

The Palestinian Case for the Land of Israel

by Paul Wilkinson

“The Zionist concept of the ‘final solution’ to the ‘Arab problem’ in Palestine, and the Nazi concept of the ‘final solution to the ‘Jewish problem’ in Germany, consisted essentially of the same basic ingredient: the elimination of the unwanted human element in question. The creation of a ‘Jew-free Germany’ was indeed sought by Nazism through more ruthless and more inhuman methods than the creation of an ‘Arab-free Palestine’ accomplished by the Zionists: but behind the difference in techniques lay an identity of goals.”¹

These venomous words were penned by Dr Fayez Sayigh (1922-1980), the Syrian-born founder of the Palestine Research Center in Beirut. A key member of the Palestine National Council (PNC), which was formed in 1964 as the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Sayigh was the chief architect behind the infamous UN Resolution 3369, which determined that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination”. That ominous resolution was passed on November 10th, 1975 – the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* (‘The Night of Broken Glass’).

By drawing almost exclusively from the writings of the Arab community, including Palestinian Arab academia, I will attempt to address, and counter, Palestinian claims to the Land of Israel. I will also demonstrate how the Arab community in and around ‘Palestine’ has succeeded in forging a uniquely *Palestinian*, as opposed to *Arab*, national identity, for the purpose of resisting the Zionist movement and ultimately destroying the Jewish State. My counter argument to Palestinian claims will be framed largely within the context of the writings and speeches of their own spokesmen who, in the course of asserting a distinctive Palestinian nationalist identity, make revealing statements which serve to undermine their own arguments.

This paper is a work in progress, which began in 2004 following my attendance at the 5th International Sabeel Conference in Jerusalem. It is a work which is integral to the ministry of my home fellowship, Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church in Stockport, England, and which will be incorporated into a new book I am co-authoring with my pastor, Andrew Robinson, entitled, *Israel Betrayed: Replacement Theology and the Rise of Christian Palestinianism*.

Arab Testimony: Palestine does not Exist!

Few Arab academics have made as much of an impression on Western academia, especially in the United States, as Maronite Christian Philip Hitti (1886-1978), the eminent Lebanese-

¹ Fayez A. Sayigh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut: Research Center of the Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965), pp.26-27.

American historian who lectured in Semitic languages and literature at Columbia, Princeton, and Harvard. On January 11th, 1946, Hitti made the following statement before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in Washington, D.C., which had been set up by the respective British and American governments in order to agree a policy for readmitting the Jewish people to Palestine:

“The Sunday schools have done a great deal of harm to us, because by smearing the walls of the rooms with maps of Palestine they are associating it in the mind of the average American – and I may say perhaps the Englishman too – with Jews. Sir, there is no such thing as Palestine in history, absolutely not ... [It is but] a very small tiny spot there on the southern part of the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by a vast territory of Arab Muslim lands ... one solid Arab-speaking bloc – 50,000,000 people.”²

This statement was corroborated before the same Committee by Professor John Hazam, Professor of History at the City College of New York and President of the Institute of Arab-American Affairs:

“Before 1917, when Balfour made his declaration, there was never any Palestine question, or even any Palestine as a political or geographical entity.”³

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: The Bible has been Misused by Zionists

In his formative anthology, *From Haven to Conquest* (1971), Walid Khalidi, a Senior Research Fellow at Harvard and one of the most influential Palestinian scholars and spokesmen, denounces the Zionist movement for justifying itself “by means of the brilliantly absurd slogans of Divine Promise and Biblical Fulfilment.” The Western mind, he argues, has been conditioned to accept what he calls the ‘myth’ of “the overriding Right of Return deriving from Divine Promise,” which “taps the vast reservoir of mass emotion, not only among Jewish, but also of Western Christian audiences” who suffer from what he terms “the Bible Syndrome”.⁴ Khalidi accepts that, based on their reverence for the Bible, Christian support for Zionism in the West “is eminently plausible”. However, he asserts that because the majority of Palestinians are Moslems, then, as far as the Palestinians themselves are concerned, “if Jehovah meant to give present-day Palestine to the Jews ... Allah did not.”⁵

Palestinian historian Nur Masalha makes the same point in his book, *The Palestine Nakba* (2012), albeit with the use of unacceptable terminology directed against the Zionists:

² Quoted in Arthur Kahn and Thomas F. Murray, *The Palestinians: A Political Masquerade* (New York: Americans for a Safe Israel, 1977), p.6.

³ Quoted in Kahn and Murray, *The Palestinians*, p.6.

⁴ Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), pp.xxii-xxvii.

⁵ Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1992), p.3.

“The invention and mobilisation of the ethnocentric paradigm of ‘promised land-chosen people’ – and the myth that the Hebrew Bible provides for the Zionists sacrosanct ‘title deed’ to the land of Palestine signed by God – became a key tool in Zionist settler-colonial and ethnic cleansing policies in Palestine.”⁶

In 1970, an anthology was published by The Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) entitled, *Christians, Zionism and Palestine*. The IPS, which was founded in Beirut in 1963, is the oldest non-profit organisation devoted exclusively to the documentation, research, and analysis of Palestinian issues and the Arab-Israeli conflict, and is home to the largest library devoted to this subject in the Arab world. What is conspicuous when reading through articles in this anthology, which a number of Arab academics cite, is the way in which the authors distort the Scriptures relating to God’s everlasting covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Islamic scholar and Arabist, Alfred Guillaume (1888-1966), who lectured at Princeton and the University of London, is a case in point. In his exposition of the Genesis texts relating to God’s promise of the land to Abraham as an “everlasting possession,” Guillaume arrives at the following conclusion:

“Now it is generally supposed that these promises were made to the Jews, and to the Jews alone. But that is not what the Bible says. The word ‘to thy seed’ inevitably includes Arabs, *both Muslims and Christians*, who can claim descent from Abraham through his son Ishmael” (emphasis mine).⁷

Another contributor to the IPS anthology was William Lee Holladay, liberal Old Testament commentator at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut. In his article, ‘Is the Old Testament Zionist?’, Holladay describes the God of the Old Testament as “a free-lance deity” whose will and actions are “constantly unexpected and not always reassuring”.⁸ Supercessionist to the core, Holladay asserts that “it is the church, we ourselves, who are the true Israel,” and in a manner later reminiscent of N.T. Wright, claims that all that matters is “the way in which God has reconstituted the whole nature of the covenant people, and we are it, the Israel of God.”⁹

All the contributors to the anthology unsurprisingly refuse to admit any connection between ancient and modern Israel, persistently asserting that the Church is “the new or true Israel of God, transcending the old distinctions of nationality or race.”¹⁰

⁶ Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (New York: Zed Books, 2012), p.3.

⁷ Alfred Guillaume, ‘Zionists and the Bible,’ in *Christians, Zionism and Palestine: A Selection of Articles and Statements on the Religious and Political Aspects of the Palestine Problem* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1970), p.4.

⁸ William Holladay, ‘Is the Old Testament Zionist?’, in *Christians, Zionism and Palestine*, p.48.

⁹ Holladay, ‘Is the Old Testament Zionist?’, p.57.

¹⁰ Frank Stagg, “‘The Israel of God’ and the New Testament,” in *Christians, Zionism and Palestine*, p.64

The Centrality of the *Nakba* to Palestinian Identity

In a 2005 article on Palestinian negotiating patterns with Israel, Palestinian scholar Omar Dajani highlights the centrality of the so-called *Nakba* (the ‘catastrophe’) to Palestinian identity. The *Nakba* is the name given by the Arab world to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs following the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948. As Dajani explains,

“The *nakba* is the experience that has perhaps most defined Palestinian history ... The *nakba* is of existential significance to Palestinians, representing both the shattering of the Palestinian community in Palestine and the consolidation of a shared national consciousness.”¹¹

The Palestinian Arab community has, in more recent times, exploited language and terminology traditionally used to portray *Jewish* suffering, in order to evoke sympathy for their cause and outrage against the Jews. In his book, *The Palestine Nakba* (2012), Nur Masalha argues that 1948 was “a year of traumatic rupture in the continuity of historical space and time in Palestinian history,” when “the name ‘Palestine’ was wiped off the map”.¹² He accuses those who deny the very existence of a Palestinian people of “Nakba denial,”¹³ including, most famously, former Prime Minister of Israel Golda Meir (1898-1978), whose interview with the British *Sunday Times* newspaper was published on June 15th, 1969; it appeared in *The Washington Post* the following day. Although, as we shall see from the following extract, Meir threw considerable light on the Palestinian question in her interview, the statements she made are held up as a prime example of “Nakba denial”:

Interviewer: “Do you think the emergence of the Palestinian fighting forces, the *Fedayeen*, is an important factor in the Middle East?”

Golda Meir: “Important, no. A new factor, yes. There were no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the First World War, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist. There is really no such thing as a representative body speaking for so-called Palestinians....”¹⁴

In an online article by Israeli lawyer and former Knesset member, Elyakim Ha’etzni, a transcript of an intriguing dialogue unexpectedly serves to substantiate Golda Meir’s much

¹¹ Quoted in Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p.12.

¹² Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p.1.

¹³ Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p.5.

¹⁴ ‘Golda Meir Scorns Soviets: Israeli Premier Explains Stand On Big-4 Talks,’ *The Washington Post* (June 16th, 1969).

quoted, and vilified, statement. The dialogue took place between the late King Hussein of Jordan and the late President Hafez al-Assad of Syria, during the Arab League Summit in Amman, Jordan, in November 1987. According to Ha'etzni, their conversation proceeded as follows:

Assad: "Palestine is mine, part of Syria. An independent state called Palestine never existed."

Hussein: "The appearance of the Palestinian national personality comes as an answer to Israel's claim that Palestine is Jewish."¹⁵

Despite shamelessly drawing parallels between the so-called Palestinian *Nakba* and the Jewish *Shoah* (the Holocaust) – something which today's Christian Palestinianists, like Evangelical Anglican vicar Stephen Sizer, are inclined to do¹⁶ – Masalha makes an important point for the purpose of this paper when asserting that events surrounding Israel's re-establishment in 1948 brought about "the crystallization of a distinct and resistant Palestinian identity".¹⁷ By making such a definitive statement, Masalha, and other spokesmen for the Palestinian cause, emphasize just how recent the origin of 'the Palestinian people' really is. Writing in the 1970s, Edward Said (1935-2003), a graduate of Harvard and Princeton, a former member of the Palestine National Council (PNC), and the man described in one newspaper obituary as "an intellectual superstar in America" and "the most articulate and visible advocate of the Palestinian cause in the United States,"¹⁸ admitted that there was "no authoritative text on Palestinian history".¹⁹ I would suggest that the explanation is very simple: there *was* no Palestinian history to write about!

The *Nakba* is, in the words of Masalha, "the single most important event that connects all Palestinians to a specific point of time,"²⁰ a connection which, he notes, has been cemented in the minds of succeeding generations through what he terms the "emergency science"²¹ of popular storytelling, which developed especially among Palestinian Arab women for the purpose of creating an historical narrative of the Palestinian people. This "science" has added fuel to the propaganda fires of Palestinian nationalism, which began to burn in the wake of the Balfour Declaration, and have done so more ferociously since 1948. Many of those born of Palestinian Arab parents in the so-called "refugee camps" following Israel's re-establishment, had their passions inflamed by stories they were told about the alleged Zionist invasion. This is attested by freelance journalist Rosemary Sayigh in her sociological

¹⁵ Elyakim Ha'etzni, 'There is Life without a Solution,' *NATV Online* Vol.6 (October 2004), www.acpr.org.il.

¹⁶ Paul Wilkinson, 'The Church at Christ's Checkpoint: A Response to the Second "Christ at the Checkpoint" Conference in Bethlehem, 5-9 March 2012,' (Stockport, England: Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church, 2012), p.45.

¹⁷ Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p.12.

¹⁸ Malise Ruthven, 'Edward Said: Controversial literary critic and bold advocate of the Palestinian cause in America,' *The Guardian* (September 26, 2003).

¹⁹ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p.xiii.

²⁰ Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p.208.

²¹ Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p.218.

study, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (1979), which was based on interviews with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon during the 1970s. Writing from a different perspective, Yehoshafat Harkabi similarly notes how “the Arab attitude” towards Israel developed as a reaction to historical events which led to the creation of the Jewish State. Feelings of humiliation, disgrace, and the desire for revenge gave way, ultimately, to the creation of an ideology which would be used to combat Zionism by indoctrinating the Palestinian Arab people in anti-Jewish rhetoric. As Harkabi explains,

“The contention that the establishment of Israel was an injustice, and that her survival is therefore unjust, deepened the sense of wrong by making the emotion into a doctrine. The emotional trauma resulting from the experience of defeat provided the impulse for the ideology”.²²

The Genesis of Arab, and Palestinian, Nationalism

In his book, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (1997), Rashid Khalidi, an advisor to the Palestinian delegation at the Madrid Conference of 1991, refers to “a multiplicity of narratives” from which the indigenous Arab population of Palestine has traditionally derived its history. These “narratives,” however, are drawn from distinctly unique historical periods, including the pre-Islamic, Islamic, and Ottoman eras. As Khalidi concedes,

“There is ... often a tendency to see an essential Palestinian identity going well back in time, rather than the complex, contingent and relatively recent reality of Palestinian identity...”²³

The primary historical attachment which the indigenous Arabs *do* have to the Land of Israel is religious, rather than political. Prior to the twentieth century, the Land was sacred to the three major religions, a holy place of pilgrimage with Jerusalem at its centre. As Alan Dowty, Professor Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, observes, “there was no territorial unit within the Ottoman Empire corresponding to historical *Eretz Yisrael/Filastin*,” but there was “a particular sensitivity with regard to Jerusalem”.²⁴ It was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that the word *Filastin* (‘Palestine’) began to be used politically, and not just geographically, among the Palestinian Arab community. Interestingly, Dowty notes how,

²² Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell & Co. Ltd., 1972), pp.438-39.

²³ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.33-34.

²⁴ Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p.19.

“In the decades to come, the pendulum was to swing back and forth between the two poles of identity [Palestinian/Arab], depending on the situation in Palestine and, even more, on trends in the broader Arab world.”²⁵

Since the Crusades, Jerusalem had been closed to European diplomats, while foreign non-Muslims had no right of residence in the city. The situation changed following the rise to power of Muhammad Ali (1769-1849), an Albanian commander in the Ottoman army who gained control of Egypt and seized Palestine from the Ottomans (1832-41). Ali ended non-Muslim discrimination and permitted European powers to open consulates in Jerusalem. Great Britain established the first Western consulate in 1838, and the first Protestant Church, Christ Church, was consecrated eleven years later in 1849. This was a period which saw the intensification of European political, economic and religious interests in the region. When the European powers finally intervened on behalf of the Ottomans against Ali in 1841, the Ottoman Empire subsequently relaxed its discriminatory policies and non-Muslims were officially granted access to the Holy City. What followed was a flurry of pilgrimages, archaeological digs, scientific expeditions, and package tours. The resultant travel books, maps, and photographic albums captivated the Western world and left the European public “more convinced that they had ‘rights of ownership’ in Palestine than in any other non-European territory.”²⁶ No one, I should point out, was, at that time, talking about the rights of *the Arabs*, or of Palestine being an *Arab* homeland; Palestine was the Land of the Bible, the Land of Jesus, and the Land historically associated with the Jewish people. However, nineteenth and early twentieth-century European colonialist endeavours in North Africa and the Middle East, and more specifically British/Zionist aspirations in Palestine, led to a backlash within the indigenous Arab community, which, as Khalidi explains, “came to describe itself as Palestinian, and that saw itself as under threat from Zionism, and from other directions.”²⁷ As Alexander Schölch writes in his book, *Palestine in Transformation 1856-1882*,

“...it was the Jewish-Zionist aspirations for the ‘Land of Israel’ that strengthened among the Arab population the notion of an entity called Palestine, as a defense against Zionist claims. After World War I, the Palestinian national movement was formed, principally as an *opposition* movement against Zionism.”²⁸

Edward Said concedes that “in any accepted sense”²⁹ Palestine has never been an independent territory. Anti-Zionist Israeli professors Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal concur, stating in their book, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (1993):

²⁵ Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.10.

²⁶ Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), p.60.

²⁷ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p.88.

²⁸ Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation*, p.16.

²⁹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p.117.

“Had it not been for the pressures exerted on the Arabs of Palestine by the Zionist movement, the very concept of a Palestinian people would not have developed”.³⁰

During the second-half of the nineteenth century, the concept of ‘national self-determination’ swept across Europe, leading to the unification of states out of which arose nations such as Germany and Italy. Other countries seceded from the Ottoman Empire and achieved their independence, notably Greece (1830), Serbia and Romania (1878), and Bulgaria (1905). Jordanian author, diplomat, and Princeton graduate, Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, notes how nineteenth-century European nationalism was the catalyst for the modern Arab re-awakening. The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century expansionist policies of Britain (in Egypt, Aden/Yemen, and the Persian Gulf), France (in Algeria and Tunisia), Italy (in Libya), and Russia (in the territories north and east of the Black Sea), and the failure of the Ottoman Empire to defend the integrity of its Arab provinces from this pan-European invasion, inspired the call for Arab autonomy and later for complete Arab independence. Nuseibeh pinpoints Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 as “the herald and the signpost of the new era”³¹ for the Arabic-speaking peoples who, for almost a thousand years, had not been masters of their own destiny.

The Arab re-awakening was aided in no small measure by the establishment of Arab clubs, associations, and secret societies, most notably in Constantinople, Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus, and also in Paris, where students campaigned for the liberation of Arab countries from Ottoman control. Arab nationalist ideas were especially strong among the more educated non-Muslim communities that had been exposed to Western culture and education, especially during the British Mandate period. The result was the emergence of an Arab intelligentsia which was sufficiently powerful to begin the elaborate process of forging a new identity for their people. Their endeavours were aided by the Western missionary societies in the Middle East, which opened schools, promoted the Arabic language, and facilitated the publication of Arabic textbooks, poetry, newspapers, and the classics, all of which helped to rehabilitate Arab culture and inspire nationalist sentiment by evoking the memory of former glories.

In his book, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism* (1956), Hazem Nuseibeh makes the following salient point:

“Nations which abruptly come into being or which undergo a metamorphosis are naturally in greater need of explicit ideological guidance, and the Arab nation belongs to this category inasmuch as it has only recently launched itself on a career of nationhood. As an Islamic community, its roots are deeply embedded in the past. As a

³⁰ Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), p.xvii.

³¹ Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.35.

nation in the modern secular sense, the Arabs have to begin from scratch. In fact, they have to decide who an Arab is.”³²

The Arab uprising against their Ottoman masters in 1916, which arose in response to an appeal made by the British government during the First World War, “marked a new milestone in the ideological development of Arab nationalism”.³³ This signified a shift in emphasis away from the religious towards the secular, with many Arabs beginning to identify themselves first and foremost as “Arab,” and secondly as Muslim or Christian.

Considered by many Arab scholars to be the premier historian of the Middle East, British-Lebanese academic Albert Hourani suggests in his book, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (2002), that Arab nationalism only became important in the two decades which immediately preceded World War I, and only then among an educated elite minority.³⁴ American-Lebanese scholar Philip Khoury, who serves as Ford International Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the American University of Beirut, points out that, although Arab nationalism would ultimately flourish outside the borders of Syria, “Damascus was the hotbed of pre-war Arabism,”³⁵ its particular brand of nationalism having been characterised by a literary and cultural Arab renaissance among young intellectuals who were connected to a particular circle of religious scholars in the Syrian capital. This renaissance led to the publication of the first unofficial textbook of Arab Nationalism in 1905 by Najib Azuri, a Lebanese revolutionary who founded the ‘League of Arab Patriots’ in Paris in 1904. His book, *Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe* (*The Awakening of the Arab Nation*) called for the establishment of an Arab State independent of Ottoman rule, which would stretch from Iraq to the Suez. It is important to note that Azuri predicted that “the fate of the entire world”³⁶ depended on the outcome of the Arab struggle with the Jews.

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: Palestine has a National History

In his ground-breaking work, *History of the Arabs* (1937), Philip Hitti makes a number of statements which identify historic Palestine as a province of Syria:

“Between 1500 and 1200 B.C. the Hebrews made their way into southern Syria, Palestine, and the Arameans (Syrians) into the north, particularly Coele-Syria.”³⁷

Referring to the seventh-century Islamic conquest he writes:

³² Nuseibeh, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism*, p.61.

³³ Nuseibeh, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism*, p.54.

³⁴ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2002), p.309.

³⁵ Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.59.

³⁶ Quoted in Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.67.

³⁷ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 3rd edn (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1943), p.11.

“Syria was now divided into four military districts ... corresponding to the Roman and Byzantine provinces found at the time of the conquest. These were: Dimashq, Hims, al-Urdunn (Jordan) comprising Galilee to the Syrian desert, and Filastin (Palestine), the land south of the great plain of Esdraelon....”³⁸

Hitti also mentions Muhammad bin Tughj Al-Ikhshid, founder of the tenth-century Egyptian-based *Ikhshidid* dynasty, who “added Syria-Palestine to his quasi-independent state.”³⁹ In his book, *The Question of Palestine* (1980), Edward Said quotes a late tenth-century Arabic text, which reads as follows:

“Filastin is the westernmost of the provinces of Syria ... Filastin is the most fertile of the Syrian provinces ... In the province of Filastin, despite its small extent, there are about twenty mosques, with pulpits for the Friday prayer.”⁴⁰

The wording used in the resolution adopted by the General Syrian Congress on July 6th, 1919, is equally instructive, once again underlining the fact that there were no such people as ‘the Palestinians’:

“We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish commonwealth in *the southern part of Syria*, known as Palestine ... We ask that there should be no separation of *the southern part of Syria* known as Palestine ... The fundamental principles laid down by President Wilson [before the U.S. Congress in January 1918] ... impel us to protest most emphatically against any treaty that stipulates the partition of *our Syrian country* and against any private engagement aiming at the establishment of Zionism in *the southern part of Syria*....”⁴¹ (emphasis mine)

In his 1993 socio-political study, *Palestine in Transformation 1856-1882*, published by the Washington, D.C. office of the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), Alexander Schölch conceded that there was a fundamental problem to his research, namely, “that there was no administrative entity with this name [Palestine] during Ottoman times”. Consequently, Schölch’s primary concern was

“to ascertain the extent to which it is at all meaningful to write a history of Palestine during a certain phase in the nineteenth century, when there was no administrative unit with this name and when this area’s ‘borders’ – in other words, the area’s historical-geographical identity – were contested.”⁴²

³⁸ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p.154.

³⁹ Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p.456.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p.11.

⁴¹ Quoted in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Transformation of Palestine: Essays on the Origin and Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 2nd edn (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1987), pp.106-07.

⁴² Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation*, pp.1, 9.

It is a fact of modern history that in 1830, the entire region of Palestine was administratively divided by the Ottoman Empire into three *sanjaqs* ('independent districts'), namely Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre. From 1864-71, following the formation of the new Ottoman *vilayet* ('province') of Syria, these *sanjaqs* were governed from Damascus. From 1874, the region surrounding Jerusalem, or southern Palestine, was designated a *sanjaq* and ruled from Constantinople, while northern Palestine was sub-divided into two *sanjaqs* centred in Nablus (Shechem) and Acre, which were part of the *vilayet* of Beirut. The Palestinian Arab economy at that time was predominantly agrarian, and parochial loyalties were primarily to the village, tribe, clan and family. Palestine was simply a land of mixed groups, which was politically administered by a succession of empires and regimes. The entry for 'Palestine' in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published in 1910/11, bears witness to this historical fact and makes for fascinating reading:

"PALESTINE, a geographical name of rather loose application. Etymological strictness would require it to denote exclusively the narrow strip of coast-land once occupied by the Philistines, from whose name it is derived. It is, however, conventionally used as a name for the territory which, in the Old Testament, is claimed as the inheritance of the pre-exilic Hebrews; thus it may be said generally to denote the southern third of the province of Syria ... The modern subdivisions under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire are in no sense conterminous [sharing a common boundary] with those of antiquity, and hence do not afford a boundary by which Palestine can be separated exactly from the rest of Syria in the north, or from the Sinaitic and Arabian deserts in the south and east ... The River Jordan, it is true, marks a line of delimitation between Western and Eastern Palestine; but it is practically impossible to say where the latter ends and the Arabian desert begins."⁴³

In his definitive work, *The Arab Awakening* (1939), leading Palestinian nationalist and historian, George Antonius, defines a 'nation' as an "homogenous population forming a coherent whole and governed by a common national outlook and purpose".⁴⁴ Based on that definition alone, Palestine has never existed at any point in history as the nation-state of the Palestinian Arab population. In her sociological study of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the 1970s, freelance journalist Rosemary Sayigh points to the rural village as the first point of identity for Palestinian Arabs. She describes how even the very youngest children in the Lebanese camps "usually know what village they come from," and how "village consciousness persists in spite of the fact that it has been overlaid by a Palestinian national

⁴³ 'Palestine,' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition, Volume XX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), pp.600-626; cf. Elyakim Ha'etzni, 'There is Life without a Solution,' *NATV Online* Vol.6 (October 2004), www.acpr.org.il.

⁴⁴ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications, 2001), p.86.

consciousness, imbued by the Resistance movement.”⁴⁵ Alan Dowty notes in a similar vein how

“the dominant identities within the [Ottoman] Empire were religion, clan, tribe, and family. Only toward the end of the nineteenth century were voices heard calling for Arab liberation from Turkish rule, on the basis of a rediscovered identity as members of an Arab-speaking nation stretching from Morocco to Iraq.”⁴⁶

With the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the assignment of the Palestine Mandate to Britain in 1922, and ultimately the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, Arab nationalism needed a champion; they found the ideal candidate in the person of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970).

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: We want peace with Israel

In his published doctoral thesis, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, which was submitted to the Hebrew University a month prior to the outbreak of the Six-Day War (June 5-10, 1967), Yehoshafat Harkabi exposes the relentless and nefarious call for “the liquidation of the State of Israel,” which Arab leaders “proclaimed day and night”⁴⁷ prior to the War. He lists “the large number of alternative expressions” used by political leaders to inflame anti-Israel Arab sentiment, among which the following were most commonly used:

<i>qaḍā’ alā</i>	(“liquidation;” the most common expression)
<i>maḥq , maḥū</i>	(“wiping out”)
<i>taṣfiya</i>	(“purification” or “cleansing”)
<i>izāla , izāḥa</i>	(“removal”)
<i>zawāl</i>	(“clearing out”)
<i>suqūṭ</i>	(“downfall”)
<i>lā baqā’</i>	(“non-existence”)
<i>saḥq</i>	(“crushing”)
<i>isti’sāl</i>	(“pulling up by the root”)
<i>iktisāḥ</i>	(“sweeping out”)
<i>isqāṭ</i>	(“overthrow”)
<i>inhā’</i>	(“bringing to an end”)
<i>fanā’</i>	(“elimination”)
<i>takhtafī</i>	(“disappearance”)
<i>tadmīr</i>	(“ruination”)
<i>yogtala’</i>	(“eradicated”) ⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 6th impression (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1991), p.14.

⁴⁶ Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.21.

⁴⁷ Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, p.1.

⁴⁸ Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, pp.2-3,5.

The most notorious of all the Arab leaders to use this language to greatest effect was Gamal Nasser who, in 1952, led a military coup which overthrew the Egyptian monarchy. Other coups were to take place during this period, notably in Iraq (1958), Sudan (1958), Yemen (1962), and Libya (1969). As Dowty notes, it was in this revolutionary climate that “the Palestinian issue took center stage, as it represented a cause that united all Arabs and gave the more radical a focus for their aspirations.”⁴⁹ A united Arab world, it was believed, would spell the end of Zionism. There was no greater proponent of this annihilationist vision than Nasser, who succeeded in achieving the (albeit short-lived) union of Egypt and Syria into what became known as the United Arab Republic (UAR). The following sample of statements made by him and other Arab leaders reveals the extent of their hatred towards Israel:

“Egypt has decided to dispatch her heroes [the *fedayeen*, or Arab terrorists], the disciples of Pharaoh and the sons of Islam, and they will cleanse the land of Palestine ... There will be no peace on Israel’s border because we demand vengeance, and vengeance is Israel’s death.”⁵⁰

(Nasser, August 31st, 1955)

“We believe that the evil [Israel] which was placed in the heart of the Arab world should be eradicated.”

(Nasser, March 13th, 1961; reply to a letter from King Hussein of Jordan)

“The Arab national aim is the destruction of Israel.”

(Nasser, 1965; joint statement with President Abdul Salam Arif of Iraq)

“We are resolved, determined, and united to achieve our clear aim of wiping Israel off the map ... God willing we shall meet in Tel Aviv and Haifa.”⁵¹

(President Abdul Rahman Arif of Iraq, June 1967)

“The only solution to Palestine ... is that matters should return to the conditions prevailing before the error [of 1948] was committed – i.e. the annulment of Israel’s existence.”

(Nasser before the UN General Assembly, September 27th, 1960)

“We swear to God that we shall not rest until we restore Arab nationalism to Palestine and Palestine to the Arab nation. There is no room for imperialism and there is no room for Britain in our country, just as there is no room for Israel within the Arab nation.”

(Nasser in Yemen, April 23rd, 1964)⁵²

⁴⁹ Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.104.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p.110.

⁵¹ Quoted in Amos Elon, *Understanding Israel: A Social Studies Approach* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1976), p.136.

⁵² Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, p.4.

As a result of six momentous days in June 1967, when Israel inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Arab armies which had menacingly assembled on its borders, “pan-Arabism failed spectacularly”.⁵³ Against all expectations, and even in the face of relentless Arab belligerency, Israel continued to hold out an olive branch to her unappeasable neighbours. In his famous speech to the Special Assembly of the United Nations on June 19th, 1967, Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban (1915-2002) made the following appeal:

“The Arab states can no longer be permitted to recognize Israel’s existence only for the purpose of plotting its elimination. They have come face to face with us in conflict. Let them now come face to face with us in peace.”⁵⁴

The response, not surprisingly, was further Arab aggression and posturing, but this was exacerbated by the emergence of a distinctly *Palestinian* nationalist movement, which quickly developed its own strategy for defeating Israel.

In 1964, during the first Arab League Summit in Cairo, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established. The PLO is a confederation of different factions, the largest being the terrorist organisation *Fatah* (meaning ‘conquering’ or ‘opening’); the name was derived from the inverted Arabic acronym of *Ḥarakat al-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī al-Filasṭīnī* (‘Palestinian National Liberation Movement’). Founded in 1959 by Egyptian-born nationalist Yasser Arafat during his years at Cairo University, *Fatah* joined the PLO in 1967; two years later Arafat was appointed Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, a position he held until his death in 2004. In his tribute to him, Palestinian professor of philosophy Sari Nusseibeh makes an important statement which supports the contention of this paper that the Palestinian people are a created, or invented,⁵⁵ people:

“Through rousing slogans and by means both foul and fair, he [Arafat] had forged a nation out of people without leadership and divided by clan, geography, religion, and class, many of whom were refugees living in squalor and despair.”⁵⁶

In his book, *The P.L.O Connections: How has the wealthiest, most bloodthirsty terrorist organisation in the world become accepted – even respectable?* (1982), distinguished Australian military historian John Laffin unmaskes the cold-blooded terrorist organisation which is today masquerading and vaunting itself as a respectable, moderate political party. By the mid-1970s, the PLO had emerged as “the principal co-ordinating, logistic and supply

⁵³ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p.183.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 7th edn (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2008), p.110.

⁵⁵ This term was used by Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and candidate for the Republican Party’s presidential nomination in 2012, in an exclusive interview with the cable t.v. station, The Jewish Channel, in December 2011.

⁵⁶ Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), p.8.

centre for anarchistic and terror groups throughout the world,"⁵⁷ establishing links with other terrorist organisations such as the IRA, ETA, the German Baader-Meinhof gang, the Japanese Red Army, the South American Junta de Coordinacion Revolucionara, Idi Amin's Ugandan murder squads, and numerous European neo-Nazi groups. Laffin describes the official statements issued by the PLO in relation to Israel as individually "disturbing" and collectively "alarming," the following being two such examples

"There is no new policy by the PLO to recognise Israel. The declared programme of the PLO is to bring about the destruction of the Zionist entity of Israel."

(May 5th, 1977)

"There is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. We are part of one nation, the Arab people. I myself have relatives with Palestinian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Syrian citizenship. We are one people. It is only for political reasons that we carefully stress our Palestinian identity, for it is in the national interest of the Arabs to encourage a separate Palestinian identity to counter Zionism. Yes, the existence of the Palestinian identity serves only tactical purposes. The founding of a Palestinian state is a new tool in the continuing battle against Israel ... After we have attained our rights in the whole of Palestine we must not postpone, even for a single moment, the reunification of Jordan and Palestine."⁵⁸

(Zuhair Mohsein, leader of the Syrian faction of the PLO and a member of the PLO's Executive Council, in an interview published by the Dutch newspaper, *Trouw*, March 31st, 1977)

This emphasis on achieving long-term Arab *unity* by promoting a short-term Palestinian *identity* is affirmed in the constitution of the PLO, known as the Palestinian National Covenant or Charter (1968). The Charter, which views "armed struggle" as "the only way to liberate Palestine" (Article 9), and seeks to achieve "the elimination of Zionism in Palestine" (Article 15), states that

"The Palestinian people believe in Arab unity. In order to contribute their share toward the attainment of that objective, however, they must, at the present stage of their struggle, safeguard their Palestinian identity and develop their consciousness of that identity, and oppose any plan that may dissolve or impair it" (Article 15).⁵⁹

In an interview conducted with Gamal Nasser in April 1956, John Laffin expressed his surprise that the Arab states had not done more to help the Palestinian refugees. Nasser gave this telling response:

⁵⁷ John Laffin, *The P.L.O. Connections* (London: Corgi Books, 1982), p.99.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Laffin, *The P.L.O. Connections*, p.91; James Dorsey, 'Wij zijn alleen Palestijn om politieke reden,' *Trouw* (March 31, 1977), www.likud.nl/1977/03/we-are-palestinians-just-for-a-political-objective-likoed-nederland/.

⁵⁹ 'The Palestinian National Charter: Resolutions of the Palestine National Council July 1-17, 1968,' *The Avalon Project*, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/>.

“The Palestinians are useful to the Arab states as they are. We will always see that they do not become too powerful. Can you imagine yet another nation on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean!”⁶⁰

As Laffin explains,

“Between 1948-1967 Palestinian refugees languished in refugee camps ignored by the great mass of Arabs and unnoticed by the rest of the world. Only after Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 did the Arabs show concern for the Palestinian people. The fundamental commitment of the Arabs is to the doctrine of pan-Arabism, not Palestinian self-determination. Arab animosity to Israel is the result of Israeli occupation of *Arab* land, not Palestinian land. Any solution to the Palestinian problem, short of Israel’s removal from the Middle East, will only marginally affect Arab demands.”⁶¹

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: We were here first, we are Canaanites!

In his book, *Bitter Harvest: A Modern History of Palestine* (1967), Jerusalem-born Sami Hadawi, a Palestinian scholar and diplomat who served in Beirut during the 1960s as director of the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), declared that the only valid claim for any land is that which is based on place of birth and length of continued possession. Contending that the Jews are not a nation but a mixed race, he denounces their settlement of Palestine as an “evil that has been unleashed upon a peaceful people” and “an invasion the nature of which is unprecedented in the annals of modern history.”⁶² Hadawi disturbingly cites British historian Arnold Toynbee, who served as a delegate of the British Foreign Office at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Toynbee not only described the Jews as a fossil people, but also likened Zionism to Nazism, declaring how “the spectacle of any Jews, however few, following in the Nazis’ footsteps is enough to drive a sensitive gentile or Jewish spectator almost to despair.”⁶³

Hadawi’s main contention is that occupation of a territory through invasion, as he terms it, nullifies any claim to that territory; since the Hebrews occupied a land once held by the early Canaanite tribes, then it follows that the Zionist claim to Palestine holds no more validity than that of the Arab world to Spain, or Italy to Great Britain. In addition, Hadawi suggests that present-day Palestinians have even more of a case because they are descended from the original occupiers of the land, namely the ancient Canaanites:

⁶⁰ Quoted in Laffin, *The P.L.O. Connections*, p.127; cf. Efraim Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p.250.

⁶¹ Laffin, *The P.L.O. Connections*, pp.167-68.

⁶² Sami Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest: A Modern History of Palestine* (Buckhurst Hill: Scorpion Publishing Ltd., 1990), p.2; cf. Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest*, p.xl.

⁶³ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History, Vol. XII: Reconsiderations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp.627-28.

“The Palestine Arabs of today ... are, in fact, mainly the descendants of the original native population – Philistines, Canaanites, etc. They were there when the early Hebrews invaded the land ... The historical connection of the early Hebrews (or Israelites) with Palestine is not one based on *birth* and *long possession* – as is the case with the Palestine Arabs – but upon *occupation through invasion*.”⁶⁴

Jerusalem-born Walid Khalidi, who helped shape the policy of the Palestine National Council (PNC), follows suit in his anthology, *From Haven to Conquest*:

“The Palestinian Arabs in the twentieth century were not merely the descendants of the Moslem Arab conquerors of the seventh century, but the cumulative stock that included all the races that had entered and settled in Palestine since the dawn of history. They ‘preceded’ both Jew and Moslem Arab, in addition to ‘incorporating’ them. They were the true Palestinians ... They had been Arab in culture since the early centuries of the Christian era, but Jewish and pagan before that since primordial times.”⁶⁵

In *Palestine Reborn* (1992), Khalidi adds how, in the eyes of Palestinians, “the Palestinian birthright to their country ... was as pristine as the birthright of any people to their own country.”⁶⁶

Such claims are astonishing in the light of the biblical record, and the divinely-mandated destruction of the Canaanites at the hands of Joshua and the Israelites. Such an ancestral claim can only be made, of course, once the authority of the Bible has been discounted, as it is by the majority of those cited in this paper.

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: The Jews stole our Land

Arab peasant farmers, or *fellaheen*, were permitted to farm the land in return for paying taxes to the Ottoman Empire, and were allowed under the same terms to pass on their tenancy rights to their children. However, as far as the *fellaheen* were concerned, despite the claims of the ruling Sultan, this was *their* land.

In his book, *Rediscovering Palestine* (1995), Palestinian-American professor Beshara Doumani, a former faculty member at the University of California, Berkley, and presently Director of Middle East Studies at Brown University, Providence (Rhode Island), notes how

“peasant attitudes in this regard were reinforced over the centuries as each clan and village became identified with particular lands, which they treated as their private

⁶⁴ Hadawi, *Bitter Harvest*, pp.30-31.

⁶⁵ Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest*, p.xxviii.

⁶⁶ Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn*, p.3.

property regardless of the changing faces of the tax collectors ... Consequently, village communities were characterized by a strong bond with their place of origin, as well as by a spirit of autonomy that was impatient with interference by the state.”⁶⁷

Following the Ottoman Land Reform of 1858, all landowners were required to register their property, which made the transfer of ownership much easier. Many refused to register in order to avoid Ottoman taxation and military conscription, which were the main reasons for the Land Reform, decisions which ultimately opened the door for village sheikhs and notable urban families to claim land, *and* for the returning Jews to possess land through legal acquisitions made by the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Wealthy absentee Arab landlords, many of whom resided outside Palestine in Beirut and Damascus and had little interest in the land except for what it could yield financially, acquired legal title to lands which had been farmed for generations by the *fellaheen*. As John Quigley, Professor of Law at Ohio State University, writes in his book, *The Case for Palestine* (2005),

“After this occurred, the family farmers continued in possession – as tenants – and considered themselves to retain their customary right to the land, although that was no longer legally the case.”⁶⁸

Some of the land was repossessed from peasants who fell into debt and could not pay their rent. Prior to 1914, according to statistics cited by Rashid Khalidi, 94% of the land which was sold to Jews was owned by absentee landlords, 36% of whom were Palestinian Arab.⁶⁹ Even when land had been legally purchased by the JNF from absentee landlords during the British Mandate period (1922-48), many *fellaheen* refused to leave. Ottoman officials and middlemen often facilitated the sale of this land by Arab landlords to Jewish settlers,⁷⁰ and there were a number of cases when they stepped in to evict the *fellaheen*. In 1929, the British administration enacted the Protection of Cultivators Ordinance, which required purchasers to compensate evicted tenant farmers. A relocation package was also offered. In so doing, the British administration gave tacit approval to Zionist land purchase and settlement, a policy which often gave rise to anger and unrest, with Palestinian Arab leaders in the cities inciting local uprisings and nationwide riots and boycotts against the Jews.

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: We have the right to Self-Determination

One of the main claims made by Palestinians and their Western advocates is that they have a right to self-determination like any other people, a claim that is often linked to a speech delivered by President Woodrow Wilson to the U.S. Congress on January 8th, 1918. Wilson’s

⁶⁷ Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), pp.156-157.

⁶⁸ John Quigley, *The Case for Palestine: An International Law Perspective, 2nd edn* (London: Duke University Press, 2005), p.5.

⁶⁹ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pp.112-13.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p.83.

“Fourteen Points” not only provided the basis for subsequent peace negotiations which ended World War I, but also served as the catalyst for the establishment of the League of Nations, which was agreed upon at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In his speech, President Wilson outlined his blueprint for world peace, the key point as far as Palestinians are concerned being Point 12, which reads as follows:

“The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development....”⁷¹

Palestinian Arabs claim that they were one of the “other nationalities” referred to in President Wilson’s address, but that was patently not the case. As we have seen already, a Palestinian “nationality” did not exist, and even if it had, the promise of “autonomous development” did not amount to statehood.

The status of Palestine in the eyes of the international community was clarified in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which was unanimously adopted on June 28th, 1919, and incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles. Article 22 (of 26) reads as follows:

“To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by *peoples not yet able to stand by themselves* under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League....”⁷² (emphasis mine)

Contrary to Arab claims, the well-being of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population has always been guaranteed whenever such declarations, charters, mandates and resolutions have been passed by the international community in relation to the establishment of a National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine. Only one party has put the existence of the Palestinian Arab community in jeopardy, and that is the Palestinian Arab community

⁷¹ ‘President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points,’ *The Avalon Project*, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu>.

⁷² Quoted in John Norton Moore (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Readings and Documents, Abridged and Revised Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p.889.

itself. The following sample of statements made by Zionist leaders in the years preceding 1948, should embarrass the Arab world and all who have bought into their anti-Israel propaganda:

“In my report to last year’s annual meeting I showed that the Jews could substantially improve Arab wellbeing by stamping out epidemics in Palestine, especially the frightfully common eye diseases. Since then, this idea has been realized by Nathan Strauss, assisted by a number of charitable societies, and one hopes that this work will win us the Arabs’ sympathy.”⁷³

Arthur Ruppin, in his report to the Eleventh Zionist Congress in Vienna (1913). Ruppin was head of the Zionist movement’s office in Palestine, and one of the founders of Tel Aviv.

“The Palestinian Arabs will not be sacrificed so that Zionism might be realized. According to our conception of Zionism, we are neither desirous nor capable of building our future in Palestine at the expense of the Arabs. The Palestinian Arabs will remain where they are, their lot will improve, and even politically they will not be dependent on us, even after we come to constitute the vast majority of the population.”⁷⁴

David Ben-Gurion, meeting in 1934 with Arab leader Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, founder of the Palestinian Istiqlal Party and lawyer for the Supreme Muslim Council.

“What a glorious opportunity this [proposed scheme of developing the land] would afford for the co-operation of Jews and Arabs to make Palestine one of the highest developed lands in the Middle East! This would improve immeasurably the lot of the Arab peasant, and at the same time create possibilities for innumerable oppressed Jews to build up their future and that of their children ... and a new era of peace and prosperity in that part of the world would thus be ushered in.”⁷⁵

Chaim Weizmann, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration (1942).

Despite every Arab effort to prevent the building of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, David Ben-Gurion finally declared Israel’s independence in Tel Aviv on May 14th, 1948. In his address, he reaffirmed the commitment of the Jewish community to work together with their Arab neighbours, and appealed to them in the knowledge that they were ready to unleash their full fury against the Jewish State:

⁷³ Quoted in Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed*, p.21.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed*, p.29.

⁷⁵ Chaim Weizmann, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Jewish National Home 1917-1942*, ed. by Paul Goodman (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1943), p.xvi.

“We appeal – in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months – to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions. We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.”⁷⁶

During a press conference in Cairo the following day, Egyptian diplomat Abdul Rahman Azzam, the first secretary-general of the Arab League, spelled out in no uncertain terms that the pan-Arab objective amounted to one thing, namely the slaughter of the infant nation:

“This will be a war of extermination and momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacre and the Crusades.”⁷⁷

On October 11th, 1948, Egyptian politician Muhammad Salah al-Din persisted with Arab threats to Israel’s existence in an article he wrote for the Egyptian daily newspaper, *al-Misri*:

“...in demanding the restoration of the refugees to Palestine, the Arabs intend that they shall return as the masters of the homeland and not as slaves. More specifically, they intend to annihilate the state of Israel.”⁷⁸

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: The Zionists believed that Palestine was Empty

In his essay, ‘On the Origin, Meaning, Use, and Abuse of a Phrase,’ Adam Garfinkle refutes the “anti-Zionist polemicists, and even a few self-critical Zionists,” who have exploited and/or misquoted a slogan they consider synonymous with the Zionist movement, namely that Palestine was “a land without a people, for a people [the Jews] without a land”. The slogan has been attributed to various individuals, most commonly to British playwright and avowed Zionist, Israel Zangwill. However, Zangwill acknowledged that he borrowed the phrase from English statesman, philanthropist, and Christian Restorationist, Lord Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury, however, was not the first Christian to use this phrase.

In his 1843 work, *The Land of Israel, According to the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*, written in the wake of his visit to Palestine in 1839 as part of a Church of Scotland deputation, Evangelical minister and author Alexander Keith made the following statement concerning the biblical account of Israel’s rebellion against God:

⁷⁶ Quoted in Moore (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.937.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed*, p.209.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed*, p.229.

“Therefore are they [the Jews/Israelites] wanderers throughout the world, who have nowhere found a place on which the sole of their foot could rest – a people without a country; even as their own land ... is in a great measure, a country without a people.”⁷⁹

One of the major culprits in misrepresenting the Zionist movement in this way is the late Edward Said. When referring to the aforementioned slogan in his book, *The Question of Palestine*, Said changed the meaning entirely by choosing to omit the indefinite article, so that it read: “a land without people, for a people without land.”⁸⁰ Said is far from alone. American Professor of International Law, John Quigley, has followed suit in his book, *The Case for Palestine: An International Law Perspective* (2005), in which he argues that the Zionist movement used this rendering to “bolster its territorial claim” by downplaying “the size and longevity of the Arab’s residence in Palestine.”⁸¹ On the contrary, as Garfinkle points out,

“Even when [in pro-Zionist writings] the land in question meant Palestine, the phrase does not necessarily assert that there were literally no inhabitants there, or even imply merely that the land was underpopulated and desolate Most [Zionists] believed that the land was desolate because there was not in Palestine ‘a people’ in the then current European sense of a group wedded to a particular land whose members defined themselves as composing a separate nation. The reference to ‘a people’ was more often political rather than literally demographic.”⁸²

Alan Dowty agrees that the phrase was not intended to imply that the land was uninhabited, but “that Palestine was a land not identified with a specific nation (other than Jews)”.⁸³ Diana Muir adds that Christians and Jews who advocated the Jewish return to Zion “assumed [that] the existing Arab population would continue in residence after a Jewish state was established.” Muir provides ample, and irrefutable, evidence against the claim that the Zionist movement widely employed such a phrase for propaganda purposes, a claim which, as she concludes, “should be retired”.⁸⁴

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: The Jews did not revive the Land

In his anthology, *From Haven to Conquest*, Walid Khalidi refers to what he calls “the ubiquitous Zionist propaganda theme that it was Zionist enterprise that made Palestinian soil productive”.⁸⁵ The Palestinian Arab community consistently claims that Palestine was

⁷⁹ Alexander Keith, *The Land of Israel, According to the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob* (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co., 1843), p.34.

⁸⁰ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p.9.

⁸¹ Quigley, *The Case for Palestine*, p.73.

⁸² Adam M. Garfinkle, ‘On the Origin, Meaning, Use, and Abuse of a Phrase,’ *Middle East Studies* 27 (October 1991), pp.539-50.

⁸³ Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.42.

⁸⁴ Diana Muir, ‘A Land without a People for a People without a Land,’ *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring 2008), pp.55-62.

⁸⁵ Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest*, p.xxxviii.

flourishing under their stewardship before the Jews began to establish their settlements towards the end of the nineteenth century. However, as I noted in *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (2007), "The consistent testimony of nineteenth-century travellers and explorers was that the land of the proverbial milk and honey was 'still in the Middle Ages',⁸⁶ abandoned and in ruins."⁸⁷ One example I cited was that of Antony Bluett, who served with the Egyptian Camel Transport Corps of the British Army. In his book, *With Our Army in Palestine* (1919), Bluett describes how he saw "the imprint of the oppressor in the very land itself". Although there were still "patches of cultivation" to be seen, he said, the land had been abandoned by the Ottomans "to a stony barrenness."⁸⁸

By 1939, there were approximately 450,000 Jews living in the Land. In the words of Israeli statesmen Abba Eban, "Its economic and technological levels were spectacular by Middle Eastern standards,"⁸⁹ and contrasted starkly to the medieval feudalism which generally characterised the Arab world at that time. Eban's assertions are corroborated by the Palestine Royal Commission Report of 1937, which stated quite clearly that as a consequence of Jewish immigration and investment, "the National Home [for the Jewish people] has meant a substantial material gain to [the Arabs]. Not unnaturally they deny it."⁹⁰ The Commission, representing the British government (which, by that time, had given its allegiance to the Palestinian Arab cause and betrayed its promise to the Jews), drew the following conclusions:

- i. The large import of Jewish capital into Palestine has had a general fructifying effect on the economic life of the whole country.
- ii. The expansion of Arab industry and citriculture has been largely financed by the capital thus obtained.
- iii. Jewish example has done much to improve Arab cultivation, especially of citrus.
- iv. Owing to Jewish development and enterprise the employment of Arab labour has increased in urban areas, particularly in the ports.
- v. The reclamation and anti-malaria work undertaken in Jewish 'colonies' have benefited all Arabs in the neighbourhood.
- vi. Institutions, founded with Jewish funds primarily to serve the National Home, have also served the Arab population. *Hadassah*, for example, treats Arab patients ... admits Arab country-folk to the clinics of its Rural Sick Benefit Fund, and does much infant welfare work for Arab mothers.

⁸⁶ Herbert Sidebotham, *Great Britain and Palestine* (London: MacMillan and Co. Limited, 1937), p.83.

⁸⁷ Paul Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2007), pp.202-03. *For Zion's Sake* has been reprinted in the United States by The Berean Call under the new title, *Understanding Christian Zionism: Israel's Place in the Purposes of God* (Bend, OR: The Berean Call, 2013).

⁸⁸ Antony Bluett, *With Our Army in Palestine* (London: Andrew Melrose Ltd., 1919), pp.214-215.

⁸⁹ Abba Eban, *My People: The Story of the Jews* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., and Random House, Inc., 1968), p.386.

⁹⁰ *Palestine Royal Commission Report, Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, July 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), p.131.

- vii. The general beneficent effect of Jewish immigration on Arab welfare is illustrated by the fact that the increase in the Arab population is most marked in urban areas affected by Jewish development.⁹¹

The Royal Commission also made an important statement which served to exonerate the Jewish community and reprove the Arabs:

“British Ministers, Commissioners of Inquiry, and the spokesmen of Zionism had unanimously re-affirmed the assumption on which the successful operation of the Mandate had rested from the outset, namely, that somehow and at some time Jews and Arabs would co-operate in promoting the peace and welfare of Palestine. Only one voice was missing from the chorus – the Arab voice. Not once since 1919 had any Arab leader said that co-operation with the Jews was even possible.”⁹²

The misguided appointment by the British of Hajj Amin al-Husseini (c.1895-1974) as Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921 and then Grand Mufti, along with his election as president of the newly formed Supreme Muslim Council in 1922, marked the beginning of an increasing Islamization of Palestinian Arab politics. By making the question of Palestine an Islamic issue, al-Husseini was able to exercise significant control over the Palestinian Arab community, and is rightly regarded as the most important figure in Palestinian nationalist history prior to Yasser Arafat; he has been described as a man who “did his utmost to turn what was then a local conflict into a regional one, by involving the masses in the Arab states in the Palestinian cause.”⁹³

This malicious puppet master of Palestinian politics, whose notoriety was sealed when he made an alliance with Hitler, was “trapped by the compulsive need to pursue power and office,”⁹⁴ and endeavoured throughout his long opportunist career to unleash the full fury of the Arab world against the returning Jewish exiles. Despite manipulating events, inflaming tensions, and radicalizing parts of the more rural Arab population, overtures for peace and harmonious co-operation between the two communities continued to sound from Zionist leaders who refused to believe that their Arab neighbours in the land wanted to fight. According to Efraim Karsh, Professor of Middle East and Mediterranean Studies at King’s College, London, and Principal Research Fellow and Chief Editor of the Philadelphia-based ‘Middle East Forum,’ the majority of *fellaheen* did not desire conflict, but became “the hapless pawns of the Mufti’s political machinations”.⁹⁵ This is borne out by the British

⁹¹ *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, p.129.

⁹² *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, p.78.

⁹³ Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Hussaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.xv.

⁹⁴ Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti*, p.180.

⁹⁵ Karsh, *Palestine Betrayed*, p.176.

Palestine High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel's report, dated April 2nd, 1920, following his two-month visit to Palestine:

“As to anti-Zionism, the most helpful feature in the situation lies in the fact that there is no antipathy, and remarkably little friction, between the Jewish agricultural colonies founded in considerable numbers during the last thirty or forty years in many parts of the country, and their Arab neighbours....”⁹⁶

Historically the Jews had lived peacefully with their Arab neighbours in Islamic territories for centuries, albeit as subservient *dhimmis* (non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state). The problem, as far as many Arab and later Palestinian nationalists were concerned, was not with the Jews *per se*, but with Zionism's attempt, as they saw it, to impose an alien culture which would displace the indigenous Arabic culture of Palestine and the wider Middle East. One of Hajj Amin's tactics, therefore, during the 1930s was to exploit the Nazi-Fascist propaganda which had poisoned German minds in Europe in order to convince the Palestinian Arab population that the Zionist invasion must be resisted at all costs.

On March 17th, 1939, the British government issued a 'White Paper,' which restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 over a period of five years. Presided over by British Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald, it was issued in the wake of the Peel Commission of August 1936, which had been appointed to investigate Arab unrest in Palestine. This reprehensible document proved to be “a death warrant for many thousands”⁹⁷ of Jews, and has been described by Golda Meir and Benjamin Netanyahu as a “betrayal”⁹⁸ of the Jewish people. In what was to be his final Zionist Congress address in Basle, Switzerland, in 1946, an emotional Chaim Weizmann declared: “Few documents in history have worse consequences for which to answer.”⁹⁹

On May 23rd, 1939, Winston Churchill gave a typically impassioned speech before the British House of Commons in response to the White Paper, which effectively “closed the chief refuge for European Jews fleeing the growing Nazi empire” and “gave the Arabs veto power over the eventual establishment of a Jewish state.”¹⁰⁰ Churchill categorically denounced Arab claims as pure propaganda in no uncertain terms:

“So far from being persecuted, the Arabs have crowded into the country and multiplied ... We are now asked to submit, and this is what rankles most with me, to

⁹⁶ Quoted in Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1972), p.82.

⁹⁷ Rufus Lears, *The Jews in America: A History* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1954), p.308.

⁹⁸ Golda Meir, *My Life* (London: Futura Publications Limited, 1978), p.160; Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Place among the Nations: Israel and the World* (London: Bantam Press, 1993), pp.69, 89.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Eban, *My People*, p.433.

¹⁰⁰ William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill; Alone, 1932-1940* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), p.399.

an agitation which is fed with foreign money and ceaselessly inflamed by Nazi and by Fascist propaganda.”¹⁰¹

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: We are united

In his book, *The Palestinian Press as Shaper of Public Opinion 1929-1939* (2007), Mustafa Kabha, a professor in the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies at the Open University of Israel, contends that “the national identity of the Palestinian Arab public was formalized, shaped and characterized by the development of the Palestinian National Movement”¹⁰² during the years 1929-39, and that the Palestinian Arab press played a formative role.

Among the fifteen newspapers launched in 1908 alone, the most influential was *al-Karmil* based in Haifa which, like the majority of such papers, denounced all who were involved in the sale of land to the Jews, and called for the boycott of Jewish goods. In 1911, *Filastin* was launched in Jaffa, which not only supplied major cities like Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa, but also the *mukhtars* (“chosen” leaders) of rural Arab villages. In November 1913, the first anti-Zionist, Arab nationalist poem was published in *Filastin*. Written by Sheikh Sulayman al-Taji, an Arab politician based in Jaffa, the poem focused the attention of the Arab population on the alleged Jewish takeover of their land:

“Jews, sons of clinking gold, stop your deceit;
We shall not be cheated into bartering away our country!
Shall we hand it over, meekly,
while we still have some spirit left?
Shall we cripple ourselves?
The Jews, the weakest of all peoples and the least of them,
are haggling with us for our land;
How can we slumber on?
We know what they want
– and they have the money, all of it ...
And you, O Caliph, guardian of the faithful,
have mercy on us, your shield ...
Bearer of the Crown, does it please you
that we should witness our country
being bought from us, wrenched from us?”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p.174.

¹⁰² Mustafa Kabha, *The Palestinian Press as Shaper of Public Opinion 1929-1939: Writing up a Storm* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007), p.ix.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.70.

In 1919, *Suriyya al-Janubiyya*, the first newspaper to be published under British rule, was launched in Jerusalem. Described by Rashid Khalidi as “the most influential newspaper in Palestine,”¹⁰⁴ the name of the paper itself is extremely instructive in terms of identifying the political thrust among many Palestinian Arabs. *Surya al-Janubiyya*, which is Arabic for Southern Syria, “expressed the aspirations of the Palestinians ... to become an inseparable part of Syria,”¹⁰⁵ a vision which was eventually relinquished after Feisal bin Hussein was ousted as King of Syria by the French in 1920. At the Arab Congress in Haifa in December that year, Palestine and the alleged Zionist threat became the focus of attention among Arab leaders, displacing the idea of a ‘Greater Syria.’

During the 1920s the newspapers, which were the only medium for reaching the Arab population before local radio emerged in 1936, facilitated political debate among the Palestinian Arab elite and helped shape wider public opinion. Political parties were launched, mainly by leading families who wished to express their political convictions, most notably the al-Khalidis, the al-Husseinis, and the latter’s main rivals, the Nashashibis. In 1934, the Muslim-owned newspaper *al-Difa’* (‘the Defence’) was launched in Jaffa and was to become the most popular Arabic paper in Palestine, achieving wide circulation among the rural, and predominantly Muslim, areas. The paper was politically inclined towards the short-lived *Hizb al-Istiqlal* (‘Palestinian Independence’) party, which challenged the prevailing dominance of the rival clans. Its main constituents were the younger, educated generation who had grown disillusioned with the old-school, which they perceived to be serving and preserving their own interests and status rather than promoting the interests of the people. Palestinian nationalism was rejuvenated and a more hard-line anti-British/anti-Mandate stance was taken in pursuit of independent Arab governance in Palestine as the first step towards achieving the ultimate goal, namely the political union of all Arab states. In its *Manifesto to the Arab World* (December 1931), the *Istiqlal* party declared Palestine to be “an Arab country and natural part of Syria”.¹⁰⁶ Following the intervention of several Arab leaders outside Palestine to help end the general Palestinian Arab strike of 1936, the *al-Difa’* editorial for August 21st, 1936, read as follows:

“The Palestinian problem is no longer a local problem, and thanks to Arab intervention it has become an international problem ... In addition, this is a wonderful step on the way to realizing Arab unity, and at the first possible opportunity the Jews will see this country [Palestine] forming part of the huge Arab homeland.”¹⁰⁷

According to Walid Khalidi, the Palestinian people have always been integral to the idea of ‘the Arab Nation’:

¹⁰⁴ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, p.166.

¹⁰⁵ Kabha, *The Palestinian Press*, p.xxi.

¹⁰⁶ Kimmerling and Migdal, *Palestinians*, p.92.

¹⁰⁷ Kabha, *The Palestinian Press*, p.196.

“...by definition the injustice suffered by the Palestinian people was suffered by the Nation [i.e. all Arabs]. Again, the loss of Palestine [to the Jews] is the de-Arabization of Arab territory. It is thus a violation of the principles of the unity and integrity of Arab soil, an affront to the dignity of the Nation.”¹⁰⁸

Thus two main groups emerged: those who, through nominally Christian papers like *Filastin*, stressed local Palestinian nationalism coupled with a certain affiliation to a broader Arab nationalism, and those represented by *al-Difa'* who pressed for the idea of a 'Greater Syria' comprising Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan. According to Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Quds University who served under Yasser Arafat, pan-Arabism was a largely intellectual movement based in Beirut, Damascus and Cairo which “frowned on old local loyalties of clan, tribe, and sect as leftovers of the feudalism that had arrested Arab scientific and cultural development.”¹⁰⁹ According to this ideology, the Arabs were a single people with a single language, culture and history. A distinctly Palestinian nationalism emerged from within this pan-Arab ideology.

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: The Balfour Declaration and British Mandate are Illegal

On January 3rd, 1919, Feisal bin Hussein and Chaim Weizmann entered into a nine-article agreement during the Paris Peace Conference. The agreement committed both sides – Arab and Jew – to the “closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine.” Feisal acknowledged the historic Jewish connection to Palestine, and agreed to accept Jewish immigration and the development of the Jewish National Home, in return for the guaranteed protection of Arab peasant farmers and support for the independence of all Arab territories. Feisal also added a reservation clause rendering the agreement null and void if the terms of his manifesto for Arab independence, which was presented to the British government on January 4th, were not met. Article II of the Feisal-Weizmann agreement is especially pertinent because of a distinction that was made:

“Immediately following the completion of the deliberation of the Peace Conference, the definite boundaries between the Arab State and Palestine shall be determined by a Commission to be agreed upon by the parties hereto.”¹¹⁰

This distinction, as opposed to association, between Palestine and “the Arab State” is instructive, and reveals just how prepared the Arab leadership under Feisal and his father, Sharif Hussein of Mecca, were to recognise a Jewish homeland. As Abba Eban explains,

“That Palestine was not like other Middle Eastern territories in its relationship to Arab history was implicit in the cautious attitude of Arab leaders after World War I. They

¹⁰⁸ Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn*, p.84.

¹⁰⁹ Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p.22.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Laqueur and Rubin (eds.), *The Israel-Arab Reader*, p.17.

hesitated to advance claims on Palestine. The Arabs of Syria and Iraq demanded fully independent control. In regard to Palestine, their leaders were willing to compromise. At the Paris Peace Conference, the Palestine issue was for the Arabs still of secondary importance. Their main task was to secure the promise of independence in those territories whose Arab character was unreserved.”¹¹¹

Some years later the British Royal Commission made the following succinct statement:

“If King Hussein and Emir Feisal secured their big Arab State, they would concede little Palestine to the Jews.”¹¹²

It is significant to note that while such agreements were being made, concerted opposition was arising from within the Vatican, as expressed in an appeal made by Cardinal Bourne to the British government. Bourne declared that the Jews must never again be allowed to “dominate and rule the country,” which, Rome believed, would be “an outrage to Christianity and its Divine Founder.” Lord Balfour’s response to Vatican interference was uncompromising, and exposed the heart of the matter as far as Rome’s relationship with the Jewish people was concerned. On February 19th, 1919, Balfour wrote to then British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, giving his reasons as to why this opposition had arisen, and why it should be flatly ignored:

“I think the opposition offered by so many Roman Catholics to the Zionist policy is very little to their credit ... I suspect that the motive of most of them is not so much anxiety about the Holy Places as hatred of the Jews.”¹¹³

In April 1920, the San Remo Conference was convened in Italy by the four principal Allied Powers of World War I, namely Britain, France, Italy, and Japan; the United States, Greece and Belgium were represented in a neutral capacity. The purpose of the conference was to discuss a settlement with Ottoman Turkey and to allocate mandates for the governance of territories previously under Ottoman control. The Empire was divided into three mandates, and it was decided that France would govern Syria, and that Britain would govern Iraq and Palestine, a decision which effectively “conferred international legitimacy on the Zionist enterprise”¹¹⁴ and acknowledged the historical connection of the Jewish people to the Land. This decision was confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations on July 24th, 1922, and came into effect on September 29th, 1923.

According to the Preamble of the Palestine Mandate, Britain was no longer simply bound by a promise she had once made unilaterally to the Jewish people; she was now to be held

¹¹¹ Eban, *My People*, p.375.

¹¹² Quoted in Eban, *My People*, p.376.

¹¹³ Quoted in Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, p.61.

¹¹⁴ Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, p.74.

internationally “responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty [the Balfour Declaration], and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”. It is important to note that the Allied Powers also gave unqualified “recognition ... to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country,”¹¹⁵ but no such recognition was ever given to the Arabs in relation to Palestine. It should be further noted that the territory within which the National Home was to have been established included both sides of the Jordan River, a commitment which Britain (with the approval of the League of Nations) reneged upon soon after for reasons of political expediency, installing Abdullah, son of Sharif Hussein, as King of Trans-Jordan. Even so, in his *magnum opus* on Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel, Canadian-born attorney Howard Grief, who served as legal advisor in international law to one of the ministers in Yitzhak Shamir’s Israeli government, contends that the ‘San Remo Resolution’ of April 25th, 1920, is “the principal founding document” of the modern State of Israel and one which recognised the Jewish people “under international law as the *de jure* [by law] sovereign over Mandated Palestine”.¹¹⁶

The decision taken by the Allied Supreme Council at San Remo is of supreme historical significance, in that it gave the Balfour Declaration international, legally-binding status. Furthermore, as Grief continues,

“The establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine simultaneously meant creating the state and country of Palestine which then did not officially exist as a legal entity under international law ... It must always be borne in mind and emphasized that Palestine was not created to satisfy Arab national aspirations in any part of the country, whether east or west of the Jordan.”¹¹⁷

In an open meeting two days after the Council of the League of Nations had unanimously agreed to confirm the British Mandate for Palestine, Arthur James Balfour made an impassioned appeal

“to friends on all sides to remember that while opposition was legitimate when the scheme was under consideration, now, when the settlement is arrived at, any man interfering with the project without prospect of achieving anything commits a great crime against civilization.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ ‘The Palestine Mandate,’ *The Avalon Project*, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu>.

¹¹⁶ Howard Grief, *The Legal Foundation and Borders of Israel under International Law: A Treatise on Jewish Sovereignty over the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2013), p.9.

¹¹⁷ Grief, *The Legal Foundation*, p.19.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in *A Summary of Events of Jewish Interest*, Vol. II, No. 1 (New York: The Department of Information and Statistics of The Bureau of Jewish Social Research of The American Jewish Committee, September 29, 1922), p.10.

PALESTINIAN CLAIM: The British betrayed the Arabs

One of the key figures in the modern history of the Arab-Jewish conflict was the Sharif and Emir of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, head of the Hashemite dynasty and allegedly 37th in line of descent from Muhammad; he was, for many years, the acknowledged spokesman on behalf of the Arab world. To aid their war effort against the Ottoman Empire and the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, the British government promised Hussein that his position in the Hejaz (a region in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia encompassing the cities of Jeddah, Mecca and Medina) would be safeguarded, and that they would assist the Arab world in achieving emancipation from the Ottoman Empire in return for an Arab revolt against the Ottomans.

In January 1915, Sir Henry McMahon took up duties as British High Commissioner of Egypt and the Sudan, and represented the British government in its negotiations with the Arab world. Between July 14th, 1915, and January 30th, 1916, eight 'notes' passed between Hussein and McMahon, which have become known as the 'McMahon-Hussein Correspondence.' Hussein outlined Arab demands for independence, and despite acknowledging them, McMahon (on behalf of the British government) remained somewhat vague when it came to the matter of determining boundaries and identifying precise territories which were to be granted independence in the event of an Allied victory; he argued that it would have been premature to have entered into such negotiations while the War was still raging and with Turkey still in control of such territories.

The key 'note,' which remains to this day a bone of contention drawing cries of "betrayal"¹¹⁹ from the Arab world, is the second note issued by McMahon from Cairo on October 24th, 1915. It is described by George Antonius as perhaps "the most important international document in the history of the Arab national movement."¹²⁰ Written in response to Hussein's demands for more clarification on territorial boundaries, it ultimately satisfied Hussein and drew the Arabs into the War alongside the Allies. This is what McMahon wrote:

"The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta [south coast of Turkey], and portions of Syria lying to the west of the [Syrian] districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation. Subject to that modification, and without prejudice to the treaties concluded between us and certain Arab Chiefs, we accept that delimitation."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), p.xiii.

¹²⁰ Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p.169.

¹²¹ Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p.419.

McMahon qualified Britain's pledge to Hussein by referring to frontiers "in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France".¹²² It was clear that Britain could not guarantee Arab independence in those areas earmarked by the French, especially once Britain had embarked on secret negotiations with France and Russia, beginning in November 1915 and concluding in May 1916.¹²³ Anticipating victory in the War, the three Powers effectively carved up the Ottoman Empire between themselves during negotiations and, prior to the Balfour Declaration, designated portions of Palestine for international control. Antonius concedes that throughout his correspondence with Hussein, McMahon "never defines in his own words the area of Arab independence,"¹²⁴ and yet to this day the Arab world maintains that Palestine *was* included in the McMahon-Hussein agreement, despite McMahon himself having later insisted that this was not the case. In his June 1922 governmental 'White Paper,' British Secretary of State for the Colonies and future Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, clarified this point:

"In the first place, it is not the case, as has been represented by the Arab Delegation [to London], that during the war His Majesty's Government gave an undertaking [through McMahon's promise to Hussein in his second note] that an independent national government should be at once established in Palestine ... [T]his promise was given subject to a reservation made in the same letter, which excluded from its scope, among other territories, the portions of Syria lying to the west of the district of Damascus ... The whole of Palestine west of the Jordan was thus excluded from Sir H. McMahon's pledge."¹²⁵

Churchill's successor, Victor Cavendish (Duke of Devonshire), was equally adamant:

"What we promised was to promote Arab independence throughout a wide area. That promise we have substantially fulfilled ... The Arabs as a whole have acquired a freedom undreamed of before the war. Considering what they owe to us, they may surely let us have our way in one small area, which we do not admit to be covered by our pledges, and which in any case, for historical and other reasons, stands on a wholly different footing from the rest of the Arab countries...."¹²⁶

Despite expressing sympathy for the Palestinian cause, Kimmerling and Migdal agree that the correspondence was "ambiguous"¹²⁷ with regards to Palestine. Even leading Middle East historian Albert Hourani concedes that there was ambiguity, highlighting instead what he believed had been achieved through the 'Correspondence' as far as he was concerned:

¹²² Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p.169.

¹²³ These negotiations are known as the 'Sykes-Picot Agreement,' the terms of which were negotiated on behalf of Britain by Sir Mark Sykes and on behalf of France by François Georges-Picot. Russia played only a minor role.

¹²⁴ Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p.177.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, pp.165-66.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, pp.173-74.

¹²⁷ Kimmerling and Migdal, *Palestinians*, p.75.

“Whether anything was actually promised, and if so what, and whether the *sharif's* revolt played a significant part in the allied victory, are matters in dispute, but what is clear is that for the first time the claim that those who spoke Arabic constituted a nation and should have a state had been to some extent accepted by a great power.”¹²⁸

Abba Eban, on the other hand, believed that there was no ambiguity in the British-Arab negotiations:

“Contrary to later Arab claims, Palestine was explicitly excluded in the Hussein-McMahon negotiations. McMahon himself was later to deny [in 1922 and 1937]¹²⁹ any contrary allegation, but it was one which Arab politicians of the postwar era repeated indefatigably in their condemnation of ‘the broken pledge of Britain with regard to Palestine.’”¹³⁰

Conclusion

Palestinian historian and nationalist, George Antonius, summarises the Palestinian Arab claims to the land as follows:

“...the Arab claims rest on two distinct foundations: the natural right of a settled population, in great majority agricultural, to remain in possession of the land of its birthright; and the acquired political rights which followed from the disappearance of Turkish sovereignty and from the Arab share in its overthrow, and which Great Britain is under a contractual obligation to recognise and uphold.”¹³¹

Rashid Khalidi acknowledges that the Arab population had never known national independence in Palestine. Consequently,

“...the Palestinians had not only to fashion and impose their identity and independent political existence in opposition to a European colonial power, but also to match themselves against the growing and powerful Zionist movement, which was motivated by a strong, highly developed, and focused sense of national identification.”¹³²

In other words, Palestinian nationalism was created and fashioned by a people persuaded by relentless propaganda that British colonialism and Jewish Zionism represented an existential threat. Palestinian nationalism was, in essence, a reactionary movement inspired by an Arab elite which succeeded in mobilising the Palestinian Arab population to revolt. For

¹²⁸ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, p.317.

¹²⁹ Grief, *The Legal Foundation*, p.23.

¹³⁰ Eban, *My People*, p.375.

¹³¹ Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, p.391.

¹³² Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, pp.10, 20.

decades the greater drive had been towards achieving pan-Arab statehood, a union of all Arab peoples in the Middle East. There was to be no greater champion of this ideology than Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semite. When, in June 1967, Israel effectively dealt a death blow to this ideology following a decisive military victory over Arab armies, including Nasser's Egypt, a section of the Arab population in Israel, under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and the PLO, began to forge a more distinct, violent, and propaganda-driven *Palestinian* identity. Turning the tables on Palestinian Arab claims, Howard Grief writes:

“Inasmuch as the Arab world has conspired to illegally deprive Jews of their rights to Palestine by artifice, fraud and deceit, especially through the misuse of the appellation ‘Palestinians’, they have committed a serious crime unique in world history – that of ‘identity theft’. This crime may be defined as appropriating the use of someone else’s national identity – in the case of the Israeli Jews, its national identity during the Mandate period – to gain rights and benefits that do not rightfully or legally belong to them. The Jews of the State of Israel are the victims of this ‘identity theft’ that has caused and continues to cause incalculable damage to their own rights, security and reputation. In the new guise of ‘Palestinians’, the Arabs have succeeded in confusing the entire world and made it seem that Jews, rather than the Arabs, are usurpers of the Promised Land, the Land of Israel, and Zion.”¹³³

I began this paper with words from Fayez Sayigh, chief architect of UN Resolution 3369, which denounced Zionism as racism. On the day the resolution was passed – the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* (‘The Night of Broken Glass’) – Israeli Ambassador and later 6th President of Israel, Chaim Herzog (the first Israeli President to be afforded a state visit to the United States during President Reagan’s term in office), gave a momentous speech in response:

“It is indeed befitting, Mr President, that the United Nations, which began its life as an anti-Nazi alliance, should thirty years later find itself on its way to becoming the world center of anti-Semitism. Hitler would have felt at home on a number of occasions during the past year, listening to the proceedings in this forum, and above all to the proceedings during the debate on Zionism...

This wicked resolution must sound the alarm for all decent people in the world ... You dare talk of racism when I can point with pride to the Arab ministers who have served in my government; to the Arab deputy speaker of my Parliament; to Arab officers and men serving of their own volition in our border and police defense forces, frequently commanding Jewish troops; to the hundreds of thousands of Arabs from all over the Middle East crowding the cities of Israel every year; to the thousands of Arabs from all over the Middle East coming for medical treatment to Israel; to the peaceful co-

¹³³ Grief, *The Legal Foundation*, p.659.

existence which has developed; to the fact that Arabic is an official language in Israel on a par with Hebrew; to the fact that it is as natural for an Arab to serve in public office in Israel as it is incongruous to think of a Jew serving in any public office in an Arab country, indeed being admitted to many of them. Is that racism? It is not! That, Mr President, is Zionism...

We are seeing here today but another manifestation of the bitter anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish hatred which animates Arab society. Who would have believed that in the year 1975, the malicious falsehoods of the [Protocols of the] 'Elders of Zion' would be distributed officially by Arab governments? ... We are being attacked by a society which is motivated by the most extreme form of racism known in the world today. This is the racism which was expressed so succinctly in the words of the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat, in his opening address at a symposium in Tripoli, Libya, and I quote: 'There will be no presence in the region except for the Arab presence'...

Mr President, I stand not here as a supplicant. Vote as your moral conscience dictates to you. For the issue is not Israel or Zionism. The issue is the continued existence of this organization, which has been dragged to its lowest point of discredit by a coalition of despotisms and racists ... You yourselves bear the responsibility for your stand before history ... For us, the Jewish people, this resolution based on hatred, falsehood and arrogance, is devoid of any moral or legal value. For us, the Jewish people, this is no more than a piece of paper and we shall treat it as such. Thank you, Mr President."¹³⁴

Having concluded his speech, Herzog ripped up his printed copy of the resolution and left the platform.

Sadly, as profound as Herzog's speech was, it achieved very little, and no matter what Israel has done, is doing, and will seek to do in the future, its case will continue to fall on deaf ears. However, when all is said and done, when all the arguments have been presented and all the claims and counter-claims for the Land have been made, one thing will never change, and that is the inviolable Word of God. As we read in the Book of Isaiah, "should not a people seek their God? ... To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19-20). The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has spoken clearly, consistently and repeatedly in His Word concerning Israel. For example, in Psalm 105 and Ezekiel 36, we read the following:

"He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, the

¹³⁴ Quoted in Alan J. Whiticker, *Speeches that Reshaped the World* (London: New Holland, 2009).

covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance'" (Psalm 105:7-11).

"But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come ... I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt ... I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings ... Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children" (Ezekiel 36:8-12).

One man who understood what God Himself had mandated for the Land of Israel was Church of Scotland clergyman Alexander Keith. In his book, *The Land of Israel, According to the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob* (1843), he wrote:

"So numerous, clear, and positive, are the prophecies which declare the final restoration of the Israelites to the land of their inheritance, that the denial of it may well seem to be an impeachment of the truth of God, in regard to the very thing on which He hath staked his faithfulness."¹³⁵

In more recent times, in an article entitled, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!," leading apologist Dave Hunt (1926-2013) declared how

"The ongoing actualization of these prophecies in our day is absolute proof that God exists, that the Bible is His Word, and that the Jews are His chosen people."¹³⁶

As we approach this advent season, may we remember afresh that it was in the Land of Israel that a Child was born and a Son given by Almighty God to a people, and to a world, walking in spiritual darkness. About this Child, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:7).

I close this paper, as I have done every year, with a song written by the Senior Pastor at Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church, Andrew Robinson. Entitled, "Unto Us a Child is Born," it is a

¹³⁵ Keith, *The Land of Israel*, p.51.

¹³⁶ Dave Hunt, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!,' *The Berean Call* (September 2000).

gift to you all from the church fellowship, in celebration of God's unchanging character and His unchanging Word.

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN,

**A Son is given;
In Bethlehem,
A Saviour,
Who is Christ the Lord (echo: Christ the Lord).**

**And He will reign in righteousness,
For evermore.
The government
Shall be upon His shoulder (echo: shoulder).**

**Wonderful, Counsellor,
O Mighty God,
Prince of Peace,
The Everlasting Father (echo: Father).**

*The people who walked in darkness,
Have seen a great light.
In the land of deep shadow,
God's glory shines.
He gave us His one and only
Beloved Son.
Who came to redeem us,
And make us His own.*

**Unto us a Child is born,
A Son is given;
In Bethlehem,
A Saviour,
Who is Christ the Lord (echo: Christ the Lord).**

**And He will reign in righteousness,
For evermore.
The government
Shall be upon His shoulder (echo: shoulder).**

**Wonderful, Counsellor,
O Mighty God,
Prince of Peace,
The Everlasting Father (echo: Father).**

*Jesus will come in splendour
And majesty,
To establish His kingdom
In Jerusalem.
And He will judge the nations,
From David's throne,
And gather the ransomed of Israel.*

**Unto us a Child is born,
A Son is given;
In Bethlehem,
A Saviour,
Who is Christ the Lord (echo: Christ the Lord).**

**And He will reign in righteousness,
For evermore.
The government
Shall be upon His shoulder (echo: shoulder).**

**Wonderful, Counsellor,
O Mighty God,
Prince of Peace,
The Everlasting Father (echo: Father).**

Last time
**Unto us a Child is born,
A Son is given;
In Bethlehem,
A Saviour,
Who is Christ the Lord (echo: Christ the Lord).**

Based on Isaiah 9, Luke 2, Micah 4

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Instruments and musical arrangement: Graham Moir
Vocals: Graham & Ben Moir

Copies of the CD and musical score are available free of charge from Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church, 68
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