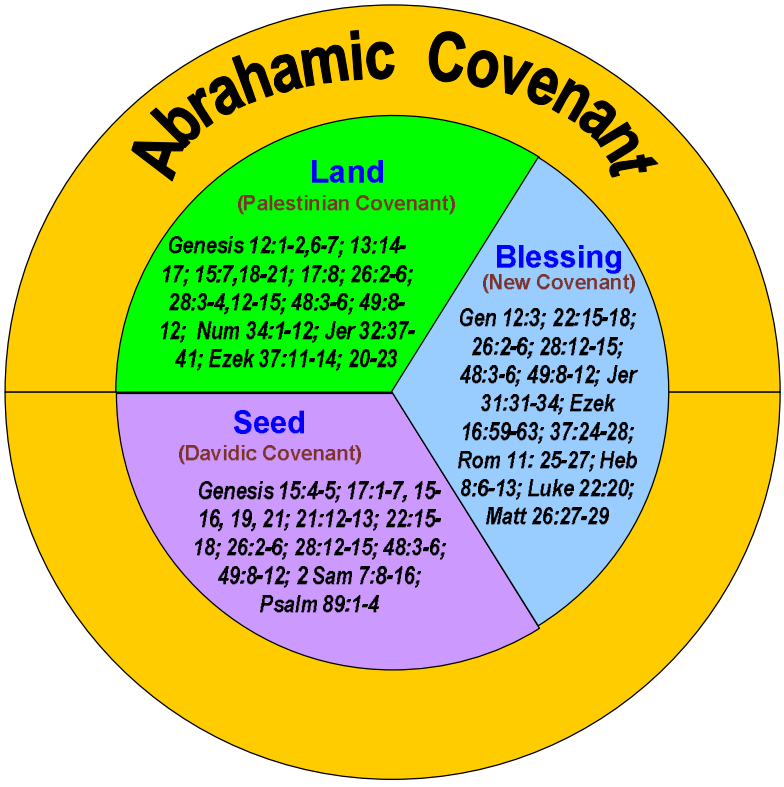
Significance of America's Recognition of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel

(*Don't Mess with Jehovah God's Game Plan*)

By Brian A. Cooper © 2018 ChristianEquity.com

The significance of Jerusalem as it relates to the Jewish people (i.e., the nation of Israel), requires an understanding of Jehovah God's unconditional covenant with Abraham. The illustration below identifies three components of this covenant (Land, Seed, & Blessing), along with their scripture references. Of these three components, ***only the Land Covenant*** (also known as the *Palestinian Covenant*) is yet to be fulfilled as God promised. Although the promise of the land is *unconditional* (guaranteed) God alone controls the circumstances that will lead to its complete possession by a faithful remnant of the Israelites.

God's Unconditional Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob



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The "Land Covenant"

In Genesis 12, Jehovah God called "Abram" (later known as *Abraham*) to leave his country and go to the "Land of Canaan." In this land and through His servant Abraham, God raised up a special people (i.e., the *Israelites*). Though they have been in and out of obedience with God since He chose them as His own, His covenant with Abraham remains unconditional. **God will make good on His promise for them to inherit the land.**

The territory God designated for Israel (i.e., the *Land of Canaan*) is defined in several places in the Bible. Such references include Genesis 13:12-17; 15:18; Numbers 34; Joshua 1:3; 15; Ezekiel 47: 13-23. The maps below (see Figures 1-4), show the approximate extent of God's land covenant to the nation of Israel as described in the each of the aforementioned passages. Some landmarks and cities documented in the scriptures are no longer in existence or have undergone name changes through time. As a result, the precise boundaries, especially along the eastern borders are difficult to ascertain.



Figure 1:The Promised Land according to Numbers 34



Figure 2: The Promised Land according to Joshua 15



Figure 3: The Promised Land according to Ezekiel 47:13-23

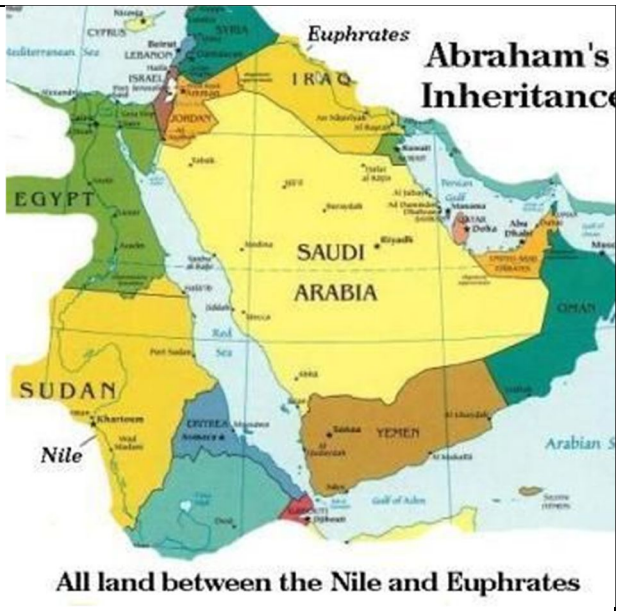


Figure 4: The Promised Land according to Genesis 13:14-18; Genesis 15:17-21; and Joshua 1:1-6

In Genesis 26, God specifically affirmed that through Isaac, his only son born by his wife, Sarah (not his first born, Ishmael) will become the branch from which His special people will be established and inherit the land. This covenant was further conveyed to Isaac's son, Jacob, in Genesis 28. *(Note that God later changed Jacob's name to **Israel** as noted in Genesis 32:22-28).* God blessed Jacob with 12 sons who became the progenitors of the 12 *tribes* of Israel.

Jacob's second youngest son, Joseph (son number 11) who was sold by his brothers to a band of Midianites/Ishmaelites who in turn sold him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. After the Lord enabled Joseph to interpret a troublesome dream of Pharaoh, he was elevated to 2nd in command of all of Egypt and saved the ancient world from a 7 year famine. Reunited with his brothers and father, they lived in Egypt for about 530 years (~130 years autonomously, then ~400 years as slaves) after the "good" Pharaoh was succeeded by another.

During this time, the descendants of Jacob's sons became a people of significant number (~ 600,000, *excluding* women and children). The Book of Exodus focuses on God's deliverance of His people from their enslavement in Egypt and their wanderings in the wilderness prior to their entrance into the *Promised Land.* The Books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy record God's instruction for their priests; the people's initial preparation for entering the *Promised Land*, their ungrateful hearts, and general unfaithfulness to God; and rededication to God in their final preparation to take possession of the land God gave them.

Immediately prior to entering the land to take possession of it, God had spoken through Moses and forewarned them that if they become corrupt, make pagan idols, or do any kind of evil in His eyes, He would destroy all but a remnant of them and scatter them to other nations who do not know Him. (See Deuteronomy 4). To preclude this from happening, God tells them (see Deuteronomy 7) that after He

delivers the Canaanites into their hands the Israelites should destroy them "totally." If they did not, the various people in the land of Canaan would lead them astray and they would do evil in the eyes of the Lord.

The Book of Joshua gives us an accounting of the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land (i.e., the *Land of Canaan*) that occurred some 3,400 years ago. Joshua, succeeding Moses as Israel's leader, led the Israelites into the Promised Land. After seven years of displacing the Canaanites, he dissolved his army and divided up the land among the 12 tribes. From this historical account of the land the Israelites began to occupy and settle it around 1400 B.C. During the reigns of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon, the physical size of their kingdoms varied to some degree, but the Israelites' complete and permanent possession of the deeded territory never materialized, because of their continual lapse into disobedience and idolatry.

Eventually *(and in concert with God's forewarning in Deuteronomy 4* and as documented in the historical book of *Judges)* they were taken captive by pagan empires with some being scattered among other nations (i.e., the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. who assimilated them into other nations and their cultures; in 605 B.C. the exile of the Southern Kingdom began…led away, captive to Babylon for 70 years, Jerusalem burned and the Temple destroyed in 586 B.C.)

In 538 B.C., the Medes & Persians under Cyrus conquered the Babylonian Empire with little resistance (see Daniel 5) and about one year later, the Jews in exile were allowed to return to their homeland to restore Jerusalem's walls and rebuild the Temple. Thereafter, for the next 600 years or so, the Israelites continued to occupy Jerusalem as an ethnic people until the Romans destroyed it and the Temple in 70 A.D.

After the dispersion (i.e., the *diaspora*) of the Jews following the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Promised Land was ruled by various people. According to [1]Pfeiffer, C. F., Vos, H. F., & Vos, H. F. (1996, c1967). *The Wycliffe historical geography of Bible lands*. Chicago: Moody Press, the following historical account of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the Jewish people follows:

> ***The Roman period.*** *The successors of Mattathias and Judas (ed. The Maccabean Revolt of 167 B.C.- 165 B.C.) did not always live up to the high ideals of the early days of the revolt. Internal dissension gave the Romans an opportunity to intervene in Palestine, and in the year 63 B.C. Pompey took Jerusalem. In 40 B.C. the Romans appointed Herod the Great as sole ruler of Judaea, subject to Rome. It was during the last days of Herod's rule that Jesus was born. Following Herod's death (4 B.C.), the kingdom was divided into tetrarchies, each under a separate ruler. The power of the Roman governor became progressively greater, and Jewish unrest continued to grow until open revolt resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus in A.D. 70. Meanwhile Christianity had made its advent and was rapidly expanding around the eastern Mediterranean. A second Jewish revolt (A.D. 132–135) under a man named Bar Cocheba (Bar Kokhba), who thought of himself as Israel's Messiah, was also suppressed and the Jews were scattered. With Jerusalem out of bounds, Rabbinical schools were established in Tiberias in Galilee.*
>
> ***Islam and the Crusades.*** *Christianity continued to flourish in Palestine as in other parts of the Roman Empire. When the Empire was divided, Palestine was part of the Byzantine*

East, but Christendom was in a precarious position there. Early in the seventh century Chosroes of Persia ravaged the country, and within a few decades Omar, the second caliph of Islam, conquered Palestine for Allah and Muhammad. Western Christendom attempted to take the holy places from the Muslims in a series of Crusades after 1095, and by the twelfth century Christian princes from the West had established a Christian enclave in the East. Their victories were temporary, however, and Palestine has continued to be basically a Muslim land with significant Christian minorities.

The Contemporary Scene. *In 1516 Palestine was taken by the Seljuk Turks, who ruled it until World War I. After the war Britain accepted Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean as a mandated territory. The land east of the Jordan was ruled by an Arab prince of the Hashemite house as the Emirate of Transjordan. Through the centuries of Arab rule, some Jews had lived in Palestine, but it was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that large–scale migration took place. The Balfour Declaration, establishing Palestine as a national homeland for the Jews, encouraged many to flee from persecution in Europe to Palestine, where they settled largely along the coastal plain. Increased immigration caused the Arabs to grow apprehensive concerning Jewish aims, and violence resulted. In 1948 Britain resigned her mandate, after which the Jews and Arabs engaged in a bitter war (1948/49). The land was divided along truce lines in 1949, the western sector becoming the state of Israel, and the eastern sector being united with Transjordan to become the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan.*



Figure 5: The limited territory of Israel today (courtesy of the CIA).

Since 1949, Israel has been involved in many wars, operations, & intifadas intended to destroy It (see Figure 2, next page).

Wars of Israel

The following illustration from the *Jewish Virtual Library*, lists all of the wars involving Israel between 1948 and 2014.

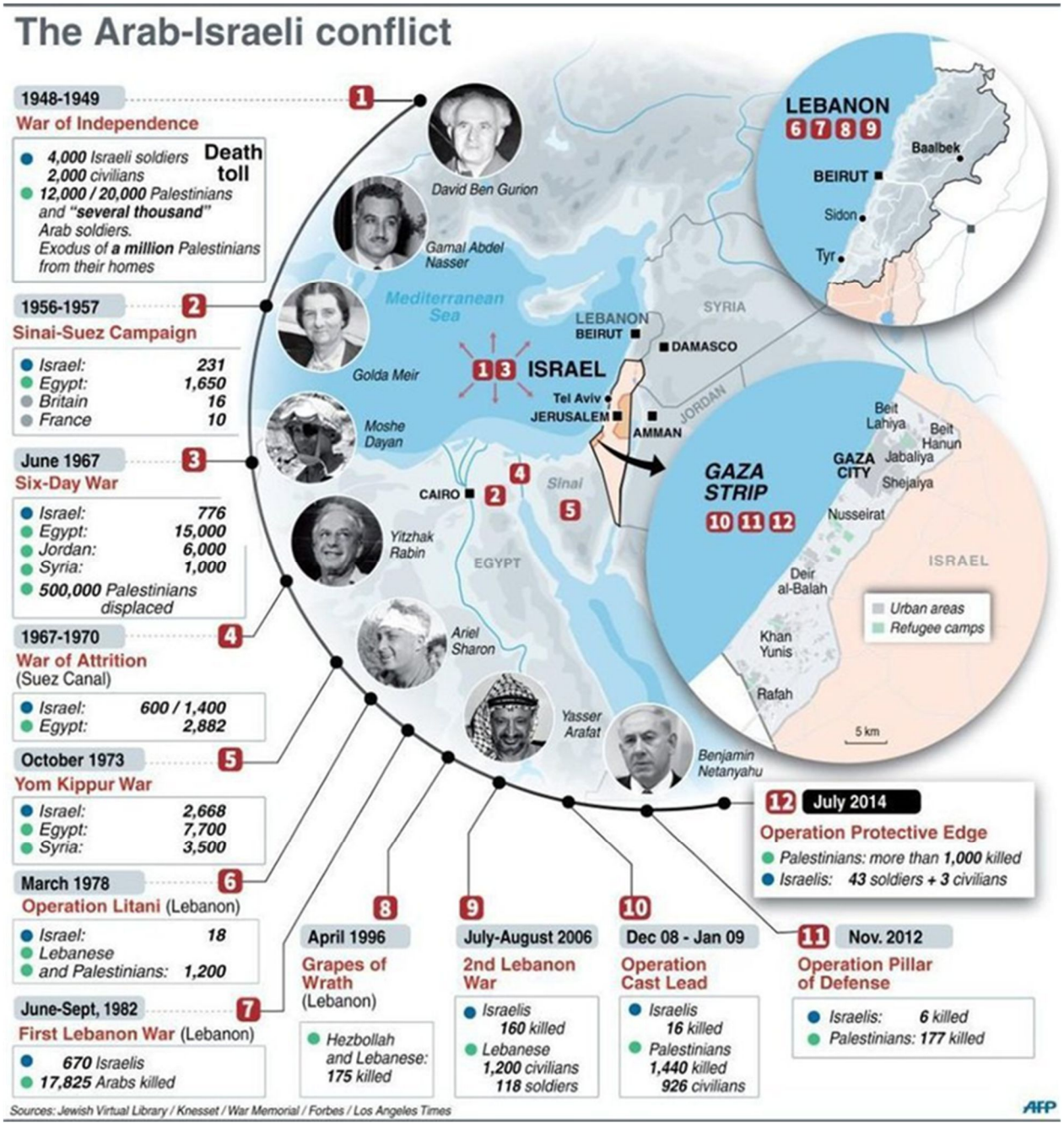


Figure 6: Wars of Israel - 1948 - 2014

Current Overview of Israel's Territorial Disputes

According to the Central Intelligence Agency…

> *"The West Bank and Gaza Strip are Israeli-occupied with current status subject to the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement - permanent status to be determined through further negotiation; Israel continues construction of a "seam line" separation barrier along parts of the Green Line and within the West Bank; Israel withdrew its settlers and military from the Gaza Strip and from four settlements in the West Bank in August 2005; Golan Heights is Israeli-occupied (Lebanon claims the Shab'a Farms area of Golan Heights); since 1948, about 350 peacekeepers from the UN Truce Supervision Organization headquartered in Jerusalem monitor ceasefires, supervise armistice agreements, prevent isolated incidents from escalating, and assist other UN personnel in the region."*

The "Palestinian"/Arab Claims to the Land

People residing in this region who call themselves, "Palestinians" believe they are the original owners of the land. Therefore, to them, Israel is occupying *their* land, not the other way around. This same perspective is generally shared by the rest of the Arab world.

Does Recorded Ancient History Back-Up this Claim?

This strip of land, initially known as the *Land of Canaan* encompasses the mountains of Lebanon to the northern edge of the Egyptian desert, bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and the east by the Jordan. This piece of real estate was highly coveted by kings and kingdoms since the resettlement of the land after the flood. This region was the bridge between Europe, Asia, and the African Continent, the epicenter of trade, travel, and conflict among the descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japheth (Noah's sons). Various empires who controlled this relatively small strip of land became both conquerors and prey throughout the ages.

Ham, the grandfather of Canaan's oldest son (Sidon) was the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites, Jebusites (who founded Jerusalem), Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

Though inhabited by numerous peoples from various origins throughout recorded history, there has never been a sovereign nation known as "Palestine" or "Canaan." The many different tribes of people who lived in this area were <u>never united politically</u>. There is no record of Palestinian or Canaanite kings or currencies. The terms, "Palestinian" and "Canaanite" were simply general names used to designate the general populace who inhabited the land.

More descriptive names were used to further delineate these larger groupings based upon the *portion* of the region they inhabited. For instance, people who occupied the lowlands were generally designated as "Canaanites" while those occupying the highlands were known as the "Amorites." Two other subgroups of people were called "Perizzites" (i.e., peasants) and "Hivites" (i.e., villagers). The

"Perizzites" were agriculturists and lived in in the land given to the tribe of Ephraim and Judah (Joshua 11:3; 17:15). The "Hivites" lived in Gibeon and Shechem (Joshua 11:19; 9:7; Genesis 34:2). The Phoenicians were perhaps the most ancient of peoples to inhabit the northern coastal region of the Promised Land. They founded the cities of Tyre, Sidon, Zarephath (or "Sarepta"), and Aemar (Genesis 10:18). Over time, however, many of them also were referred to as Canaanites or Amorites.

Focusing on the City of Jerusalem

Most recently, President Trump rightfully declared Jerusalem to be Israel's capital as he announced plans to move our embassy there. Muslim demonstrations against this plan ensued, in part, because of its connection to the *Dome of the Rock*. According to Ana Botchkareva (the *Jane and Morgan Whitney Fellow*, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art:

> "Originally constructed between 688 A.D. and 692 A.D. under the rule of Abd al-Malik…the Dome of the Rock is one of the most emblematic architectural landmarks in the history of Islamic culture. On the one hand, the monument carries a unique and unifying significance for Islamic religious communities over broad temporal and geographic scopes; on the other hand, it reflects the far-reaching extent of intercultural contacts and dialogues that have shaped such Islamic communities over time, on a local level.
>
> The edifice is situated on top of the Temple Mount (the site of Solomon's and Herod's Temples) in Jerusalem, framing a rock that holds sacred significance for all three monotheistic religions. In the Judeo-Christian tradition this rock marks the place where Abraham came to sacrifice Isaac; for Muslims, it came to be thought of as the site of the *Miraj*, the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous ascension to heaven with the angel Gabriel and his faithful horse Buraq. Although the monument's intended function continues to be debated, the Dome of the Rock has historically functioned—and continues to serve—not as a mosque but as a shrine, and one of the most important sites of pilgrimage for Muslims worldwide."

This structure and its location will be central to Biblical prophecy during the Tribulation Period. Its historical and symbolic attachment for Muslims will ultimately have to give way to the building of the Third Temple for Jewish worship and sacrifice. The Antichrist will somehow make a peace treaty between these two factions that will allow the rebuilding of the Temple on this very site.

Interestingly, the Quran does not even mention Jerusalem nor does it record Muhammad ever having been there. Some Muslims, however, believe he was miraculously transported there from Mecca on a *Burāq* (a creature with wings) in 621 A.D. This event is referred to as his *Night Journey*. *Sura 17:1* is used as the basis for this event:

> *"[17:1] Most glorified is the One who summoned His servant (Muhammad) during the night, from the Sacred Masjid (of Mecca) to the farthest place of prostration, whose surroundings we have blessed, in order to show him some of our signs. He is the Hearer, the Seer."*

The Holy Bible, on the other hand, references Jerusalem over 600 times in both the Old and New Testaments. The Minor Prophets and Isaiah deliver some 15 distinct prophecies (48 times) concerning

Jerusalem and its connection with Jehovah God's game plan to restore Jerusalem and His people to this sacred city. More importantly, many of these refer to Jerusalem as being **God's Holy City**.

References To	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets	Psalms
Jerusalem	198	66	17
Zion	78	31	39
City of David	15	0	0
Ariel	5	0	0
Totals =	**296**	**97**	**56**

Figure 7: References to Jerusalem and variations of the name of this city

Focusing on the Remnant of the Jewish People

Throughout the written prophets, God declares that ultimately, He will restore a remnant of His "chosen people" to their spiritual relationship with Him.

> *8 "It will come about in all the land," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God."*
>
> Zechariah 13:8-9

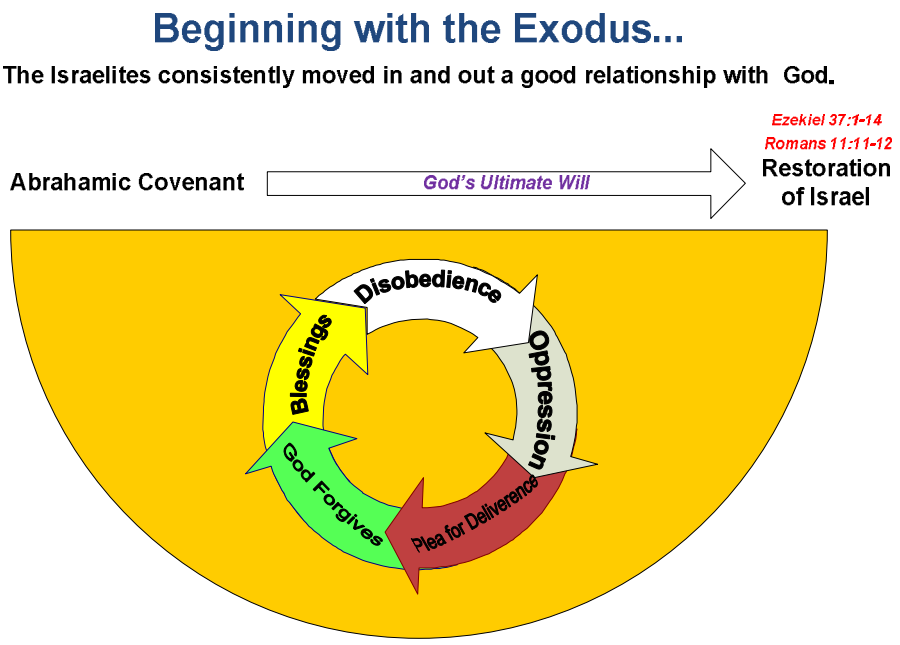


Figure 8: Restoration of a remnant of God's chosen people.

So, do the Claims of the "Palestinians"/Muslims Really Matter?

Actually, **no**. Jehovah God promised His people (the Israelites) the land they currently claim and more and He will make good on this unconditional covenant in His timing. Almighty God holds the deed to the entire world…He alone created it! It doesn't matter that some people other than the Jews claim it as theirs.

The Quran's emphasis on overtaking the world with Islam, has always and will continue to incite a large portion of the Muslim world to call for Israel's destruction. It instructs Muslims to lie if necessary to achieve this end and to use the sword to "convert" non-Muslims to Islam. The fact that President Trump has just recently stirred up the Muslim world by declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is profound. It has confirmed that Israel and specifically, Jerusalem, is indeed the epicenter of God's creation, It draws us ever closer to the Battle of Armageddon which will usher in Christ's Second Advent and His Millennial reign!

There is an abundance of evidence that supports my belief that America was founded by God as a Christian nation…a final pawn in His play book to bear witness to the world of His gospel message. This and this alone has been the only reason our nation has been blessed with an abundance of material riches and influence in this world. Unfortunately, as the Israelites of antiquity, we have abandoned God as a nation and have pursued other gods that appeal to the intellect and senses of a growing populace of American citizens.

Many people often wonder what America's role will be in the coming end-of-the age. In President Trump's announcement about the city of Jerusalem, I believe God has allowed us to play a part (albeit a disappointing one) in His plan for the ages.

We are together in Christ,

