



# Who Owns the Holy Land?

By Pastor F. M. Riley

*"In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:" Genesis 15:18.*

*"And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*

*And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Genesis 17:7-8.*

## Introduction

I received the following letter from a staunch Preterist [*replacement theology*]. It is reproduced verbatim, exactly as written, except that I have withheld the signature to protect the identity of the writer.

*Dear sir:*

*I read your remarks on the Palestinian question in the January 2001 Last Call with great interest. Concerning the proclamation you mention on page 4, "urging the Palestinians to return to Israel, promising them that they could reclaim what rightfully belonged to them," would you be so kind as to send me a copy of that proclamation?*

*The reason for this request is that there is a booklet called "The Origin of the Palestine-Israel Conflict" published by Jews for Justice in the Middle East, P. O. Box 14561, Berkeley, California 94712, which states that Israel expelled the Arabs from Palestine and would not allow them to come back. If they are wrong about this, then the error should be corrected. Not only that, but if the proclamation you described was indeed issued by Israel, then this means that the Palestinian refugees today can still go back home, which would solve one of the problems that prevents the signing of a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians. In other words, if you can release the text of this proclamation, which you say is "a documented fact," then this might have historic and beneficial consequences in alleviating the current crisis in the Middle East.*

*Also, I would like a clarification as to your statement that "the Jewish immigrants bought the land from the Palestinians." The enclosed material from Jews for Justice in the Middle East states that as of 1948, the Jews had bought slightly more than 6% of the land of Palestine. This would imply that almost 94% of the land was taken without compensation – that is to say, it was "stolen." If you can document that the Jews*

*bought all of the land, not just 6%, then please do so. If not, please consider issuing a clarification to your statement, so that no one will be misled and that you will not lose your credibility on this important issue.*

*Yours in Christ,*

\_\_\_\_\_ [name purposely withheld]

### **My Answer and Clarification**

Sir, I don't know how old you are, but I was fourteen years of age in 1948. I was saved and active in a good Bible believing, Bible preaching church, where the ***"whole counsel of God"*** [Acts 20:27] was taught. Our pastor preached and taught on Bible prophecy often and in detail. Therefore, when the Jews fought their war of independence I paid close attention to the details printed in the daily newspapers. (No TV back then....praise the Lord!).

When Israel won their war of independence I specifically remember the newspapers reporting that ***"a brief amnesty"*** had been extended to the Arabs who had fled from the land of Israel during the war. I think that after fifty-two years [now 59 years] I can be forgiven for not remembering every intimate detail of the offer. I do remember that the amnesty was only for a limited time. Whether it was for two weeks, one, two, or three months, etc., I do not remember after all these years. I do remember that it was limited to those Arabs who would return and swear to live peacefully in Israel and seek the welfare of the nation. I cannot send you the text of the actual proclamation issued by Israel, for I never had a copy of it. I only know that the newspapers at that time carried it as a "documented" story. I do know that a few Arabs did return to Israel at that time, were allowed to reclaim their property, and were granted citizenship. Some of those Arabs (or their heirs) are even serving in the Jewish Knesset today. Most of the Arabs that fled did not return, some by choice, and many others being forbidden to return by Muslim religious and political authorities. I am getting older, but since I am neither feebleminded, senile, or decrepit, I do remember reading the unfolding story in the newspapers, therefore I consider it to be documented history. If this explanation is not suitable to you, then you have a problem.

As to the "clarification" that you asked for..... Sir, I do not know what percentage of the holy land was owned by the Jews when they were forced to fight their war of independence. I do know that the first Jewish immigrants that returned to the land after World War I bought land from the Arabs, often at highly exorbitant prices. I have several books in my library dealing with the return of the Jews to the holy land. Each of these books, written by both Jewish and Gentile writers, record numerous accounts of returning Jews who bought land for farming, building homes, and establishing whole communities. Each of these books also records numerous accounts of Jews being cheated and driven off the land that they had legally purchased and improved, and murdered in cold blood in order to take their land from them. Sir, your claim that the Jews ***"stole 94% of the land from the Arabs"*** convinces me that ***"Ye do err, not***

*knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," Matthew 22:29*, nor even the history of events in the holy land over the past century.

## Who Owns the Holy Land?

**Almighty God owns it!** At some point in the past Almighty God created the entire universe, which included the planet Earth, *Genesis 1:1; Job 38:4-7; Isaiah 48:13*. Therefore, He owns every square inch of it, and gives it to whomsoever He chooses.

In *Psalm 24:1* we read, *"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."*

*Deuteronomy 32:8* tell us, *"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."*

See also *Exodus 9:29, 19:5, Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 50:12, Acts 17:24-26, 1 Corinthians 10:26-28*, and many other similar passages in the Scriptures.

**Almighty God chose it!** After creating the earth the Lord chose one certain portion of it as *His land*. The Scriptures repeatedly state that the Holy Land belongs to the Lord. Therefore He alone determines who is to reside on that land.

In *Psalm 10:16* we read, *"The Lord is King forever and ever: the heathen are perished out of His land."*

When speaking to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in *Jeremiah 2:7*, the Lord said, *"And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled My land, and made Mine heritage an abomination."*

In *Joel 3:2* the Lord states, *"I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land."*

See also *Deuteronomy 32:43, 2 Chronicles 7:20, Psalm 85:1, Isaiah 14:24-25, Jeremiah 16:18, Ezekiel 38:16, 38:21*, and many similar passages in God's Word.

It is obvious that the Holy Land is a special land chosen as His own land by the Lord Himself. He therefore has a perfect right to do with it whatever He desires to do. And what was His desire?

**Almighty God desired to give it to the Jewish people.** He chose to give it to the Jewish people as their eternal possession, subject only to His direction as to how the

land should be used. Over and over again dozens of Scriptures make it clear that God purposed to give the Holy Land to the Jewish people, and that He did give it to them.

Beginning with Abraham [**Genesis 12:1; 15:7; 15:18; 17:8**] the Scriptures repeatedly, when speaking to the Jews, refer to the Holy Land as **"your land," "their land," "the land that I have given you."** Even a casual study of the Old Testament Scriptures will confirm the truth of this statement. The Holy Land is the only piece of real estate on earth that was given to one certain race of people [*the Jews*] by a title deed from God Almighty Himself.

Therefore by direct grant from God Almighty, the Holy Land belongs to Israel and to no other people on earth.

**Almighty God gave a warning!** The Lord warned the Jews *in advance*, before He brought them into the land, that if they did not obey His laws and keep His statutes, they would be driven out of the land that He was giving them.

In **Deuteronomy 11:16-17** the Lord said, ***"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you."***

Then in **Deuteronomy 28:15-68** when God inspired Moses to set before Israel the blessings and the curses, Moses was inspired to write, ***"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day.....The Lord shall make the pestilence to cleave unto thee, until He have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.....and thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.....and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other....."***

It is obvious from subsequent history that Israel did not obey the Lord, and God did exactly what He said He would do; He drove them from the land and scattered them among the nations of the earth.

But isn't it interesting that in passage after passage in God's Word, even during Israel's absence from the land, God Himself continued to refer to the Holy Land as ***"the land of Israel," "the land of Jacob," "your land,"*** and ***"their land"***? This clearly indicates that even during Israel's absence, the Holy Land still belonged to the Jews.

**Almighty God's intentions for the land...** According to God's Word the Holy Land was meant to lay ***"desolate and empty"*** during Israel's absence from it.

In **Leviticus 26:32-33**, before Israel ever entered the “promised land,” the Lord inspired Moses to write about the blessings that would come upon the Jewish people if they obeyed the Lord, and the punishment that would come upon them if they were disobedient. The Lord specifically stated, ***“And I will bring the land into desolation.....And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.”***

Centuries later Jeremiah was inspired to write, ***“They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto Me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.”***

In **Jeremiah 44:6** the Lord added, ***“Wherefore My fury and Mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.”***

There are many similar passages clearly stating that God had made [*or decreed*] the land to become ***“desolate”*** and ***“empty.”***

But now look at **Leviticus 26:34-35** for one reason why the land was to lay ***“desolate”*** and ***“empty”*** during Israel’s absence from it. ***“Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies’ land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.”*** See also **26:43** and **2 Chronicles 36:21**.

It is obvious from these passages that God intended for the Holy Land to be ***“desolate”*** and ***“empty”*** throughout Israel’s absence from it. God *did not* give the land to any other nation or people. It still belonged to Israel, even though they had been *temporarily* evicted from it.

**The Arabs enter the picture!** After Israel had been removed from the land, the Arabs couldn’t resist seizing all of that ***“desolate”*** and ***“empty”*** land for themselves. In plain words, it was the Arabs who ***“stole”*** the land which God Himself had given to the Jews, and which His Word repeatedly states still belonged to the Jewish people. Proof of my statement? Gladly!

***“And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the Word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God; Because thou saidist, Aha, against My sanctuary, when it was profaned: and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession.....and ye shall know that I am the Lord,”*** Ezekiel 25:3-5.

***“Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance,”*** Ezekiel 33:24.

***"Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophecy against it.....I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against Me, and have multiplied your words against Me: I have heard them," Ezekiel 35:2; 35:12-13.***

***"Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient places are ours in possession: Therefore prophecy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen.....Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about," Ezekiel 36:3-4.***

These Scripture passages are too plain to be misunderstood by anyone. The Arab nations around the Holy Land moved in and "stole" the land from the Jews when it was laying "desolate" and "empty."

Sir, if there was a vacant lot down the street, or a lot with an empty house on it, would you consider it "stealing" if you moved onto and occupied that property in the absence of the rightful legal owner? We both know the answer to that question.

Yet that is exactly what the Arab nations did some 2,500 plus years ago when Israel and Judah were carried off into captivity. And that is exactly what the Arabs did again after 70 A.D. Yet, you sir, claim that Israel "stole" the land from the Palestinians. Sir, your logic is sadly lacking in Scriptural truth, historical reality, or even "good sense." The Palestinians, and other Arab nations before them, have never been anything but "squatters" on land that never belonged to them in the first place.

**The Jews shall return to their land!** Almighty God clearly and repeatedly promised Israel that He would ultimately bring the Jewish people back to their land.

***"For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it," Jeremiah 30:3.***

***"Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel," Ezekiel 11:17.***

***"Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in***

*them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to My servant Jacob, Ezekiel 28:25.*

*“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land,” Ezekiel 36:24.*

*“And I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them.....And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God,” Amos 9:14-15.*

See also *Deuteronomy 30:1-5, Jeremiah 23:3, 29:12-14, 32:37-41, 46:27-28, Ezekiel 34:12-13, 37:21-23, 39:28*, and many similar Scripture passages scattered throughout the Old Testament.

Everyone of these passages makes it clear that God has promised to regather the Jewish people back to their own land as this present dispensation draws to a conclusion. The Lord began fulfilling His promise around the turn of the last century [1900], and He is still in the process of fulfilling it today. Those of us who were living in 1948 [*and even before then*] can testify to the truth and accuracy with which the Lord has been fulfilling His Word to Israel.

### Conclusion

Sir, you speak of the Palestinians going “*back home*.” Do you mean back to the land that their forefathers “*squatted on*” and “*stole*” from the Jewish people? According to the inspired Word of Almighty God, that land never belonged to the Palestinians or to any other group of Arabs; not one square inch of it.

I personally think that the government of Israel was extremely generous and compassionate in making even a temporary offer to the Arab people displaced in Israel's war of independence, inviting them at that time to return and claim their possessions. But now after 59 years, the Palestinians and their hundreds of thousands of offspring are demanding the right to return. Sic! I hope Israel's leaders never become foolish enough to yield to their wicked demands.

Further, if the Palestinians really want a “*homeland*” of their own, then let them settle in the nation of Jordan. The wicked, liberal [*anti-God*] news media never tells the public that the population of Jordan is already 75% Palestinian. Check it out for yourself. Why should the Palestinians then be allowed to take land that God Himself gave to Israel?

Sir, after reading the material you sent me from the so-called *Jews for Justice in the Middle East*, I can easily see that there are still plenty of “*Judas*” Jews among the Jewish people. It appears to me that these people would willingly betray and sell out their own people and nation in order to achieve their twisted sense of “*justice*” for

Israel's enemies. In fact, after reading their material, it appears to me that the people composing this group are actually *"anti-Semite Jew haters."* If the leaders of this organization are really *"Jews,"* then are they ashamed of their own race and nation?

Sir, long ago the inspired Apostle stated, ***"We ought to obey God rather than men," Acts 5:29.*** Not one argument presented by your so-called *Jews for Justice* is based on the eternal truths of Scripture. According to their own booklet, their entire position is based on human reasoning, politics, political statements, judicial decisions, conflict, and emotionalism. Their booklet is conspicuous by the total absence of Scripture.

Sir, you claim to be *"a man of God."* Then don't you think it is about time for you to get with God's program as outlined in His Word, and quit trying to set your own agenda? I would think as *"a man of God"* you would be trying to uphold the truth of God's Word, rather than *"warming yourself around the fires of the enemy," Mark 14:66-68.*

The Word of God is quite clear that the Holy Land belongs to Israel by title deed from Almighty God Himself. There isn't a Arab or any other Gentile on earth, that, according to God's eternal Word, has a legitimate claim on one square inch of it. While there is constant change in this present world, the Lord Himself said, ***"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away," Matthew 24:35.*** Ultimately the Jews will possess every square inch of the land promised to them through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and it will happen whether men like it or not.

Sir, that being the case, I would suggest that you abandon the anti-Semitic, Jew hating, replacement theology which was handed down to you from the Roman whore religious system, and turn back to teaching and preaching the ***"whole counsel of God," Acts 20:27.***

**THE HOLY LAND BELONGS TO ISRAEL! PERIOD!!!**