



Is Israel a Thorn in the Side of the World?

Zechariah 12:3: (NASB) *It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.*



Special Guest: Len Griehs

Israel is a country that only covers about 21,000 square kilometers - it is not even in the top 150 countries and is about the size of New Jersey. It houses about 8.3 million people which figures to be about .11 percent of the world's population. Yet, for its insignificance, Israel is always in the news and always seems to be in trouble. Why are there so many questions about and issues with this tiny nation? Is Israel really occupying land that is not theirs? Is Israel really mean and over-the-top harsh with their neighbors, or are there important details about the constant conflicts we are always missing? Should we just be fed up with what Israel does and what they stand for, or should we be respectfully looking up to Israel for what they do and what they stand for?

(Commentary has been edited for brevity and clarity. Len's comments are shown in purple.)

Len, you have been a frequent guest, but for those who have not heard of you, give us a little background about yourself and why you have an interest in Israel.

I'm very interested in Israel as a student of the Bible. I have been a Bible student for well over 50 years. I serve in two different Bible study classes. I live half of my year in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and half in Phoenix, Arizona.

I retired nine years ago and since have had a number of opportunities to travel and meet with other Bible students around the world, including Australia and throughout Europe, with international groups. My background professionally was in the corporate finance area for many years, and I worked for two Fortune 500 companies with opportunity to get exposed to the world of finance. As a result, I was involved in political activity as well as communications and the world of Wall Street. I learned a lot during that time and hope to now apply it to understanding the Scriptures better. My high interest now is Israel which is one of my favorite topics.



As things have developed recently with Israel, we asked you to give us some insight to our question: Is Israel a thorn in the side of the world? In this segment we are going to get our bearings on the latest events within Israel that have yet again caused worldwide reactions. Coming up later in the podcast, we are going to look specifically at who the Palestinians are and trace what land should belong to whom.



Let's get started with the current events. We now have an American embassy in Jerusalem, and we also have many dead Palestinian protestors. How did these events unfold? Do we need to do some finger pointing? Is there a connection? Give us some of the current event background to get us started.

Having been to Israel and seen the land and the people, there is a great flavor in Israel for the land, and the land is very important to the people of Israel. Jerusalem especially is a very important city. They have a real passion for it. The U.S. Embassy now is moved to Jerusalem after a 1995 decision being deferred for 23 years. I think that has resurrected a lot of feelings because so many felt Israelis had no right to have Jerusalem as their capital. I sort of sat back and chuckled during that whole time when U.S. President Donald Trump decided we were going to finally do this. It is the 70th anniversary of Israel's founding, but it has certainly caused a great deal of turmoil. We already read in [Zechariah 12:3](#) *It will come about in that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone.* We could say that is today, because the issue around Jerusalem has been sensitive. The notion, however, of the U.S. recognizing Jerusalem sort of made me laugh because, don't they have a right to decide their own capital? They are a democratic country. It is like someone coming in here saying, "Well, I'm sorry. You can't have Washington, D.C. as your capital, because we don't think it should be."





You're right. Israel is a sovereign nation and has been for a very long time. What business should it be of other countries where it designates its capital? You said a law was passed in the United States in 1995 to move the embassy, but it never happened. Why the 23-year delay?

I think a lot of it was political, because even though it was voted to do that in 1995, there was an option given by the U.S. Congress for the President to defer that action. I think because of circumstances they were advised not to move the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Every president we had from 1995 on, three presidents, waived it in the name of what they called national security, because it could have ramifications on the United States. My point is, not moving that embassy did not prevent something like 9/11 from happening in 2001. I think this was really the reason many opposed the move, as it was claimed we would be exposing ourselves to great danger if we did this.

We are not going to get into politics; it is irrelevant whether democrat or republican, but the previous administration seemed to be going in the opposite direction with the resolution in 2016 at the U.N. Security Council. What was that about? We are laying the groundwork for where we are and what it means to us now. Where were we with the Security Council just a couple of years ago?

On Christmas Eve, 2016, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution that condemned Israel as an illegal occupier of the West Bank, which we knew in the older days as Judea - Samaria. They claimed all the land acquired from Jordan between 1948 and 1967 should rightfully not be part of Israel. The United States has always supported Israel in the United Nations. It has always voted against resolutions condemning Israel, but for the first time in the history of the U.N., the U.S. abstained from that vote despite Israel's pleas. Abstaining is the same as a "no vote." So, though they did not vote for it, not voting against it because the U.S. is part of the Security Council, it was allowed to pass. China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom all voted in favor of it. The U.S. abstention as the fifth country allowed it to pass. That locked Israel, as far as the U.N. was concerned, into the 1948 line drawn after the armistice of the war, declaring Judea, Samaria and East Jerusalem as occupied land that belonged to the Palestinians.



Then those Jewish settlers, who for years were in these areas after they won the land in war, were looked at as criminals according to the United Nations.

That is absolutely right. I've been to the Jewish Quarter. It is such an active area, but basically those residents are now considered as criminals, which is strange. The outgoing Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said after that vote, "Decades of political maneuverings have created a disproportionate volume of resolutions, reports and conferences criticizing Israel. We must never accept bias against Israel





within U.N. bodies.” That was his outgoing statement. But he saw it for himself, because almost half of the U.N. Human Rights Councils have centered on condemning Israel.

It really comes down to “land issues,” and we will get into some of the “people treatment issues” as we go through this podcast. What has been the reaction of the move of the Embassy since May 14, 2018?

- The move infuriated Palestinians and sparked international condemnation.
- Previous U.S. presidents, as well as nearly every other country, refrained from opening embassies in Jerusalem, arguing that the city's final status should first be resolved through Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.
- Israel's foreign ministry said all 86 countries with diplomatic missions in Israel were invited to the embassy opening, yet only 33 countries confirmed attendance.
- Palestinian leaders see East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state and have said that Trump's move disqualifies the U.S. as a peace mediator.
- The Cairo-based Arab League, comprised of 22-member states, urged the international community to oppose what it considers an "unjust decision" and the ongoing "Israeli occupation" of Jerusalem.
- It called the embassy relocation a "blatant attack on the feelings of Arabs and Muslims" and a "grave violation of the rules of international law" that would destabilize the region.
- A statement from the U.N. on Twitter: "Shocking killing of dozens, injury of hundreds by Israeli live fire in Gaza must stop now. The right to life must be respected. Those responsible for outrageous human rights violations must be held to account. The international community needs to ensure justice for victims."
- "These sorts of actions will increase tension in the region and the world," Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency quoted a spokesperson.
- During the American ceremony, television networks around the world aired a split screen of Israeli and American smiles in Jerusalem and bodies carried on stretchers in Gaza. Since then, the perception of Israeli callousness and brutality has continued. The easily-proven-to-be-false message that the deaths in rioting came as the result of the embassy opening was accepted as fact by the international mainstream media, even though the Hamas March of Return had started weeks earlier with numerous clashes with IDF troops and dozens of Palestinian casualties.
- The Hamas admission that 50 of the 62 dead from the border attack were affiliated with the terrorist organization and Hamas' printed orders to those approaching the fence to try to kidnap Israelis could have made Israel look somewhat better had they been more widely reported. But the “Israel Kills 60 Palestinians” headlines, like the one splashed across the front page of *The New*



York Times, are the only ones etched into the minds of the readers around the world.

On one hand you have the establishment of the American Embassy in Jerusalem. On the other hand, you have these demonstrations. Were those demonstrations aimed at the U.S. Embassy being put into Jerusalem?

No, it was not aimed. It was an excuse.

What were those demonstrations for?

Those demonstrations were really part of the ongoing activity against Jerusalem itself and against Israel. The embassy was just another excuse for the terrorist activity to continue and gave them a reason. It was for the media to create a furor in the world.



And those demonstrations were happening weeks before the move of the Embassy...?

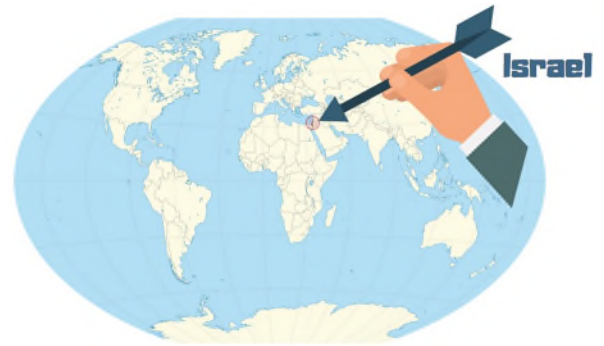
It started as soon as the announcement was made that they were going to demonstrate. Nothing was done when the other five or six countries also moved their embassies. That's a strange thing. The U.S. was such a focus with a big backlash, and the media loves to cover the current president and any activity that reports as negative. It certainly was a big negative that day when you saw everything crashing. It looked like it was crashing in Israel, and in reality, it was really just terrorists and their ongoing activity. Some of the pictures they showed of people dying were pictures from places like Pakistan.

We have the American move of its embassy to Jerusalem, and the demonstration going on was actually an annual demonstration, the Hamas March of Return, which has been happening for years. The bottom line is, terrorists being killed. Now, look, a human life is a human life. But what we want to make clear here is the unfair representation of what was really happening. We say, "Oh, these poor Palestinians who are dying because they are facing armed Israeli soldiers, oh, these poor people." But wait, these poor people are terrorists. They are going out to try to kill. Hamas told us who they were, but we don't get to hear that.

We are starting with this recent event because it is fresh in everyone's minds. When you look at Israel and the world, you do see that Israel is kind of a thorn in the side of the world, don't you, Len?



Yes. Israel's rapid fall from being commended to being condemned is an example of once again being treated like a toy in the world and a thorn in the world's side. Why should anyone care about that little country in the Middle East? You look on a map of the world, and you need a big arrow pointing just to see where it even is.



Israel gets all this incredible attention on a worldwide stage. We have to ask why? In the eyes of many in the world, Israel is a real problem.

How did Israel come to the land they, in our modern times, call home? How long has it been fought for?

Putting the questions of ownership and struggle into their TRUE historic context sets the stage for being able to begin to understand the REAL issues with Israel in our present day. As we shall soon see, the history that seems to often be assumed and the history that actually happened do not always agree!

Len, let's talk about facts versus fiction in the Middle East. You put this timeline together that lays out what happened in Israel and who the players have been for thousands of years.

The Middle East today is in conflict that now spans for three millennia, 3,000 years of conflict.

Yes, but more recently in the last 300 years it has been big in everyone's mind. But you're right, we can trace it back for 3,000 years.

Facts vs. Fiction in the Middle East

- The Middle East today is in conflict that now spans three centuries:
 - 🕒 2000 BC -- Abraham and the beginning of Jewish and Arab lines
 - 🕒 1575 BC -- Children of Jacob entered Canaan (Israel)
 - 🕒 1000-925 BC -- Solomon builds the First Temple in Jerusalem
 - 🕒 607-587 BC -- Israel taken captive into Babylon
 - 🕒 537 BC -- Temple rebuilt under Persian order of Cyrus
 - 🕒 63 BC -- Roman occupation of Israel
 - 🕒 70 AD -- Herod's Jerusalem Temple destroyed
 - 🕒 135 AD -- Jewish Nationalism ends in Bar Kochba revolt
 - 🕒 613 AD -- Mohammed forms Religion of Islam
 - 🕒 638 AD -- Muslim Conquest of Holy Land, Al-Aqsa Mosque built
 - 🕒 691 AD -- Dome of the Rock built in Jerusalem on Temple Mount

Tell us where this story began to help us understand when Israel was planted in the land and many of the things that happened afterwards.



Starting with Abraham, both sides claim Abraham as their father, the Jews and Arabs. We are going back to around 2,000 BC for the time when Abraham appears on the scene. Abraham wasn't Jewish, as there wasn't a Jewish nation at that time. The Jewish people came through his children, one of them being Jacob. In 1575 BC, the children of Jacob enter Canaan (present day Israel) after the exodus from Egypt.

When we use BC rather than BCE we mean before Christ. So, we go back to that period of time and then jump ahead. After they were in Canaan, which was the Promised Land we will talk about soon, the first temple was built in Jerusalem by Solomon. King Solomon, one of David's sons, built that temple somewhere around 1000 BC. It stood for some 400 years, and then Israel, because of their sins against God, were allowed to be taken captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar between 607 and 587 BC.



They were never entirely out of their land, an important point. Even though they were taken captive, they were still in the land of Canaan (Israel). There were still remnants of Jewish people there. Afterwards they were taken captive into Babylon for about 70 years, consistent with Bible prophecy. Remember Daniel the prophet himself talked about this. The temple was rebuilt, as seen in Daniel's vision, by the order of the Persian King Cyrus who overcame Babylon. The order to go back and rebuild the temple was in 537 BC.

It was calm from that point on until the first century BC, when in 63 BC the Romans came and occupied Israel. At the time of Christ, Roman occupation was a big part of society.

Jewish people were in the land of Israel continually about 1600 years before Jesus.

That's right. And once the Romans occupied Israel after the death of Jesus some 37 years later in 70 AD, Herod's temple, which was the second temple in Jerusalem, was destroyed and rebuilt. What we see now in Israel, the Western Wall, stands on the outside as part of that second temple. The events in 70 AD wiped out Israel's presence in that period, although there was still a remnant for another 65 years until 135 AD. There was the Bar Kochba revolt, and Jewish nationalism came to an end for that period of time. That land was occupied by many others during that time, although we can surmise there was a bit of a presence always there with some kind of a remnant somewhere around the land.



According to Wikipedia, the Bar Kochba revolt resulted in extensive depopulation of Judean communities. It is reported that 580,000 Jews perished in the war and many more died of hunger and disease, with war captives sold into slavery. Some scholars describe it as genocide.



Now we get into the Arab world, when Mohammed formed the religion of Islam in 613 AD. It is almost 500 years later when we find the beginning of Islam. In 635 to 638, the Muslim conquest of what was then called the "Holy Land" took place and the Al-Aqsa Mosque was built. They were only in that land for about 22 years that time, although the Ottomans, and the claim of the

Muslims' presence there, happened all the time after that until 691 AD when the Dome of the Rock was built in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount.

You are up to 691 AD in this timeline. There is a blank spot for 1200 years until we get to 1878.

Let's go to an audio clip from cbn.com with a quote from Mark Twain. It is an interesting quote that gives a flavor for what it must have looked like then.

 **Mark Twain 1867, *Made in Israel: Agriculture, cbn.com***

- In 1867 Mark Twain toured the land of Israel, known back then as Palestine. Here's how he described it: "...a desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds - a silent, mournful expanse. There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes, desolate and unlovely." Today, Mark Twain wouldn't even recognize this land. Out of rocky soil, out of the swamps, and out of the deserts, Israelis have created gardens, vineyards and farms with some of the most innovative techniques in the world.*



The land is desolate in 1867 with several events on your timeline from 1878 to 2003.

Let me mention one thing first. Between 638 and 1918 with some form of Islamic dominance in the Middle East, the words "Palestinian" or "Palestine" never appear.

- 🕒 1878 -- First settlement of Jews in Palestine (Petah Tikva)
- 🕒 1897 -- First Zionist Congress
- 🕒 1916 -- Tripartite Agreement (Sykes-Picot) creates borders of Modern Middle East
- 🕒 1918 -- British Mandate over Palestine begins
- 🕒 1922 -- Britain creates Transjordan for Arabs
- 🕒 1937 -- Peel Partition Plan of Palestine
- 🕒 1939 -- British restrict Jewish immigration
- 🕒 1947 -- United Nations Partition Plan (rejected by Arabs)
- 🕒 1948 -- Declaration of Jewish State, Arab-Israeli War



- 🕒 1950 -- Jewish Law of Return enacted, Jordan cedes West Bank
- 🕒 1956 -- Sinai War
- 🕒 1967 -- Six-Day War
- 🕒 1973 -- Yom Kippur War
- 🕒 1979 -- Egyptian-Israel Peace Agreement
- 🕒 1987 -- Intifada begins

One of the things that jumps out is in 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1987 there is war, constant unrest. It is seemingly because Israel is there. It is something that we have to get our head around in terms of the size of Israel and the way this all fits together.

A quote from Yasser Arafat, because he was very much behind all this intifada (the Palestinian uprising against Israeli "occupation" of the West Bank and Gaza Strip) action in the late 1980's and 1990's:

We plan to eliminate the state of Israel and establish a purely Palestinian state. We will make life unbearable for Jews by psychological warfare and population explosion. We Palestinians will take over everything, including all of Jerusalem. – Yasser Arafat

Len, when you are a small nation and you have someone who says things that have a relative amount of growing power, it would make you a bit concerned, I would think, right?

Yes, I think so. When you are told that our job is to wipe out you and your family, you get attention.

That was the attitude. Everybody looks at Israel as, oh, they shouldn't, they shouldn't, they shouldn't. But where is the looking at what happened with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and their stated objective of wiping out a people? We don't seem to get that. We will come back to that as we go through who owns what and who has rights to what. Let's finish up this timeline.

Now we jump to 1989. Two years later we have the first mass exodus of Jews going back to the modern land, around the time of the fall of the Soviet Union. In 1991, we had the Gulf War with Iraq, Jordan and the PLO against Israel. In 1993 to 2000 were the Oslo Accords trying to bring peace. In 1994, Israel signed a peace treaty with Jordan. In 2000, another intifada began. In 2001, of course, we had the terrorist attack on America that showed it didn't really matter what we did with our embassy. In 2003, we had the U.S. war against Iraq, the Aqaba Summit on the Roadmap to Peace in the Middle East. This brings us up to the last 15 years where there has been nothing but war in the Middle East in one form or another.

- 🕒 1989 -- Mass exodus from Soviet Union
- 🕒 1991 -- Gulf War (Iraq-Jordan, PLO against Israel)
- 🕒 1993-2000 -- Oslo Accords
- 🕒 1994 -- Peace treaty with Jordan
- 🕒 2000 -- Intifada begins
- 🕒 2001 -- Terrorist attack on America



🕒 2003 -- U.S. war against Iraq, Aqaba Summit on Road Map to Peace in the Middle East

What is "Zionism"?

Zionism was first used by an Austrian journalist back in 1886, derived from a biblical word used in Psalm 132 symbolizing Jerusalem. But there has been a lot of misunderstanding, because it really means simply a return to the ancient and biblical homeland of the Jewish people. This is what Zionism is about. It encompasses the prayers of the people to have a homeland - not just a return of the people - but also a return to the sovereignty of the land.

We have seen a lot of factions of Zionism. Theodor Herzl brought on a political movement. On the practical side was a Jewish cultural revival. We saw the Labor Movement, which was the establishment of a socialist state, and then we saw the religious side, which envisioned a Jewish state governed by Jewish law.

Zionism means returning to the land, and you mentioned it can be traced way back to Joseph in Egypt. The point is, Israel, the land, is attached to the Jewish people. The fact that this attachment is thousands of years old for some reason always seems to get put aside when we talk about the conflicts in this area. People talk a lot about the Palestinians having just as much right as the Jews do to the land.

**Zionism was built on very ancient foundations of Judaism.
What about the Palestinian historical foundation?**

With so much of world opinion set against Israel in the current issues of dividing the land with Palestinians, one would think we would be able to look at the claims of each side in the light of history and see dramatic overlaps in claiming the land. Let's test that - let's look at the history of Palestine and see whose footprints are there. This particular segment gets a bit more complicated and for many, may even get emotional.

We typically frame our podcasts with lots of Scriptures, but we thought it necessary today to look at historical facts to begin. Looking at what actually happened gives us a sense of the reality that may be lacking when talking about current events.

Before we start, here is another audio clip about Israel in relation to their agriculture and some of the amazing things that have begun to develop in that nation over the last 100 years:

 **The kibbutz farms, *Made in Israel: Agriculture, cbn.com***

- *It's been said that the modern state of Israel was born on the kibbutz. So, it's only natural that much of Israel's innovation was born there as well.*
- *The kibbutz is a cornerstone, in a lot of ways, of a lot of things in Israeli society.*



- *People came back wanting to create a collective and an equal society. And these kibbutzim became a very effective way to defend the land and to start getting young people engaged in agriculture. Remember, Jews were forbidden in most countries of the world to own land or to work the land. Jews couldn't be farmers. So, all of a sudden to see a generation of Jews farming the land in a collective environment was incredible.*
- *Before Israel even became a state, Jews by the thousands came to live there on communal farms. But when they arrived in the promised land it wasn't exactly flowing with milk and honey. The coastal plains were swampy. The Galilee and the Judean Hills were rocky, and the southern half of the country was mostly desert.*



Len, those are some of the things you mentioned previously, and it gives a sense - especially from 1878 on - there was a lot of work done by a lot of individuals in a land they were allowed to settle legally. They transformed the barrenness of this land to something magnificent.

Palestine, Palestinians. Who is who? What is what? Give us some history.

I mentioned earlier from 638 to 1918 under Islamic dominance, what was considered Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire under the rule of Turkey. For hundreds of years it was under that rule; there was no such place as "Palestine." There were no Palestinians with a distinct identity or any kind of private ownership of the land.

Interestingly, there was a census taken back in 1882, which is still available, that states less than 250,000 Arabs lived in the entire country. They were mostly the Bedouins, what you consider as desert dwellers, those who moved from place to place shepherding flocks. Today they are known as the Bedouin or the Fellahin, who are migrant workers that move from place to place to have work. Less than a quarter of a million were there. The majority of the Arabs that were there had immigrated in the prior 70 years to work for, interestingly enough, the Zionist settlers who had come five years earlier. There really was not a presence of any single group there at any time between 638 and 1918. It was just part of the Turkish rule.

In that land, you had Arabs; a lot of Bedouins and Zionist "settlers," many of whom employed a lot of these migrant workers, because they had found a way to develop the land.

Right. Because there was a lot of work to be done that you heard on that audio clip. What those first Jewish settlers in 1878 and a little earlier found was swampland, just as Mark Twain described it as a vast wasteland of nothing that anyone would want. After that period, in 1919, there was a peace conference in Paris and an agreement between the Zionist leader at that time, Chaim



Weizmann, and the Arab leader, Emir Faisal. They promoted the development of a Jewish homeland that would be separate from the part that would be claimed by the Arabs. There was no "Palestinian" name at that point. That same year the Muslim-Christian Association met in Jerusalem to choose representatives for the Paris Peace Conference. They adopted the resolution that said this: "We consider Palestine as part of Arab Syria, as it has never been separated from it at any time. We are connected with it by national, religious, linguistic natural, economic and geographical bonds." Both of those events show that the Arabs did not view Palestine as having any independent status.

One can look at history and can prove there was no "Palestinian" according to these things happening in 1918 and 1919. And very emphatically the Arab community was saying there is no "Palestine." That does not exist; it was all part of the larger Arab Syria.

They considered it southern Syria at that point.

The point is, when we say, "The Palestinians have an ages-long right to the land," there is no physical history to prove it, because the Arab countries themselves said they were not "Palestinians."

We will see that even into the 1930's they said it again.

What was the 1936 Peel Commission and why is that important?

Not too many people have heard of it, but you can find it on Wikipedia. The Peel Commission, also called the Palestine Oil Commission, was a British Commission of Inquiry. Lord Peel was the person who headed the commission; thus, whoever heads the thing always gets their name on it. If you want to have your name in infamy, just head some commission!

No thanks!

Peel was appointed in 1936 to investigate the cause of unrest in what was called "Mandatory Palestine." That was administered by Britain at the time, and it followed a six-month long strike that was going on there by the workers. The Peel Commission ended up proposing the partition of Palestine. But here is what the local Arab leader, Abdul-Hadi, said when that proposal was made: "There is no such country as Palestine. Palestine is a term the Zionists invented. There is no Palestine in the Bible. Palestine is alien to us. It is the Zionists who introduced it. Our country was for centuries part of Syria." Well, that does not sound to me like there was any Palestine or Palestinian land at that time. There was never a non-Jewish Palestine - it was created later. The land was always part of the Ottoman Empire until it was freed by the British. Until that came out after 1918-1919, non-Jewish Palestine existed, but it was created in 1922 by the British, it was separated, and it formed what is today known as Jordan. That was the partition.



So, "Palestine" created by the British was actually part of what we know as Jordan, not what we know as Israel.

That is correct. In fact, the majority of Jordan's population and army really are Palestinian. Most Palestinians in the West Bank today hold Jordanian passports.

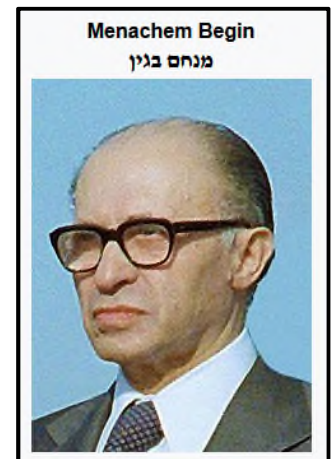
We hear "It is the Palestinians versus the Jews," but if you look at history, the Palestinians by admission of several commissions and several members of leadership in the Arab community say it did not exist. The only Palestine that existed was part of Jordan, *not* Israel.



Yes. In 1981, King Hussein himself, the grandson of Abdullah, said, "The truth is that Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan." Even Yasser Arafat said that when he was a terrorist fighter back in 1991. If you look at what he was talking about in the civil war, he said the same thing, "Jordan is Palestine. Palestine is Jordan."

What about United Nations activity during that period of time, 1918, 1919, 1936 and so forth? What were the declarations of the United Nations relating to Palestine back then?

Well, the United Nations was not there at that time. It was not until 1947 we had the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. There were two parties involved in that - the Arab Higher Committee and also Menachem Begin. Begin was at that time the chief of what was called the Irgun, the paramilitary organization that had been set up in 1948 or 1947 to help defend the Jewish population. Today it would be known as the IDF, the Israeli Defense Forces. But that was the one before they were a state and Begin was in charge of that. At that point, nobody wanted partition. The Jews and the Arabs - and, again, we are not talking about Palestinians. We are talking about the Arabs who claimed that Syria was their land and Jordan was Palestine. Neither one wanted to have partition. The Jews, of course, said that on biblical grounds this is our homeland. The Arabs said if the land is partitioned, we will go to war. And David Ben Gurion at that time said there was no solution. We want the country to be ours, and they want the country to be theirs. The General Assembly of the United Nations in November of 1947 voted to set up both a Jewish state and an Arab state, and they determined the borders. Jerusalem was to be an international zone. The Jews accepted this, but the Arabs rejected it. That is when they immediately attacked the Jewish settlements in all parts of what was then called Palestine. That has continued to this present day.





The United Nations said, "Here is how we are going to do it. We are going to separate things out and Jerusalem is going to be international," which the Jews accepted. But right after the Jews accepted it, there were attacks upon Jewish settlements throughout that whole area.

That U.N. Resolution 242 is the most famous one. You ask any Israeli or anyone who knows about Resolution 242. The Arabs did not even keep that. It goes all the way back to 1947. The offer was made to partition, and it was rejected.

They had the opportunity for a homeland. Even though we established historically that there were no "Palestinians," but they were Arabs from Jordan essentially, and even though the opportunity was there, they simply said no. We have had this argument that has raised its level of emotionalism and ratcheted it up to the point today where we are really in a difficult situation. Present day, what is the thinking now in terms of all of this with the land and the divisions and so forth?

Nobody disputes that the Arabs have lived in Palestine for many centuries. The controversial issue really revolves around immigration and what they want for people and the positions on where that should go. Arab population increased. But it is all around immigration. That is really where the arguments take place. The revisions that were made in the land, the Palestinian Authority rejected the existence of the State of Israel and wanted the separate state. But there has been no agreement on that. Today it is really about what happens. Israel declared its independence when we had the first Israeli-Arab War. It ended in the establishment of the Jewish state, and they were admitted to the United Nations as the 59th member in 1949. That is really the key element that ended up coming out of what happened with the U.N. resolution of 1947.

They ended up becoming that nation because they were attacked by those who, during the negotiations, said, "No, we do not want any of this." Israel fights back and wins. Israel is recognized as a sovereign nation. They declared their independence in 1948, and the UN recognized them in 1949. They are a nation. It is not debatable. You cannot say, "They do not belong there." They did all the things they were supposed to do, and now they have been established.



Let's talk about the population within Israel and the nations around it, because we think that is going to be an important factor as we look at all this. The bottom line is the idea of "Palestinian" and those who are unseated have no place. You have to ask yourself, am I going to listen to what people are saying, or am I going to look at what is factual?



We have looked at Israel historically and in light of world opinion. What does the Bible say is coming next?

In a way, all we have talked about so far is kind of like an introduction. What comes next really is the main story. God set a plan in motion long ago on behalf of His human creation, and Israel has been, is and will be one of the key lynchpins of that plan. Let's begin with *Israel right now* in relation to prophecy.

 **GDP and tech, *How Powerful is Israel, testtube.com***

- *How does Israel fair economically? Although they're on the smaller side, Israel's GDP is around 300 billion, ranking them 37th worldwide and 19th in the U.N.'s development index. Israel is a high-tech start-up hot spot. Its nickname is Silicon Wadi, after the Arabic word for valley. Some are pointing toward their emphasis on education and disproportionate numbers of scientists and engineers for the leading cause for the ongoing technological boom. Many wealthy American figureheads have praised and invested in Israel's economy as well, including Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. Israel is also home to one of the largest diamond cutting and polishing industries, although the land itself is low on natural resources.*

How did it happen that this tiny country is a world leader in technology? It happened because you have a people who applied themselves in a big way for a long time, whether others liked it or not.

Israel's Biblical Position: What does the future hold?

- **Post Holocaust, only two main centers of Jewish life: America and Israel**
 - U.S. in 1990 - Jewish population was 5.5 million
 - In 2000 - 5.2 million
 - Israel's Jewish population passed 5.6 million in 2006
 - First time since 135 AD, there are now more Jews in Israel than anywhere else.
 - If there were no Holocaust, the estimated Jewish population would be about 26 million, but today it is about only 14.5 million.
 - Since 1948 when Israel became a country, almost 3 million Jews have immigrated from all over world; (note Jeremiah 23:7) probably 2 million came out of Egypt.

But in Jeremiah 23:7 God said that when He regathered and He brought Israel together, it would make the Exodus basically look small. And we can estimate about 2 million people came out of Egypt in the Exodus. The fact that more than that have immigrated to Israel, I think is very biblically significant.

Zechariah 10:6: (NASB) *I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph, And I will bring them back, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.*

I think it is an indication again of the regathering of Israel, the fact that God would bring them back. Bring them back where? Bring them back to where they were before.



Jeremiah 23:7-8: (NASB) ⁷Therefore behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they will no longer say, As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, ⁸but, As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them. Then they will live on their own soil.

That is pretty explicit! God is going to bring them back to the land of Israel, and that is exactly what has happened.

What about anti-Semitism? We hear about it, and it seems like it is on the rise. What is happening with anti-Semitism around the world?

- **Anti-Semitism rising all over the world**
 - Since the mid 1990's, a steady stream of South African Jews, American Jews and French Jews have either made Aliyah (Hebrew "ascent"), or purchased property in Israel for potential future immigration because they are worried about anti-Semitism.
 - On the heels of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, Western Aliyah was at its highest in 36 years with 3,324 North American Jews immigrating to Israel.

We are seeing anti-Semitism rise all over the world and more so as other places have an increased Muslim population. There is animosity between Muslims and Jews, so we see a lot more immigrating to Israel. Dozens of countries now host just a very small Jewish population. Israel and the U.S., between the two countries, has 83 percent of the world Jewry. Ninety-eight countries hold the other 17 percent.

Let's get a little more specific on that. This next quote is from Norman Finkelstein, born in 1953 to Jewish Holocaust survivors. He is an American scientist, activist, professor and author. He is very critical of Israel, as you will see by his quote. I want to put this quote on the table and then talk about diversity in the Middle East.

The Zionists indeed learnt well from the Nazis. So well that it seems that their morally repugnant treatment of the Palestinians, and their attempts to destroy Palestinian society within Israel and the occupied territories, reveals them as basically Nazis with beards and black hats. — Norman Finkelstein

That is a pretty awful, powerful statement from somebody who is Jewish and anti-Semitic. You mentioned that most of the Jewish population is in the United States and in Israel. Give us a few numbers about some of the countries that surround Israel. First of all, approximately how many Arabs are citizens within the nation of Israel right now?

Within the nation of Israel, Arabs, all those that would be outside of the Jewish part of the population, would be probably three or four million Israeli citizens that live and work in Israel. But outside of that, Israel has very little representation in the Arab countries of citizens. United Arab Emirates is the biggest. And you might say, "Oh, they might have a few thousand." Well, 500 is the estimate. Egypt, which Israel made a peace treaty with some years ago, you had 80,000 Jews in the early part of the century. Today it is estimated there are 40 to 50.



In the whole country of Egypt?

Bahrain is the other one. It is estimated there are only about 36 Jewish citizens there. Very few.

Here is the thing. Within Israel there are over a million "Palestinians," Arabs who are citizens. They have jobs like everybody else.

They want to stay within Israel.

Right. Because they have a good life, and they participate in the organization and government of that nation. When people lean on Israel with such ferocity, you have to ask, "What about the nations around them? Why is there not any kind of diversity in those nations?" And how come we don't get on them to say "Hey, that's not really very fair!" We look at this and get confused.

Zechariah 12:2-3: (NASB) ²Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. ³It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

Is this a warning?

It IS a warning. God says He is the one behind the scenes doing this. When it says *I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone*, it really is *a heavy stone* for them if they do not support Israel. If they do not, it says they will be *injured*. And we are seeing God had said *those that bless you, I will bless. And those that curse you, I will curse...all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.*



We see that with something like the United Nations, for example. They are definitely anti-Israel. Does this represent all the nations of the earth? I think yes, it does. All the meaningful nations are part of that, and all are anti-Israel. I think we are seeing this Scripture fulfilled in our day.

Let's look at Ezekiel 11:17, because this is about the prophecies God gave to put our understanding of what Israel means in a proper context.

Ezekiel 11:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶Therefore say, thus says the Lord GOD, Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone. ¹⁷Therefore say, Thus says the Lord GOD, I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

It almost sounds like God is in a sense repeating Himself to different prophets.

He certainly is repeating Himself, because He wants to verify through every prophet the land belongs to Israel. When He says He would give the land to Abraham and his descendants, we can track that back to those that descended from his son Isaac, tracked to the Jewish people today.

Right. You established that in the timeline we saw earlier, where Israel established itself in the land in 1500 BC, 1500 years before Christ. And then the Muslim religion began in 631 AD. There is a 2000-year head start.



It is pretty dramatic from a scriptural standpoint:

Amos 9:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine and make gardens and eat their fruit. ¹⁵I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them, says the LORD your God.

This is important because when the land was given to Israel, divided up after the United Nations, 60 percent of what was given to the Jewish state was Negev Desert containing nothing but Bedouins. The Jewish people have transformed the land into, as we heard in the previous audio clip, places where basically every flower, every plant is productive, and they are doing things no one else could do. This Scripture has been fulfilled in our very day by the activity that has happened since 1948 with Israel.

This cannot be overstated, because we remember the audio clip from Mark Twain back in 1867 saying the place was just a desert barren land where nothing grew. Yet when you go there, you see the incredible agriculture they have created out of nothing and you say, "How did they do that?" It was through blood, sweat, tears, technology and innovation and never giving up on making the land have the ability to produce. It is just an incredible, miraculous look at development there.

You have to remember, the last part of that Scripture says, *they will not again be rooted out from their land, which I have given them*. Israel will stay, and they will survive, and they will prosper in that land.

Jeremiah 30:3-11 carries another important point in terms of prophecy.

These texts predict that the regathering of the people and rebuilding of the land will not be done in a peaceful manner. It is done like unto a woman in childbirth, in spasms of pain and peace. This is exactly what we have seen since 1878 when Israel opened to the Jews. We have spasms of peace then spasms of war. This will continue until God says it is done.

What we are seeing is no surprise when it comes to Israel. When we look at anti-Semitism, even though we get frustrated by it, it should come as no surprise, because the prophecies tell us these things are going to happen as part of God's big plan. Israel's role up to this point has been unmistakably in the hands of God.

What will come of God's overruling on Israel's behalf through all of the historical and present turmoil?

Looking back on our conversation, we can certainly see the pattern of trouble that has followed Israel. An important thread that ties all of these events together is Israel's significant place in God's overall plan. Now let's look at how prophecy describes their place and the results of their ages-long turmoil.

Len, as we begin to wrap this up for this last segment, it is going to be more of a scriptural viewpoint of what is happening in Israel today.



We began by looking at current events, specifically the United States establishing an embassy in Jerusalem and the unrest and misrepresentations unfolding around the event, and everybody saying Israel should not be doing this. Then a few other countries put their embassies in Jerusalem and nobody says a thing. You have to wonder about that.

We looked at the timeline that said Israel was established in the present-day nation of Israel 1,500 years before Christ and has had a basic presence ever since, albeit at times very small.

We looked at how Palestinians were not an Arab presence in Israel, but according to Arab documentation, were part of Jordan and not Israel.

We looked at the willingness of Israel to go along with the rules and their continually getting attacked, beaten down and beaten back, and yet becoming victorious and building a nation to be reckoned with since 1948. It is one of the strongest military powers in the world, agriculturally very far ahead of most countries and technologically a fertile ground for invention.

We can say clearly God has not abandoned Israel, but He is certainly letting them go through a lot of trouble.

Isaiah 51:3: (NASB) *Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and sound of a melody.*

Even though one might say Israel is not a religious nation, there is a religious tenor in that nation. There is no question about it. And as you said, God has not abandoned Israel. We see in that desert wilderness 60 percent of the land is blooming. **Isaiah 35:1** (KJV) says *the desert will blossom as a rose and they shall see the glory of the Lord*, and we are starting to see this happen.

Israel has plans to bring about every flower and animal mentioned in the Bible. They are definitely focused. Even though they have not yet completely turned back to God, they are certainly focused in that direction.



We can see God's hand in their lives:

Jeremiah 32:42: (NASB) *For thus says the LORD, Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.*

We know of the disasters and we know all the things happening to them. God says He is going to bring good. It is just starting, and He is not talking about just today. There is a place for Israel that is going to be there for all eternity; they are going to play a big role in God's plan for the future for the entire world.

Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people - Why does God have to do it that way? This is a subject for another day how He works us through the world of sin to help us understand righteousness versus evil. Israel, being God's



chosen people from early on, had that experience more than anybody, generations and generations and generations of that experience.

The old saying is, "No pain, no gain." They have great gain, but they have gone through a great deal of pain. I believe God is training the nation of Israel for a special role.

Sometimes God, in His overruling providence, can put us in a position training us for something and we have no idea what it is we are being trained for.



I can look back and see how the Lord did certain things in my life to train me, frankly, for doing podcasting and radio for 20+ years in relation to the gospel. I had no idea the two were connected, but when the opportunity arose, the training was already in place. God works ahead and it is no different with Israel.



The role Israel plays in bringing the world to God:

Jeremiah 3:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷At that time they will call Jerusalem the Throne of the LORD, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. ¹⁸In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

Here we see a beautiful picture of what Jerusalem's role is to be in the future! At some point, that is going to be the focal point for teaching the world about God and His ways. The nation of Israel will have a big role in that, and they will learn why they have gone through all those things, turn as a nation back to God and will no longer be divided amongst themselves. They will be under leadership who will point them in the direction back to God.

Verse 18 says in those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel. God is saying the divisions within Israel will be dissolved and things will be brought back together.

Yes, and they are going to be there from everywhere to do that. *They will call Jerusalem the Throne of the LORD* - Jerusalem does play a significant role in world history as well as in the history of Israel.

The role of Israel and bringing the world to God:

Zechariah 8:2-3: (NASB) ²Thus says the LORD of hosts, I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her. ³Thus says the LORD, I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.

We are dealing here with the fact that Jerusalem does not necessarily belong to Israel. *It belongs to God.* And so that is what we see - God will, through Jerusalem and through the nation of Israel, bring true peace to the world.

That is amazing. When we think about bringing true peace to the world and ask somebody, "If true peace was to come to the world, where would it come through?" I do not think anybody would say Jerusalem.



I think you are right.

It does not seem to fit with what we see today. But with Bible prophecy, it gives us a sense of how this can really happen. Let's just watch how God unfolds things. The role that Israel plays is utterly significant. You made a really important point, Len, by saying Jerusalem is not Israel's; it is God's. And that is why all of this will come together, but it is not going to happen until the entire world turns against Israel. We painted that glorious picture, and then we have to ruin it with facts about prophecy!



Ezekiel 38:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it?

¹⁵You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army; ¹⁶and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.

This is an amazing Scripture, because it lays out God's future peace plan for the Middle East. We think it's a hot bed now in the Middle East with Israel - Ezekiel is a prophet who describes not just the regathering of Israel, but after they are regathered there, there is a big turn against Israel. It is there God makes known to the world who He is.

It is through that, when He says, at the very end there, *I will bring you against my land so that the nations may know Me when I'm sanctified before your eyes.* God will make it very manifest that He exists, and not only that He exists, but that He is in control. This is the final battle that will take place in the current world of sin, I believe, before God inaugurates His kingdom, which will be centered in Israel with the capital of Jerusalem.

Now we are getting serious in talking about a final battle.

Zechariah 14:2: (NASB) *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.*

That does not sound good.

No, I think it indicates to us that somehow, as powerful as Israel is, when it comes to the point where all the nations are gathered against it, the only favorable outcome for them will be if God intervenes. This is the point where God intervenes from Israel being destroyed, and He makes Himself known to all the nations of the earth.



Zechariah 8:23: (NASB) *Thus says the LORD of hosts, In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.*

That sounds like that is a positive end.

Yes, this is not about destruction; it is about blessing, what it is meant to be. Israel is there to eventually be a blessing to the entire world. Many look at Israel as a blessing today with all the advancements they have created, but the real blessing of Israel is to teach the world about God. That is what this Scripture is saying. Israel will turn to God, and they will be God's nation and His avenue for people learning who He is and what He has in store for them. Nations will follow Israel because it will be known that God is with Israel.

What do you believe is the proper role for Christians toward Israel right now?

To look toward Israel and pray for the peace of Israel. Eventually God's intervention in the world's affairs will eradicate this world of sin and bring about blessings for all mankind. Isaiah 40:1,2 is a text aimed at all Christians today.

Isaiah 40:1-2: (NASB) *¹Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God. ²Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.*

Israel, a land that has gone through so many things, we have to learn to appreciate what they have, what they have been, and what they are to be in the future. If we can do that as Christians and pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we will be doing God's will. That is really what He wants us to do, not to convert Israel to Christianity but to pray for them and their role in teaching the world about God in the future.

Len, thanks so much for being with us today. It has been a blessing to have you here with the history and the statistics and looking at it from a whole different perspective.

This is an important subject because in our lives, in our experiences, we come across the difficulties with Israel on a regular daily basis. Take heart in biblical prophecy. Take heart in historical facts that Israel belongs where they are. They are God's chosen people and are going to help to usher in the kingdom of God for all of the world.

***So, is Israel a thorn in the side of the world?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***



Join us next week for our podcast on June 4, 2018:
**Is the Hell of Christian Tradition
Taught in the Bible? Part II**

Bonus Material:

Israel was not created in order to disappear - Israel will endure and flourish. It is the child of hope and the home of the brave. It can neither be broken by adversity nor demoralized by success. It carries the shield of democracy and it honors the sword of freedom.

— *John F. Kennedy*

In Israel, a land lacking in natural resources, we learned to appreciate our greatest national advantage: our minds. Through creativity and innovation, we transformed barren deserts into flourishing fields and pioneered new frontiers in science and technology.

— *Shimon Peres*

Look, we have existed for 4,000 years - 2,000 years in diaspora, in exile. Nobody in the Middle East speaks their original language but Israel. When we started 64 years ago, we were 650,000 people. So, you know, we are maybe swimming a little bit against the stream, but we continue to swim. — *Shimon Peres*

