in the southern part of Judea. This area became known as Idumea, a Greek adaptation of Edom. Around 125 B.C. the Jewish John Hyrcanus defeated the Edomites and forced them to become Jews. After the Jewish-Roman wars in the 2nd Century, the Idumeans are no longer mentioned in historical records, indicating they ceased to exist as a unique people. ⁴⁴

e) Arabs

Already in the fifth century B.C. , the Jewish Nehemiah spoke about Arabs in the land. ⁴⁵ Although the Ishmaelites were the first to be called Arabs, ⁴⁶ it seems that at this time other peoples were counted as Arabs as well. ⁴⁷

With the arrival of Islam in Palestine around 640 A.D., Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula settled in the area, including Jerusalem. Through the Islamic Arabization process, most of the peoples living there, lost their unique identity and formed an Arab population, existing mainly of Christians and Muslims. In the 11th Century, a number of the Arabs began to follow the Druze teaching and in the 19th Century the Bahai.

When the Jews began to develop the western part of Palestine in the 1880s, prosperity increased. The economic growth attracted Bedouins from the surrounding desert areas and Arabs from neighboring countries also decided to settle there. Shortly before and during the war between the Jews and Arabs in 1948, many Arabs fled to neighboring countries. Afterwards, a number of them returned. According to *The World Factbook* of the CIA, about 6.8 million Arabs now live in the state of Israel and the Palestinian territories (data from 2015). ⁴⁸

f) Summary

Coming back to the question who has the greatest claim on the land, based on who all has lived there, we can state the following:

The oldest right goes to the original inhabitants: the Canaanites. However, they have largely been exterminated and long ago ceased to exist as a people.

Then the right goes to the Israelites, whose ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob already lived there 4000 years ago. From the 15th century BC, when they were given possession of the land, until now, the Jews have lived there continuously.

During the reign of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews lost their autonomy. They made several attempts to regain control, but each time were suppressed by the ruling powers. That doesn't mean the land didn't belong to the Jews anymore. In 1948 they regained independence again.

At different times in history, many Jews lived outside their land, but that was never out of free will. It was because they were forced to, either by exile or by persecution.

After the Babylonian exile, a good number returned at the command of the Persian king Cyrus. And at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, many Jews returned to Palestine because of increasing persecution elsewhere, especially in Spain, Eastern Europe and Yemen. After the Second World War, Jews returned from all over Europe. The establishment of the Jewish State was a great help. The self-government created a safe haven for the Jews worldwide. After the proclamation of the State of Israel, many Jews fled from the Arab nation because they were threatened by the Muslims.

5. Names of the land under different rulers

It is logical to say that Palestine belongs to the Palestinians. With 6.8 million inhabitants, they make up about half of the population of Israel and the Palestinian territories. Yet we can learn something unique about the different names by which the area has been known throughout the ages.

a) Canaan

As mentioned under 4 a), Canaan is the oldest known name of the area between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea. The name is derived of Canaan, the ancestor of the earliest known peoples who lived there and who each governed their own territory.

b) Philistia and Israel

When the Philistines arrived, they conquered part of the coastal land. The area where they settled was named Philistia.

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In the 15th century BC the Israelites moved into the land of Canaan at the command of God and exterminated the Canaanites (because of their sinful behavior). The land became known as the land of Israel, according to the new name that God had given to their forefather Jacob.⁴⁹ When the ten northern tribes separated themselves from king Rehobeam in the 10th century BC, they formed the kingdom of Israel, while the remaining land in the south became the kingdom of Judah.⁵⁰

c) Samaria, Judea and Galilee

After Assyria conquered the northern kingdom and exiled the Israelites, the southern part of it became known as Samaria, after the previous capital Samaria, while the northern part was named Galilee (a name which already existed in the 15th century BC).⁵¹

After the fall of the Kingdom of Judah, the area remained known in Hebrew and Judah⁵² and was named Judaea in Greek.⁵³

Even though the aforementioned Greek Herodotus was the first to name the whole area Palestine, the Romans called the geographical areas of Idumea, Judaea and Samaria the province of Judea.⁵⁴

d) Paleastina

In 135 A.D. Emperor Hadrian gave this province the name Paleastina and the whole region the name Syro-Palaestina (see map 8 below).

After the split of the Roman Empire in 395 A.D., the eastern part became known as the Byzantine Empire, with the names Palaestina I, II and III being maintained.

In 638 A.D. Arab Muslims conquered the area and Palestine became part of a province called al-sham (see map 9 below). Up to 750 A.D. the Umayyad ruled over Palestine, followed by Abbasside rule until 1258.⁵⁵

In 1258 the Mongols defeated the Abbasid empire, but two years later the Mamluks gained control over the area.⁵⁶



Map 7 The Roman province Judea

Who are the Palestinians?



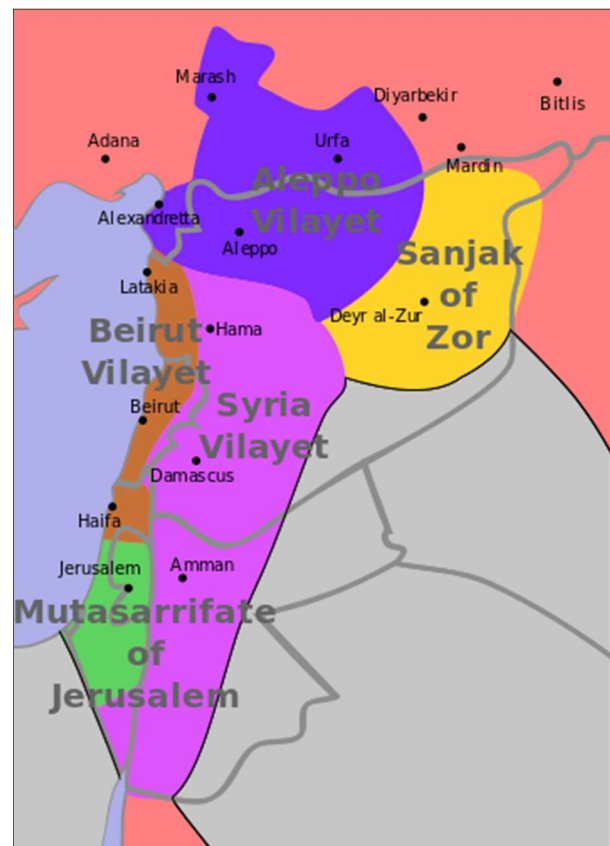
Map 8 The Roman provinces after 135 A.D.



Map 9 Abbasid districts in the 9th century



Map 10 Part of the Ottoman Empire around 1850



Map 11 Part of the Ottoman Empire around 1900

Who are the Palestinians?

e) Syria and South-Syria

In 1516, the Turks conquered Palestine and made it part of the province of Syria in the Ottoman Empire (see map 10 above). The Turks used Philistin (Palestine) as an abstract name for the Holy Land and not for a specifically defined geographical area.⁵⁷ In 1872 they named the area Mutasarrifate (district) of Jerusalem (green section in map 11 above).⁵⁸

a) British Palestine

In 1917 the Ottoman Empire collapsed and South-Syria came under British rule as agreed with the French in 1915 in the Sykes-Picot agreement. The British gave the whole area between Iraq and the Mediterranean Sea the name Palestine. At the end of 1917, Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."⁵⁹

A few years later, in 1921, the British assigned all of the region east of the river Jordan, more than three quarters of Palestine

to the Arabs. This part, mainly inhabited by Arabs, was named 'the Emirate of Transjordan.'⁶⁰

In 1946 the area was named 'The Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan' and three years later 'The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan'⁶¹ or Jordan in short.

In 1947 the United Nations proposed to divide the remaining part of British Palestine between the Jews and

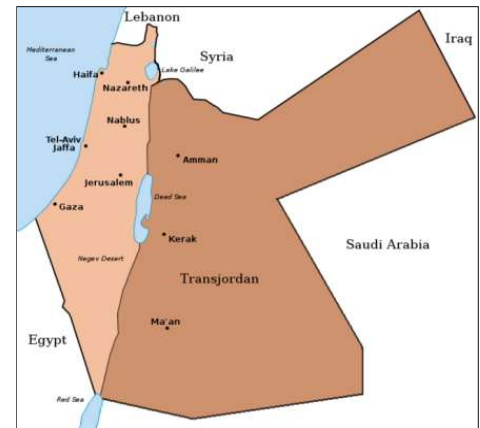
Arabs according to the map on the left.

At that time all the inhabitants of Palestine, the Jews as well as the Arabs, were called Palestinians.⁶² So there were Arab Palestinians and Jewish Palestinians.

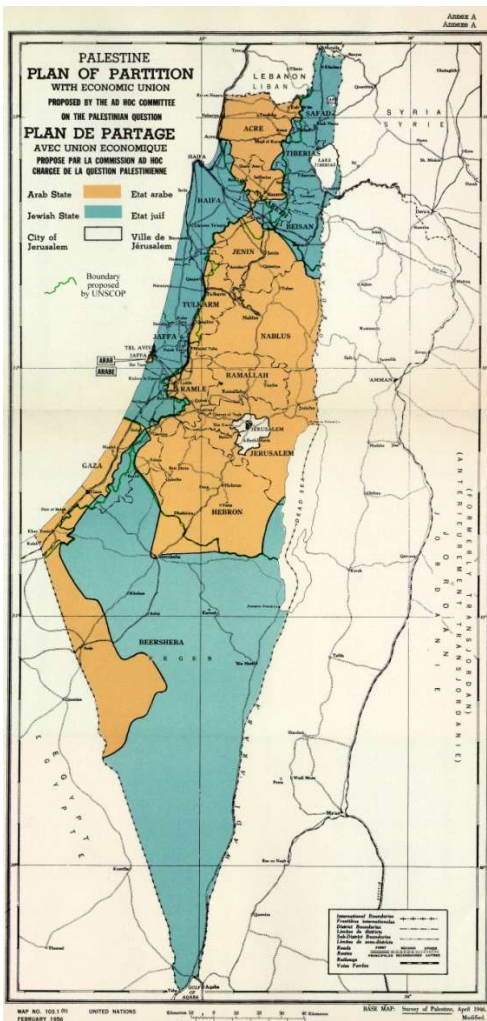
Map 14 Proposal by the U.N.



Map 12 British Palestine



Map 13 Division of British Palestine



Who are the Palestinians?

The British used a flag, based on the Union Jack, but the Arabs and Jews refused to use it and each had their own flags, which are forerunners of the current flags of Israel and the Palestinian territories.



British flag of Palestine ⁶³



Arab flag of Palestine ⁶⁴



Jewish flag of Palestine ⁶⁵

The Jews accepted the U.N. proposal, even though they had to share the land of their ancestors with the Arabs. The Arabs rejected it, ⁶⁶ even though they had already received all of Jordan from the British. In fact, they began to attack the Jews in a number of places, resulting in the Civil War of 1947-1948. ⁶⁷ Before the U.N. had voted over the plan, the Arab nations already threatened to destroy Israel and kill all the Jews in the Arab world. ⁶⁸

f) Israel and the Palestinian Territories

On May 15th, 1948, The British Mandate expired and it was not clear who would gain control over the remaining part of Palestine. This is one of the reasons why on May 14th the Jews proclaimed the areas under their control as the State of Israel. ⁶⁹ For the first time in about 2500 years, the Jews regained autonomy over the land from which their ancestors had been exiled, even if only part of it.

The next day, on May 16th, the neighboring Arab countries of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq started a war against the brand new nation in order to wipe it out, but they didn't succeed. On the contrary, the Jews conquered territory.

Jordan then took control of the west bank of the Jordan and gave it the name West Bank (green section in map 15). The Gaza Strip was assigned by the Arab League to the independent All-Palestine Government, but in 1959 Egypt took control of the area (black part in map 15). ⁷⁰

In 1967, Egypt and Syria tried to defeat Israel again, but this attempt failed as well. The Jews were so successful that they even took possession of the West Bank and Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip and Sinai (see map 16).



Map 15 Israel in 1949



Map 16 Israel in 1967

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In 1988 the P.L.O. (Palestinian Liberation Organization) declared the Palestinian State, consisting of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but it was not recognized internationally.⁷¹ Jordan then withdrew all rights of the population in the West Bank. With that, the inhabitants also lost the right to Jordanian citizenship that they had enjoyed until then.⁷²

In 1993 and 1995 the first and second Oslo Accord were signed respectively between Israel and the PLO, which granted limited self governance to the Arab Palestinians living in the West bank and Gaza strip.

In 2005, Israel completely withdrew from the Gaza Strip. After the internal Palestinian conflict in 2006, Hamas became the ruling authority of the Gaza Strip, while the Fatah party became the Palestinian authority of the West Bank.



Map 17 Israel in 2006

Since 2012, the State of Palestine enjoys recognition by the United Nations, although not all member states support this recognition.⁷³

Today, most Arab countries refuse to recognize Israel as a country.⁷⁴ They speak of Palestine or of occupied Palestine and on many Arabic maps of the Middle East, no name is given to the area that makes up Israel.

g) In short

In summary, we see that the land in question has been known by different names, related to the people living there. First it was called Canaan, after the Canaanites, and then Israel, after the Israelites.

After the Jewish exiles, the area was known by the names of Judea, Samaria and Galilee, where Judea and Galilee were inhabited by the Jews* and Samaria by the Samaritans. Roman Emperor Hadrian decided to get rid of the name Judea and named the area Palestine. From then on all the inhabitants – the Jews and Samaritans - were in fact Palestinians!

After the Arabization of Palestine by the Arab Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula, the two main people groups in Palestine were the Jews and the Arabs. During the Ottoman Empire, the inhabitants were considered Syrians, while they were again called Palestinians during the time of the British Mandate.

* The word Jew is derived from Judah

All of this means that the name of the area cannot be conclusively used to determine ownership. Suppose the Jewish Revolt in 153 A.D. had succeeded, all the inhabitants would have been called Judeans or perhaps even Israelites!

During and after the Ottoman Empire, Palestine or South-Syria covered both sides of the Jordan. When the British assigned the eastern part to the Palestinian Arabs, it would only have been natural to assign the much smaller western part to the Palestinian Jews. However, neither Great Britain, nor the United Nations, chose for it. Instead, they proposed to divide the western part among the Arabs and Jews as well. While the Jews agreed to this, the Arabs didn't. They wanted to get rid of the Jews altogether.

So, although many believe that Palestine belongs to today's Palestinians, the Jews are equally entitled to the land. It would only be reasonable for the Jews to possess the entire Palestinian territory west of the Jordan, because the Arabs have the much larger area on the east side. This actually agrees with the division of the land as God gave it to Abraham, with the area west of the Jordan river for his descendants through Isaac and Jacob and the area East of the Jordan for his other descendants (see paragraph 4.a).

6. The confusion and the solution

Based on the above, one would expect the Palestinian problem to have been solved years and years ago. Both Jews and Arabs are Palestinians and have the right to dwell in Palestine. If the Arabs accept authority over Jordan and permit authority to the Jews over the territory west of the Jordan river, and the Jews accept this division, isn't the problem then solved?

Reality turns out to be more complex. This is partly due to the United Nations. When the Arab nations attacked the brand new State of Israel on May 15th, 1948, a large refugee problem arose. Up to 700,000 Arabs fled the violence, many of whom did so at the advice of the Arab armies who promised them they would soon be able to return in peace. Others fled from the counter attacks of the Jews or because they didn't want to come under Jewish rule.⁷⁵

In response to the refugee flow, the United Nations defined the Palestinian refugees as:

"persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict."⁷⁶

This definition made everyone, both the families who had lived there for centuries as well as those who had only been there for a few years, into Palestinians. Now a number of reports show that before the 1880s, when immigrant Jews and Arabs began to arrive, the land was very sparsely populated.

In 1869, Mark Twain wrote in *The Innocents Abroad* about cities laying in ruins, such as Capernaum, Tiberias and Jericho. About the valley where once the Israelite Barak had defeated the Canaanite army of Jabin, he wrote, "There is not a solitary village throughout its whole

extent—not for thirty miles in either direction. There are two or three small clusters of Bedouin tents, but not a single permanent habitation. One may ride ten miles, hereabouts, and not see ten human beings."

And, "Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren, they are dull of color, they are unpicturesque in shape. The valleys are unsightly deserts fringed with a feeble vegetation that has an expression about it of being sorrowful and despondent. The Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee sleep in the midst of a vast stretch of hill and plain wherein the eye rests upon no pleasant tint, no striking object, no soft picture dreaming in a purple haze or mottled with the shadows of the clouds. Every outline is harsh, every feature is distinct, there is no perspective—distance works no enchantment here. It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land." ⁷⁷

British Consul James Finn wrote in 1857, "The country is in a considerable degree empty of inhabitants and therefore its greatest need is of a body of population." ⁷⁸

In 1874, S. Manning wrote, "This fertile plain, which might support an immense population, is almost a solitude. Two or three wretched hamlets, mere clusters of mud huts, are the sole representatives of the numerous and thriving cities which once occupied it. Here and there was a solitary Arab breaking up the clods with a plough which remains unchanged in form from the earliest ages. These were the only signs of life we could discover," and "An hour beyond Rachel's tomb brings us to a fertile, but desolate and unpeopled valley," and "There is nothing to break the solitude, save now and then a string of camels on their way between Hebron and Jerusalem. Not a house, or sign of human habitation is visible." ⁷⁹

In 1861, J.B. Forsyth went even as far to write in *A Few Months in the East*, "depopulation is even now advancing." ⁸⁰

According to the report of the British Royal Commission in 1913, "The area was under populated and remained economically stagnant until the arrival of the first Zionist pioneers in the 1880's, who came to rebuild the Jewish land. The country had remained "The Holy Land" in the religious and historic consciousness of mankind, which associated it with the Bible and the history of the Jewish people. Jewish development of the country also attracted large numbers of other immigrants – both Jewish and Arab. The road leading from Gaza to the north was only a summer track suitable for transport by camels and carts... Houses were all of mud. No windows were anywhere to be seen... The plows used were of wood... The yields were very poor... Schools did not exist... The rate of infant mortality was very high... The western part, toward the sea, was almost a desert... Many ruins were scattered over the area, as owing to the prevalence of malaria, many villages were deserted by their inhabitants." ⁸¹

So, before the arrival of Jews from Europe there was only a tiny number of Palestinians in the land. That means that only a very small portion of the Palestinian refugees are descended from the original inhabitants of the land. As mentioned before under section 4.e, many Arabs from neighboring countries moved into the area after 1880. That means that most of the Arab

Palestinians had only lived there for a few decades and were no more Palestinian than the Jewish immigrants.

It is mostly on the basis of the definition of the United Nations that they are able to call themselves Palestinians.

The following table clarifies the development of the identity of 'Palestinian'

up until 1880:	small groups of Jews, Arabs and Samaritans
1880 - 1948:	the above mentioned Palestinians, together with a large group of Jewish and Arab immigrants
1948 - 1967:	a small group of original Arab Palestinians and a large group of Arab immigrants, including a significant number of Jordanian citizens on the West bank
after 1967:	all Arab speaking non-Jews, regardless of their ethnic background

This explains why there is no unique Palestinian culture or language. The language and culture of today's Palestinians is identical to that of the surrounding Arab nations. No wonder, because that's where most of them come from.⁸²

It is interesting to note that probably many of the Bedouin and Arab immigrants from Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia are descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael. That means that a large part of today's Palestinians really are Ishmaelites.

We may safely conclude that it is just to grant the Jews the portion of land that God promised their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see section 4.a). At the same time there are Palestinians who have lived in the land since the 7th century BC. Probably a number of Palestinian families in Nablus have descended from the Samaritans. It would not be fair if they had to move out for another people, the Jews in this case. Is there a solution?

Yes, there is! According to the Bible, God gave the land forever to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁸³ He also told them to take good care of the strangers among them. They were not allowed to exploit them, but had to take good care of them.⁸⁴ God warned them that, if they would disobey him, He would exile them.⁸⁵ However, He also promised to bring them back.⁸⁶

God knew that in the meantime other people would settle in the land. Therefore He gave the Israelites specific instructions before their return from Babylon through the prophet Ezekiel. First he mentioned where the borders of the land would be⁸⁷ and then he said, "So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the sojourners who reside among you and have had children among you. They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel. With you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the sojourner resides, there you shall assign him his inheritance, declares the Lord GOD."⁸⁸

When the Israelites returned from the Babylonian exile, they didn't chase out the people who were living there already. Instead, they accepted them, in accordance with the word of the Lord by mouth of the prophet Ezekiel.

If today the Jews are granted self-governance over the land that God has given them and if they give the non-Jewish citizens equal right, including the right of land ownership, then everyone can live in peace.

That means one thing for the Arab Palestinians: they too must submit to God's plan. They must stop trying to drive the Jews out of the land and submit under Jewish rule.

7. Conclusion

Today, the Arab Palestinians claim that Palestine is theirs and the Jews that the land belongs to them.

No one can claim ownership based on the correlation between Palestine and Philistia, as the Philistines have been wiped out and ceased to exist as a people.

With the Canaanites having been exterminated, the oldest rights go to the Israelites. Ever since their taking possession of the land in the days of Joshua, they have lived there without interruption, even when part of the population was exiled or fled persecution.

Since the 6th century BC, people from other nations have lived in the land as well. They became known as Samaritans, of whom a handful are still there today.

The vast majority of today's non-Jewish population is Arab immigrants or descendants of immigrants since the time when Jews, fleeing persecution elsewhere, returned to their holy land. Although they call themselves Palestinians, in terms of language and culture they belong to the Arab population of the Middle East. When British Palestine was divided, they received three-fourth of the land.

The most righteous solution is for the Jews to reign over the remaining one-fourth of the land, which corresponds with the boundaries that God gave to Moses. There can be peace if the Jews accept the others in the country as fellow citizens and grant them equal rights and if the Arabs accept these boundaries as well and submit to God's plan.

We may also approach the Palestinians from another angle. Many of today's Arab Palestinians are physical and/or spiritual descendants of Ishmael⁸⁹, while the Jews are descendants of Isaac. There is room for both family members in the land. God has promised the land to the descendants of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham therefore sent his other sons to the east, so they would not share the inheritance. In the end, God's love is so great that others may share in the unique blessing that rested on Isaac and Jacob.

Acknowledgements:

Map 1 source unknown

Map 2 own production

Map 3 own production

Map 4 Illumina

Map 5 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Levant_830_nl.svg

Map 6 By Effib - https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/החשמונאים_הממלכה#/media/File:Map_Hasmonean_Kingdom-he.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63408877>

Map 7 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_century_ludaea_province.gif

Map 8 adapted from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_province#/media/File:The_Roman_Empire_ca_400_AD.png

Map 9 "Syria in the 9th century" by Constantine Plakidas - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syria_in_the_9th_century.svg

Map 10

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eyalet#/media/File:1849_Mitchell_Map_of_Turkey_%28_Iraq,_Syria,_Palestine_%29_-_Geographicus_-_TurkeyAsia-m-1849.jpg

Map 11 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman_Syria_1900.svg

Map 12 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/images/mandate1.gif>

Map 13 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PalestineAndTransjordan.png>

Map 14 https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/UN_Palestine_Partition_Versions_1947.jpg

Map 15 [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3APalestinian_Territories%2C_1948-67_\(2\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3APalestinian_Territories%2C_1948-67_(2).svg) By ComServant [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Map 16 "Palestinian National Authority within Israel, 1967-94" by ComServant - This file was derived from:

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Map 17 By ComServant - This file was derived from: Palestinian National Authority within Israel, 2013.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0, \$3

¹ Herodotus 1:105, 2:104, 3:91, 4:39, 7:89

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_name_%22Palestine%22

³ The province of Judaea was renamed Syria Palaestina (later simply called Palaestina), and, according to Eusebius of Caesaria (Ecclesiastical History, Book IV, chapter 6), no Jew was thenceforth allowed to set foot in Jerusalem or the surrounding district. <http://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine#ref494709>

⁴ Genesis 10:1,6,14

⁵ Jeremiah 47:4, Amos 9:7

⁶ Strong's Concordance H6430, H6429, accessed in e-Sword version 10.1.0, Rick Myers

⁷ Genesis 21:34

⁸ Joshua 13:3

⁹ For an in-depth study about the areas God promised to Abraham and his descendants, see godlovesishmael.com/site/en/land-for-ishmaels-descendants-us/

¹⁰ Judges 1:18

¹¹ For an overview of these conflicts, see Study Conflicts with Nations at www.godlovesishmael.com

¹² They are mentioned in Egyptian records as prst, one of the Sea Peoples that invaded Egypt in about 1190 bc. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/456536/Philistine>

¹³ For an overview, see godlovesishmael.com/site/en/prophecies-neighbors-israel-us/

¹⁴ Obadiah 1:19, Zephaniah 2:7

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Gaza

¹⁶ During the 10th–7th centuries BC the distinctiveness of the material culture appears to have been absorbed with that of surrounding peoples. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistines>

¹⁷ Genesis 10:15-18a – *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (ESV), Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles

¹⁸ Genesis 10:18b-19 and 13:10

¹⁹ Genesis 12:5

²⁰ Genesis 15:7 ESV

²¹ See Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-25; Deuteronomy 9:4, 18:12

²² Genesis 15:18-19 ESV

²³ See for instance Deuteronomy 7:1

²⁴ 2 Kings 17:3

²⁵ 2 Kings 17:7-23

²⁶ See for instance Deuteronomy 28:36-37, 63-64; 29:24-29

²⁷ See Jeremiah 27:22, 29:10, 32:37

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty

²⁹ a universal ban on circumcision that Hadrian issued in, it seems, the early 130s. The emperor had an abhorrence of physical mutilation and even went so far as to declare that castration was no less a crime than murder. In the same spirit he denounced and forbade circumcision, which he viewed as mutilation.

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Hadrian>

³⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism>

³¹ It is known from reports of the Crusades that Jews were living there and also in other parts of Palestine.

³² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishkenot_Sha'ananim

³³ See for instance Deuteronomy 30:3, Isaiah 11:11-12. 43:5-6, 49:12, Jeremiah 31:8-9, Ezekiel 37:21, 39:27-28, Zechariah 8:7

³⁴ 74% of a total of 8,900,000 = 6,590,000 in Israel (including East-Jerusalem and Golan Heights) + 430,000 in the West Bank = 7,020,000 Jews.

www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/israel/#people-and-society, September 2022

www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/west-bank/#people-and-society, September 2022

³⁵ 2 Kings 17:24

³⁶ See 2 Kings 17:25-34

³⁷ Matthew 10:5-6, Luke 17:18

³⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritans#Byzantine_times

³⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritans

⁴⁰ Commentator Clarke at Nehemiah 2:10 Sanballat the Horonite - Probably a native of Horonaim, a Moabite by birth, and at this time governor of the Samaritans under the king of Persia. Accessed in e-Sword

⁴¹ See Nehemiah 2:10, 19 and 4:3, 7

⁴² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ammon>

⁴³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moab>

⁴⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edom>

⁴⁵ See Nehemiah 2:19 and 4:7

⁴⁶ Arab means steppe dweller

⁴⁷ For an extensive study about this, see the study Origin of the Arabs at godlovesishmael.com/site/en/oorsprong-arabieren-us/

⁴⁸ 21% of a total of 8.900.000 = 1.900.000 in Israel + 2.400.000 in the Westbank + 2.000.000 in Gaza = 6.300.000 Arabs. www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook, 24 September 2022

⁴⁹ Genesis 32:28

⁵⁰ 2 Chronicles 11:17

⁵¹ Joshua 20:7

⁵² See for instance Nehemiah 1:2

⁵³ See Strong's # G2449 Ἰουδαία Ioudaia the *Judae*an land (that is, *Judaea*), a region of Palestine: - Juda.

⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judea_%28Roman_province%29

⁵⁵ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/muslims/timeline.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate

⁵⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamluk#Mamluks_and_the_Mongols

⁵⁷ "The name "Palestine" was no longer used as the official name of an administrative unit under the Ottomans because they typically named provinces after their capitals."

"The Ottomans regarded "Filistin" as an abstract term referring to the "Holy Land", and not one consistently applied to a clearly defined area." [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Palestine#Ottoman_era](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/palname.html)

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/palname.html>

⁵⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mutasarrifate_of_Jerusalem

⁵⁹ "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."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour_Declaration

⁶⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emirate_of_Transjordan

⁶¹ On 25 May 1946, the Emirate became the "Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. Source: ibid

⁶² "Before the establishment of Israel, the meaning of the word Palestinian didn't discriminate on ethnic grounds, but rather referred to anything associated with the region, which in the Mandate for Palestine definition briefly included the area which today is Jordan. Until the creation of the state of Jordan (then called Transjordan after the Jordan River) in 1922, pursuant to the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement, the area broadly to the west of the Jordan River was designated for Jewish Palestine and the area east of the Jordan River for Arab Palestine."

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Definitions_of_Palestinian

⁶³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Mandatory_Palestine

⁶⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_Arab_Revolt en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_flag

⁶⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Mandatory_Palestine

⁶⁶ "Arab leaders and governments rejected the plan of partition in the resolution and indicated that they would reject any other plan of partition. The Arab states' delegations declared immediately after the vote for partition that they would not be bound by the decision, and walked out accompanied by the Indian and Pakistani delegates."

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Partition_Plan_for_Palestine

⁶⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1947-48_Civil_War_in_Mandatory_Palestine

⁶⁸ Jamal Husseini promised, "The blood will flow like rivers in the Middle East".

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, said: "We will smash the country with our guns and obliterate every place the Jews seek shelter in".

Iraq's prime minister Nuri al-Said told British diplomats that if the United Nations solution was not "satisfactory", "severe measures should be taken against all Jews in Arab countries".

"On 24 November the head of the Egyptian delegation to the General Assembly, Muhammad Hussein Heykal Pasha, said that "the lives of 1,000,000 Jews in Moslem countries would be jeopardized by the establishment of a Jewish state." At the 29th Meeting of the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine on 24 November 1947, Dr Heykal Pasha, the Egyptian delegate, said, "if the U.N decide to amputate a part of Palestine in order to establish a Jewish state, no force on earth could prevent blood from flowing there...Moreover...no force on earth can confine it to the borders of Palestine itself...Jewish blood will necessarily be shed elsewhere in the Arab world... to place in certain and serious danger a million Jews." Mahmud Bey Fawzi (Egypt) said: "...imposed partition was sure to result in bloodshed in Palestine and in the rest of the Arab world". In a speech at the General Assembly Hall at Flushing Meadow, New York, on Friday, 28 November 1947, Iraq's Foreign Minister, Fadel Jamall, included the following statement: *Partition imposed against the will of the majority of the people will jeopardize peace and harmony in the Middle East. Not only the uprising of the Arabs of Palestine is to be expected, but the masses in the Arab world cannot be restrained.*

⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine#Termination_of_the_Mandate

⁷⁰ The All-Palestine Government was an entity established by the Arab League on 22 September 1948, during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, purportedly to provide a Palestinian government for Palestine. After the War, the Gaza Strip was the only former-Mandate territory under the jurisdiction of the All-Palestine Government. However, the members of the Government were consequently removed to Cairo, and had little or no influence over events in Gaza. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Palestine_Government

In 1959, the Gaza Strip under the All-Palestine Government was officially merged into the short lived United Arab Republic. All references to an independent Gaza were abolished and Egyptian administration was officially imposed. In this move, Nasser *de facto* cancelled any official Palestinian self-rule. In 1962 the Egyptian government established a Palestinian Legislative Council elected by the population.

When the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964, Nasser proclaimed that it would hold authority over Gaza, but that authority was never conferred in practice. A year later, conscription was instituted for the Palestinian Liberation Army.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Gaza_Strip_by_Egypt

⁷¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Palestine

⁷² 'Jordan did not officially relinquish its claim to the area until 1988, when it severed all administrative and legal ties with the West Bank and eventually stripped West Bank Palestinians of Jordanian citizenship.'

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Bank

⁷³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Palestine

⁷⁴ 18 of the 21 UN members in the Arab League: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen; a further 11 members of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Chad, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Mali, Niger, and Pakistan. (exceptions are Egypt and Jordan)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_recognition_of_Israel

⁷⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1948_Palestinian_exodus

⁷⁶ <http://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>

⁷⁷ Quotations from chapter 46 and 56 of *The Innocents Abroad*. accessed at

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm>

⁷⁸ Report to the Earl of Clarendon, Jerusalem, September 15, 1857, F.O. 78/1294 (Pol. No. 36)

⁷⁹ The population of Palestine, Circa 1875 Fred M. Gottheil [Middle Eastern Studies](https://doi.org/10.1080/00263207908700414) Vol. 15, Iss. 3, 1979 , accessed at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00263207908700414?journalCode=fmes20>

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ <http://www.nourishingobscurity.com/2016/05/palestine-in-the-1800s/> and

http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/14126#.Vqy2Ek_CfMR

⁸² Zuhair Muhsin, military commander of the PLO, declared in 1977 that there "are no differences between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese We are one people. Only for political reasons do we carefully underline our Palestinian identity ... the establishment of a Palestinian state is a new expedient to continue the fight against Zionism and for Arab unity." *Refuting the Anti-Israel Narrative*, Jeremy Havardi, p128

⁸³ See Genesis 13:15, 17:8, 48:4, Exodus 32:13, Joshua 14:9, Judges 2:1. The Quran attests to God giving the land to the Jews as well. In Sura 5:21, Moses is quoted as saying, "O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you" Saheeh International, *The Qur'an: English Meanings and Notes*, Riyadh: Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, 2001-2011; Jeddah: Dar Abul-Qasim 1997-2001

⁸⁴ See for instance Leviticus 19:33-34, "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." ESV. Also Exodus 22:21, 23:9

⁸⁵ See for instance Deuteronomy 28:36-37, 63-64; 29:24-29

⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 30:1-5. See also endnote 33

⁸⁷ Ezekiel 47:13-21

⁸⁸ Ezekiel 47:21-23, ESV

⁸⁹ Muslims consider Abraham their spiritual father through the line of Ishmael