

'The Canaanites Were Then In The Land'

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"And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him" (Genesis 12:6-7).

One of the arguments against the Jews' right to sovereignty over their historical homeland, or conversely for the Palestinian Arabs' right to a national homeland in these biblically Jewish lands, is that even though the Jews had a virtually unbroken presence here through the last 2000 years, in the centuries before 1948 it was the Arabs who comprised the overwhelming majority of the overall inhabitants, with the number of Jews almost marginal at one time.

Today this argument is applied to the "West Bank," with some demographers pointing out that there are 2.5 million Arabs (90%) as compared to just 255,600 Jews (9.4%) in Samaria and Judea.

And since the "Disengagement" in 2005, the Gaza Strip is said to have 1.4 million Arabs, and not a single Jew.

No serious authority disputes that there were many more Arabs than Jews in Ottoman Empire Palestine at the end of the 18th century. According to respected historians like American Howard M. Sachar, there were only 6,000 Jews in Palestine in 1800 out of what, by 1840, was a total of 400,000 inhabitants.

While tens of thousands of Jews did begin flooding into the land from 1882 onwards, the Arab majority remained strong, so that in 1914 there were 60,000 Jews and 730,000 Arabs resident here.

This, triumphantly crow Israel's enemies, more than supports the Arab claim to all of the land, and means that it is the Arabs who are being asked to concede land, because the land is theirs.

Historically, the numbers may favor the Arabs, but from the point of view of national ownership, it is the Jews - with their forefathers' history of founding the nation of Israel here 4000 years ago, and who have never repudiated or relinquished their claim to any of the land despite twice being exiled from it, once for 70 years, and most recently for 1813 years - who have the sole claim.

Nationally, the Arabs come from Arabia. And although they today have more than 20 states, the Arabs are still, ethnically, one nation, as they themselves aver.

Before the establishment of anti-semitic terrorist Arab groups like the PLO, the Palestinian Arabs had never had a single symbol of nationhood: no flag, no passport, no anthem and, most importantly, no country.

Therefore, to talk about "giving land back" to the Palestinians as if they have had a homeland and a state at some point in history is pure fabrication and deception. The territory which the world today has dared to earmark for the creation of Palestine is land that was illegally occupied by Jordan (in the case of the "West Bank") and militarily administered by Egypt (the Gaza Strip). Prior to that those areas, along with what is today Israel, were all part of the British Mandate, and before that, formed part of a province in the Ottoman Empire.

None of this territory can be given "back" to the Palestinians in the national sense simply because they never had it. (US President George W. Bush has acknowledged this by repeatedly spelling out his administration's determination to "create a new state alongside Israel.")