



ISRAEL AND HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

The nation of Israel is about the size of New Jersey, is comparatively small compared to its Arabic neighbors (Figure 1), yet is one of the most contentious and well-known portions of land in the world. Israel dates back to the book of Genesis and although blessed with a rich history of biblical nuances, its history has also been periodically intermingled with disobedience to God, enslavement, evictions, persecution, wars, anti-



Figure 1. Israel is comparatively small compared to its Arabic neighbors

Semitism, the German holocaust of World War II, and is currently engaged in a survival war with Hamas – a radical Arabic/Islamic organization supported by Iran. Nonetheless, in direct contrast with the preceding adversities, the Israeli people are the Chosen People of God, they have been given the Promised Land by God, are a key element of end time biblical prophecies – such as the Gog-Magog war detailed in Ezekiel 38-39, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the Antichrist 7-year covenant of “*peace*” with Israel.

Not surprisingly, unrest between the Jewish and Arabic/Islamic people can be traced back to the story of Abram as found in biblical Scripture that begins in Genesis 11 in addition to a longstanding misinterpretation between the Bible and Islamic Qur’an. With these thoughts in mind, let’s look at the history of the Jewish and Arabic people, the Islamic Religion, and the Land of Israel to highlight why the Jewish and Arabic people have been in conflict for thousands of years (and will continue to be in conflict).

JEWISH-ARABIC HISTORY

The history of both the Jewish and Arabic people originates with Abram when God directs him to leave his homeland and travel to a new home in Canaan. Although Abram is first mentioned in Genesis 11:26 which is part of a post Tower of Babel genealogy, the definitive account begins several verses later as follows:

“And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sari, his son Abram’s wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.”

Genesis 11:31

As Abram is dwelling in Haran, God speaks to Abram and directs him to leave:

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 12:1-3

ABRAM’S ORIGINAL RELIGION¹

Abram is called the friend of God (Isaiah 41:8, 2 Chronicles 20:9, James 2:23), and is also the father of the Jews and faithful, and is honored by Jews, Muslims and Christians as a great man. Before God’s calling, Abram was born and raised in Ur of the Chaldees, an area in modern Iraq with a civilization and prosperity but were also worshipers of the moon god Nanna. Therefore, it is not surprising that Joshua 24:2 says that Abram and his father worshiped idols. However, when God called Abram in Genesis 12:1, He told Abram to leave his country, his kindred, and his father’s house. Everything familiar was to be left behind, and that included his religion. As a worshiper of other gods, Abram was likely stunned to receive a direct calling from God. Nevertheless, Abram obeyed

God's call, and when he and his family arrived in the land of Canaan, he built an altar to God at Shechem (Genesis 12:7). Scripture indicates that God's call to Abram was a deciding factor in Abram choosing to worship Him. Hebrews 11:8 says that Abram's departure from Ur was an example of faith in action accompanied by obedience.

In Genesis 14:22, Abram calls God "*the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.*" This statement shows that Abram viewed God above and apart from the moon god Nanna and his decision to worship God alone was confirmed in Genesis 17, when God established the covenant of circumcision with Abram. God appeared to Abram in Genesis 17:1 saying; "*I am Almighty God, walk before me, and be blameless.*" In Genesis 17:7, God indicates the covenant He is establishing with Abram is to be everlasting and that He alone was to be the sole God to Abram and his offspring. Abram chooses to follow God alone, and demonstrates his commitment by circumcising every male in his household.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT²

The "*Abrahamic Covenant*" is an unconditional covenant and is initially found in Genesis 12 with the ceremony and unconditional nature recorded in Genesis 15. An unconditional covenant is an agreement between two parties, but only one of the two parties has to do something as nothing is required of the other party. However, when a covenant was dependent upon both parties keeping commitments, then both parties would pass between the pieces of animals. In Genesis 15, God alone moves between the halves of the animals as Abram was in a deep sleep. God's solitary action indicates that the covenant is principally His promise as He binds Himself to the covenant. Later, God gave Abram the rite of circumcision as the specific sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:9-14). All males in Abram's line were to be circumcised and thus carry with them a lifelong mark in their flesh that they were part of God's physical blessing in the world. Any descendant of Abram who refused circumcision was declaring himself to be outside of God's covenant.

As previously mentioned, Genesis 12:1-3 contains the introduction of the "*Abrahamic Covenant*" whose fulfillment extends from this passage all through Scripture to Revelation 20, and is comprised of the following four elements and components:

Four Elements:

- Introduced in 12:1-3
- Recorded in 15:18-21
- Reaffirmed in 17:1-21
- Renewed with Isaac 26:2-5 and Jacob 28:10-17

Four Components:

- Seed (Gen 17:2-7, and Gal 3:8&16 where it refers to Christ)
- Land (Gen 15:18-21, 17:8)
- Nation (Gen 12:2, 17:4)
- Divine blessing and protection (Gen 12:3)

Highlighting the next portion of the Abrahamic story:

So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said; "To your descendants I will give this land. And there he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him."

Genesis 12:4-7

In Genesis 12:4-7 we find two Godly tenets:

- **I will give this land (Gen 12:7):**^{3,4}

This is the first indication of a "Promised Land," (Figure 2) but the specific boundaries are first specified in Genesis 15:18-21. This specific land was also chosen by God as



Figure 2: The Promised Land

the most appropriate land for the coming of divine revelation and salvation of the world (the birth, death, ministry, and final return of Jesus Christ). This transfer of land ownership from God to the Jewish people was appropriate from four perspectives:

- First, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). As the Creator of the earth, God has the right to do with it as He chooses. The land pledged to Abram was part of God's provision for the Jewish people and to fulfill His promises that also eventually included becoming the birthplace of the Messiah

- Second, giving the land to Abram's descendants was, in part, a judgment on the sinful Canaanites. In Genesis 15:16, the Lord gives a timeframe for the transfer of the land, as well as a reason for it; *"In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."* This statement clearly shows that God had a reason for wresting the land from the Canaanites—namely, their sin
- Third, the prosperity promised to Abram required much land. God's promise to make Abram and his descendants prosperous would virtually require giving him large amounts of land
- Fourth, the geographical portion of the Abrahamic Covenant served as the historical basis for Israel's eventual settlement of the land
- **Altar to the LORD (Gen 12:7):**⁵
By this act, (1) Abram made an open confession of his religion, (2) established worship of the true God, and (3) declared his faith in God's promise. This was the first true place of worship ever erected in the Promised Land and would be repeated by Isaac (Gen 26:24-25) and Jacob (Gen 33:18-20)

Now, from Genesis 12:4-7, let's skip over to the journey of Abram to Egypt that includes dividing the land with Lot, Lot's captivity and rescue, and to the 16th chapter of Genesis that begins the story of Hagar and Ishmael. However, note that between Genesis 12:7 and Genesis 16, God repeats his covenant with Abram in Genesis 13:14-17 and Genesis 15:7, 18-21. Continuing, let's *highlight* the narrative story of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 16:1-7 that sets the stage for the division of the Jewish and Arabic peoples:

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne no children. So Sarai said to Abram, see now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children from her. So he went into Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. And when Sari dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness."
Genesis 16:1-7

Because Abram and Sari decided to not trust God for an heir through Sari and used Sari's maidservant to fulfill that role, the next portion of Scripture details the beginning of a "*division*" in Abram's family that will ultimately lead to Abram being the father of two groups of innumerable descendants that will be known as Jewish and Arabic:

"Then the angel of the Lord said to her (Hagar), I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said to her, Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."
Genesis 16:10-12

This portion of Scripture describes Abram's firstborn son Ishmael as a "wild-man...against every man." This phrase best describes the fiercely aggressive and independent nature Ishmael would exhibit, along with his Arabic descendants. Then, in Genesis 17:5, God changes Abram's name to Abraham (which stands for "exalted/high father") and Sarai's name to Sarah (*my princess*) in Genesis 17:15, and then informs Abraham that Sarah will bear him a son (Genesis 17:16). Not surprisingly, Abraham does not believe God and replies "Oh, that Ishmael might live before you!" This plea indicates how impossible Abraham believed it was for he and Sarah to have children. Then, God convincingly settles the issue:

*Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes (sons), and I will make him a great nation. **But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year.**"*

Genesis 17:19-21

At the conclusion of Genesis 17:21, a primary covenant has been established between God and Abraham and is the beginning of the Jewish and Arabic peoples as follows:

- A Promised Land (for Abram and his descendants (Genesis 12:1-3), and reaffirmed in Genesis 13:7, 13:14-17, 15:7, 15:18-21, and Genesis 17:8
- The beginning of two diverse nations – Jewish and Arabic. **Ishmael would multiply exceedingly and become the father of a great nation (Arabic, Genesis 16:11-12) and Isaac would be the heir of the "Everlasting Covenant" between the Jewish people and God (Genesis 17:19 & 21)**

JEWISH-ARABIC HOSTILITY

Regrettably, history has confirmed there has been a substantial amount of hostility and animosity between the Jewish and Arabic peoples which has become "center stage" in modern times. However, a familiarity with all of the preceding verses should indicate that this animosity goes back to an early degree of bitterness and jealousy between Isaac and Ishmael as follows:

- Isaac was the only promised son who would inherit the blessings of Abram and receive the Covenant from God (Gen 17:19-21), not Ishmael
- As a result of this clear division, there was a strong animosity between Ishmael and Isaac:
 - Ishmael being described as a wild man and his hand being against every man, and every man's hand against him (Gen 16:11-12)
 - Ishmael scoffing Isaac (Gen 21:9)
 - Sending Ishmael and Hagar away (Genesis 21:14)

Also, there are several additional factors that have made this enmity and hostility even more pronounced and has contributed to its continuation thru modern times:

- The Qur'an and the religion of Islam. The account of God directing Abraham to sacrifice and offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering is found in Genesis as follows:

"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you"

Genesis 22:2

Yet, a similar account is found in the Islamic Qur'an where it only refers to a "son" yet fails to delineate Isaac as the only son as follows:⁶

(37:99) Abraham said: "I am going to my Lord; He will guide me. (37:100) Lord, grant me a righteous son." (37:101) (In response to this prayer) We gave him the good news of a prudent boy; (37:102) and when he was old enough to go about and work with him, (one day) Abraham said to him: "My son, I see in my dream that I am slaughtering you. So consider (and tell me) what you think." He said: "Do as you are bidden. You will find me, if Allah so wills, among the steadfast." (37:103) When both surrendered (to Allah's command) and Abraham flung the son down on his forehead, (37:104) We cried out: "O Abraham, (37:105) you have indeed fulfilled your dream. Thus do We reward the good-doers." (37:106) This was indeed a plain trial. (37:107) And We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice, (37:108) and We preserved for him a good name among posterity. (37:109) Peace be upon Abraham. (37:110) Thus do We reward the good-doers. (37:111) Surely he was one of Our believing servants.

Qur'an, Surah 37, verses 99-111

As a result of the disparity between the biblical and Islamic accounts as found in Genesis 22 and the Qur'an, verses 99-111, the prevailing Islamic doctrinal perspective believes (and educates) that Abraham was commanded by God in a dream vision to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, and not Isaac. This perspective can be found in a number of published Islamic resources such as:

- *"Prophet Abraham was commanded by God in a dream vision to sacrifice his son, Ishmael"*⁷
- *"Ibrahim's devotion to Allah and his readiness to sacrifice his son, Ismail"*⁸
- *"Prophet Ibrahim, who dreamed that God ordered him to sacrifice his only son, Ismail"*⁹
- *"The will of Prophet Ibrahim, who was tested by Allah to sacrifice his only son, Ismail"*¹⁰

Today, Muslims celebrate the Islamic holiday of *Eid al-Adha*, known as the *"Festival of Sacrifice."* This Islamic holiday celebrates the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son by Hagar, Ishmael (who is also believed to be the son of Promise and the ultimate right to the Holy Land).¹¹ Obviously, this viewpoint is in direct conflict with Genesis 17:17-21, Genesis 22:9, Hebrews 11:17, and James 2:21. Nevertheless, *"Muslims believe in the biblical*

stories only when they do not contradict or go against the Qur'an or the authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad"¹²

- In 1948 Israel became a nation with set boundaries that were approved by the United Nations. The land at that time was primarily inhabited by Arabic peoples (Palestinians) and was vehemently protested by most Arabs. This hostility resulted in the Israeli-Arab war of 1948 that started immediately after Israel declared their independence. This hostility between Israel and its Arabic neighbors has continued to escalate into modern times

In finishing this section on Jewish-Arabic Hostility and a variance between the Bible and the Qur'an, it is more than imperative to take a brief look at the fact that both the Bible and the Qur'an are in *agreement* that the Holy Land (Promised Land) was promised to only Israel. In recent times, the Arabic people (descendants of Ishmael) claim that the Holy Land belongs to them because the Jews (descendants of Isaac) no longer have a right to it. Despite this deep-seated conflict, many non-Muslims and perhaps some Muslims themselves may be astonished to learn that the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book specifically states in Surah 5 that Allah gave the Holy Land to the children of Israel as follows:¹³

(20) And when Moses said to his people, "O my people, remember the favor of Allah upon you when He appointed among you prophets and made you possessors and gave you that which He had not given anyone among the worlds. (21) O my people, enter the holy land which Allah has assigned to you and do not turn back [from fighting in Allah 's cause] and [thus] become losers."
Qur'an, Surah 5, verses 20-21

Interestingly, the Qur'an promises the "holy land" to the children of Israel long before there was any Islamic influence over the land or any Islamic monument, such as the Al Aqsa Mosque, was envisioned or built. Even according to the Qur'an, the land is holy because of its connection to the Jews, not Muslims.¹⁴ In 2014, Sheikh Ahmed Aladoan of Amman, a member of Jordan's well-known Adwan tribe, acknowledged that Allah is the protector of the children of Israel and Allah "gave the Holy Land to the sons of Israel until the Day of Judgement."¹⁵ Sheikh Aladoan further stated that Muslims who deny these facts "distort the words of the Koran"¹⁶ (and the Bible).

ARABIA BEFORE MUHAMMAD

In the preceding discussion, we looked at the Arabic nation as promised by God to Hagar in Genesis 16 and Abraham in Genesis 17. However, as history will record in detail, the birth of Muhammad in 570 AD will lead to the establishment of the Qur'an, the Islamic religion, and a principal leader (Muhammad) for the Arabic peoples. However, before we look at the next section on the Islamic religion, let's briefly consider the time period between Ishmael and Muhammad and the growth of the Arabic peoples.

From a time-perspective, Ishmael was born around the time of 1911 B.C. and Muhammad was born in 570 AD. Therefore, the pre-Muhammad time period we are considering is about 2481 years of an initial growth period for the Arabic people. During this time, the Arabic people were dramatically increasing into one of the largest civilizations the world has ever known. For this discussion, this time period can be summarized by the following highlights:

- Initially and during the time of Abram/Abraham, Arabia was inhabited by the Bedouins (people with a nomadic life style) and could best be described as a culturally isolated and economically underdeveloped region. As a side note, most of the land is desert, arid (rainfall is scarce), minimal vegetation and land suitable for farming. As a result, the nomadic lifestyle was the lone successful existence
- Ishmael's offspring would consist of 12 sons (Gen 25:13-16) who would initially comprise a portion of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula (also descendants from Joktan, Shem, Keturah, and Essau)
- As the Arabic population increased, the nomads (or Bedouins) still lived according to ancient tribal patterns but were beginning to be influenced by neighboring and more sophisticated cultures of Ethiopia, Persia, and Byzantium
- 853 BC - First reference to Arabs found in an Assyrian inscription
- 350 AD - The first Aramaic script is developed
- 450 AD - The king of Mecca (Quasayy) unifies enough people to establish a city around the shrine of Mecca
- 500 AD - Southern Arabia ruled by a Jewish kingdom
- 500 AD - Northern Arabia is ruled by the Kinda
- 570 AD - Christian Ethiopia tries to capture Mecca but is defeated by the Arabs
- 570 AD - *Muhammad is born*
- 610 AD - Muhammad preaches a new religion, Islam, in Mecca
- 610-632 AD - Muhammad and his followers gain prominence and followers. During 627 AD, Muhammad kills 700 Jews and in 629 AD, Muhammad wins the battle of Khaybar and beheads all the Jews
- 632 AD - The Muslim army conquers the Arabian Peninsula
- Post 632 AD - The Muslim faith and army marches on.....

THE ISLAMIC RELIGION

In the preceding sections we highlighted Jewish/Arabic history and hostility with an overview of the beginning of the Jewish and Arabic nations. However, at this point a question is usually asked regarding the appearance of Islam in Arabic history. So, with these thoughts in mind, let's briefly look at the history of Islam by highlighting its noteworthy characteristics:

- Islam is a monotheistic (belief there is only one God) and Abrahamic religion that is expressed in the Qur'an and is considered by its supporters as holy and the exact word of God. Abrahamic religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- Islam is the second-largest religion in the world (behind Christianity) and may be the fastest growing religion in the world
- Allah is the Arabic word for God and is primarily used by Muslims to refer to God in Islam
- The Qur'an is a collection of revelations and teachings of Muhammad who Muslims believe was the last prophet from God to mankind
- The name of Muhammad means "*Praiseworthy*"
- Muslims maintain that previous revelations, messages, and the Bible have been partially misinterpreted or altered over time
- Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the unaltered and final revelation of God
- Muhammad was a man, born in Mecca, Arabia (present-day Saudi Arabia) in 570 AD and died in Medina, Arabia (present-day Saudi Arabia) in 632 AD at age 62
- Muslims believe that Muhammad restored the unaltered and original faith of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc., and is the founder of Islam
- While working as a merchant, Muhammad would occasionally retreat to a cave for prayer and seclusion. At age 40, Muhammad allegedly was visited by the angel Gabriel and received his initial revelations from God
- Three years after this event, Muhammad began publicly preaching these revelations, emphasizing:
 - God is one
 - Complete surrender to Him
 - Islam is the only way acceptable to God
 - He was a prophet of God
- In 622 AD, Muhammad and his followers migrated to Medina. This event marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar
- In Medina and after 8 years of fighting the Meccan tribes, Muhammad collected an army of 10,000 Muslim converts and marched on the city of Mecca, capturing the city with little resistance
- Muhammad had all pagan idols in the city destroyed and all remaining pagan temples in Eastern Arabia were destroyed
- Shortly after, Muhammad became ill and died. However, most of the Arabian Peninsula had converted to Islam and Arabia was united into a single Muslim religious organization
- Muslim law is the result of Muhammad's practices and teachings
- After the death of Muhammad, Abu Bakr (a friend) was appointed successor and the first Caliph

- Within 10 years, Islamic Arabs had conquered Mesopotamia, Byzantine Syria and Egypt, and large parts of Syria that led to the establishment of the first Caliphate
- History has graphically indicated that Islam has significantly increased to the status of a large and active religion since the death of Muhammad. Today, the militaristic side of radical Islam has dominated the global media

THE LAND OF ISRAEL

From a geographical perspective, the Land of Israel is a unique state in that it is a God-given topographical portion of land that is nestled at the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and also shares land borders with the Muslim states of Lebanon to the north, Syria in the northeast, Jordan on the east, and Egypt to the south (Figure 3). Located *within* the boundaries of Israel are the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and the Gaza Strip (both were conquered by Israel during the 1967 6-Day War). During the 1967 6-Day War, Israel also captured the Golan Heights from Syria. With the exception of Israel and the United States, the international community regards the Golan Heights to be Syrian territory held by Israel under military occupation. Currently, United Nation Forces (United Nation Disengagement Observer Force) monitors the Golan Heights.¹⁷



Figure 3. The Land of Israel

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly recommended the implementation and resultant adoption of a Partition Plan named Mandatory Palestine (that was rejected by the Palestinians). However, on May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion (president of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and Executive Head of the Zionist Organization) boldly declared *“the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz Israel, to be known as the State of Israel, and independent upon the May 15, 1948 termination of the British Mandate for Palestine.”* This declaration came to be sanctioned by the United Nations with additional approval from the United States. Not surprisingly, neighboring Arab armies



Figure 4. The Land of Israel and captured land after the Six-Day War of 1967

were incensed that they had lost their proposed land and promptly invaded the new State of Israel the next day but were miraculously defeated in the war of 1948. The armistice lines that were agreed upon at the end of fighting in 1949 served as Israel's boundaries until the 6-Day War of 1967 that ended with Israel occupying the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Golan Heights in Syria (Figure 4).

In the interest of peace agreements, the Sinai Peninsula (largest of the captured areas) was returned to Egypt in stages during the time period of 1974-1982. In 1994, a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) resulted in the ending of Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and Jericho in the West Bank. An additional peace agreement in 1995 led to the Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank area. Referring to Figure 5, it is easy to see that the modern boundaries of Israel have been significantly reduced from 1967 (in the interest of peace) and yet has not resulted in any form of reduced hostility from Israel's Islamic neighbors and/or organizations. In fact, history has demonstrated that hostility towards Israel has not only been simplified from the Gaza Strip and West Bank but has also dramatically increased.¹⁸

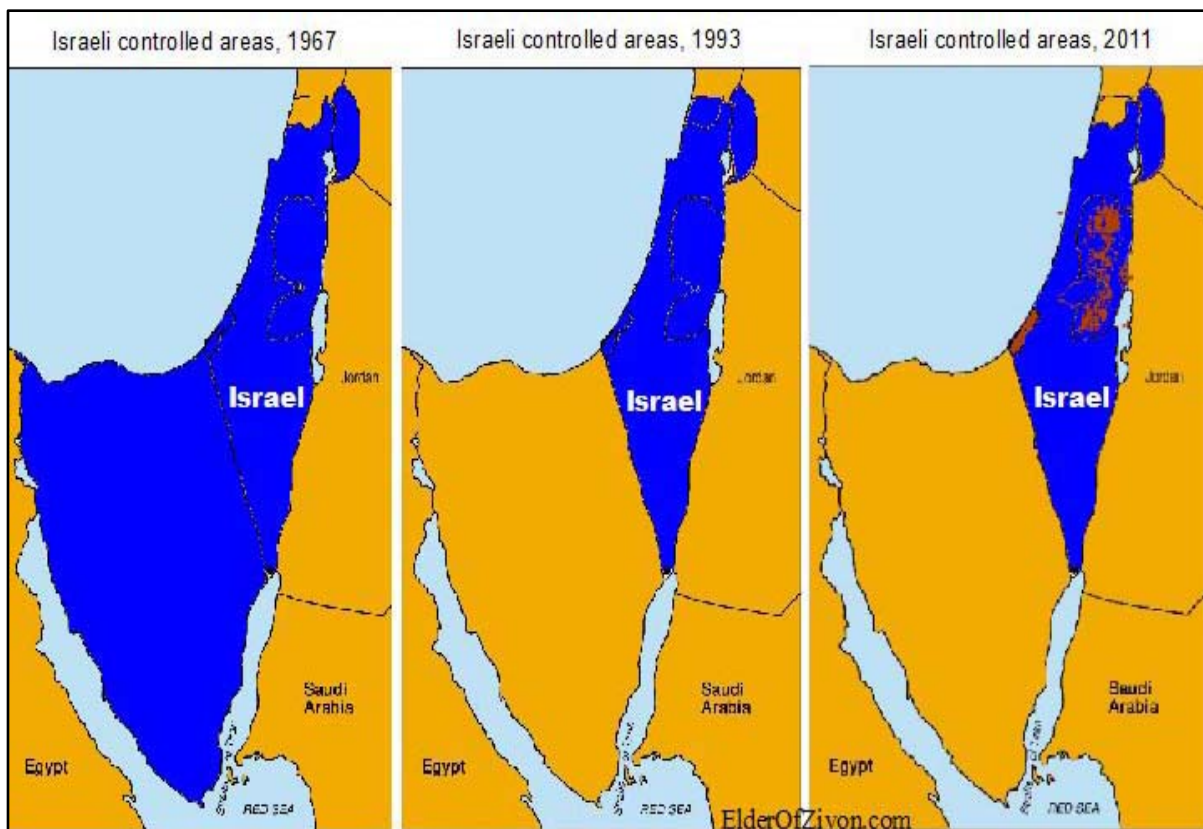


Figure 5. Israeli controlled areas from 1967 to 2011

Following are some items of interest (in no particular order) that summarize the Land of Israel from a biblical, historical, and geographical perspective:

- Israel is the size of New Jersey

- Israel is the land specifically promised to Abram in the Bible
- Israel is located in a strategic location at the junction of Africa, Asia, and Europe
- Israel is a democratic country
- Israel is central to the Jewish religion
- Israelis and Palestinians both claim Jerusalem as their capital
- Israel is home to more than 1/3 of the world's Jews – and that number continues to increase
- Over 20% of Israel's citizens are not Jewish
- Zionism comes from the word Zion, and over time was referred to as the Jewish idea of utopia
- Israel is holy to four faiths:
 - Jews
 - Christians
 - Muslims
 - Baha'i
- Christ ministered in Israel and will once again return to Israel as the conquering King
- Israel is often referred to as the *"Holy Land."* However, this expression occurs only once in Zechariah 2:12 and not once in the New Testament. As a side note, Zechariah 2:12 states – *"And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land and will again choose Jerusalem"*
- Conflict in Israel has been a reality since Israel has existed. Whether it was the Egyptians, Amalekites, Midianites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amorites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, or Romans, the nation of Israel has always been persecuted by its neighbors. Why this dilemma? According to the Bible, it is because God has a special plan for the nation of Israel, and Satan wants to defeat that plan. Satanically influenced hatred of Israel (and especially Israel's God) is the reason Israel's neighbors have always wanted to see Israel destroyed. Whether it is Sennacherib – King of Assyria, Haman – official of Persia, Hitler – leader of Nazi Germany, or Ebrahim Raisi – President of Iran, attempts to completely destroy Israel will always fail. The persecutors of Israel will come and go, but the persecution will remain until the second coming of Christ.

THE PROMISED LAND

"The Promised Land" is the land originally promised by God to the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob, and is first made to Abram in Genesis 15:18-21 and then renewed to his son Isaac and to Isaac's son Jacob (Genesis 28:13). Related historical terms for The Promised Land include:

- This Land
- The Land of Canaan
- The Holy Land

- Palestine
- Dan to Beersheba

Interestingly, the boundaries of The Promised Land vary somewhat between multiple biblical Scriptures such as Genesis 15, Exodus 23, Numbers 34, Ezekiel 47, and Joshua 1:4. Starting with Genesis 15, these boundaries are categorically defined as follows:

Genesis 15

In Genesis 15:18-21, the general “*Borders of the Land*” are defined as the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob.

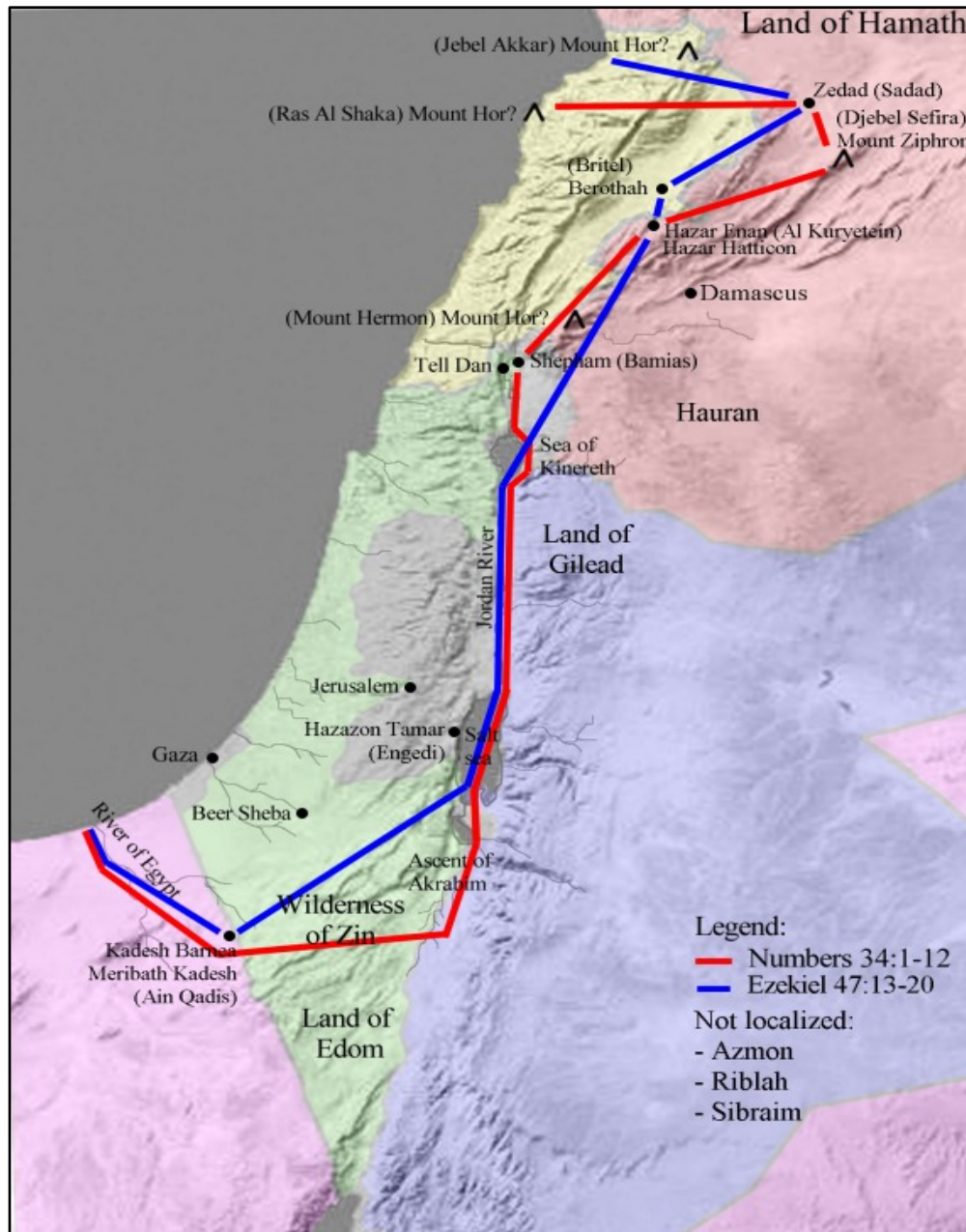


Figure 6. The Promised Land as defined in Numbers and Ezekiel

Exodus 23

Exodus 23:31-33 gives a more detailed description and describes the borders as “from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the desert (Negev) to the River (Euphrates).”

Numbers 34

Numbers 34:1-15 defines the land given to the Israelite tribes after the Exodus (Figure 6). Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh were to receive the land east of the Jordan (Numbers 34:14-15). Numbers 34:1-13 describes the land west of the Jordan to be received for the remaining tribes.

Ezekiel 47

Ezekiel 47:13-20 provides a description of land in which the twelve tribes of Israel will inhabit “at the end of days” (Figure 6).

Joshua

Joshua 1:4 recaps the land promise just prior to the Israelites invading The Promised Land.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

In summary, let’s look at three relevant questions regarding The Promised Land:

What is the Promised Land?

The Promised Land as defined in Genesis 15:18 and Joshua 1:4 consists of (Figure 7) everything from the Nile River in Egypt to Lebanon (south to north) and everything from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River (west to east).

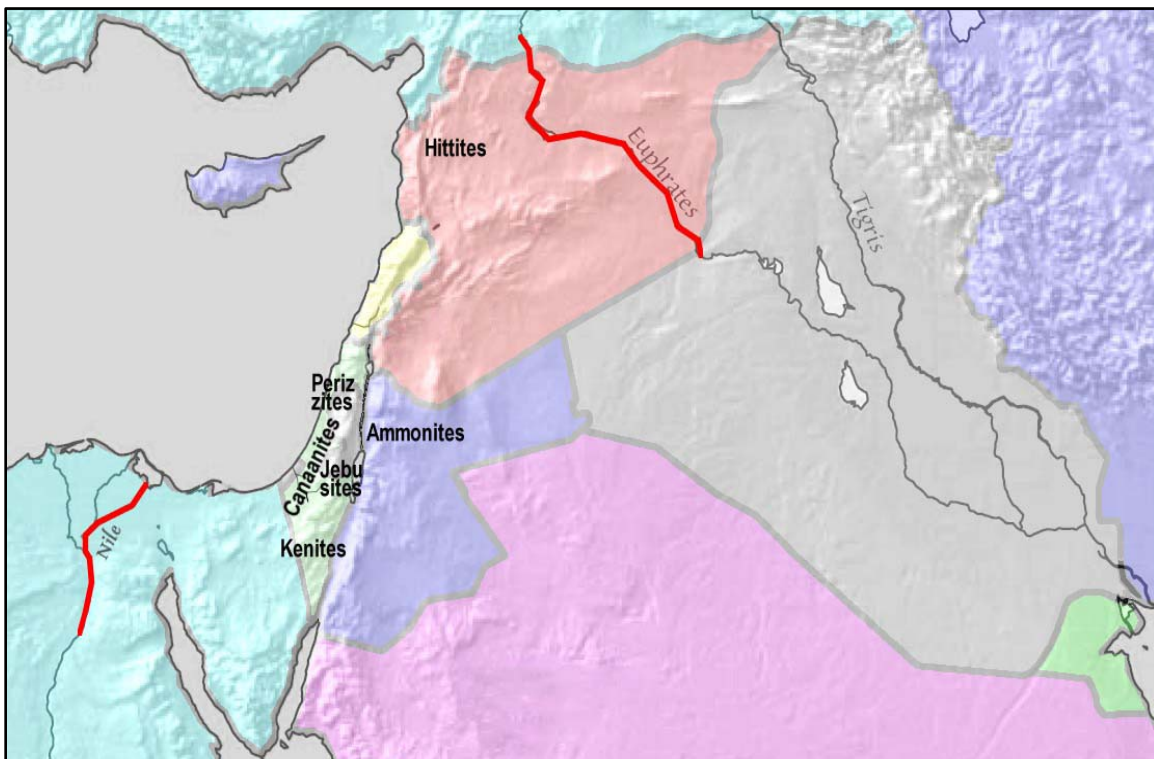


Figure 7. The Promised Land as defined in Genesis and Joshua

What portion of the Promised Land *does not currently* belong to Israel?

The West Bank, the Gaza Strip, some of Egypt and Syria, all of Jordan, some of Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

Has Israel ever totally encompassed the promise in Joshua 1:4?

The entire land that has been promised to Israel in Joshua 1:4 (and other Scriptural passages) has yet to be fulfilled. During the reigns of David and Solomon, Israel achieved the greatest control of the Promised Land – although not totally. After David and Solomon, Israel suffered through kingdom divisions and exiles. However, in 1948 the modern nation of Israel was established and Israel has become a democratic and thriving nation. As a complete answer to the question of Israel encompassing all of the Promised Land, Revelation 20:1-6 indicates that God will fulfill the promise to give Israel total control of the Promised Land that will be ruled by Christ during the 1,000-year Millennium.

Did God give Israel the Promised Land for all time?

To answer this question, let's look at Deuteronomy 4:40 that says:

“Keep His decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.”

Interestingly, this passage indicates this promise is both conditional and unconditional. The Israelite's had to obey God's statutes to *remain* in the land. However, the end of verse 40 says that God is giving Israel the land *“for all time.”* So, the clear answer is that God conditionally offered blessings within the Promised Land, and God made an unconditional promise that Israel would have the Promised Land for all time.

DEFINITIONS

Due to the current war between Israel and Hamas that began on October 7, 2023, let's conclude this discussion by looking at the prevalent terms (with some associated backgrounds) that are commonly used in the media (often with minimal explanation) so we can have a clearer understanding of current organizations and related events as applied to the nation of Israel, remembering that Hamas and other anti-Israel organizations enjoy a measure of acceptance and forgiveness by global nations (Figure 8). The following terms will be listed in no particular order.

Palestinian^{19,20}

The Palestinian people are an Arabic nationalist group residing *primarily* in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Yet, there are Palestinian communities located in other countries as well, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States. Over 5 million live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and another 2 million in Israel. The remaining population lives elsewhere, mostly as refugees, with the largest communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The majority of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are descended from Palestinians



Figure 8. Hamas enjoys global acceptance and forgiveness

who remained in the country after the 1948 war, constitute about one-fifth of the Israeli population.

Palestinian Territories (Palestine)^{21,22}

Before the word “*Palestine*” (from ancient Greek *Philistia*), there was Judea as the word “*Palestine*” did not exist until the Roman occupation beginning in 63 BC which brought the region under Roman control, though they used local leaders to govern. After the failed Jewish rebellions against Rome in 66-135 AD, the Romans renamed the land to Palestine beginning an effort by Rome to rewrite history and erase the Jewish ties to the land. Continuing on, up until WWI, Palestine was ruled by various powers such as the Mongol Empire, Egyptian Mamluks, and the Ottoman Empire. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Palestine typically referred to the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Much of this land is now part of present-day Israel. Then, starting with 1917/1918, Britain ruled until 1948 (under a mandate from the League of Nations) when it announced the termination of its Mandate over Palestine quickly followed by the new State of Israel declaring its independence.

Today, the region known as the Palestinian Territories (also referred to as occupied Palestinian territories) includes the West Bank (a territory that sits between modern-day Israel and Jordan) and the Gaza Strip (bordering Israel and Egypt). These areas have been under Israeli military occupation since 1967 (Figure 9). The West Bank and Gaza Strip were conquered by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967 and had earlier been controlled by

Jordan and Egypt. In 1988, Jordan relinquished territorial claims to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. After the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in 1988, the “*State of Palestine*” (Palestinian territories) has been recognized by 130 UN Nations but not recognized by the United States, Israel and some Western nations. Then, in 1993, parts of the territories came under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority with Israel having full military control over 60% of the West Bank area. In 2005, Israel disconnected from the Gaza Strip and in 2007, the Hamas political takeover of Gaza politically divided the Palestinian territories with Hamas governing the Gaza Strip and Fatah controlled Palestinian National Authority governing the West Bank.



Figure 9. Modern Palestine is comprised of the Gaza Strip and West Bank territories, and are *within* the contiguous boundaries of Israel

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)²³

The Palestine Liberation Organization was founded in 1964 and can be considered as an umbrella organization for various groups that represent the Palestinian people (you may remember its late Chairman Yasser Arafat). Today, the PLO is officially referred to as the Palestinian National Authority (PLA) as a result of the Oslo Accords of 1993 that determined the “*right of the Palestinian people to self-determination*” but stopped short of

promising a Palestinian state. The PLO was declared a terrorist organization by the United States in 1987.

Caliphate²⁴

Caliphate is derived from the word “*caliph*” that means successor – as in successor to Mohammed – and is an Islamic State that is supposed to encompass every Muslim on earth. Although a caliphate still generates the notion of a modern unified Islamic community-state, the only time a caliphate has existed was during 632 AD when the Prophet Mohammed died and one of his follower’s assumed leadership and was referred to as the khalifah (Arabic for successor – simplified as caliph). Interestingly the Ottoman Empire claimed to be the last caliphate that lasted until 1914. Jihadists vision a caliphate as the height of Islam’s glory, or, a version of Islamic nationalism. Jihadists and Islamists also view a caliphate as the solution to the past several hundred years of suppression and humiliation by Western nations and believe that all Muslims should be united in one state and ruled by Islam.

Islam²⁵

Islam is an Abrahamic and monotheistic religion voiced in the Qur’an and considered by its followers as the *absolute* word of God (Allah). Islam is the second-largest and fastest growing religion in the world (Christianity being the largest) with the Kaaba (Islam’s most sacred mosque) in Mecca. Saudi Arabia is the center of Islam. Muhammad was considered to be the last prophet of God and disciples of Islam are called Muslims. Currently, most Muslims are comprised of two primary denominations:

- Shia (10-20%)
- Sunni (80-90%)

Allah²⁶

Allah is the Arabic designation for God and is primarily used by Muslims to refer to God in Islam.

Muhammad²⁷

Muhammad is considered by Muslims to be a messenger from God. Muhammad was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 570 AD, and was instrumental in converting the Arabian Peninsula to a single religious system known as Islam. It is believed his revelations were from God, is known as Islam, and is mostly found in the Qur’an.

Arab Spring²⁸

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests and rebellions that spread across the Middle East during the beginning of 2011. The Western media popularized the term “*Arab Spring*.” From an achievement viewpoint, it did not reform decades of authoritarian regimes but likely provided a catalyst for long-term change.

Jihad²⁹

Jihad is an Islamic term and a religious duty that means, “*struggle*” or “*resisting*.” It appears in the Qur’an 41 times and refers to the struggle against those who do not believe in Allah. There are two accepted meanings of Jihad:

- An inner spiritual struggle
- A physical struggle against the enemies of Islam that can be non-violent or violent.
Supporters of violent jihad view jihad as a form of a holy war

Muslim Brotherhood³⁰

The Society of the Muslim Brotherhood – shortened to Muslim Brotherhood – is an Islamist organization that was founded in Egypt in 1928. The Brotherhood’s stated goal is to “*instill the Qur’an as the sole reference point for ordering the life of the Muslim family.*” Additionally, the Brotherhood insists it is a peaceful organization that also disavows violence. However, the Egyptian government has labeled the group a terrorist organization, as have Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Russia and Syria.

Hezbollah³¹

The Party of Allah or Party of God is also transliterated to the more common term of Hezbollah. Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group based in Lebanon and funded by Iran where its extensive security apparatus, political organization, and social services network have fostered its reputation as “*a state within a state.*” Founded in the chaos of the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War, the Iran-backed group is driven by its opposition to Israel and its resistance to Western influence in the Middle East. With its history of carrying out global terrorist attacks, parts of Hezbollah—and in some cases the entire organization—have been designated as a terrorist group by the United States and many other countries. In recent years, long-standing alliances with Iran and Syria have transformed Hezbollah into an increasingly effective military force, one that experts say would pose a formidable challenge in the event of asserted fighting against its long-time enemy – Israel.

al-Qaeda³²

Al-Qaeda is one of the longest-operating and largest jihadist militant organizations in the world and was founded and funded by Osama bin Laden between 1988 and 1989 as a result of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Since then, it has grown to become an organization with affiliates and supporters all over the world and has carried out some of the most violent and infamous attacks in the last twenty-five years. It seeks to rid the Muslim world of foreign influence and establish Shariah-based Islamic governments. During the Syrian civil war, al-Qaeda factions started fighting each other and that has led to other terrorist organizations branching off from al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda was responsible for the September 11 attacks in the U.S. as well as others around the world. Following the death of bin Laden in 2011, al-Qaeda vowed to avenge his killing. The group was then led by Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri until his death in 2022. As of 2021, they have reportedly suffered from a deterioration of central command over its regional operations. However, senior al-Qaeda figures remain in Afghanistan under the Taliban's protection, and the group has established new training camps and safe houses where it sends new recruits. Al-Qaeda is currently rebuilding its transnational attack capability.

Hamas³³

Hamas is the acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement) and is the largest and most capable militant group in the Palestinian territories and one of the territories two major political parties. Hamas emerged in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising (or intifada) as an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian branch. The group is committed to armed resistance against Israel and the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state in Israel's place. Hamas has been the de facto governing body in the Gaza Strip since 2007 when it ousted the Palestinian Authority from power. Moreover, Hamas also has a stated goal of establishing an Islamic State in Israel, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. In short, Hamas does not recognize Israel and is devoted to its destruction and has launched consistent rocket attacks into Israel since 2001. In the Palestinian parliamentary elections of 2006, Hamas defeated the PLO Fatah party and assumed political control of the Gaza Strip which they continue to hold. The Hamas Charter issued in 1988 states the following:

- *"Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious and calls for the obliteration and/or dissolution of Israel with the eventual formation of an Islamic state in Palestine"*
- *"The time will not come until Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him"*
- *"Hamas is humanistic, and tolerant of other religions as long as they do not block Hamas's efforts"*

Although Hamas is well-known for its terrorist activities against Israel, its recent terrorist attack on Israel, October 7, 2023, that was responsible for over 1,400 Israeli deaths, has openly displayed its brutal capabilities against Israel on the world stage.

Fatah³⁴

Founded in 1959 and previously known as the Palestinian National Liberation movement, Fatah is a current Palestinian political party that comprises a large portion of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and is identified with its late founder, Yasser Arafat. In 2006, Fatah lost to Hamas in the Palestinian elections and has since taken political control of the West Bank. Currently, Fatah's popularity has somewhat diminished and has suffered from a reputation of inefficacy and corruption.

ISIS³⁵

ISIS is shorthand for the jihadist organization known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria and may also be referred to as ISIL and/or The Islamic State although there may be some inconsequential differences. Linked to al-Qaeda in Iraq (and after the U.S. damaged al-Qaeda in Iraq), ISIS emerged as a fearsome and well-funded group several years ago that has swept across northern Iraq and northern portions of Syria and was responsible for imposing Sharia law as ISIS had quickly become one of the most powerful forces in Syria. However, after the United States vowed to eradicate ISIS, President Donald Trump declared that ISIS was defeated in December 2018 which was finalized in

February 2019 when Syrian Defense Forces launched the final siege on ISIS forces in Baghouz. The last holdout, Baghouz fell on March 23, 2019, formally ending the caliphate's claim to any territory. The mass surrender of ISIS fighters and their families illustrated the lingering challenge — how to deal with jihadists to forestall its transformation into an insurgency in Iraq and Syria. The Baghdadi era of ISIS ended on October 26, 2019, when the leader was killed in a U.S. raid in northern Syria.

ISIL³⁶

ISIL stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is a Salafi-Jihadist militant organization that operates primarily in Syria and Iraq. The word Levant comes from a term in the group's Arabic name "*al-Sham*" that refers to a region stretching from southern Turkey, through Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian territories. The stated goal of ISIL is to restore an Islamic state or caliphate in this entire area. ISIL can be viewed as a derivative of ISIS with more of a focus on enlarging its caliphate over discrete acts of terrorism.

Islamic State (IS)³⁷

The Islamic State (IS) – also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – is a Salafi-Jihadist militant organization that seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria and to create a global Salafi-Jihadist movement. The Islamic State was formerly known as ISIL in Iraq and was formed out of that organization in April of 2013. However, due to frequently changing English titles – ISIS, ISIL, or Islamic State – the basic idea is that Islamic militants flying the "*Black Flag*" have a central focus of territorial conquest underscored by rape, crucifixion, mass ethnic murder, public beheading, and imposing an extreme form of Sunni Islam. These atrocities have been so radical that some fellow extremist Islamic organizations have rejected their ideology (i.e., Turkey, Iran, and Hezbollah, etc.). The Islamic State is particularly dangerous and a modern threat to the U.S. as follows:

- Well-funded (control of eastern Syrian oil fields, selling looted antiquities, and its conquest of Mosul and its central bank)
- Militants from other countries such as the U.S., U.K., Germany, and the Arab world are joining it cause
- Considerable military success in northern Iraq and Syria including Mosul

Houthi Rebels³⁸

Iran is widely accused of backing the Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite movement that has been fighting Yemen's Sunni-majority government since 2004. The Houthis took over the Yemeni capital Sanaa in September 2014 and seized control over much of north Yemen by 2016. Yemeni officials and Sunni states have repeatedly alleged that Iran and its proxy Hezbollah have provided arms, training, and financial support to the Houthis. The United States, in coordination with Saudi Arabia, has presented physical evidence of Iranian arms transfers to the group. Recently, the Houthis have been responsible for attacking some ships in the Red Sea.

Jerusalem³⁹

Jerusalem is not only one of the oldest and most well-known cities in the world, it is also considered a holy site to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. As a focal point of contention, both the Israeli and Palestinian people publicly claim Jerusalem as their capital. During the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, West Jerusalem was captured by Israel while East Jerusalem (and the old city) was captured from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War (Figure 10). Today, Israel's Basic Law of 1980 considers Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. During the Six-Day War of 1967, the Jewish state occupied the Jordanian sector and shortly thereafter expanded the city boundaries — thereby annexing some areas of the West Bank previously held by the Jordanians — and extended its jurisdiction over the unified city. Although Israel's actions were repeatedly condemned by the UN and other bodies, Israel reaffirmed Jerusalem's standing as its capital by declaring a special law in 1980. The status of the city remained a central issue in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs who claim East Jerusalem as their capital of a future Palestinian state.

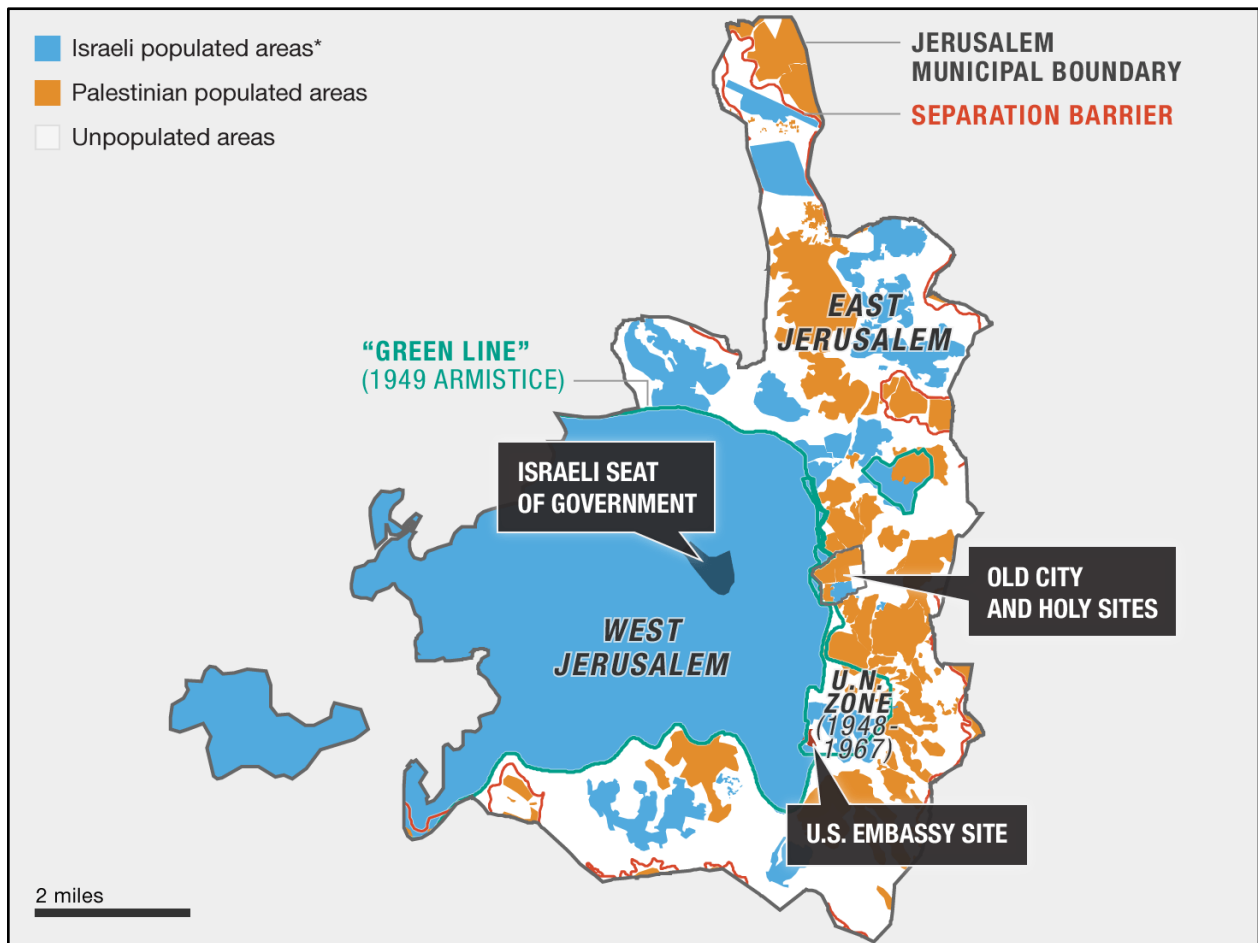


Figure 10. West and East Jerusalem

East Jerusalem⁴⁰

Jerusalem was imagined as a separate, international city under the 1947 United Nations partition plan. However, it was divided by the 1948 war that followed Israel's declaration of independence. As a result of the 1949 Armistice Agreements, the city's western half came under Israeli control, while its eastern half, containing the famed Old City, came under Jordanian control. Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War, and since then, the entire city has been under Israeli control. The 1980 Jerusalem Law declared unified Jerusalem the capital of Israel, formalizing the annexation of East Jerusalem, and considers all of Jerusalem to be its capital. Today, Palestinians and many in the international community consider East Jerusalem to be the future capital of the potential State of Palestine. East Jerusalem includes the Old City, and is home to many sites of religious importance (including the Temple Mount, Al-Aqsa, the Western Wall, the Dome of the Rock, the church of the Holy Sepulchre, etc.) for the three major Abrahamic religions consisting of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Interestingly, the international community considers East Jerusalem to be a part of the West Bank and Palestinian territories.

Gaza Strip-West Bank-Golan Heights

(refer to Figure 11 for a closer look at Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights)



Figure 11. Gaza Strip, West Bank, and the Golan Heights

Gaza Strip⁴¹

Typically referred to as just Gaza, this area of land makes up a portion of the Palestinian territories. Gaza is located *within* the state of Israel and is located on the southwest of Israel just above Egypt and next to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel captured the Gaza Strip from Egypt in the Six-Day War in 1967. In 1994, self-governance was granted by Israel to the Palestinian Authority. In 2000, a violent intifada or uprising began, and in 2001, negotiations to determine the permanent status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip stalled. In late 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew all of its settlers and soldiers and dismantled its military facilities in the Gaza Strip, but it continues to control the Gaza Strip's land and maritime borders and airspace. In early 2006, HAMAS won a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council election. Fatah, the dominant Palestinian political faction in the West Bank, and HAMAS failed to maintain a unity government, leading to violent clashes between their respective supporters and HAMAS's violent seizure of all Palestinian Authority military and governmental institutions in the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Since HAMAS's takeover, Israel and Egypt have enforced tight restrictions on movement and access of goods and individuals into and out of the territory. Fatah and HAMAS have since reached a series of agreements aimed at restoring political unity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank but have struggled to enact them. The Gaza Strip is comprised of a total area of 141 square miles and contains about 2 million people (primarily Palestinian refugees) that make this land one of the most densely populated areas of the world.

West Bank⁴²

The landlocked West Bank — the larger of the two Palestinian territories — is home to some three million Palestinians and located *within* Israel. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the West Bank was captured by Transjordan (later renamed Jordan) which annexed the West Bank in 1950 then captured by Israel in the Six-Day War in 1967. Under a series of agreements known as the Oslo Accords signed between 1993 and 1999, Israel transferred security and civilian responsibility for many Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank as well as the Gaza Strip to the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA). In addition to establishing the PA as an interim government, the Oslo Accords divided the West Bank into three areas with one fully managed by the PA, another fully administered by Israel, and a third with shared control until a permanent agreement could be reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. In 2000, a violent intifada or uprising began across the Palestinian territories, and in 2001, negotiations for a permanent agreement between the PLO and Israel on final status issues stalled. Subsequent attempts to re-start direct negotiations have not resulted in progress toward determining the final status of the area. The PA last held national elections in 2006 when the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Fatah, the dominant Palestinian political faction in the West Bank and HAMAS failed to maintain a unity government, leading to violent

clashes between their respective supporters and HAMAS's violent seizure of all PA military and governmental institutions in the Gaza Strip in June 2007. In December 2018, the Palestinian Constitutional Court dissolved the PLC. In recent years, Fatah and HAMAS have made several attempts at reconciliation, but the factions have been unable to implement agreements. The West Bank is currently politically administered by Fatah.

Golan Heights⁴³

The Golan Heights is an area of about 700 square miles in the upper portion of Israel that also borders Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The Golan Heights was part of Syria until 1967 when Israel captured most of the area in the Six-Day War, occupying and annexing it in 1981. That unilateral annexation was not recognized internationally, with Syria demanding the return of the territory. Syria tried to regain the Heights in the 1973 Middle East war, but was thwarted. Israel and Syria signed an armistice in 1974 and the Golan Heights has been relatively quiet ever since. Israel says that the civil war in Syria demonstrates the need to keep the plateau as a buffer zone between Israeli towns and the instability of its neighbor. Israel and Syria covet the Golan's water resources and naturally fertile soil. Syria insists that the part of the Golan Heights held by Israel remains occupied territory and has demanded its return. Currently, supervision/security is provided by United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) that is stationed in camps and observation posts along the Golan Heights, and supported by military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

Rocket Attacks^{44,45,46}

For at least the past twenty years, the land of Israel has been subjected to rocket fire and/or a realistic threat of rocket fire from Gaza/Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Since 2001, over 15,000 rockets and mortars have been launched into Israel with the greatest number coming from 2005 after Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in that same year. Some of the rockets that are launched into Israel are capable of reaching Israel's largest cities such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. When incoming rocket fire is detected, Israeli citizens have between 15-45 seconds to find shelter. As a result, the Israeli Defense Forces launched Operation Protective Edge (or Operation Solid Cliff) on July 8, 2014 on the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip. The 2014 Gaza War, also known as Operation Protective Edge, and Battle of the Withered Grain was a military operation launched by Israel on July 2014 in the Gaza Strip for the stated purpose of stopping rocket attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip. However, after the start of Operation Protective Edge, additional rocket strikes from Gaza militias continued on Israeli cities. This conflict is reportedly the deadliest conflict in Gaza since the Second Intifada (the Second Intifada was the second Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation and began after the failure of the Camp David Summit of 2000). As an example of the magnitude of the number of rocket/mortar attacks against Israel, Israel has intercepted 9,500 rockets since the start of the October 7, 2023 war. For a complete list of the number of rockets and mortars fired into Israel since

2001 to present, go to — *The Jewish Virtual Library; Rocket & Mortar Attacks Against Israel By Date.*

Since the Gaza Strip is located within the contiguous boundaries of Israel, the launching of rocket fire by Hamas (and other terrorist organizations) has been simplified and is also able to reach many areas of Israel in addition to Hamas incessantly increasing the capabilities and size of its terror arsenal. Although Israel Defense Forces have currently been successful in severely damaging terrorist long-range rocket arsenals, shorter-range mortars and rockets still pose a constant threat.



Figure 12. Qassam rockets are easily launched from common areas

Generally, most Palestinian rockets that are launched into Israel are home-made, about the height of a person, are easily transported and launched from common areas, and are called Qassam rockets by the Israeli media (Figure 12). These rockets cannot be precisely launched to a specific target so they are used indiscriminately against Israel. Although the Qassam rockets pictured in Figure 12 are the most accessible rockets in the arsenal of Hamas (manufactured within the Gaza Strip), Hamas also has limited access (due to the Israeli blockade of Gaza) to the following rockets:

- Grad: Supplied by Iran and China, 11-24 mi range, 39 lb. warhead
- WS-1E: Supplied by China, 24 mi range, 44 lb. warhead
- Fajr-5: Supplied by Iran, 46 mi range, 385 lb. warhead

- Khaibar M-302: Supplied by Syria, up to 93 mi range, 3-9 lb. warhead

Note: As a side note, indiscriminate attacks against civilians (that do not discriminate between civilians and military targets) are viewed as illegal under international law.

A primary advantage of Qassam rockets is cost in combination with ease and speed of manufacture, transport and mobility. There are three common types:

- Qassam 1: Range of 3 mi, 11 lb. warhead
- Qassam 2: Range of 7 mi, 22 lb. warhead
- Qassam 3: Range of 9 mi, 44 lb. warhead

The Qassam propellant is a mixture of sugar and potassium nitrate (a widely available fertilizer), the warhead is comprised of TNT and urea nitrate (another common fertilizer), and a single person can carry one rocket. The cost of each rocket is about \$800. Not surprisingly, the Israeli Ministry of Defense views the Qassam rockets as *“more a psychological than a physical threat.”*



Figure 13. An Iron Dome battery

Iron Dome⁴⁷

Operational since 2011, the Iron Dome is a missile defense system that is designed to intercept in-coming rockets and missiles. The Iron Dome is comprised of *“batteries”* that use a radar unit and three launchers that are each capable of firing 20 Tamir interceptor missiles designed to intercept incoming short-range missiles launched from 2.5 to 43

miles away (Figure 13). Interestingly, the Israeli designed system (Rafael Advanced Defence Systems) is capable of simultaneously handling multiple threats but can ignore threats that will land outside of a specific defended zone. The system does not target missiles that are directed at uninhabited areas. This system has been very effective in reducing the number of missiles reaching Israeli citizens/property. Currently, Israel and the United States have been jointly producing and testing the latest generation of a missile defense system known as the Arrow 3. The Arrow system, produced by Israel Aerospace Industries, is the top tier of Israel's multi-layered integrated air defenses, focused on incoming *ballistic* missiles. The Arrow is a cutting-edge system designed to counter long-range missile attacks from Gaza, Iran, or elsewhere. Although Hamas does not presently have long-range capability, other terrorist organizations will likely have that capability in the not-too-distant future.

Tunnel Systems^{48,49}

After the Hamas terrorist incursion into Israel on October 7, 2023, the vast underground tunnel network constructed by Hamas under Gaza (estimated at over 300 miles and known as "*Gaza Metro*") has been receiving a significant amount of attention by the media. During Operation Protective Edge, Israeli Defense Forces discovered a labyrinth of underground tunnels that had been secretly dug by Hamas, costing millions of dollars, using common building materials, traveling from Gaza into Israel and Egypt, and even the West Bank into Israel. Currently, the Israeli Defense Forces have confirmed they have discovered 800 tunnel shafts and have destroyed 500 tunnels. The tunnels from Gaza into Egypt were assumed to provide supplies from Egypt into Gaza to negate the current Gaza blockade by Israel. However, the tunnels from Gaza into Israel were designed to not only bring supplies into Gaza but to also provide some of the following considerations:

- Interconnected tunnels that would allow Hamas senior leadership to easily move underground (between various locations) with freedom
- Part of the tunnel enterprise was a part of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) that has a stated goal of helping Palestinians. They have also been allegedly linked to militant organizations
- Some tunnels with explosives were located under Israeli kindergartens. Detonation would have caused building collapse and wholesale murder of children in the building
- In addition to the aforementioned explosives, hundreds of heavily armed Hamas fighters would have exited the tunnels into Israel during nighttime hours to infiltrate Israeli communities by the Gaza strip. This would have positioned them to kill the kindergarten children and then kill and/or kidnap as many Israelis as possible
- Abductions-kidnappings (from Israel into Gaza), allowing Hamas to put pressure on Israel while holding Israeli citizens hostage

- Stockpile thousands of weapons (i.e., Russian/Chinese/Iranian/etc. anti-tank missiles, explosive devices, and large amounts of sedatives, tranquilizers, handcuffs, syringes and ropes that are the tools for capture on a large scale)
- Secret access between Israel and Gaza for personnel and weapons (infiltration avenues)
- Stockpiles of materials for bomb-making materials (primarily located in the tunnels from the West Bank into Israel)

Some tunnels were very deep (over 200-feet to neutralize bunker bombs), reinforced with concrete (Figure 14), large enough to contain vehicles, serve as command centers and rocket launcher hiding sites, and so on. In short, Gaza and the West Bank had been preparing for war and on a scale that was far more advanced than Israeli intelligence imagined. It is estimated that Hamas diverted 40% of its budget into the Gaza tunnel system in order to initiate a major military strike on Israel. As a side note, see the New York Times article at – www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/11/10/world/europe/hamas-gaza-tunnels.html

Note: One has to wonder about the rapid tunnel and missile abilities of Hamas and the Islamic State spreading undetected to the US-Mexico border areas.



Figure 14. A common Hamas underground tunnel

Funding^{50,51}

The Islamic State (IS) has been referred to as “*the most well-funded militant organization in history,*” and “*the richest terrorist organization in the world.*” Linked to Hamas, the IS are allegedly sponsored by:

- Qatar and Turkey with Turkey their NATO representative and Qatar primarily providing the financing. Interestingly, Qatar is the world’s richest country per capita
- The previous conquest of the bank in the northern city of Mosul, Iraq, netted about 430 million dollars
- Wealthy individuals in the Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar
- Oil fields of northern Iraq
- Extortion and taxes levied in conquered/occupied areas

CONCLUSION

A familiarity with the history of the age-old Israeli-Arabic conflict in combination with Israel being surrounded by larger Arab nations that openly voice a hatred for Israel (and the United States) combined with the current escalation of the Israeli-terrorist war could easily result in a perception that Israel is destined for a potential Islamic destruction of Israel and its Jewish inhabitants. However, the Bible clearly states:

- God has promised the land (i.e., Promised Land) to Israel as follows:
 - God declared to Abraham – “*To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates,*” Genesis 15:18 - and to Isaac and Jacob – “*Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates – all the Hittite country – to the great sea on the west*” Joshua 1:4
- God has promised to deliver Israel from a future Islamic invasion as described in Ezekiel 38-39. In these explicit prophetic passages, God predicts a coming northern confederacy of Islamic nations (led by Russia) who will invade Israel (Ezekiel 38:1-6). However, God will miraculously defeat the invading forces in Ezekiel 38:18-39:8, and then restore the nation of Israel (Ezekiel 39:21-29)

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