

WEST OF THE DEAD SEA

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[This week's Archive was

originally published on July 11, 2008. In response to last Friday's HFR (HFR 10/13/23), TTPer Michael made this request: "Jack – Too many young people believe Israel was stolen from the Palestinians. You wrote an excellent article on the founding of Israel a few years back I wish you would republish with permission to share. It should have an opportunity to go viral as a counterbalance to the lies which have infected the narrative on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict." Here it is, Michael. Note that it contains links to five previous TTP articles for background in greater depth. I'm looking forward to your and other TTPer comments in the Forum.]

TTP, July 11, 2008

All photos by Jack Wheeler

You're lazily swimming in the Mediterranean Sea just off a beautiful beach. The beach goes on for miles, lined with resort hotels, and it's crowded with people. Young fit men playing volleyball, beautiful bikini-clad young women sunbathing, families relaxing under umbrellas, children making sand castles, multitudes of folks peacefully enjoying themselves in the sun, the sand, and the gentle sea.

You swear you're at one of Spain's great beaches, like Valencia, Marbella, or Barcelona. But you've noticed that a small light plane has flown along the shoreline several times. Your son asks, "Dad, why does that plane keep flying by?"

“It’s an IDF spotter plane,” you tell him. “Watching for a boatload full of Arab terrorists who might land to machine gun to death as many Jews on this beach as they can. Stuff like that can happen here anyplace, anytime. That’s life in Israel.”

Nope, we’re not in Valencia. We’re in Tel Aviv.

The next day you’re on a mountainside overlooking a lush green valley filled with farms, orchards, small communities, lakes and forested wildlife preserves. It’s a paradisaical scene, jarred by your standing on a slab of concrete – a gun emplacement for Syrian artillery that used to shell the valley indiscriminately. You’re on the Golan Heights, recaptured by Israel from Syrian occupation during the Six Day War (June 5-10, 1967).

Nestled directly below the Naftali mountains on the other side of the valley is the city of Kiryat Shmona, full of hi-tech enterprises, shopping malls, and hotels packed with tourists. Right behind the Naftali range is Lebanon, from where Hezbollah terrorists are fond of lobbying Katyusha rockets into the city. During Israel’s 33-day conflict with Hezbollah in July 2006, over 1000 Katyushas hit Kiryat Shmona.

It’s an incredible experience to visit Israel. For a Christian it can be overwhelming. Almost all of Jesus’ ministry prior to the last days in Jerusalem took place in a tiny area around Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, which is at the foot of the Mount of Beatitudes.

The area is so small you can capture it in practically one camera shot:



The trees on the hilltop are where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. At the base of the hill on the right is Bethsaida of Galilee (called today by the Arabic name of Tagbha) where Jesus performed the miracle of loaves and fishes. Next to Tagbha (on the back side of the hill) is the fishing village of Capernaum to where Jesus moved from Nazareth to begin his ministry, and home of the apostles Peter, James, John, and Matthew.

It’s an idyllic place, where the synagogue in which Jesus taught is being excavated:



Equally idyllic are the Franciscan gardens and chapel on the Mount of Beatitudes.



It's hard to imagine a more beautiful and tranquil place, where Jesus proclaimed the ethics of Christianity.

Far from tranquil, however, is the city where Jesus' ministry ended: Jerusalem. Even the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built over the site of Jesus' crucifixion, is a reminder of the city's vicious history:



The Roman emperor Hadrian (76-138) built a temple to the goddess Venus on the site, which Constantine (272-337) dismantled when he converted to Christianity and erected a church in the temple's place.

That church was destroyed by invading Persians in 614, built anew by devout Christians, then completely demolished down to the bedrock in 1009 by a Moslem Caliph, Tariqu I-Hakim, who styled himself *bi-Amr al-Lah*, Ruler by God's Command.

One of the first tasks of the Crusaders when they captured Jerusalem in 1099 was to reconstruct the *Sancti Sepulchri*, the Holy Sepulcher. Franciscan monks further renovated it in 1555, resulting in the exterior you see today.

And ever since the church was rebuilt, it has been fought over – not by Christians against Moslems, but Christians of one sect against Christians of another. Eastern (Greek) Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox all claim custodianship, fistfights frequently break out between them, so nothing gets repaired or changed.

A famous example is The Immovable Ladder. See it up there on the second story ledge? Someone, nobody knows who, put it there sometime before 1852. It hasn't moved since. Photographs from the 1890s show it exactly where it is today.

You'd think that the one place where people could get along, where Christians could get along, would be the place of Jesus' sacrifice for humanity, where pilgrims come from all over the world to revere that sacrifice and place their hands on the Stone of Anointing, the slab Jesus's dead body was laid upon after being taken down

from the Cross.



Then again, the worst that happens between these sectarians is angry words and an occasional busted lip. No Christians – nor Jews for that matter – blow themselves up in suicidal-homicidal butchery.

As you're just a visitor here, the question strikes you: What is it like to *live* here in Israel, to try and live a normal peaceful life surrounded by people who are criminally insane? What would you do to protect yourself?

You might build walls to separate you from the homicidal maniacs:



But then some random Arab lunatic living inside those walls commandeers a bulldozer and drives it down one of Jerusalem's busiest streets, crushing cars, overturning buses, killing three and injuring dozens – as happened last week on July 2nd.

The temptation to surrender to the insanity, to appease and capitulate to an implacable enemy sworn to annihilate you, can be strong under such pressure-cooker circumstances. Thus the peaceniks of Israel's Labor Party.

What the peaceniks need, what anybody needs who wants to come to grips with the reality of Israel, is a basic grasp of certain fundamental historical facts. For you to get this grasp, I need to give you a few short reading assignments.

The first is *The Moslem Myth of Jerusalem* from December 2003. It explains how the claim that Jerusalem is a Holy Islamic City is a total fabrication. There is no legitimate Moslem claim to Jerusalem whatever.

Second is *Philistines and Palestinians* from December 2006. This explains why there has historically never been any group of Arabs known as "Palestinians" distinct from other Arabs.

Third is *The English Godfather of Palestinian Terrorism* from December 2003, revealing how a manically anti-Semitic English homosexual named Ernest Richmond prevented Israel's creation after World War I and mentored the original Arab anti-Israel terrorists.

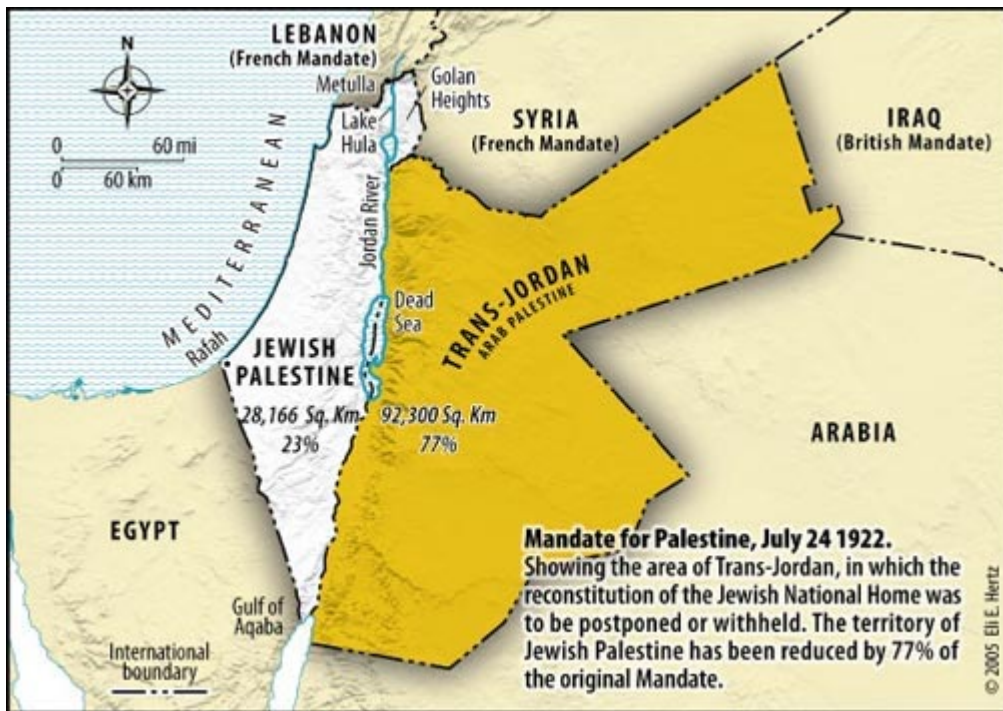
For a clear picture of how Israel legally came into existence, with maps and historical documents, there's the concise masterwork of Eli Hertz, *Mandate for Palestine: The Legal Aspects of Jewish Rights*.

Recall from our discussion of the history of Jordan last week in East of the Dead Sea that certain countries of

the Middle East were created as “Mandates” by the League of Nations out of the defeated Ottoman Empire: Mesopotamia (later Iraq), Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine (subsequently divided into Jordan and Jewish Palestine or Israel).

Since the mandate process created these countries, it is valid for all or none. Syria, for example, cannot claim that its borders and very existence as a nation state are valid but Israel’s are not. The same legal process that created Syria created Israel. Both are as legal – or illegal – as the other. Damascus should be made to choose which.

Here is the final Mandate for Jewish Palestine after its diminution to create (Trans-) Jordan. Note the borders:



You don’t see any “West Bank” in there, do you? Compare this map – which is the legal map of Israel to this day – with that of the CIA’s and US State Department’s:



So where does this “West Bank” come from, and where does the CIA get off labeling the Golan as “Israel Occupied”?

When Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948 (one day before the British Mandate expired so it was still valid with the borders you see above), Arab armies invaded from Syria, Jordan, and Egypt intent on eliminating the existence of the “Zionist Entity.” They were defeated – but not entirely.

Egypt occupied the “Gaza Strip” portion of Israeli territory, Syria the same with the Golan, and Jordan the same with what it called the West Bank (the “bank” being that of the Jordan River, east of which was Jordan). For 19 years, the Golan was Syria Occupied, while the West Bank was Jordan Occupied.

Then came the Six Day War, June 5-10, 1967, in which Israel recaptured its territories – and beyond. Israeli armies got to within a few miles of Damascus, seized all of the Sinai, and were poised to take the Suez Canal and march on Cairo. Instead, they pulled back to their 1948 Mandate borders, and eventually gave the Sinai back to Egypt. (Israel tried to give the Gaza, so full of Arabs, to Egypt but Cairo wouldn’t take it.)

And ever since, the world has the gall to label the Golan and the West Bank as Israel Occupied, and demand that “peace requires” Israel return to its “pre-1967” borders!

The 1922-1948 British Mandate for Jewish Palestine borders are Israel’s legal borders. This one fact is the absolutely most critical thing to understand about Israel today.

So now we come to the last reading assignment, Snipe Hunt for Peace from November 2007. In addition to learning that Colin Powell, before he became Bush's Secretary of State (Condi's predecessor) was on the Saudi payroll, you'll learn the three different – very different – Arabic terms for “peace.”

And why in any discussion of “peace” with Arabs, we must insist that only one of these three be used.

You've got your summer reading assigned. Consider printing it all out and taking it with you for something to peruse at the beach or your backyard. And ever so often, take a break to gaze up into the sky. Take a moment to be grateful for what you don't see: planes flying overhead looking for terrorist crazies who want to kill you.

The immediacy of danger here in Israel is ever-present. The courage of Israelis who face it every day is awe-inspiring. They are the gutsiest people on earth. And they are our allies in the support of freedom and Western Civilization. *L'chaim!* Israel. *Mazel tov!*

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