

Senior Division

Chauvin Kamana

Israel vs. Palestine: A Conflict for a Strip of Land

2,026 Words

Introduction

The Arabs and the Jewish People have a long, grand history with the land of Canaan, but the conflict between the two only started recently compared to the amount of time they have been existing on the land. Ever since tension started amongst them, they grew stronger in their opposing ideologies, and stronger in opposing each other. Books, politics, ideologies, and religion have been used to separate them. Violence, anger, and hatred also grew between them. The peace between the two groups was gone. Despite many peace attempts, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is not yet settled.

The Land of Canaan is so dear to both sides. People in the land feel as if the land belongs to them and it was made just for them. They use religious sites in the land to justify their ways. Since the conflict began, Arabs pulled verses from the Quran justifying their claims. Also, the Jews brought verses of the Torah telling why they would fight for the land. Even with all this, the conflict was not initially religious. The father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, saw Zionism as a secular movement even if he emphasized the importance of religion in his "Israel"¹. Also, Arabs did not oppose the Jewish people in their land until very recently when the Jews were mass migrating to Canaan in the Twentieth Century.

Geographically, Canaan (Israel and Palestine) is the region located on the west coast of the Levant. On the north, the states of Israel and Palestine border Syria, on the east, it borders

¹Herzl, Theodor. *The Jewish State*. 1896. Dover ed., New York, Dover Publications, 1988.

Jordan, and on the south it borders Egypt on the Sinai Peninsula. The Mediterranean Sea is the sea bordering the two states on the West.² (See Figure 1)

Before the Conflict/Background

The Land of Canaan in Antiquity

Early Canaanites were the first people in Canaan. These people had their own culture, their own traditions, their own society, and their own gods. According to the Bible, Abraham of Ur is the father of all Jews (Israelites), and the Arabs (Ishmaelites). Abraham then had Isaac who had Jacob. Jacob's wives bore twelve sons. These children became the fathers of the Israelites. Because of these twelve patriarchs, Israel was separated into twelve tribes with each tribe named according to their patriarch. From then, Israel went on to live for long periods of time as a little strip of Land, east of the Mediterranean Sea (see figure 3).³

Through its history, Israel went through many leaderships. Sometimes Israel was independent, but other times it was controlled by foreign empires. One example would be in 500 b.c. during the Exile in Babylon. At this time, Babylonians held the Israelites captive for about 60 years. Later, the Israelites were under rule of the Greeks, but later were freed as well. Then there were the Romans. The Romans conquered the Israelis in 63 B.C.E. Then in about 70 C.E., the Jews were spread by the Romans throughout the western world. Only a few Jewish people

² "The Eastern Mediterranean Today." *Jewish Virtual Library*, American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2017.

³ Parrot, André. "Abraham." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 3 Oct. 2017.

were left in Canaan while the majority of the them were now in Europe. Here, the Jews would suffer much of persecution for hundreds and hundreds of years.⁴

Rise of the Islamic Empire

In the seventh century, in the Arabian Peninsula, a man named Mohammed started the faith of Islam. Almost after his death his followers spread the religion like a wildfire. Because Canaan was so close to the Arabian Peninsula, it was only a matter of time until Islam reached Canaan. The Arabs then built their Mosques and temples. All this in less than 50 years after Mohammad's death. These Arabs would become very advanced in knowledge for hundreds of years. About five-hundred years after, Christians from the Holy Roman Empire came and invaded the Arabs. During this time Arabs and Jews of the area lost their homes and were also brutally murdered by the knights from the Holy Roman Empire. The Arabs obtained the region of Canaan after a total of nine crusades of back and forth ownership of Canaan. After the crusades, Arabic people still inhabited Canaan and were the most dominant race in the region for many, many years.⁵

Zionism and Arab Nationalism

On May 2, 1860 a man by the name of Theodor Herzl was born. Herzl was the main founder of modern Zionism. In Herzl's work, he mentions the persecution of Jews in Europe, in the middle ages as well as in the developing Industrial age. Herzl's book, *Der Judenstaat*, Talks about how a Jewish nation would be ordered if one was established in the future. He held councils discussing a land full of Jews. Herzl chose Canaan as the best location for the Jewish

⁴ Hanukoglu, Prof. Israel. "Israel Science and Technology Directory." *Brief History of Israel and the Jewish People*

⁵"Early Islamic World." *Ducksters Educational Site*, Technological Solutions, Inc..

state he dreamed to start. The land Herzl envisioned never became a reality in his his lifetime because he died in 1904, but Zionism went on even after his death.⁶ More and more Jews felt a need for the Jewish state, so more and more Jews worked toward that goal. Around the same time, Arab nationalism was developing.⁷ During British rule, more and more Palestinians saw the land as theirs. This started conflict between the Jews and the Arabs.

Arab nationalism mostly rose during the time of the organization of the Young Arab Society. Basically the Young Arab Society advocated for modernizing the Arabic nations. In WWI, when the British took over the Ottomans, Arab nationalism grew very much around the Middle East, and soon became in conflict with Zionism.⁸

Antisemitism in Europe⁹

Antisemitism is an ideology that grew widely in Western Europe during the Middle Ages and up until the industrial revolution. The ideology started when Christianity became popular in Europe. White Europeans would blame Jews for killing Jesus, and for other terrible evils of the world. Many lies about the Jews would arise during this time which became widely believed by white Europeans. Jews were persecuted and expelled from European societies and sent to live in their own societies.

In the modern era, antisemitism was still prevalent in European countries. Russia and Germany, as well as other countries, blamed the Jews for many of the problems in society. In Russia, anti-semitic pogroms, or anti-ethnic rioting, took place. Also, the Protocols of the Elders

⁶ Herzl, Theodor. *The Jewish State*. 1896. Dover ed., New York, Dover Publications, 1988.

⁷ Peretz, Don. *The Arab-Israel Dispute*. New York, Facts On File, 1996.

⁸ Peretz, Don. *The Arab-Israel Dispute*. New York, Facts On File, 1996.

⁹ "European Antisemitism from Its Origins to the Holocaust." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

of Zion was published. The book purported to outline a plan in which the Jews would take over the world. Authorship of the book was said to be of the Jews, but this was proven false. The authors of the book were actually whites in Russia. In Germany, Jews were widely persecuted during the World Wars. During World War II, Jews were sent to concentration camps, where about six million Jewish people were killed. Anti-semitic propaganda was being disseminated everywhere in Germany and German conquered territories. The sum of these events is commonly known as *The Holocaust* which lasted from 1939 to the end of the war in 1945, three years before the establishment of Israel. After WWII much of the persecution and hatred of the Jews in the west faded. Only groups like the Neo-Nazis and the KKK continue to espouse hatred for the Jewish people in the western world.

All this persecution of the Jewish people in Europe clearly shows why Israelis were eager to embrace the ideas of Zionism and the Jewish state. They probably saw it as a favor the world needed to give them because of the Europeans' cruel treatment to them.

The Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate

In 1517, Canaan was under the rule of the Ottoman Turks, a nation of mostly Islamic peoples originating in Turkey. The nation had control of Canaan until WWI when the British took over the land of Canaan. The British took over Canaan in which they divided authority between the Jews and Arabs living in the area. Because there were many more Arabs in Canaan during the time, so more Arabs ruled most of Canaan. The mandate went on until 1947, a year before the creation of the State of Israel.¹⁰

¹⁰ Peretz, Don. *The Arab-Israel Dispute*. New York, Facts On File, 1996.

1948: The State of Israel

Arab-Israeli War of 1948

Almost immediately after Israel became a state, the Palestinians waged war against the Israelis. War between the Palestinians and the Israelis lasted for about a year. During the war, about 700,000 Palestinians were removed from Canaan. The event where the Palestinians were expelled from Israeli land is called *Nakba*, Arabic for “disaster”. Victory was declared by the Israelis, and the land was theirs. This would now be known as Israel’s war of independence. Right after the war, the United States and the Soviets recognized Israel as an independent state. The creation of Israel also caused many other wars, and is the main component in tension between the Palestinians and the Israelis.¹¹

War and Conflicts

Palestine and the Middle East

Most of all the countries in the Middle East are supportive of Palestine. Many of these countries do not have diplomatic relations with Israel, and do not recognize Israel as a nation. This does not include Jordan and Egypt, which have a significant connection with Israel rather than with Palestine.¹²

Gaza

Gaza, or the Gaza Strip, is land in the southwest of Israel. On the north and east, the land is bordered by Israel, and on the south the land borders Egypt. The last border, the western

¹¹ Peretz, Don. *The Arab-Israel Dispute*. New York, Facts On File, 1996.

¹² “The Arab-Israel War.” *Middle East : Israel & Palestine*. Wheeling Jesuit University/Center for Educational Technologies®.

border, is part of the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (See Figure 1). Since 2007, a Palestinian group called *Hamas* had authority over Gaza. Hamas was founded in 1987, and is an anti-Israeli Palestinian group whose goal is to overthrow Israel. Hamas has launched many rockets toward Israel, and is a key participant in the conflict with Israel.¹³

Israel/Palestine Now

Israel and the World

Israel is recognized by most countries of the world (recognition meaning countries with diplomatic relations with Israel). For the countries that it is recognized by there is peace between them. Israel is opposed by most of the Arabic world. Many countries in the area do not recognize Israel as a nation. In the US, Israel is supported by most Americans. A 2010 study showed that about 63 percent of all Americans support Israel. Also, in December 2017, President Donald Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, announcing plans to move the American embassy there from Tel Aviv. This shows the president's support for Israel over Palestine.¹⁴ The EU, for the most part, is supportive of Israel, as is the majority of the western world. The rest of the world ranges from neutrality to opposition to the Jewish state.¹⁵

Peace Attempts

There have been peace attempts between the governments of Israel and Palestine. One of the most famous of these attempts was the *Oslo Peace Process*. This was a six year year process from 1993 to 1999 that tried to make peace between the West Bank and Israel. The Process was not exactly successful, and as were many other peace attempts. Still, these peace attempts are

¹³"Hamas: Background & Overview." *Background & Overview of Hamas*. American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise

¹⁴Domonoske, Camila. "'Beginning Of A New Approach': President Trump Declares Jerusalem Israel's Capital." *NPR*, NPR, 6 Dec. 2017.

¹⁵

important to Israel. Out of these came many agreements between countries which mostly ended tension between them. The countries include Egypt and Jordan, who are now allies with Israel.

Conclusion

Both the Arabs and the Jewish people claim rights over the land of Canaan. The Arabs feel as though their land was taken from them. This is much like how the Native Americans must have felt when white Europeans came and took their land. On the other hand, the Jews feel a great connection toward a land with which they have a great history and where they could have found refuge in the 20th Century after much persecution. This sort of conflict is difficult to resolve, because to do so one, or both, sides would have to give up some or all of their hard work and struggles over the decades. Now, because of all the opposing ideologies, the wars, and the ongoing conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, this is the kind of world the people of the area live in. It is the world the people are familiar with, a world of opposition and tension. The conflict has changed how the two cultures in Canaan coexist. Before the establishment of the Jewish state, relations between the two cultures were much more peaceful.

This is a major conflict, and out of any conflict emerges the need for peace. That is why many attempts over the years to reach that peace. The situation applies to the annual theme, because there is such great conflict, in the area that demands great compromise.



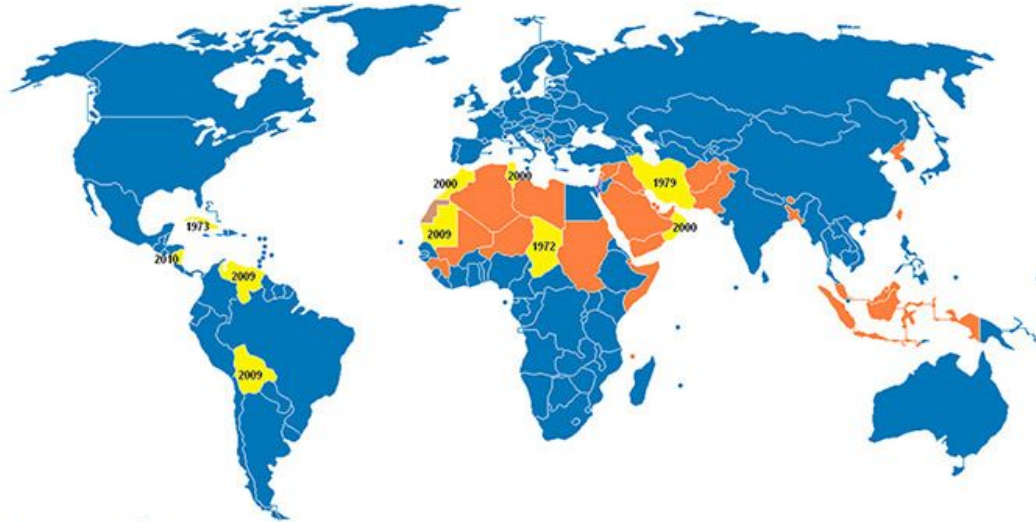
Figure 1: Map of the Middle East (Eastern Mediterranean) as of 2017¹⁶

¹⁶ "The Eastern Mediterranean Today." *Jewish Virtual Library, American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2017.*



Figure 2: Satellite Map of Israel¹⁷

¹⁷ "Satellite Image of Israel." *JR, JR*.
www.jr.co.il/pictures/israel/maps/israel-satellite-map.jpg. Originally Captured by NASA



Legend:

- Countries which maintain diplomatic relations with Israel
- Countries which have never had diplomatic relations with Israel
- Countries which maintained relations with Israel in the past but have severed relations

Source: Israel Civil Service Commission (March 2016)

Figure 3: Countries that Have Diplomatic Relations with Israel(March 2016)¹⁸

¹⁸ Parrot, André. "Abraham." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 3 Oct. 2017.



Figure 4: Countries Recognizing Palestine(November 2014)¹⁹

¹⁹ Tharoor, Ishaan. "Map: The Countries That Recognize Palestine as a State." *The Washington Post*. WP Company

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Map of countries that recognize Palestine

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