

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: “AT LAST WE ARE A FREE PEOPLE.”¹

INTRODUCTION

Our study today is in connection with Parashat Vayetzei. However, I am going to save some important comments about Parashat Vayetzei, Genesis 28:10–32:2 for the end of this presentation, as they will be more appropriate at that point.

Today is 29 November. This marks a very special day in modern Jewish history. I will let others tell the story:

In the afternoon of Saturday, 29 November 1947, in a cavernous gray building that had once housed an ice-skating rink, in Flushing Meadow, New York, the delegates of fifty-seven members of the General Assembly of the United Nations were called upon to decide the future of a sliver of land set on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean. Half the size of Denmark, harboring fewer people than then city of St. Louis [about six decades ago!], it had been the center of the universe for the cartographers of antiquity, the destination of all the roads of man when the world was young: Palestine. No debate in the history of the United Nations had stirred passions comparable to those aroused by the controversy over that land.... Before the General Assembly was a proposal to cut the ancient territory into separate states, one Arab, one Jewish. That proposal represented the collective wisdom of a United Nations special committee instructed to find some way of resolving thirty years of struggle between Jew and Arab for the control of Palestine.²

In light of the current events in the world, especially the explosion of violent antisemitism, it seems right that we re-visit that fateful day in 1947 as we remember it today. That is the nature of our presentation.

Note: We do not like the name “Palestine.” It is not a biblical name for the Land of Israel. However, for the sake of an accurate historical account of the events leading up to and following the 29 November 1947 decision, we shall use the name Palestine in this essay.

I. THE HISTORY

A. The Last Word in the Hebrew Bible: וַיַּעַל

The final book of the Hebrew Bible, the Tanakh, is 2 Chronicles 36:23. The final Hebrew word is the word *vey'al* (וַיַּעַל), associated with the word *'alah* (עלה). It means “to go up.” In the context, the text is recounting the command in 536 BCE of the ancient Persian King Cyrus to permit the Jewish people who were captive in Babylon for about 70 years to leave and go back to their home in Israel/Judah. That process was called “*aliyah*” — as it is to this day. It is no accident that this is the final word of the Hebrew Bible. It serves as a reminder that while Israel has been dispersed, tormented, and persecuted for centuries, God’s Word to them is simply, “Go Home!” The events of 29 November 1947 are a direct result of the Jewish Peoples’ attempt to do just that, to come home to the Promised Land.

B. The Palestine Situation in the 1800’s

Many powerful nations have ruled over the inhabitants of Palestine over the centuries. The latest was the Ottoman Empire, which centered in modern Turkey. They ruled from about 1516 to 1918, when they were defeated in World War I. Yet, even though Palestine was part of the

1. This is what David ben Gurion proclaimed on Partition Day, 29 November 1947, as recorded in Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* (Jerusalem: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 208.

2. Ibid. 17.

Ottoman Empire for centuries, it is impossible to provide precise figures. It is estimated that by 1800, “the entire population of Palestine was probably in the neighborhood of half a million...”³ Furthermore, “There is considerable dispute about the ethnicity of the population who worked the land in what eventually became Israel.” One Arab scholar asserts that the residents of Ottoman Palestine “are descendants of the Semitic tribes that came and inhabited Palestinian territory since thousands and thousands of years, certainly long before Abraham set his foot on the Palestinian territory.”⁴ In truth, however, the residents of Ottoman Palestine up to the 1800s were from Greece, Bosnia, the Druze, Egypt, Kurds, Persians, Sudanese, Algerians, Samaritans, Tatars, Georgians, and “many people of mixed ethnicities...a tiny remnant of a volatile population...”⁵

Joan Peters concurs. She writes, “Thus, not only was Arab rule ‘extraordinarily short’ but the ‘pure Arab peoples of Palestine for millennia’ — a romanticized notion discredited by serious scholars — actually consisted of a non-Arabian, multi-ethnic procession of immigrants.”⁶ To be sure, “the non-Jews in Palestine listed as their ‘birthplace’ at least twenty-four different countries, in addition to the Americas and Europe.”⁷

Not only was the mixed population very sparse, but the Land of Palestine itself reflected such sparsity in its barrenness. We are all familiar with depressing descriptions of the Land from international travelers such as Mark Twain in the mid-1800’s. Here is what the American biblical geographic scholar, Edward Robinson, said about the Land after his visit in 1838:

We now returned through the village...ancient Jericho. Situated in the midst of this vast plain, it reminded me much of an Egyptian village. The plain is rich, and susceptible of easy tillage and abundant irrigation, with a climate to produce anything. Yet it lies almost desert; and the village is the most miserable and filthy that we saw in Palestine. The houses or hovels are merely four walls of stones taken from ancient ruins and loosely thrown together, with flat roofs of cornstalks or brushwood spread over gravel. They stand quite irregularly and with large intervals and each has around it a yard enclosed by a hedge of the dry thorny boughs...One single solitary palm tree now timidly rears its head, where once stood the renowned “City of Palm-trees.”⁸

Continued Jewish Presence in Palestine

Ever since the Assyrians began to disperse the Israelites over 700 years before Yeshua, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been forced from their national God-given homeland. The dispersion was especially acute following two wars with the Romans in the Land, after 135 CE. Yet, despite the forced expulsion of Israelites from the Land there has always been a presence of Jewish people in the Land, including at times, most of the population in Jerusalem. To be sure, life under the Byzantines and Roman Catholic Church (political Christianity) was not easy. Yet, some Jewish people continued to remain in the Land.

3. Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 2003, 24.

4. Haider Abdel, (then head of the Palestinian peace talks delegation, now an independent activist), Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine luncheon address, US State Department briefing, Federal News Service, January 17, 1992, as quoted by Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 23.

5. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 26.

6. Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 152.

7. Ibid, 226.

8. Edward Robinson as quoted by Yoel Elitzur, *Places in the Parasha: Biblical Geography and its Meaning* (Jerusalem: Maggid. Books, 2020), 642.

C. 19th Century Persecution of Jews in Europe

Gradually, over the centuries, most of the world's Jewish population could be found in Europe. Despite the fact, Poland became a shelter for Jews persecuted and expelled from various European countries and the home to the world's largest Jewish community of the time. According to some sources, about three-quarters of the world's Jews lived in Poland by the middle of the 16th century.⁹ Millions also lived in Czarist Russia.

Eventually, Jewish people in Eastern Europe were restricted mostly by the old Russian Empire to live in former Polish and Ukrainian territory in what came to be called "The Pale of Settlement."¹⁰ It was like a huge ghetto created by the Czars.¹¹ This was done as an attempt to keep them out of Russia proper. By way of interest, for all intents and purposes Poland ceased to exist during this time and much of it was integrated into the old Russian empire.



The Pale of Settlement

1835–1917

Picture taken from Martin Gilert,
The Atlas of Jewish History, p. 72

The Czar at the time, Nicholas I (1825–1855), attempted to reduce the numbers of Jewish people in the Empire. However, just like in ancient Egypt, “the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied.”¹² As the 19th century wore on, things went from bad to worse with the Jewish population. Russia, the main power controlling the Jewish population passed many laws restricting Jewish settlement, reflecting an official government anti-Semitic policy.

“The Russians anticipated the concept of Judenrein and attempted to make their country free of Jews” either through forced emigration, conversion to Christianity, and mass starvation.¹³

9. George Sanford, *Historical Dictionary of Poland* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003). 79.

10. "Pale" is an old term for a district with defined boundaries, originating from the Latin word *palus* for "stake".

11. “The Pale of Settlement comprised that area of Czarist Russia in which the Jews were legally authorized to settle. The Pale covered an area...from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.” By 1897 the Jewish population in the Pale “formed 94 percent of the total Jewish population in Russia.” (Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*, Phoenix Press: London), 1976, 5.

12. Philip Ginsbury and Raphael Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History* (Jerusalem: Devorah Publishing, 2005.), 220. (Now published as *Tragedy & Triumph*): (i2i Publishing, 2014).

13. Ginsbury and Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History* 222.

Through Czar Nicholas II (1894) blood libels were common and pogroms were sponsored by the government. It was also during this time that the famous libelous book called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was produced by the Russian secret police in 1893 in St. Petersburg.¹⁴ One result was that between 1881 and 1914, “over two million Jews made America their new home, but even so, numbers in Russia and Eastern Europe did not decline.”¹⁵ (This writer’s grandparents were among those millions!)

D. The Beginning of Zionism

Zionism, despite what the United Nations has said, is not a racial movement. The simplest definition of Zionism is “A worldwide political movement that worked toward the establishment of a Jewish homeland.”¹⁶ Some of the early Zionists were, in fact, religious. “The first organized aliyah of Hasidim took place in 1764, led by the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov.”¹⁷ The 300 people settled in Jerusalem. Not every Jewish person agreed with their philosophy. Some said that only God can restore Israel, not man, and some still assert that notion.

However, responding to increased European hardships and persecution, the Zionist movement really took off by the late 1800’s into the 20th century, especially through the likes of Theodore Hertzl and Max Nordau. Even before Hertzl, such people as Rabbi Judah Alkalai began to teach that “settlement of Eretz Yisrael was the primary solution to the Jewish people in Europe.”¹⁸ Hence, it came about that America was not the only place to where Jewish people decided to emigrate. During the late 1800’s many began to think of Palestine as the most logical place for the Jewish people to go. In fact, to be sure, not everyone thought of Palestine. Some, like Leon Pinsker and others were willing to live elsewhere. For a while, Uganda was even considered!

E. The Five (6?) Aliyot¹⁹

Eventually, six major waves of settlement took place between 1882 and 1948. aliyot (5 “official” ones) where large groups of Jewish people moved together from Europe and elsewhere to Palestine. They each had their own motivating factors, their own outstanding personalities, and special places where they settled in the Land. Note well that when they came, contrary to popular opinion, they stole no land.

Many people assume that during this time Palestine was densely populated by Arabs. “The story goes, ‘But poor and neglected though it was, to the Arabs, who lived in it, Palestine...was still their country, their home, the land in which their people for centuries past had lived and left their graves’.”²⁰ However, “The Palestine to which the European Jews of the First Aliyah immigrated was vastly underpopulated, and the land into which the Jews moved was, in fact, bought primarily from absentee landlords and real estate speculators.”²¹ Moreover, “That the

14. Ginsbury and Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History*, and Martin Gilbert, *The Atlas of Jewish History*, Completely Revised and Updated (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1993), 64.

15. Ginsbury and Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History*, 222–223.

16. Joyce Eisenberg & Ellen Scolnic, *The JPS Dictionary of Jewish Words* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002).

17. Aryeh Rubenstein, ed. *The Return to Zion* (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1972), 6.

18. Ibid. 7.

19. An aliya (aliyot is plural) is “The act of immigrating to Israel. Almost always used with the verb “make,” as in ‘Did Lisa and her husband make aliyah?’” (Eisenberg Scolnic, *The JPS Dictionary of Jewish Words*).

20. Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 161.

21. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 23.

claim of the age-old Arab Palestinian rights to Arab Palestine is contradicted by history has been pointed out by eminent historians and Arabists.”²²

As we have already indicated, Palestine was

Not a country or state in the manner to, say, an England or Germany at the time. It was simply a collection of villages that happened to exist within the geographical region known as Palestine. Although many Arabs did own their own homes, the majority were poor fellahim [tenement farmers], who worked as hired hands for the landowners. There was no nationalism in the land, no feeling of belonging to a “people,” loyalty was to the local clan or village.²³

Jewish attitudes toward the Land were different from the start. David ben Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister and national hero, sums up the attitude of most of the Zionist immigrants towards the residents of the Land when he said,

Under no circumstances must we touch land belonging to fellahs or worked by them. Only if a fellah leaves his place of settlement, should we offer to buy his land, at an appropriate price. I believed then, as I do today, that we held a clear title to this country. Not the right to take it away from others (there were no others), but the right and the duty to fill its emptiness, restore life to its barrenness, to re-create a modern version of our ancient nation. And I felt we owed this effort not only to ourselves but to the land as well.

Aliyah	Dates	Amount	Origin	Settlements
1 st Aliyah	1882–1893	c. 30,000	Eastern Europe (esp. Russia and Romania)	Rishon LeTzion Petach Tikvah Zichron Ya’akov Kfar Yavor, etc.
2 nd Aliyah	1904–1914	c. 40,000	Russia and Poland	Tel Aviv, Degania Haifa, Merhavia
3 rd Aliyah	1919–1923	c. 35,000	Russia and Poland, E. Europe	New Collective Settlements
4 th Aliyah	1924–1928	c. 80,000	Poland	Tel Aviv, Herzliya Afula, Netanya
5 th Aliyah	1929–1939	c. 250,000	West and Central Europe	“Wall and Watchtower” Settlements
Illegal Immigration	c. 115,000	1934–1948	Refugees	c. 51,000 captured by British and placed elsewhere.

22. Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 138.

23. Steve Maltz, “An Idiot’s Guide to the Middle East Conflict,” an essay taken from Maltz’s larger book *The Land of Many Names: Towards a Christian Understanding of the Middle Eastern Conflict*, (Authentic Media, 2003).

F. Enter: The British

1. The Balfour Declaration

During World War I, the British successfully fought against the Ottoman Turks, dislodging them from Palestine. In the process, through the efforts of men such as of T. E. Lawrence, the British instilled in many of the Arabs a new sense of nationalism. At the same time, Britain took a renewed interest in the entire Middle East to use overland trade routes to India, secure use of the Suez Canal, and other interests. “Later British policy in the Middle East would be counterbalanced by the budding realization of the importance of petroleum in Arab countries, especially after Winston Churchill converted the navy from coal to oil in 1911.”²⁴

As Jewish immigration increased, leaders began to express mixed opinion about their presence, especially about any nationalistic aspirations they might have had. For example, “a native Arabic speaking Palestinian Jew reported in 1900 that foreign missionaries and priests were heightening Arab feeling against the Jews.”²⁵ Yet, respected leaders in Britain began to call forth positive statements concerning the return of the Jewish People to Palestine. Among these were Prime minister David Lloyd-George, who “had a particular interest in Jewish history. He later told the Jewish Historical Society that as a boy in his school in Wales he was taught far more of the history of Jews than of his own land.”²⁶ Such positive sentiments were shared vocally by Lord Balfour, who “held the Hebrew Bible, the Children of Israel, and the Holy Land in high esteem. He said, ‘if we can find them [the Jews] an asylum, a safe home in their native land, then the full flowering of their genius will burst forth and propagate’.”²⁷

It was the Jewish scientist, Dr. Chaim Weizemann who “sought a public statement for support of a Jewish state from the British government. Weizeman’s goal...was achieved in substance when the [British] cabinet decided to broadcast the declaration known to history as The Balfour Declaration.”²⁸ Hence,

On November 2, 1917, shortly after forces under General Allenby began the invasion of the Holy Land from Egypt in the south, the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour sent a letter to Lord Rothschild, reminiscent of the Cyrus declaration in biblical times. It stated, “His Majesty’s Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a natural homeland for the Jewish people.

2. The Mandate

In 1922, after WWI, the League of Nations divided the former Ottoman territory into new entities called “mandates.” “The mandates would be administered like trusts by the British and the French, under supervision of the League until such time as the inhabitants were believed by League members to be ready for independence and self-government.”²⁹ France was awarded the mandates of Syria and Lebanon and the “new entity called Palestine” was awarded to the British.³⁰ In this arrangement, the term “Palestine” was defined for the first time in modern

24. Anton LaGuardia, *War Without End: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Struggle for a Promised Land* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2001), 111.

25. Ena Gray, *The Jews in Palestine: Destruction to Restoration (70 – 1948 CE)*, Veritas, 2009. 63–64.

26. Ibid. 65.

27. Ginsbury and Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History*, 232.

28. Gray, *The Jews in Palestine*, 65.

29. Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 6th edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 41.

30. Ibid.

history at a conference in San Remo (on the Italian Riviera) in 1920 and it included “both sides of the Jordan River and encompassed the present-day countries of Israel and Jordan.”³¹

Administering the mandates was no picnic for both the French and the British. Yet, the British made good attempts to show impartiality to increased Arab and Jewish nationalism.

British colonial rule was in general conscientious, efficient, and responsible... The British had a good record in Palestine... in terms of developing administrative institutions, municipal services, public works, and communications... But Palestine was a special case, and the British were caught in a web of their own making by the contradictions inherent in the mandate instrument and the conflicting claims of Arabs and Jews... As many observers have noted, the British seems to be muddling through, while trying to keep the peace.³²

However, “It was British policy to foment unrest among minorities in the Ottoman Empire and then win them over to its own cause, especially when the control of the Suez Canal was at stake.”³³ As a result, they issued several contradictory and confusing statements of policy. This applied also to the Balfour Declaration. While In 1922 the League of Nations approved the mandate for the British government to establish a Jewish national home. “One year later, however, the British reneged on their trust by amputating 91,000 square kilometers of the mandated territory and creating out of it the Emirate of Jordan.”³⁴

Initially, many Arab farmers welcomed the new Jewish returnees. Jewish presence caused rapid urban and rural development of the remaining land, west of the Jordan River and “increased prosperity, which in turn attracted hundreds of thousands of Arabs from the economically stagnant surrounding Arab countries.”³⁵

The introduction of European standards of wage and life in Mandate Palestine acted like a magnet on the entire Near East. Abruptly, Palestine began attracting Arabs. By 1922, after a quarter century of Jewish colonization, Arab numbers mushroomed to 488,000. By 1938, the Arab population had reached over a million.³⁶

Paradoxically, while enjoying the benefits of Jewish immigration, Arabs simultaneously opposed it with a series riots beginning in 1920. The instigator of these riots was a Muslim leader named Haj Amin Al Husseini, a cousin of Jordan’s King Abdullah. He became the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Palestinian Arab nationalist, Muslim leader in Mandatory Palestine — and the greatest enemy of the Jews in Palestine.³⁷

While the Jewish population increasing through the subsequent aliyot during the next decades, the Arab population also increased. Jewish immigration was carefully monitored by the British, who eventually severely limited their immigration, to appease the Arabs. At first “The British were not aware of the magnitude of illegal Arab immigration or, indeed, of the possible

31. Bickerton and Klausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 41.

32. Ibid., 47.

33. Ginsbury and Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History*, 231.

34. Ibid., 234.

35. Ibid.

36. Sheree Roth, “Were the Arabs Indigenous to Mandatory Palestine? *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2016 Volume 23: Number 4, <https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/were-the-arabs-indigenous-to-mandatory-palestine>

37. A “mufti” is a Muslim title for an Islamic judge or legal scholar who can issue a judgment based on Sharia Law. This was an honorific title bestowed on Al-Husseini by the British. Cook, *The History of Modern Israel*, 22.

political ramifications of that condition should it become known.”³⁸ The increased population, the instigations of Al Hussein and other antisemitic Muslims brought increased violence in the mandate.

In addition to the anti-Jewish riots in 1920, violent riots also broke out in 1929, especially in Hebron where there was a horrible massacre, and again in 1936–1939 as well as in Jerusalem. These resulted in the British attempting to propose a division of the Land in 1937 through what has been called “The Peel Commission.” Interestingly, this British committee “realized that the murderous violence against citizens that had begun in 1920’s had been deliberately ordered by the Mufti [Hussein].”³⁹

Hence, after hearing both the Arab and Jewish claims to the Land, the Peel Commission “recommended a partition plan by which to resolve what it characterized as ‘irrepressible conflict...between the two national communities with the narrow bounds of one small country’.”⁴⁰ This showed that, to the British, the end of the mandate was inevitable. Moreover, “The Palestinian Jews were mixed about their acceptance of this plan of partition while “most Arabs rejected it out of hand.”⁴¹ David ben Gurion was one who accepted the report of the Peel Commission. He reminded his people, “The acceptance of partition does not commit us to renounce Transjordan: one does not demand from anybody to give up his vision. We shall accept a state in the boundaries fixed today, but the boundaries of Zionist aspirations are the concern of the Jewish people and no external factor will be able to limit them.”⁴²

Thus, in the years leading up to that fateful day in November at the United Nations, Palestine saw increased trouble from all sides: Jewish, Arab, and British. The Arabs were increasingly under the spell and control of violent antisemitic Muslim leaders; the Jews were facing increased limitations by the British to the immigration of refugees from Nazi-infested Europe and were beginning to respond with weapons to defend themselves, occasionally sprinkled with some terrorism by some of the fringe groups, such as the Irgun. Then let’s not forget a little disturbance like World War II creating problems!

II. BACK TO THE UNITED NATIONS

We return now back to the impending debate and vote at the United Nations. In January 1947, “the British government decided that if no settlement [to the Palestine conflict] could be reached, the matter would have to go to the new United Nations organization.”⁴³ They debated and argued. By November 1947, “for Britain, the nation that had ruled Palestine for thirty years, the debate offered an end, however inglorious, to what had become a nightmare.” Thus, the UN, in August 1947, recommended partition into an Arab state, a Jewish state, the internationalization of Jerusalem, and economic union between the two states...The British were determined to get out of Palestine as soon as possible, they had had enough and were bitter toward the Zionists.”⁴⁴

A vote for such partition was scheduled for Wednesday, 26 November. Though unhappy with the plan, The Zionists were willing to live with it. The Arabs, however, were bitterly opposed to the partitioning of Palestine and advanced an alternative proposal advocating a single Arab state

38. Peters *From Time Immemorial*, 270.

39. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 47.

40. Ibid.

41. Ginsbury and Cutler, *The Phases of Jewish History*, 236.

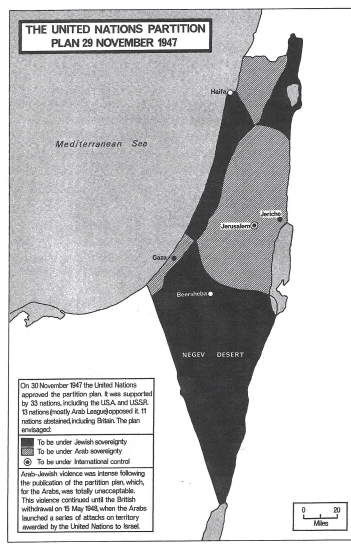
42. “*The Peel Report and the Jewish State*,” a speech delivered in Zurich, 1937.

43. Bickerton and Klausner, *History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 80.

44. Ibid., 81–82.

where Jews would be permitted to live as a minority.⁴⁵ The Jewish delegation at the UN realized that the vote would not go in their favor and managed to forestall the vote until the 29th. During that time, pressured by the American Jewish community, the US government, especially President Truman, did everything imaginable that politicians do to attempt to persuade people to agree with them! Their efforts, especially on countries like Greece, Haiti, Liberia, and the Philippines paid off. The UN was now ready to vote.

29 November 1947 became a very solemn day. For a brief time, the world remained quiet while the rollcall of the UN nations began. “The spectators, the newsmen, seemed united in awe of the moment before them, in their awareness of the grave and solemn decision about to be taken.”⁴⁶ If the partition passed, as soon as possible a Jewish state would be born and the Arabs vowed to make war immediately when that state would be declared. In Palestine everyone was listening to the radio broadcast clutching a slip of paper counting the votes to see if the 2/3 majority would be reached. Then the announcement came, “The General Assembly of the United Nations, by a vote of thirty-three in favor, thirteen against and ten abstentions, has voted to partition Palestine.”⁴⁷ Shofars were blown all over Israel with dancing in the streets from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and beyond, while the Arabs declared it a day of Great Disaster.



The UN Partition Plan

29 November 1947

Picture taken from Martin Gilert,
The Atlas of Jewish History, p. 108

III. AFTERMATH OF THE PARTITION VOTE

A few months after the Partition Vote, on 14 May 1948, Britain would leave, David ben Gurion would declare an independent Jewish state for the first time in two-thousand years, and seven Arab nations made war on Isreal, just as they said they would.

One of the lessons this might teach us is that contrary to the international clamor today for a so-called “two-state solution” for the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the issue was resolved on 29 November 1947! The UN Partition Vote declared that *Jordan* is the Palestinian state! Along with this, we should note that such a two-state solution was completely rejected by the Arabs — twice! Thet declined it when the Peel Commission called for it back in 1937, and they declined it

45. Collins and Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!*, 26.

46. Ibid. 30.

47. Ibid., 36–37.

in the UN in 1947. Moreover, their rejection of the plan was enforced with violence. They threatened to make war on Israel once the British were gone — and they did.

Another lesson to learn is that the Israeli-Palestinian problem cannot be solved by political action. The problem runs deeper than that. It is a religious problem. The Muslims consider Jewish presence among them and in that piece of real estate, an affront to Islam. “The Arab world today is attempting to reassert its power and regain control of Israel, clearly through terrorist efforts. The agenda of Islamic fundamentalism is to conquer the land for Islam again, to rid the Middle East of an infidel nation.”⁴⁸

Amidst all of this clamor, let us not forget that as much as the UN Partition was imperfect and disliked by Arab and Jew alike, nevertheless, it was used by God to pave the way for the rebirth of the free and independent Jewish state as we have today.

God’s Birthday Presents

God confirmed His plan for Israel with two sovereign events surrounding 29 November 1947. The first is to note the Torah Portion which was read that day by Jews the world over. It was — and is — Parashat Vayetzei, Genesis 28:10–32:2. This is no accident! This is the beginning of Jacob’s return to the Land after fleeing for his life, serving another master, acquiring wives and children, and then turning to God after a long time. This is what 29 November 1947 mirrored for the people of Israel today. It shows them that now, if they choose, they will be free to return to their homeland, like their father Jacob.

The second confirmation event took place the same day. I will finish with this story. On Saturday night, 29 November 1947,

Along Ben Yehudah Street [In Jerusalem] a tell distinguished man wandered alone, an island of concern in the midst of the jubilant crowd. While they celebrated the promise of a new Jewish state, every fiber of Eleazer Sukenik’s being was concentrated on an old one, the one that had died almost two millennia before on the mountaintop of Masada. That afternoon in the shop of an Arab [antiquities] dealer..., Eleazer Sukenik’s fingers had caressed a few scraps of ancient leather. Trembling with emotion, he had realized he held in his hand the most precious remnants ever found of that dead civilization. Tomorrow he was going to meet the Arab souvenir dealer to negotiate their purchase... They were the first scraps of the most important archaeological discovery of the twentieth century — the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴⁹

Of course, that was monumental. Yet, there is more. History records for us that one of the first scrolls purchased by Sukenik on behalf of the would-be State of Israel was a complete scroll of the prophet Isaiah! So far, Isaiah is the only complete biblical scroll among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but here was Isaiah, and it was practically in mint condition! That is enormously significant for several reasons, but especially for modern Israelis. Its presence on this date could be construed to be a strong message from the God of Abraham. More than any other prophet, Isaiah speaks of three things that modern Israel needs to hear:

- Return to the Covenant!
- God’s Covenant Calling for Israel still remains.
- Only The Servant Messiah enables Israel to live both the Covenant and their Covenant Calling.

48. John MacArthur, *Terrorism, Jihad, and the Bible*. (Thomas Nelson and W. Publishing Group: Nashville, 2001), 50.

49. Collins and Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!*, 40.

This was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob speaking to them /us to remind all of His continual calling of us as we take residence once again in the Promised Land.

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The number of books on this subject is almost overwhelming. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim authors all have their say in the tomes of material they have written. Unfortunately, our access to this material, however, is severely limited by the flow of our life! So, we apologize for leaving out many important works that are almost standard in this field of study.

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