

Complete Separation by Relocation

by Kermit Zarley 1/25/2005

Introduction

In my book, *Palestine Is Coming: The Revival of Philistia* (1990), I assert that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be successfully solved unless a settlement achieves maximum security for both peoples and the Palestinians get their own independent and fully sovereign state. I further maintain that such a solution should be based on the two principles of “complete separation” and “historical precedent,” which requires relocation.

By complete separation, I mean that the two states must have no non-contiguous lands and be juxtapositioned side-by-side. That’s how all continental, neighboring states that are aligned on the earth. The world focus on giving a Swiss cheese West Bank and separated Gaza Strip, with an adjoining corridor, to the Palestinians in which to establish their sovereign state does not adequately meet this criteria. In order for Israel to maintain adequate security for its citizens under this arrangement, it is doubtful Israel will ever forfeit military control of a Palestinian state in a Swiss cheese West Bank-Gaza entity. Neither will Israel allow such a Palestinian state to marshal its own national defense.

By historical precedent, I mean that this conflict be settled on the basis of Israel’s claim to its “ancestral land” as stated in its Proclamation of Independence. And similarly, I suggest that the word “Palestine” be redefined as in antiquity. “Palestine” derives from the word “Philistia,” and the word “Palestinian” derives from the word “Philistine.” The ancient Philistines are the people from whom the modern-day Palestinians derive their name. How did this happen? It is a rather convoluted history.

The Philistines were the archrival of the ancient Israelites for over half a millennium. Their two nations were juxtapositioned side-by-side, with Philistia located in the coastal plain and the Israelites occupying primarily the Judean hill country and northward. When Judah suffered Exile during the 6th century B.C., neighboring Philistines predominantly resettled the land of Judah. That’s why Greek traders called it “Palaestina,” referring to “Philistia.” As authority John Bright explains, “the Babylonians did not replace deported Jews with elements brought in from outside, as the Assyrians had in Samaria.”¹ Following the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135), the Romans expelled Jews from their land and expunged Jewish names from it, re-substituting the Greek designation “Palaestina.” This name fell into disuse during the Middle Ages and was revived again by the British following WWI. That’s when the League of Nations issued the mandates over the former Ottoman Empire’s Middle Eastern lands, and the British were given the single mandate over Palestine and Transjordan. Thus, throughout history the Gentiles have applied the name “Palaestine/Palestine” to the former land of Israel. And without this designation, during the 20th century the indigenous Arabs of the former land of Israel never would have come to be called “Palestinians.”

¹ John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (orig. 1959; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 344.

I believe that the Palestinians probably have a stronger genetic link to the ancient Philistines than any other people group. While this cannot yet be determined, who is more deserving of the land of the Philistines than the Palestinians? Accordingly, let the Jews have their ancestral land, the Land of Israel, and let the Palestinians have the Land of the Philistines. While the borders of these lands fluctuated somewhat throughout the history of conflict between these two peoples, their most common borders can be determined by means of archaeological excavation of ancient sites, many of which have been undertaken. Allowing this history to be the judge, Israel would forfeit all of its coastal plain south of the Nahal Sorek in order to get all of the West Bank. And the Palestinians would forfeit all of the West Bank in order to get the coastal plain south of the Nahal Sorek. Obviously, such a geographical arrangement requires the relocation of both Jews and Palestinians living in these territories to be exchanged.

Settlement Pattern

In considering this proposal, I think it helps some people, especially religious Jews and Christians, to know how this disputed territory was historically settled. According to the Jewish Bible (=Old Testament), the ancient Hebrews (=Israelites), ancestors of today's Jews, had a covenant with their god, Yahweh. In this covenant as originally given to the patriarchal Hebrews—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—Yahweh promised them a people and a land, it being the land of Canaan. Later, Yahweh gave them his Law through Moses as an agreed part of this covenant. Yahweh required that the Israelites keep this Law or he would not fulfill his part of the covenant, even threatening to expel them from the land he was about to give them. This very thing subsequently happened more than once, in which Yahweh removed the Israelites from their land and sent them into exile in Gentile lands. Whenever this happened, neighboring peoples moved in to possess the Israelites' land. Since ancient Philistia bordered on Judah (=Judea) to the south, during the Exile the Philistines, who by now had had some intermixture from other peoples, began settling in the neighboring land of Judah, the foremost tribe of the Israelites.²

It is interesting to view a map showing the Israelites' territorial conquest under Joshua's leadership with the border of the West Bank overlaid.³ Amazingly, the two territories are practically identical, yet the populations are now reversed. Whereas the Jews' ancestors lived almost exclusively in this territory at that time and Gentiles lived in the coastal plain, Gentiles now live almost exclusively in the West Bank and Jews live in the coastal plain. So, the situation was reversed in the 20th century compared to antiquity.

Moses explained in the Law that if Yahweh removed his people from their land, Yahweh would curse it, so that it would become a diseased wasteland.⁴ Indeed, when the Zionists began returning to this disputed land in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they settled mostly in the coastal plain because it was largely unoccupied. In contrast, the indigenous Arabs (=Palestinians) occupied the Judean hill country, which had been the heart of ancient Israel. Except for Gaza, these Arabs did not live in the coastal plain because it had long ago been overrun with malaria-carrying mosquitoes that had infested rampant marshes. These migrating Jews exerted a heroic effort in reclaiming this coastal territory,

² See Nehemiah 13.24 and *Palestine Is Coming*, pp. 37-38.

³ For example, Barry J. Beitzel, *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, p. 103.

⁴ See Deuteronomy 29.22-28 and *Palestine Is Coming*, pp. 63-64.

and that is why most Israeli Jews live there today and Tel Aviv is a metropolitan center. Thus, the present settlement pattern of this disputed land—in which most Palestinians live in ancient Judea and Samaria whereas Israeli Jews live in the coastal plain north of Gaza—is solely a result of the ancient Israelites failing to keep their covenant with Yahweh their god and thus being expelled from their land. I therefore suggest that the present situation be reversed, to the way Yahweh originally intended it and therefore in accordance with historical precedence, by transferring the two peoples.

Opposition to My Proposal

Since my book was published, I have visited Washington, DC, on two occasions to try to meet with members of Congress and Middle East analysts to present my proposal for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (When I do, I do not initiate discussion about the religious or biblical aspects of this issue.) The last time I did so was in October, 2001, shortly after the terrorist attack on the U.S. on 9/11 and during the week of the anthrax scare. It was not the best time to go there. At any time, it is difficult to get an appointment to meet with such important and busy people. But I have friends there who arranged some appointments.

One of the people I met with in 2001 to discuss my proposal was Judith Kippur. She is still second only to Anthony Cordesman as the top Mideast analyst at the prestigious Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). As soon as I briefly made my pitch, Ms. Kippur responded, “You can’t tell the Palestinians to ‘get out of the West Bank.’” I understood her point well. The West Bank is home to nearly 2 million of the worldwide total of 7-8 million Palestinians. Many of their families have lived there for several generations, far longer than the modern migration of Jews to the present land of Israel and the West Bank. My reply to Ms. Kippur’s objection was that I didn’t think it was the best place for the Palestinians to live compared to what I was suggesting.

The West Bank Security Barrier

In early 2002, only months after I met with Ms. Kippur, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced that Israel would construct a very formidable wall-fence-trench barrier around the West Bank to secure Israeli citizens against primarily Palestinian suicide bombers. Israel had built a far less impregnable fence around the much smaller Gaza Strip with checkpoints that it controlled. The Gaza Strip had twenty-one Jewish settlements, which now contained nearly 8,000 Jews, that Sharon had established there when he was Israel’s Minister of Housing. This “hemming in” of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip worked, resulting in a sharp decline in Jewish deaths inflicted there by Palestinians. That is why Sharon, his cabinet and Israel’s Knesset made the very controversial decision to build this barrier around the West Bank.

Most of the world highly criticized this plan to build a West Bank barrier, alleging that it would be a heinous infringement on Palestinian human rights and against international law. Indeed, in mid-2004 the International Court of Justice at the Hague, in Amsterdam, rendered an advisory opinion on Israel’s construction of this barrier. It stated that it would be illegal, according to international law, wherever it would be located inside the Green Line, thus encroaching on West Bank territory. Present construction and the planned route

do so in several places, yet Israel has ignored the ruling because the court has no legal jurisdiction over Israel.

This West Bank Security Barrier is most imposing. It is 25 feet high and consists of various sections of either razor-tipped electric fence or concrete wall. It also has 30-100 meters of buffer space with a water trench, a road and many surveillance cameras and sniper towers. And it is costing approximately \$1 million per mile.

Construction of this West Bank wall-fence began in mid-2002. Since then, its route has been altered several times to deflect criticism, sometimes due to lawsuits that also temporarily stopped its construction. Each time the route has been revised, it makes more zigzags that add to its overall length. Originally, its was to be about 300 km long. Later, it was lengthened to 600 km. Now, it is projected to be 750 km (=466 miles) or more. To date, 180 km of the barrier reportedly has been completed,⁵ which represents less than 1/3 of its overall length.

The exact location of this impassible West Bank Security Barrier has been controversial, and many West Bank Palestinians complain bitterly about it. When the map was presented to the public for the first time, in late 2003, it consisted of about 375 miles on a twisting route in which only 11% of it would extend along the Green Line, which is the West Bank border. And it would completely enclose twelve Palestinian communities. Moreover, it would put 15% of the West Bank and nearly 300,000 Palestinians on the Israeli side of the barrier. Reportedly, 675,000 Palestinians would have their lives seriously disrupted due to this barrier.⁶ Many Palestinians therefore claim that the barrier will make their lives absolutely intolerable. It will separate them from their jobs, agricultural fields, schools, hospitals, water sources, etc. They constantly will have to go through Israeli checkpoints, which in other places have been notoriously slow, in order to get to the other side of the barrier. Chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, said in late 2003 that the Israelis were threatening to “bury the two-state solution by building the wall in the West Bank and confining us to towns that are prisons.”⁷ Indeed, Israel confined Erekat, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and other leaders in their Ramallah compound the last years of Arafat’s life.

This West Bank Security Barrier eventually will drive some Palestinians out of their homeland. If they were then presented with my proposal, I suspect that a considerable majority of them would prefer it to living inside the fenced-in West Bank. Then, you won’t have to tell a lot of Palestinians to get out of the West Bank; rather, they will gladly go, especially if they have a better place to live.

“Right of Return”

I also brought up the subject with Ms. Kippur about the aspirations of the Palestinian refugees. I mentioned that the two sticking points in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process are the Palestinians’ demand of “right of return” and their desire for the capital of their Palestinian state being located in East (=Old) Jerusalem. Israel has always vowed it could

⁵ So says the Israeli Consulate in Washington, DC.

⁶ *New York Times*, November 11, 2003.

⁷ *New York Times*, December 12, 2003.

never accept either of these conditions. I told Ms. Kippur that if the Palestinian refugees were presented with two options—returning to their former homelands in Israel and the West Bank or living in the location for a Palestinian state that I propose—they would choose my proposal. Ms. Kippur objected by saying that, similar to the Palestinians now living in the West Bank, the refugees are psychologically attached to their former homelands and you can't expect them to change that.

I replied to Ms. Kippur that Israel must deny the right of return of the Palestinian refugees to their former homelands in Israel because that would lead to Israel no longer being a Jewish state, which I asserted is a legitimate objective due to the history of anti-Semitism. I also pointed out, of which I was sure Ms. Kippur would be aware, that with the ongoing disparity in birth rates between Jews and Palestinians, Israel's population would in the not too distant future become a Palestinian majority. Thus, Israel could not afford to continue very long in its intransigence in settling the Palestinian problem.

There had never been any way to confirm Ms. Kippur's assertion about the Palestinian refugees being so psychologically attached to their former homeland in present Israel or the West Bank, which the "right of return" presumes. There certainly had been people who wanted to try to find out. But President Arafat reportedly did not want public polls taken among the refugees in case they differed with him and the PLO. That is supposedly why it never happened until July 11, 2003. That's when preeminent Palestinian political scientist and pollster, Khalil Shikaki, released the results of the first poll ever taken among the approximately 3.5 million Palestinian refugees who live mostly in UN refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan. That very day he did so at his Palestinian research center in Ramallah, the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank, a mob assaulted Shikaki. His reliable poll surprisingly showed that only 10% of respondents would return to Israel if so allowed. Instead, 54% would choose to accept compensation for their loss and live in the Palestinian state. Thus, this poll showed that Ms. Kippur had misjudged the aspirations of the Palestinian refugees with respect to where they wanted to live. And the number of these refugees slightly exceeds the total number of Palestinians that live in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

So, my proposal requires some transfer of both peoples. Almost two million Palestinians now live in the West Bank, and they would have to be relocated to the proposed Palestinian state. And an undetermined number of Jews living in the coastal plain south of metropolitan Tel Aviv would have to be relocated to the West Bank, which would be annexed to Israel. These two relocations would no doubt be expensive, but such an investment would provide maximum security for both peoples and thus prove worthwhile. Such transfer of peoples would not be unprecedented. Forced population transfers have occurred many times throughout history, sometimes in order to achieve peace. For example, following WWII, 11.5 million Germans were relocated from Eastern Europe to Germany, it being financed by the U.S. Marshall Plan, and 18 million Hindus and Muslims were exchanged between India and Pakistan.

Recent Developments

On May 1, 2003, the U.S., European Union, Russia and the UN jointly announced a new peace plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Calling themselves the Mideast

“Quartet,” they adopted a plan put forth by U.S. President Bush called “the road map.” It has three phases. Phase 1 involves the cessation of violence. Phase Two provides for a democratic Palestinian election, the drafting of a new Palestinian constitution and the establishment of unidentified provisional borders for a Palestinian state that would have “maximum territorial contiguity.” Phase Three of the Road Map provides for an international conference that oversees negotiations on final issues, borders, East Jerusalem and a peace treaty, to occur in 2005. However, a Palestinian state in a Swiss cheese West Bank-Gaza Strip-corridor, with East Jerusalem as its capital, does not seem to meet the requirement of “maximum territorial contiguity.”

It seems Ms. Kippur has somewhat altered her stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since we discussed it. On April 12, 2002, she reportedly stated concerning Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, “But neither leader will take a step forward without being forced to do so.”⁸

Other U.S. experts are adopting this new position expressed by Ms. Kippur. For example, in 2004, Brent Scowcroft, highly respected former national security advisor for presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush, publicly insisted that the U.S. should decide on a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and enforce it. He added, “The United States must seize this unique opportunity to make a decisive move.”⁹ It would seem that these experts have been affected by the 9/11/2001 attack on the U.S., and understandably so. Decades of Arab anger and hatred toward the U.S. has been connected to (1) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, (2) the U.S. as Israel’s foremost ally and (3) the sole peace broker in the conflict, which is a conflict of interests. Americans have been so slow to accept these connections.

I have never favored a forced settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and neither has the U.S. government as the peace broker. I have thought that if a referendum were held in Israel that provided a choice between my proposal and a Swiss cheese West Bank-Gaza settlement, the Israeli electorate would choose mine. And I think Israel’s construction of the West Bank Barrier will make my proposal more favorable to many Palestinians.

In June, 2003, U.S. President Bush, Israeli PM Sharon, Jordan’s King Abdullah, and Palestinian Authority PM Abbas met for the “Red Sea Summit.” While offering slightly different versions of a final settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they all agreed that there should be “two states living side-by-side in peace and security.” Sharon reportedly said at the summit that he now favored the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state, but one having “geographical contiguity.” Such a restriction does not seem to accord with a Swiss cheese West Bank-Gaza Strip-corridor entity.

In early 2004, Israeli PM Sharon announced his unilateral plan to dismantle most or the twenty-one Jewish settlements and military outposts in the Gaza Strip, along with a few minor Jewish settlement outposts in the northern West Bank, and turn the Gaza Strip over to the Palestinians. Sharon now contends that any Jewish settlement among the 1.3 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip is “unsustainable.”

⁸ *Arizona Republic*, April 12, 2002.

⁹ Article by Brent Scowcroft at *washingtonpost.com* entitled, “Middle East Opening,” November 12, 2004.

In early 2005, Sharon announced a “Revised Disengagement Plan” to include dismantling all Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip. He said it would begin in June, 2005, and hopefully be completed late in the year. Israel will explore the possibility of establishing a joint industrial zone along the southern border of the Gaza Strip, called “the Philadelphia Route,” and is open to the construction of a seaport and airport. The Gaza Strip will be a demilitarized zone devoid of weapons except those possessed by Palestinians security forces. Israeli forces will only guard the perimeter and coastline of the Gaza Strip and control its airspace. The perimeter fence will remain and Israel will continue to control the checkpoints. Accordingly, the Gaza Strip will still remain an occupied territory according to international law, which states, “a territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army.”

This “Sharon Plan” was most surprising because Prime Minister Sharon has been about the most hawkish politician in modern Israel’s history. In fact, he was the chief architect of Israel’s entire settlement program in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. All 8,000 Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip will be forced to leave. Some are now protesting vigorously, feeling betrayed by Mr. Sharon.

U.S. President Bush approved of the Disengagement Plan, and he regarded it as helpful to accomplishing the Road Map. He also declared that Palestinian refugees should have no “right of return” to Israel but that they should be allowed to live in the future Palestinian state. And he affirmed Israel’s right to retain its most populous settlements in the West Bank. President Bush has not opposed the building of the West Bank barrier.

Perhaps the most amazing reaction to Israel’s Disengagement Plan is from Hamas, the foremost Palestinian terrorist organization. In early 2004, Hamas founder and spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, announced that if Sharon follows through with his Disengagement Plan, Hamas might lay down arms and participate in a Gaza government. Surprisingly, shortly after Yassin’s announcement Israel assassinated him. Nevertheless, other Hamas leaders have indicated their desire to uphold Yassin’s declaration.

In late 2004, Egypt agreed to assist the Palestinians in the transfer of power in the Gaza Strip. Egypt will increase its security along the Gaza-Egypt border and help train Palestinian police and security forces.

In January, 2005, newly elected Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, declared that any peace accord “must get approval in a Palestinian referendum, both here in the homeland and abroad in the exile.”¹⁰ I expect that if Egypt would agree to my proposal, and it was put to a referendum vote in which Palestinian refugees participated, it would win over the Swiss cheese West Bank-Gaza-corridor proposal.

Some people think that if Israel completes its Gaza Disengagement Plan, the Palestinian Authority might declare the Gaza Strip as a Palestinian state. The fear in doing so is that such a move might embolden Israel to keep the West Bank by eventually annexing it to

¹⁰ *Arizona Republic*, January 5, 2005.

Israel. If the Palestinians do so declare Gaza as their state, the idea of an expanded Gaza Strip as the future Palestinian state is going to look very plausible.