

The Israeli Experience “Part one”: The Land with a Unique Geopolitical, Historical, and Religious Case; “Who is Fighting and What For?”

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Abstract

Originally, the “Israeli experience” was born from the womb of the Holy Land, even when the “children of Israel” lived in diaspora; the “Land” is everything for all Israelis, as it represents the homeland, religion and history, the Promise of the Lord, the people’s dream, Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall, and other holy sites. Therefore, to the Jews, there is nothing comparable to the “Holy Land or Eretz Ysrael”. Similarly, as history supports, several peoples have populated the land of Palestine, not just Arabs and Jews. Moreover, they used to live together, intermix, intermarry, and merge, and so on. Geo-politically the land of “Palestine/Eretz Israel” was known as “Greater Syria” before being divided by the then “Great Powers” into four countries, two small cantons, and five nationalities. On today’s world map, these are known as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories. However, this study aims to argue the development of this land from a historical and geopolitical point of view up until 1947; the names and borders, the holiness of the land to the Palestinians and Israelis, the land without a state that was waiting for the Lord’s promise for the people without a homeland. Moreover, this study concludes that on the modern map, one would have great difficulty finding a country labeled “Palestine.” It is not until 1922 that the name Palestine emerged with any “official” status, so what is all this talk about Palestine? Furthermore, whereas the Israelis could easily prove their historical and religious right to the holy or sacred land, it would be very hard for the Palestinians to do so. Finally, there are reasonable doubts about certain facts, and, so far, nobody has been able to provide a logical answer to such questions as, who is fighting who exactly? These facts are discussed from a historical and geopolitical perspective in the “Israeli Experience”.

Keywords Israeli Experience, land, a unique case, geopolitical, historical, religion, fight.

1. The Stature of “Land” in the Israeli experience

Concentrating on older times and focusing on the primitive era, along with several preceding and chronological experiences that have transpired until today, the history of initialization and establishment of various nations and countries as; Greek Times, Roman Empire, Islamic Age, Ottoman Empire, British domination, American (Cowboys empire) experience from 1907 until the fall in 2010, the Japanese 1949-1981, Chinese experience (led by Deng Xiaoping) 1978-1990, and even the Malaysian experience (led by Dr. Mahathir Mohammad) 1980-2003, are examples of sequential experiences of nations and their peoples. Certainly, the Israeli experience can be added to the continuing list of nationalism.

Among all the civilizations and experiences in the history of the human race from ancient to modern times, there was, and still is, a great story of a people who suffered and were scattered several times between staying and exile, and, later on, returning to their “Holy and Promised Land”. The Israelis are very tied to the historic land of “Eretz Israel”, through their religious and historical experience. In which each generation had to entrust to the next one’s charge and care about the Holy Land and “Jerusalem”, and they would live and die for one demand, goal, and dream: gathering in the Promised Land at the “Wailing Wall” before the Day of Resurrection:

“During the last two or three generations the Jews have recreated in Palestine a community, now numbering 80,000, of whom about one-fourth are farmers or workers upon the land. This community has its own political organs, an elected assembly for the direction of its domestic concerns, elected councils in the towns, and an organization for the control of its schools. It has its elected Chief Rabbinate and Rabbinical Council for the direction of its religious affairs. Its business is conducted in Hebrew as a vernacular language, and a Hebrew press serves its needs. It has its distinctive intellectual life and displays considerable economic activity. This community, then, with its town and country population, its political, religious and social organizations, its own language, its own customs, its own life, has in fact national characteristics.” (Hertz, 2007).

Although they lived in diaspora, after that they returned to their land around Jerusalem and constructed their “Kingdom and Temple” during the time of King David and his son Solomon, after that came the destruction of the holy town and temple, followed by exile from the land, a scattered people without a land for many years. However, the Israeli experience with the historical and religious insistence for all “Jews” to return to their land, which represented a great experience for all humankind; promised from “God” to the “children of Israel”, enslaved (under the power of ancient pharaohs), suffering, building their temple, destructing, exile, one dream and aim, planning with patience. Then the emergence of ambitious generations in the nineteenth-century (rabbis, such as Yehuda Alkalai and Zvi Hersch Kalischer, as well as national leaders like Herzl, Ahad Ha’am, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion) who were able to translate the Israeli/Jewish dream into a reality on the ground: the establishment of a home land for their people in “Eretz Israel”, as a great step toward re-establishing the “kingdom of Israel” in the promised land, which is described in this study by “the Israeli experience”. A similar opinion was expressed by Jimmy Carter (2006) who explained that:

“One must consider the Jewish experience of the past. Jews suffered for centuries the pain of Diaspora and persistent persecution in almost every nation in which they dwelt. Despite their remarkable contributions in all aspects of society, many Jews were killed and others driven from place to place by Christian rulers”.

Specifically, Jacob and his sons, as children of Israel in ancient times, together with the people of Israel have witnessed such a situation since the very beginning of the early historical age until the establishment of Israel. The mainland is known as the State of Israel or Eretz Israel. However, this historic Promised Land is explained as being a unique land with many sophisticated events and experiences in human history from its early stage of establishment until today. Moreover, the land is considered as a source of knowledge because it has numerous meanings and teachings to offer. In ancient times, the land was referred to as “flowing with milk and honey”. In addition, the Aggada, in the non-normative rabbinical custom and in folk tradition, was decorated with astonishing tales and legends (Kramer, 2011).

In particular, the land is everything for the Israelis, especially for the Jews because of its religious importance. However, from the standpoint of identity and religiosity, the homeland, religion and history, the promise of God, the people’s dream, Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall, and other holy sites are considered to be at the heart of Israelis. As a result, it has turned into the incomparable phenomenon for Jews with their “Holy Land” or “Eretz Ysrael”.

Fundamentally, according to Bright (1976), Abraham left Haran at the command of God, having been promised land and posterity in the place that He would show to him. This promise, however, over time, was renewed and sealed by agreement, and was also given to Isaac and to Jacob “Israel”, as well as Moses, who actually began to fulfil the prophecy of the Promised Land. Viewed so, Abraham stood as the ultimate antecedent of Israel’s faith and belief.

Again, the promise inherent in their type of religion stayed. As a result, without fulfilling this, it was not given until the invasion of Palestine under the aegis of Yahwism. It can be added, as explained and validated through the normative Hebrew faith, that this was viewed as the fulfillment of the promise made by an older generation.

However, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stand, in the truest sense, at the foundation of Israel’s history and faith. Not only do they represent the movement that brought the constituents of Israel to Palestine, but also their atypical beliefs facilitated the forming of the faith of Israel as it was to become. From the religious point of view, the Bible tells how the sons of Jacob “Israel”, having gone down into Egypt and sojourned there a long time were led thence by Moses and brought to Sinai. It is also stated that they acknowledged the treaty and rule, which made them atypical inhabitants. Afterwards, following their peripatetic journey, they entered Canaan (Palestine) and took it.

The Bible normally refers to the pre-Israelite population of Palestine as either Canaanites or Amorites. Although these terms are not actually identical, it is difficult to explain the distinction between them as the Bible uses them. Whatever the derivation of the name may have been, in the days of the Egyptian empire, “Canaan” was the official title of a state, which was situated in western Palestine covering most of Phoenicia and southern Syria except Transjordan. According to the Bible, the Israelites then occupied Palestine through a sophisticated attempt through which they were able to secure the land.

Although the Israelite livelihood in Palestine was more complex than a casual reading of the schematized narrative of Joshua might lead one to suppose, it is regarded, perhaps, as obvious that it was far more than a largely peaceful infiltration of semi-nomadic clans, as the Bible states the involvement of serious fighting and violent subjugation. Moreover, the first stumble upon Israel in Palestine is seen as having integration, or a sacral league of twelve tribes. These twelve tribes are often called the Amphictyony. Within the framework of this league, Israel’s sanctified traditions and institutions developed and achieved normative form (Bright, 1976). In

due course, the Israelites were taken on board with the Canaanites from whom they learnt agricultural and other aspects of settled life including the art of writing (Tibawi, 1977).

Nevertheless, a number of historians assume and infer that, from the dawn of civilization to the fast-approaching period of the modern era and World War I, the world had seen Israel, which seemed to link with a kingdom that provided and created the Levant. Afterwards, the world found the term used in combination with the longing for the Jewish homeland in scripture and its appropriation by Zionist ideology regarding the actual establishment of a homeland in Eretz Israel. However, instead of other names, it received some association religiously and historically with the name of Israel. (Harms & Ferry, 2008).

The Israeli experience was composed of "unique" various stages; the promise from God to the Israelis, the "children of Israel", to gather and live in the Holy Land; whenever the people succeed in divine ordeals, such as migrating of Israel and his sons from Canaan to ancient Egypt (to live according to the Holy Quran under the power of his lover's son; Joseph, and also as governors for while), after that enslaved in Egypt, after that exile and Passover with Moses to the Holy Land, then fighting with powerful people in Canaan, and (some of them went into a labyrinth in the desert), after that David and Solomon constructed the Kingdom of Israel and the temple, after that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians, then suffering in Diaspora (all over the world without a homeland until their tragedy under the Nazi's crime in Europe in the Second World War), finally, struggling again until their success in re-establishing the "State of Israel" in 1948. In short, all the previous phases were accompanied by great belief, satisfaction, motivation, patience, insistence, and the long-term policy to finally gain the "Promise of God" and "gathering one people", toward one "dream"; dwelling in one land around "Jerusalem" until "Doomsday".

2. The historical and geopolitical Status of the land until 1948

From different historical points of view, the land of Southern Syria has been characterized by various names, unstable borders, several nations/kingdoms, and an intermixture of peoples/ethnicities. Moreover the land was reformed, transformed and divided many times; sometimes as a part of the old Egyptian kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel, Greek and Roman Empire, Islamic-Arab rule (from the orthodox Caliphs, passing to Mamluk and the Ottoman caliphs), and British mandate, then to return to the start point; re-establishing the Israeli state "Kingdom", in the life circle of nations and civilizations. Therefore, the author will briefly discuss the historical and geo-political status of the land of "Palestine/Israel" until 1947 through two steps, as follows:

2.1 The Historical Status

In fact, the historical outset for the land of "Southern Syria/Palestine" is very colorful, and has changed many times throughout its history, from the very old times until early 1947. This land has been characterized by the instability of its geographical and political landmarks.

Several names have been used for the land including such traditional names as Canaan's land, Holy Land, Historic and Sacred Land, Promised Land, Land of Passage, Land of Israel, Eretz Ysrael, Philistaea, Philistia, Arazi-I Muqaddese, and Arz-i Filistin. In the history of Central Palestine, Harms and Ferry (2008) found that many people have inhabited the land of Palestine. They considered that the inhibitions have been made by both the Arabs and Jews who, previously, used to coexist with one another. The situation was like an intermixed culture, merged together, that grew mutually with intermarriage among the tribes. Furthermore, the fundamental and historical situation is as stated below:

"The word Palestine was obtained from Philistia. The name given by Greek writers to the territory of the philistines, in the 12th century BC engaged an undersized compartment of land on the southern coast, among contemporary Tel Aviv-Yafo (Tel Aviv-Jaffa) as well as Gaza. The Romans revitalized the name in the 2nd century AD in "Syria Palaestina," assigning the southern segment of the region of Syria. After the Roman period the name had no authorized status waiting after World War I as well as the end of Ottoman rule".

In addition, several archeologists clarified that the Philistines were Mediterranean people who established themselves along the coast of Canaan in 1100 BCE. If a proper investigation is made, then it would be found that these people have no link to the Arab nation, but were simply desert people. In addressing them, Hertz (2009) claimed that they came out from the Arabian Peninsula.

However, the Canaanites were not alone in Palestine, as it had always been the crossroads of the Near East. The people of Palestine used to come and go, passing through from one region to the next. It was a particularly

busy place during the Bronze Age. Accordingly, Harms (2008) argued and claimed that the Israelis and other Canaanites lived in relative peace for a long time. In addition, both the Jews and Palestinians had feasible primordial claims to the land that they would be able to justify. For instance, after the conquest, representatives of all the components of Israel, including those who had worshiped Yahweh in the desert and the Hebrews of Palestine who had newly joined with them, met at Shechem (Bright, 1976).

By the way, the Greeks conquered the area three centuries before Christ, while the Jews were recognized as an independent Judea that existed awaiting the Roman conquerors who came about fifty years later. Moreover, there was a Jewish rebellion in A.D. 70, which was suppressed by the Romans, who shattered their temple. According to Carter (2009), after one more rebellion in A.D. 134, many Jews were forced into exile and the Romans named this province Syria-Palestine while the Jews preferred to call it "Eretz Israel".

Sequentially, in A.D. 313, Palestine was recognized as Religio-Licita before Constantine made it the established religion of the eastern Roman Empire. Thus began the acts of fidelity that made Palestine the Holy Land. History continues with the name game, as during the time of the Byzantine Empire, which is basically the Christian period, the country became known as Palaestina. It did not actually include Galilee, which belonged to Phoenicia, rather, it was divided into three unequal parts. With these three parts, the central and largest was Palaestina prima with its capital at Caesarea; the second and the smallest was Palaestina Secunda to the north with its capital at Tiberias; the third and the least defined part was Palaestina Tertia to the south with its capital at Petra. Although Palestine, at that time, became generally Christian, its population remained culturally mixed (Tibawi, 1977).

However, Saladin (Salah el-Din), Sultan of Egypt, retook the Holy City in 1187, and after 1291, Muslims controlled Palestine until the end of World War I. Followed by World War II, The French and British played an influential role in the Middle East (Carter, 2009). As Tibawi (1977) stated, under Saladin's successors, and under the Mamluk and Ottoman Sultans, Jerusalem was the city of three faiths, with some insignificant turmoil, the adherents of the three monotheistic religions lived in harmony. Subsequently, another incident happened – the Mamluks became the masters of Syria and Palestine in 1260, while Hulegu withdrew to Iraq and Persia. While in control of Syria and Palestine, the Mamluk forces drove the last of the crusaders out in 1291, and remained in power until 1517.

From the historical perspective, Tibawi (1977) found and explained the situation slightly differently. He saw that the Ottoman Turks and their sultans paid special attention to Jerusalem, even if they were often accused of neglecting Palestine. Additionally, another story surfaced with Napoleon in 1799, who invaded Palestine and Syria but was defeated by the Turks. After that, the son of Muhammad Ali, whose name was Ibrahim Pasha, occupied Palestine in 1831-1840. However, later on, Turkey recaptured Palestine from Egypt in 1840 (Kattan, 2009). In 1839, Palestine was then a predominantly Muslim country with a Christian minority and a small number of Jews. The Muslims constituted the core of the inhabitants of the cities, most of the villages and all the Bedouins. However, the Bedouins owned most of the lands, and, thus, they used to show power with an iron hand. It was also found from Tibawi (1977) that they also monopolized the civil service and were alone required to serve in the imperial army and local armed forces.

Actually, these are the roots of the ancient Palestinian and Jewish culture from the Canaanites to the Romans. Following that, the descendants of the ancient Israelites, who are labelled as Jews, were also descendants of the ancient Canaanites. They were the people of Canaan, now modern Palestine. Moreover, by one name or other, the Jews have populated the land for thousands of years. On the other hand, the Palestinian-Arab culture of today is a result of the later seventh-century influx of Arab tribes who brought with them the religion of Islam, Arab culture, Arabic language, and the intermixing of Arab peoples with the population of Palestine. Moreover, the Jews have taken the place of the Roman-Judaeans of ancient Palestine into modern history. The Palestinians are descendants of the ancient Canaanites by a different name and a different culture just as are the Jews (Harms & Ferry, 2008).

In this context, the Palestinian landscape shares the fundamentals of extra backgrounds and elements as a product distorted by socioeconomic life. In addition, the landscaping of Palestine created the shape of a region with its own unique attributes during that time. Although the Palestinian landscape led to a modern landscape of fear for contrast, the disjointed Palestinian geography is more attributable to an older chronological pattern. In addition, the enclosed space was first popularized in the late nineteenth-century by Theodor Herzl to resolve the trouble of anti-Semitism by making a state haven for the Jewish people. Finally, the historical geography of Palestine since 1947 attests to the thoroughness of this process of land salvation (Fields, 2010).

2.2 The Geopolitical Status

With geological deliberation, the land of Palestine is viewed and understood to be a part of the Fertile Crescent. It extends from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Gulf, as well as from the Taurus and Zagros mountains in the north to the Arabian Desert in the south. However, the name Palestine needs to be clarified more. Shaping the understanding of the facts for the “what” and “when” of Palestine would be an indefinite matter. However, looking at the contemporary and most recent map, it would be difficult to find a country labeled as “Palestine.” If somebody has an old map from the second half of the nineteenth-century, it would still present the same difficulty in finding the name Palestine. In fact, until early 1922, the name “Palestine” did not receive any official recognition (Harms & Ferry, 2008). Just after the First World War, Palestine acquired definite political boundaries for the first time in history. Until then, however, the name denoted different meanings at different times –historical, geographical or administrative (Tibawi, 1977).

Essentially, “Palestine” was always located in the south-west of Syria. In other words, under the Ottomans, the area was traditionally known as “Palestine”; Eretz Yisrael in Hebrew or Falastin in Arabic. It was undefined administratively or politically, and its citizens included Muslims, Christians, as well as Jews. However, the recent literature by Morris (2009) disclosed that even the people from the current Palestinian territory could hardly claim themselves as Palestinians. Therefore, Palestine may not have existed on the map during the Ottoman period, even though the thought of Palestine existed and it had its own history and culture. Over and above, to some extent, the geographical name of the land of Palestine was undecided before 1918. In fact, there was no demarked area for that name in the Ottoman Empire. Although there used to be a Palestine under British rule, it was divided into three Sanjaqs or provinces under Ottoman rule. However, even those areas were not exactly aligned with the borders of British Palestine (Strawson, 2010).

The land of Palestine was subdivided into several districts, with each district ruled from a secluded capital. The area of Palestine from the Ramallah-Jaffa line southward, to Gaza and Beersheba, was ruled directly from Constantinople, because of the area’s political and religious sensitivity, which, specifically, pertained to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The area to its south, down to the Gulf of ‘Aqaba was ruled from Damascus, the northern half of Palestine was subdivided into three Sanjaks or sub-districts, which, until the 1880s, were ruled from the provincial capital of Damascus. For that reason, by the end of the First World War, a small portion of Palestine’s Arabs considered Palestine as a separate geopolitical entity. This was perhaps the reason for the eventual consequences. Subsequently, distinct routes led to its self-determination and statehood in 1920 – the severance of Palestine from Syria was through the French takeover of Lebanon (1918) and Syria (1920); the British conquest of Palestine and Transjordan (1917-1918) and the institution during 1920-1922 of separate French and British mandates over these regions (Morris, 2009).

In this regard, Bitar (2009) introduced an interesting issue in which Palestine turned into one of the main Arab countries with a Muslim majority in the late seventh-century. The land’s prime distinctiveness and boundaries were, after this consolidation in the seventh-century, known to the entire Muslim world by its Arabic name as “Filastin”.

Briefly, more historical evidence supports that from 636 to 1099, the region of Palestine was part of the Arab Caliphates that decisively seized the area from the Byzantine Empire after the Battle of Yarmouk. However, later on, continuing from 1099 to 1187, European Crusaders held sway over the land. Most likely, in 1270, Palestine became a part of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and remained so until the Mamluk Sultanate was decisively beaten by the Ottoman Sultan, Selim-I, at the Battle of Marj Dabiq. After the end of this battle, in 1516, Palestine became part of the Ottoman Empire and continued, with one brief exception, when it was conquered by Egypt, to be held as one of its provinces until after 1917 when it was invaded and occupied by the British under the command of Field Marshal General Allenby.

3. The Holiness of the Land for the Israelis and Palestinians

The notion of Palestine as an endowment, translating a political issue into religious language, was neither unique nor entirely new. However,

“The sale of land was both sin and high treason, illegitimate in terms of both religion and politics. What were at stake were not just the Muslims living in Palestine – these were mere trustees of the endowment. Islam was at stake and the community of Muslims at large. What we find here is a mirror image of the Zionist understanding of Eretz Israel as Jewish land, based on divine promise and requiring the “redemption” of this land” (Kramer, 2011).

More specifically, there is no such country as Palestine! As Hertz (2007) considered that “Palestine is a term the Zionists invented! There is no Palestine in the Bible; our country was for centuries, part of Syria.” Moreover, “There is no such thing as Palestine in Arab history, absolutely not.”

The sanctity of the land of Palestine, especially for the some/many places is only pertinent for three monotheistic religions. In fact, this feeling always motivates individuals, sects, and sometimes armies towards yearning (to), protecting and (consequently) controlling the holy places. However, the religion (and its sects) creates particular beliefs, visions, attitudes, ideas, and motivations (all in the name of God, holy books, holy places, or holy saints) that always push and lead groups, peoples, and nations to “holy war” to obsess over those “holy” sites and “land”.

However, for the peripheral religious individuals with stakes in disparity, Jerusalem is an object of longing as well as a subject of invasion by all three beliefs, holy sites as growing reifications of divergence. In addition, all three monotheistic religions are descendants of the Abrahamic family. One thing should be noted, Arabs were the followers of Ishmael “Ismail” and Hebrews followed Isaac. Historically, the Abrahamic family myth has lived a long time and breathed an independent realism to millions of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is a dangerous means of systematizing the world as well as making sense of one’s history, one’s origins, and even one’s prospects. Furthermore, it is a story arbitrated during different lenses, depending on the religious group, with countless difference, based on the sub grouping and personality of millions of interpreters.

In actual fact, going back to the issue of the Holy Land of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, it did not entirely overlap with the region of modern Palestine, which renders things even more difficult. In the twentieth-century, the Zionists, later followed by the Islamic activists and Arab nationalists, took up this idea of Palestine as a divine gift or trust, unalienable and nonnegotiable. In addition, there were many holy places for Muslims and Jews in the Old City of Jerusalem. In fact, the notion of the Wailing Wall as a focal point of Holiness was only popularized in literature and pictorial form in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The idea was based on four holy cities in Eretz Israel. The holy cities – Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias – developed in connection with fund-raising for the Jews in Eretz Israel. Another name that comes into the picture is Halukka, which seems to have been carried out more systematically after the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth-century (Kramer, 2011). However, Fromkin (2009) viewed it a bit differently in that there was no recognized country that had ever called itself Palestine; it was a geographic term in the Christian Western world to describe the Holy Land. With all these facts and historical background, this study reviews the religious considerations and the Holiness of places simultaneously.

3.1 For Palestinian “Muslims”

Ethnically and culturally, Palestine remained an integral part of the Arab-Islamic civilization. Caliphs, Sultans and even rulers whose legitimacy was in question never ceased to embellish the city with religious and charitable institutions and to assign munificent endowments for their continuance. Such pious apprehension for the holy city, more than doubled after its recovery from the advocates. The most important implication for Muslim understanding is Prophet Muhammad’s miraculous night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and His ascension to heaven. However, neither Saladin (Salah el-Din in Arabic) nor later Muslim rulers lost sight of the fact that Jerusalem and Palestine were also holy to Christians and Jews.

However, Tibawi (1977) mentioned that Ottoman officials, Europeans, and modern Jews regarded the territory lying between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea as the Holy Land, on the basis of the earlier Jewish and Christian appreciation. Muslims afterwards adopted the term, despite one thirteenth-century Arab text only referring to “the land around Jerusalem” as Al-Ard Al-Muqaddasa (the Holy Land) and the term Al-Quds (the Holy), only used for Jerusalem itself. In contrast, Morris (2009) tried to clarify that Palestine was no more sacred than, say, Syria or Iraq or Egypt for many Muslims.

Moreover, in early 1948, when Jordan took charge of the eastern part of Jerusalem, containing the Old City, it estranged the city for the first time in its three hundred year history. Under the 1949 truce of conformity with Israel, Jordan vowed to permit free access to all holy places but was unsuccessful in honoring that obligation. A recent study conducted by Hertz (2011) confirmed that from 1948 until the Six-Day War in 1967, the part of Jerusalem controlled by the Jordanians, once more became a remote undersized provincial town and its religious sites the target of religious fanaticism.

Overall, the researcher can detail the Muslim Holy Sites in that land – According to the Sunni faith, there are “only” two known Holy Places that clearly belong to Muslims; firstly, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which was built by

David's son, namely, Solomon; and, secondly, the Door Ring of the al-Buraq Wall (on the eastern side of the Wailing Wall).

Further, this study seeks answers to several questions:

1. Which piece of the land particularly is the holy site for Muslims that all Arabs, and radical parties: Hamas "Muslim Brotherhood" and Hezbollah are talking about?
2. What kind of religious rights do they hope for? In other words, what has and continues to cause the wars, fighting, and killing of people from both sides – the Palestinians and Israelis – for around a century?
3. Did the Palestinians reject all peace attempts and shatter all peace dreams for their people (and the Middle East as whole) for just two holy sites?
4. What type of attitude, mentality or even beliefs do the Palestinians (and their ancestors) have?
5. What are the reasons behind the rivers of blood and the failure of all peaceful coexistence plans, proposals, or accords between two peoples occupying the same piece of land?
6. Where are the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Door Ring of the al-Buraq Wall now? Or who is now controlling both holy sites?
7. Who is fighting now? For what? And, what else?

3.2 For Israeli "Jews"

The primary meaning and significance of the land "Eretz Israel" to Jewish tradition is beyond doubt. Until now, its actual relevance to Jewish life and thought and the practical consequences have always been subject to historical transformation. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, it was by no means to appeal to God to legitimize claims to land. What was unusual was the Jewish insistence that the Israelites were not indigenous to the land.

Basically, it was justified by the divine promise as it was understood. Moreover, the special status of Eretz Israel was habitually easier said than done to distinguish between the ideal borders of divine promise and with the real borders of Jewish agreement. This issue had further come up with legal consequences, which took on new importance in modern times. In the ancient Middle East, it was also common to think of the divine presence and power as manifest within a specific territory. However, according to the Bible (Kramer, 2011), the God of Israel revealed himself to Abraham, Moses, and Joshua. In fact, Moses received the law in Sinai, beyond the borders of Eretz Israel even if some of its stipulations were fully valid only within those borders. Eretz Israel could therefore be considered as a "Geotheological" term in which reference is made to an actual space bound up with the expectation of liberation.

Furthermore, according to Jewish tradition, what is "Holy" about Eretz Israel? Regarding that, Kramer (2011) emphasized that the logic of holy because of God being its owner and being present there. In addition, it is holy because within it, God's law is fully valid. Another point can be drawn because of its ritual purity, thus, it is considered as "Holy Land". Biblical scholars have analyzed the pertinent evidence, pointing to the important shift from the "Land of Israel", as a whole to Zion-Jerusalem, and, more specifically, to the Temple in Jerusalem, following the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile in 539 B.C. However, the term "Holy Land" can be found in Zachariah 2:12 "and the God will inherit Judah as his piece in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem". Psalms 46:4 and 48:1-3 are of special importance here: "great is the God and greatly to be admired in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great king. Within her fortress God has shown himself a sure defense." In addition, the official, legal and fiscal aspect used to become unique to Jewish conceptions of the holiness of the Holy Land while nothing in the Christian traditions corresponds thereto.

In a similar context, in Islam, there are approximately eighty four objects/sections (verses of) in the Holy Quran that explain the story of the children of Israel and Moses, which review the Israeli story (at times summed up and detailed at other times), and how God chose them from all people in their time, and then God appeared and talked to them on several occasions in the mountain of Sinai, the Holy Land and Jerusalem. For instance, in the Quran (2: Part 1:57-58):

"And we (God) shaded you (children of Israel) with clouds and sent down on you Al-Manna and the quails, (saying): "eat of the good lawful things we have provided for you"...and (remember) when we said: "enter this town (Jerusalem) and eat bountifully therein with pleasure and delight wherever you wish..." (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1417 HJ)

In this matter, Hertz (2011), argued that:

"Jerusalem was more than the Jewish kingdom's political capital – it was a spiritual beacon. During the First and Second Temple periods, Jews throughout the kingdom would travel to Jerusalem three times yearly for the

pilgrimages of the Jewish holy days of Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot, until the Roman Empire destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE and ended Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem for nearly 2,000 years.”

However, even according to Jewish law, the boundary of Eretz Israel was not undyingly fixed. Religiously, God granted the Land to the People of Israel as an “Everlasting Possession” it was in principle unalienable and neither sold nor rented to non-Jews. Leviticus 25:23 explicitly states, “The Land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the Land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me.” After the second temple was destroyed and the Jews banished from Jerusalem and its environs in 70 A.D., the rabbis proclaimed a duty for all Jews to remain in Eretz Israel. For these reasons and others, they acquired land there and they encouraged the immigration of Jews and endangered or chastised any sale or rent of land to non-Jews, or any act of emigration.

Kramer (2011) considered that the founding of the dynasty and the construction of the palace by David and Solomon and the Temple might thus be interpreted as signs of a “normalization of Israel” with parallels in the ancient Middle Eastern concepts of courts and empire. The Urshalim, which was basically Jerusalem, had attained a special rank within Eretz Israel since at least the period of the second Temple. Additionally, Zion, which, later, was frequently used as a synonym for Jerusalem as well as the Land and People of Israel, changed its geographic reference and significance to sacred history more than once. Moreover, Jerusalem first became Israelite under David and Solomon. Additionally, Jerusalem under David was elevated to a royal city and religious center of the Israelites. David renamed the fortress of Zion the “City of David” with the construction of the Temple under Solomon, which lent an aura of “Holiness” to the city.

Finally, in the closing stages, Jerusalem only emerged as the sole religious center after the Babylonian exile, when the Persian king Cyrus II in 539 B.C. granted the Israelites or Jews the right to return to their city and rebuild the Temple. Therefore, the notion of “Heavenly Jerusalem” can be traced back to the eighth-century B.C. It grew stronger in the Hellenistic period, especially in those circles living in the expectation of the end of times, but never replaced the yearning for the earthly Zion. Even after the temple and palace, there remained the importance of Zion/Jerusalem as a symbol of the Jewish people. As a result, with the seven-armed candelabrum, the Menorah, which symbolized the Temple, they used to live turning to the land – all synagogues were oriented toward Jerusalem, like Mosques toward Mecca – yearning for Zion, which was expressed in liturgy and ritual, in visual art and poetry.

4. The land without a state was waiting for the Lord’s promise for the people without a homeland

Overall, the Arabs of Palestine did not do well under Turkish regulation (Stern, 2011). In fact, the Palestinians were not acknowledged as possessing any distinctive national identity for more than two centuries in backwardness and poverty. In short, Palestinians had no representative bodies and many were compulsorily recruited into the Turkish army and denied the most elementary rights of speech and assembly. Although there was no independent state or country, one day, under the name of “Palestine”, as a geopolitical entity in the modern history or even on the world map, the “Palestinian cause” turned out to be a major gathering point for Arab nationalism throughout the Middle East.

Several historical facts in the modern history define the whole phenomena. It can be articulated as: “Palestine was a land without a people for a people without a land”. However, at the end of nineteenth-century the Jewish settlers found a country not only devoid of people, but utterly deserted, a “land of ruins,” squalid and desolate: Palestine, a “still life.” Consequently, the well-known phrase and axiom regarding the Jewish pioneers can be expressed as in they “made the desert bloom.”

Furthermore, according to the Quran {17: Part 15: 104,383}; “and We (God) said to the children of Israel after him (Jacob/Israel): dwell in the land, then, when the final and the last promise come near (i.e. the Day of Resurrection), we shall bring you altogether as mixed crowd (gathered out of various nations)” (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1417 HJ). In addition, in the Bible; Isaiah 2:5 “O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord”, moreover all Jews take business activities very seriously; like they always said “We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, as well as die serenely in our own homes” (Mahler, 2010).

In the same context, Tibawi (1977) argued that as two Semitic cousins; the Arabs and Hebrews ought to cooperate in reviving the glory of the Semitic civilization, that Palestine along with the rest of Syria required development, and that Jewish immigrants, coming from a more civilized environment, possessed skills that could be employed for the benefit of the country. In short, it was found that Palestine was a dilapidated region of the decomposing Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth-century. The Ottoman authorities in Istanbul barely showed any concern to the land of Palestine, even the holy places, as not enough revenue was generated from the depressed citizens. The country had no political significance, its financial system was prehistoric, and the meager, racially assorted population subsisted on a miserably low standard. In short, the country was poorly

ruled. In addition, there were only a few towns, which were small in size, with an unhappy people, and the roads were few and poorly maintained.

Simply put, Palestine was a sad backwater of a dissolute empire – very different from the fertile, prosperous land it used to be in ancient times. In the same context, the past appeared glorious and the present seemed dismal and deserted, the people were poor and neglected, it showed the decay of nineteenth-century Palestine.

It was found from Kramer (2011) that the first birth and death registers were not created in Egypt and other parts of the Ottoman Empire until 1846. Palestine was not only typified by ancient ruins that lie in rubble, but the Palestine that remained was now only the rubble of what no longer exists. Other than that, Palestine was sparsely populated in terms of outside of the inland hills and mountains. In regional terms, the demographic weight of Palestine remained small into the nineteenth-century, and its economic potential insignificant. Its importance for the Ottoman Empire was economic rather than strategic with the strategic dimension largely determined by religion. Into the agreement, the villages ranged in size from a few dozen people to several hundred and so on. Matrilineal families and clans served as the basic unit of solidarity, of physical and social security, mediation and arbitration. While the houses in the plains were built mostly of perishable clay brick, in the mountains they were made mostly of stone.

Regarding the health system in the society, in Palestine as elsewhere, diseases and epidemics, such as cholera, typhus, yellow fever, smallpox, and malaria, accounted for a high mortality rate, especially among infants and children. For example, in 1865-66, a cholera epidemic led to thousands of deaths in northern Palestine, and, in 1902, hundreds more died. In fact, in 1920, a small leper colony existed outside the gates of Jerusalem. One of the most widespread diseases, malaria, was caused primarily by stagnant water that was found not only in low-lying swampy areas fed by winter rains, it was also in the cisterns used to store rainwater in Jerusalem and many other places as well.

In respect of the dealings and arrangements for the use of land, it relied on various combinations of local customs, Sharia (Islamic) law, and Sultanic statutes, which served a twofold purpose: to regulate the rights to and control over a given piece of land, and to determine tax-paying and other duties attached thereto. In this relationship, the Ottoman government, in contrast to classical Islamic law, was ignored. In fact, the religious attachment of those concerned attributed the same rights and duties to Muslims and non-Muslims accordingly (Kramer, 2011).

Whilst many historians argued that in the first Aliyah (1882-1903) the immigration of Jews into Palestine was only 25,000. As many as half would leave Palestine upon arriving, observing the lack of developed land and opportunity. Many of the immigrants were surprised to find little cultivable land available. Sequentially, the Jews of the second Aliyah (1904-14) acquired as much land as possible and began to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine (Harms & Ferry, 2008).

In this respect, Pappé (2004) expressed that Palestine after the Second World War was not the same as at the start of the order. Many automobiles transport and trucks showed up on the new system of black-top streets, where, beforehand, stallions and carriages had transported travelers in a moderate and erratic way. In one statement, the truth was that the Palestinians were living in a "backward" state in all matters of their life throughout the Ottoman Empire work the British mandate and the landing of Jewish settlement, then the new settlers equipped to modernized the social order by their experience, talented individuals and the European model of "modernization". As depicted by Kramer (2011):

"by the mid-1930s, different kinds of clubs and companionships had shaped notwithstanding the existing political gatherings, including welfare associations, ladies' cooperation's, the bar affiliations, councils of business, exchange unions, games clubs, the scouts, the Young Men's Muslim acquaintanceships, the YMCA and other Christian youth assemblies, et cetera.....alongside stallion and carriage, there was an expanding number of trucks, transports, taxis, cruisers, and autos. In parallel to the transportation framework, the postal and broadcast systems were consistently extended. The phone system was made in 1920, and in later years spread to all towns and bigger settlements. In 1933 worldwide phone associations with Europe were introduced. In March 1936, the Palestine Broadcasting Service went broadcasting live, television every day programs in the three dialects of Arabic, Hebrew, and English. In that year, the Muslim Friday sermon was show from al-Aqsa Mosque despite any precedent to the contrary. In various towns, open amplifiers were set up to transmit government affirmations to the individuals who had no radios of their own"

In this regard, Ben-Gurion kept in touch with the Arab patriot, George Antonius who said: "We need to come back to the east just in the geographic sense, for our destination is to make here a European society... .. in any event as the social establishments in this corner of the world remain unaltered.... (In any case) We live in the

twentieth century; they (the Palestinians) live in the fifteenth.....we have made an excellent social order in the heart of the adult" (Ben-Ami 2005).

5. “Who is fighting” and “What For”; “Islamic State” in Gaza, “Palestinian Authority” in West Bank, or Israel?

It was mentioned earlier that the land was known as the “Greater Syria”, and then the land was divided by the then super powers into four separate countries, and small cantons, to be five nationalities and peoples. On the modern map, the countries are known as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine territories. More specifically, southern Syria was divided between 1922 until 2007, into two states, two provinces, and four nationalities – Jordan, Israel, Gaza strip “province of Hamas: the Kharijites and Shia’ sects” (Hamas was never classified as Sunni sect), and “Palestinian Authority” “Fatah” in West Bank. All of those represent four peoples: Jordanians, Israelis, Gazanians (Gazawy or Hamsawy in Arabic), and finally Palestinian Fatah – in Arabic Fatahaway. Therefore, in this regard, Hertz (2009) stated that:

“In conditions of today’s states, the Syria of old encompass Syria, Lebanon, Israel, as well as Jordan, plus the Gaza Strip along with Alexandria. The rhetoric by Arab leaders on behalf of the Palestinians rings hollow, for the Arabs in neighboring lands, who control 99.9 percent of the Middle East land, have never recognized a Palestinian entity. They have always considered Palestine and its inhabitants part of the great ‘Arab nation,’ historically and politically as an integral part of Greater Syria “Suriyya al-Kubra“.

However, as Penziner (2004) explained, during the First World War, decisions were made with little knowledge of, or concern for the lands and peoples about which and whom the decisions were being made. Although the British and the French were negotiating at times with “native” leaders, these individuals did not always represent their populations.

“Fifty-one member countries – the entire League of Nations – unanimously declared on July 24, 1922: Whereas recognition has been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.” Unlike nation-states in Europe, modern Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, and Iraqi nationalities did not evolve. They were arbitrarily created by colonial powers. In 1919, in the wake of World War I, England and France as Mandatory (e.g., official administrators and mentors) carved up the former Ottoman Empire, which had collapsed a year earlier, into geographic spheres of influence. This divided the Mideast into new political entities with new names and frontiers.” (Hertz, 2007).

Moreover, as a historical fact, in November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to end the British mandate over Palestine, which had been established after World War I, and to partition the land into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Zionist leadership accepted (from their experience) the partition plan, with certain reservations, but the Arab leadership both within Palestine and in the neighboring states-rejected it. Fighting broke out between the two communities, which turned into an all-out war after May 15, 1948, when the British forces withdrew, the Jewish leadership in Palestine declared the independent State of Israel, and regular armies from the neighboring Arab states joined the fray. An armistice agreement was signed in July 1949. The armistice lines became the official borders of the State of Israel, which included larger portions of Palestine than the UN partition plan had originally allotted to the Jewish state. Two parts of mandatory Palestine remained under Arab control: the West Bank, which was eventually annexed by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip, which came under Egyptian administration. In this regard, Jimmy Carter (2006) argued that:

“No serious consideration was given by Arab leaders or the international community to establishing a separate Palestinian state, while this homeland was divided among Jordan, Israel, and Egypt”

Therefore, the major question asked of many Arab-Israeli dispute scholars is, “who are fighting? Why are they fighting? And, what for? The answers given vary according to the perspective of the individual reply. Some answers along religious lines refer to the stories of Isaac and Ishmael (Ismail in Arabic), which means that this conflict is an outgrowth of conflicting claims that go back to Biblical days. The answer can also be seen in the diplomatic legacies from the period before Israel was established. In addition, there are many questions, such as, can peace come about through conservative religious belief as well as practice, belief that splits and divides people into sects and denominations, each emphasizing that theirs is the selected way and their God the true God?” How many more wars will it take to find out how to end war? Can tranquility come about through conservative spiritual belief as well as practice? Can faith resolve the difficulty of war and bring peace? Another burning question is: can belief be characterized by religious, political, theoretical, or emotional factors? Can the

priests and the religious leaders bring peace? One would think so because they admit to being devoted to its achievement.

However, in reality, they are alienated in their ranks as well as levels of the chain of command, demanding to set up who is the holiest within the fastidious belief or among different religious groups. At the very least, military people are understandable in their appearance of ironic, opposing ideals. The religious make-believe to be peaceful, but, subsequently, the ideals of their commandments, mean they are at war surrounded by themselves, lodged in the entangled judgments. Each belief has its own set of principles, each creating conflict. In spirit, customary religious practices strengthen the basis of war throughout the habitual nature of beliefs (Webster-Doyle, 1991).

The researcher believes that the great historical crime in this context was done particularly by Great Britain and the Muslim Brotherhood "Hamas". After the end of the First World War, in order to create a new Middle East, Great Britain was busy remapping its geopolitical borders. On the other hand, Hamas, in particular, perpetrated a historical and religious crime toward their people by curtailing all religious, historical, and political rights, by designating the Gaza strip as a Palestinian Islamic state. In addition, Hamas already abandoned the issue of the "al-Aqsa Mosque" and other Palestinian-Muslim demands in Jerusalem, to replace all by the mosque of the dome of the rocks (which appears in the Hamas' flag), even though that mosque, which was built by one of the Umayyad caliphs, was never considered as holy for Muslims.

Surprisingly, the land of southern Syria (formerly Palestine) was divided in 1922 during the British mandate, by establishing a new Arab country, "Jordan", over a large part of the "Palestinian" land, without any form of objection from any of the Arabs-Muslims, while the neighboring Arab leaders and governments killed their people in (around) four "holy wars" against the Israelis during the last six decades. With no meaning, and notwithstanding the fact that the Israelis had a religious and historical right to the sacred and Holy Land, while the Jordanians had no right to the same land to establish their state (although the researcher believes that 95% from the Jordanians are Palestinians originally except 5%). In this matter, David Lloyd George, then British Prime Minister said:

"The Balfour Declaration implied that the whole of Palestine, including Transjordan, should ultimately become a Jewish state. Transjordan had, nevertheless, been severed from Palestine in 1922 and had subsequently been set up as an Arab kingdom. Now a second Arab state was to be carved out of the remainder of Palestine, with the result that the Jewish National Home would represent less than one eighth of the territory originally set aside for it. Such a sacrifice should not be asked of the Jewish people...17,000,000 Arabs now occupied an area of 1,290,000 square miles, including all the principal Arab and Moslem centres, while Palestine, after the loss of Transjordan, was only 10,000 square miles; yet the majority plan proposed to reduce it by one half. UNSCOP proposed to eliminate Western Galilee from the Jewish State; that was an injustice and a grievous handicap to the development of the Jewish State."(Hertz, 2007).

In brief, it is hard to explain who is fighting? Is it the "Tunnels' Government" in Gaza or the "Unsubstantial Authority" of the West Bank or their cousins, the Israelis? The most important unanswered question is for what reasons are they fighting. The next question is who is winning the war? It can be safely claimed that Israelis are on the winning side because of their skilled and diplomatic leaders, superior military, and resources, in addition, the historical and religious experience to deal with the unique case of the land, which is logically described by the "Israeli experience".

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the Israeli experience has been born from the womb of the Holy Land, even when the "children of Israel" lived in diaspora; the "Land" is everything for all Israelis, which represents the homeland, religion and history, the Promise of the Lord, the people's dream, Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall, and other holy sites. Therefore, there is nothing comparable to the Jews than the "Holy Land or Eretz Ysrael". Furthermore, whereas it would be easy for the Israelis to prove their historical and religious rights to the holy or sacred land, it would be very hard for the Palestinians to do so.

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