

Who Are the Palestinians?

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Institute for Contemporary Affairs

Founded jointly with the Wechsler Family Foundation

Vol. 17, No. 21

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- **What is the source of the name "Palestine?" It is not Arab; it is derived from the name "Palestina," by which the Roman Emperor Hadrian chose to call the land after the defeat of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 135 CE. His aim was to erase "Judea."**
- **According to Palestinian historian Muhammad Y. Muslih, during the entire 400 year period of Ottoman rule (1517-1918), before the British set up the 30-year-long Palestine Mandate, "There was no political unit known as Palestine." In Arabic, the area was known as *al-Ard al-Muqadassa* (the holy land), or *Surya al-Janubiyya* (southern Syria), but not Palestine.**
- **Not a single Palestinian tribe identifies its roots in Canaan; instead, they all see themselves as proud Arabs descended from the most notable Arab tribes of the Hejaz, today's Iraq, or Yemen. Even the Kanaan family of Nablus locates its origins in Syria. Some Palestinian clans are Kurdish or Egyptian in origin, and in Mount Hebron, there are traditions of Jewish origins.**
- **This study does not deny the right of the Palestinian clans as a whole to define themselves as a Palestinian people. It would**

be better, however, if the Palestinian leadership were to choose a positive and constructive narrative and not a baseless one that is intended to negate that of the Jews of Israel.

Yet again, Palestinian leaders are claiming that the Palestinians are descended from the Canaanite people who lived in the land of Canaan before the Israelite tribes settled in it. No less than the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, made that claim in Germany; no one was taken aback by his remarks or questioned him.¹

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat frequently makes the assertion,² and during an international forum, he insultingly sniped at senior Israeli politician Tzipi Livni that his origins lay with the Canaanites of Jericho who were wiped out by the Israelites, alluding to “war crimes” of Joshua ben Nun.³ Again, none of the senior international officials who were present made any effort to ask questions, raise doubts, or come to the defense of the abashed Israeli representative.

Ironically, a strong dissenting view to this thesis that the Palestinians can be traced back to the Canaanites comes from Hamas. On March 23, 2012, the Hamas Minister of the Interior and National Security, Fathi Hammad, linked the Palestinians’ origins to Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula:

Who are the Palestinians? We have many families called al-Masri, whose roots are Egyptian! They may be from Alexandria, from Cairo, from Dumietta, from the north, from Aswan, from Upper Egypt. We are Egyptians; we are Arabs. We are Muslims. We are part of you. Egyptians! Personally, half my family is Egyptian – and the other half are Saudis.⁴

The Palestinians' Canaanite narrative is not new. It emerged after the fall of the Hashemite monarchy in Syria in 1920, Syria's incorporation into the French Mandate, and King Faisal's flight to Iraq so that he could assume the throne there in 1921. Yasser Arafat claimed that the Palestinians are descendants of the Jebusites, whom he describes as a Canaanite tribe.⁵ In short, this argument has been around for a while.

What's in a Name?

What is the source of the name "Palestine?" It is not Arab; it is derived from the name "*Palestina*," by which the Roman Emperor Hadrian chose to call the land after the defeat of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 135 CE. His aim was to erase "Judea" and negate any connection of the land's history and identity with the Jews.⁶ This denial of the land's Jewish roots has regrettably been continued to the present day by today's Palestinians.

When the Islamic armies conquered the land, they adopted the administrative name used by the Byzantines and dubbed part of *Palestina Prima* ("the first Palestine") – more or less today's Jerusalem area and the *Shfela* [coastal plain] – as "*Jund Filastin*."⁷ *Jund* means "army;" *Jund Filastin* means "the Palestine military command." In other words, the name did not signify the national identity of a "Palestinian people" who lived in the land, but instead, a military district, in line with the Byzantine nomenclature. The hub of *Jund Filastin* was the town of Ramle, not Jerusalem; the intention was apparently to protect the trade routes leading from Egypt to Syria and Iraq.

The first generation of the Palestinian Muslim leadership took part in the Great Arab Revolt of the Hashemites in 1916. Palestinian leaders were members of the Hashemite administration in Syria, and it was only after King Faisal's reign collapsed that they came to Palestine.



Arab demonstration in Jerusalem, circa 1920. The sign on the left says: "We resist the Jewish immigration;" the sign on the right says: "Palestine is part of Syria."

According to Palestinian historian Muhammad Y. Muslih, during the entire 400-year period of Ottoman rule (1517-1918), before the British set up the 30-years-long Palestine Mandate, "There was no political unit known as Palestine." In Arabic, the area was known as *al-Ard al-Muqadassa* (the holy land), or *Surya al-Janubiyya* (southern Syria), but not Palestine.⁸

The Arabs of British Mandatory Palestine (1918-1948), then, had been exposed to competing narratives by which they could construct their political identity.⁹ Haj Amin al-Husseini, for example, was an Ottoman officer, but he joined the Hashemite army as a recruiter.¹⁰ Another figure from those days was Aref al-Aref, a supporter of the Hashemite regime in Damascus who orchestrated the April 1920 Nabi Musa riots in Jerusalem as a way of honoring the reinstatement of the Hashemite Faisal's government. In 1919, al-Aref edited a Jerusalem-based publication called "Southern Syria." At the 1920 riots, Haj Amin al-

Husseini held up a portrait of King Faisal of Syria and showed it to the Jerusalem Arab crowd: "This is your King!" The crowd responded: "God Save the King!"¹¹ The focus of much of the protest at the time was on the imposed separation of British Mandatory Palestine from Syria, which came under a French Mandate. The goal was reunification not Palestinian independence.



Arab demonstration outside of the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, 1920. The speaker may be Aref al Aref. The signs declared support for Palestine as part of Syria (*Library of Congress*)

As long as Palestinians saw themselves as part of Syria, they were not aware of their Palestinian identity. Adnan Abu Odeh, a senior Jordanian statesman of Palestinian extraction, wrote about Palestinian-Jordanian

relations and made a distinction between the two peoples. In his view, the difference between Jordanians and Palestinians does not necessarily lie in how they define their identity but in how *others* define them.¹² This distinction emerged, he maintains, when the British established the Emirate of Transjordan, which defined the Jordanians, and designated Palestine as the Jewish national home, thereby defining the Arabs who lived in the territory allocated to the Jews as Palestinians.

The following are Adnan Abu Odeh's definitions:

- Trans-Jordanians: Jordanian citizens whose origin is in Transjordan,
- Palestinians: The Arab people of Mandatory Palestine,
- Palestinian Jordanians: Palestinians who became Jordanian citizens after the West Bank and the East Bank were unified by Jordan in 1950,
- Jordanians: Jordanian citizens of whatever origin.

Thus, the national definition of the Palestinians stemmed from the borders that the *Western powers* carved out, whereas, after the First World War, they defined themselves as part of the short-lived Hashemite regime in Syria.

A remnant of those early days is the flag of Palestine, which is actually the flag of the Great Arab Revolt of the Hashemites.¹³ It still serves as the official flag of the Syrian Baath Party and was only adopted as the official flag of Palestine at the PLO congress of 1964.¹⁴ In any case, the flag's colors represent symbols from Islamic history and are in no way specifically linked with the Palestinians.



The flag of Hashemite Syria



The flag of the Syrian Baath Party

This latter flag represents the Syrian aspiration for an empire. Similarly, the first generations of Palestinian nationalists joined the Hashemite administration out of hope that pan-Arabism would liberate Palestine. To this day, the PLO regards itself as pan-Arab.¹⁵ This means that for the Palestinians, defining themselves as pan-Arabs entails the total negation of the other – in the Palestinians' case, of Israel. The first article in the 1964 Palestine Liberation Organization's Charter declares "Palestine is an Arab homeland bound by strong Arab national ties to the rest of the Arab Countries and which together form the great Arab homeland."¹⁶

The flag of Palestine is, then, one of the flags of "Greater Syria." It expresses a pan-Arab commitment, which the flags of Jordan, the Baath Party, and the Hashemites during their short-lived regime in Syria also upheld.

Denial of Jewish History

When Nabil Shaath, head of the PLO's foreign relations department, explained why they oppose the 1917 Balfour Declaration, he described Jewish history as "a potpourri of legends and fabrications."¹⁷ Britain had awarded the country to those who had no bond with it whatsoever. "[The Jews] he said, "have no connection with the country, neither in distant nor in more recent history. Britain destroyed Palestine and cleared the path for the colonialist settlers instead of the real owners of the country. That is history," declared Shaath.

Associating Palestinian history with the Canaanites is, then, part of the total denial of Jewish history. It is echoed in the denial of the Jewish people's connection to the Temple Mount and the existence of a Jewish Temple there – nothing but a "potpourri of legends and fabrications."

This narrative is directly linked with the outrageous UNESCO resolutions that sever the bonds between the Jewish People and the cities of Jerusalem and Hebron. Some time ago, in one of the West Bank cities, I talked with a retired Palestinian teacher about the Canaanites. He claimed that they were a Yemenite Arab tribe that settled in Palestine and that the Israelites when they conquered the country, did not build a single new city or village; all the cities are Canaanite cities.

He also said that the Israeli Shekel bears a Canaanite name; the evidence is that it was a Canaanite currency that Abraham paid to the Canaanites for the Cave of Machpelah. He claimed the Palestinians hold the right to the name "Shekel."

According to the Torah – so the Palestinian teacher claimed as well –

Ishmael (Abraham's son) was the firstborn, not Isaac. God's promise to Abraham pertained to Ishmael and not to Israel, he insisted.

One theory associates the Canaanites with the tribe of Amalek,¹⁸ hated by the Israelites. It posits that the Canaanites were among the Amalekites' descendants, and that "explains" why the Jews want to annihilate the Palestinians. Thus, linking the Palestinians with Canaan reflects an uncompromising attitude of all-out war.

Palestinian scholar Khairiya Qassemiya wrote in the PLO's journal that the Palestinians' disengagement from Syria was difficult for them because they then had to contend alone, without the Arabs, against the Zionists. King Faisal, she wrote, opposed severing Palestine from Syria, and in doing so set the stage for the ongoing opposition of all Syrian governments to creating a separate Palestinian state that is detached from Greater Syria.

The collapse of Faisal's government, however, cut the Palestinians off from Syria¹⁹ and forced them to seek separate roots for their identity; thus, the Canaanite ethos was born.

For his part, PLO leader Yasser Arafat was known to describe the Palestinians as a "nation of heroes" (*kum jabarin*). The term comes from a Koran verse concerning the Israelites' trepidation over entering the land of Canaan since it harbored a "nation of giants," that is, the Canaanites. Thus, Arafat gave the Canaanite narrative Islamic roots.²⁰

The Public Relations Hype versus Genealogy

Such is the ethos. When one looks into what the Palestinians say about themselves, how each family describes its lineage, there is no trace of a "Canaanite" ancestry. Most of the families find their origins in Arab tribes, some of them with Kurdish or Egyptian background, and there

are even – by word of mouth – widespread stories of Jewish or Samaritan ancestry. Although one might have expected some effort to adduce a *Philistine* ancestry, there is almost no such phenomenon.²¹

In Nablus, there is a family named Kanaan – that is, Canaan. We asked members of the family about its lineage, and they affirmed that they had been Canaanites for 3,000 years. However, a look at the family's website gave a different picture.²² It is indeed an ancient family – part of it Christian, indicating its pre-Islamic origin; but coming from Aleppo in Syria. From Aleppo, the family branched out to Damascus, Cyprus, and other places, including Nablus. Although the name may indicate Canaanite ancestry, the Canaanite forebears were in Syria, not in the land of Canaan.

According to another source within the family, the clan originated in Homs,²³ Syria and became widely dispersed in the Middle East, apparently including Nablus, about 300 years ago. Despite the fact that the name suggests a Canaanite lineage, this source says the family's origins lie in the ancient Arab Tamim²⁴ tribe.

Thus, apart from the Kanaan family with its possible Canaanite ancestry coming from Syria, not Palestine, and its possible Arab origins, there is no direct or indirect evidence of the Palestinians having descended from the Canaanite people as they claim.

On February 1, 2014, Saeb Erekat locked horns with his negotiating partner, Tzipi Livni, before a European audience in Germany. He pronounced:²⁵ "I am a son of Jericho. My age—10,000 years. I am a proud son of the Canaanites, and I was [here] 5,000 years ago, and 500 years before the coming of Joshua bin Nun, who burned my city, Jericho, and I will not trade in my history [because of a demand to recognize Israel as a Jewish state]."

In other words, Erekat's claimed Canaanite roots entail that he cannot recognize Jewish history; and in any case, Joshua bin Nun, Erekat intimates, was a war criminal.

Is the Erekat family "Canaanite," as he angrily insisted to Tzipi Livni before a European audience that did not bat an eyelash?

To find out how the family views its lineage, we looked at his family's genealogical sites.

It turns out that the Erekat family originates in the large Huweitat tribe, and they belong to the Ashraf (families that trace their lineage to the family of the Prophet). They are related to the descendants of Hussein, grandson of the Prophet, who migrated from Medina to the Syrian Desert and settled in the Aqaba area.

The Erekat family itself settled in Abu Dis, Jericho, Amman, and Ajloun (in Jordan). The sheikh of the family was Kamal Erekat, commander of the jihad against the nascent Jewish state in 1948 after Abd al-Kader al-Husseini was killed in the Battle of Kastel during Israel's War of Independence. Kamal Erekat himself was wounded in the war and later became the first speaker of the Jordanian parliament.

In general, the list of heads of the Erekat family includes many Jordanian cabinet ministers. Why is the family so prominent in Jordan? Because the Huweitat tribe was among the main tribes that backed the Great Arab Revolt of the Hashemites in Mecca, and it moved north along with Laurence of Arabia—that is, at the same time as the Zionists were establishing themselves in Palestine.

The Hejaz-based Huweitat tribe linked up with the branch of the tribe that had already settled in Jordan, and together they conquered Aqaba.²⁶

Historic Arab Migration

How did the Arab tribes of the Levant and Arab tribes, in general, come to be so dispersed? The Ottoman Empire was a gigantic open space, and internal migration and free movement of individuals and nomadic tribes were a common and characteristic feature. Hence, Arab tribes that settled in the Land of Israel were also varied and of different lineages, and during the Ottoman Empire, the Arabs in the country did not identify themselves as Palestinians. The term Palestine was Western and was regularly used by Jews who immigrated to the country; the Zionists called themselves Palestinians while the Arabs simply identified themselves as Arabs. The Zionist institutions – such as the Anglo-Palestine Bank, the *Palestine Post*, and so on – were “Palestinian” whereas the Arab institutions, such as the Arab Higher Committee, were simply “Arab.”

As Adnan Abu Odeh observed, the definition of the Arabs as Palestinians stemmed from how the British identified the land – that is, from how foreigners, not necessarily Arabs, referred to the area.

During and before the Ottoman Empire, Arab tribes were defined as *Qays* and *Yaman* – that is, the tribes of the “northern” Arabian Peninsula and the tribes of “Yemen.” That dichotomy characterized the disputes between the Arab tribes long before Islam began. It stemmed from the massive northward migration of the Yemenite tribes after a traumatic event in Yemen’s ancient history – the collapse of the Great Ma’rib Dam sometime between 570 and 575 CE.

Those migrations were not typical of Palestine, which had not yet emerged, but rather of the Middle East as a whole, and in this regard, the Palestinian tribes were no different from the region in general.

Up to the present, almost every Palestinian family describes its origins by identifying either with the Qays (northern Arabian) tribes or with Yaman (Yemen).²⁷ We did not find a single Palestinian family or tribe that referred to a Canaanite origin, including the Erekat tribe, which locates its lineage in the northern tribes.²⁸

In 1938, the historian Ihsan Nimri published in Damascus a book about the history of *Nablus and the Balka*. Nimri was a resident of Nablus. Balka, a region in central Jordan in which the town of Salt is located, was connected to Nablus and was not referred to in terms of southern or northern, but rather, regarding the *eastern* direction – where Jordan is today. As Nimri wrote in the introduction:²⁹

Nablus was known in the days of the Canaanites as "Shechem" [the Hebrew name], and it was unimportant. The Israelites conquered it easily, and after that, the Assyrians deported them to Iraq, and Iraqis settled in it. In the days of Rome, the city rebelled, and the Romans destroyed it and rebuilt it and called it Neapolis, the new city.... Until the Muslims conquered it, its residents were an assortment of Christian Arabs, Samaritans, Arab governors, and soldiers... Subsequently, Nablus got caught up in events in Syria, and I have devoted a chapter to the events in Syria because of [Nablus'] connection with this history.

Thus, according to this book on the history of Nablus, the references to the Canaanites are chronological rather than actual, and the Canaanites have left no trace in the current demography of the city.

Jewish Origins for Some?

Among the prominent tribes is that of the Barghoutis, from whose ranks have come Marwan Barghouti and other well-known figures. In a

conversation with a member of the family many years ago, he told me that the Barghouti family symbolizes *sumud* – remaining steadfastly on the land. The family originally was Jewish, he said, and they converted to Christianity during the Byzantine Empire, and then, when Islam arrived, to Islam.

There is no evidence of this description in the family's genealogy. There are, however, signs of its Christian origins. The family comes from the village of Deir Ghasana in the Ramallah district.³⁰ Today, it is a Muslim area, but the names of the villages indicate that it was Christian in the past. The word *Deir* means "monastery," and "Deir Ghasana" means "the Ghasana monastery." Thus, the village from which the Barghouti family spread to other points on the map bears a Christian name. Although the Barghoutis ignore this Christian origin, other sites refer to it.³¹

For Muslim families, a Christian origin could indicate a Jewish origin, though not necessarily. The Christian families of Ramallah are an example. According to their tradition, the Christians of Ramallah are descended from the Christian Bedouin tribe of southern Jordan. (Yes, there were Christian Bedouins in the past.) They were the Haddadin tribe of the Karak area, 140 kilometers south of Amman, who were forced to leave 250 years ago by pressure from the Muslim tribes who sought to marry their daughters.³²

Originally, the Haddadin tribe was Yemenite, and it was forced to leave pre-Muslim Yemen at the time of the Jewish king, Dhu Nuwas (455-510 CE), to avoid converting to Judaism and to maintain their Christianity.³³ Today, the Haddadin is one of Jordan's important tribes, and its members hold senior positions in the Hashemite government; an example is Munzer Haddadin, who headed the Jordanian delegation to the talks on water with Israel.

The Jewish origin of the *fellahin* [villagers, laborer] is a fascinating subject. The Israeli computer scientist Zvi Misinay has sponsored genetic studies that have demonstrated a “primary” genetic link between the Palestinian fellahin and the Jews.³⁴ Arab researchers have rejected this thesis, ascribing it to the desire to Judaize the Palestinians.³⁵

Nonetheless, in conversations, many Palestinians confirm ancient traditions of Jewish origins that are common in their families. For example, a female clerk in the office of Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) once told me that her origins lay in the two biblical towns of Tzora and Eshtaol mentioned in the Samson story (*Judges* 13). Interestingly, the pairing of Tzora and Eshtaol is also preserved in spoken Arabic. The *Palestinian Encyclopedia*, published by the Palestinian Authority, describes “Sar’a” as a village that was founded in Canaanite days.³⁶ The Israeli nonprofit organization Zochrot, which preserves the memory of the Palestinian villages that were destroyed during the War of Independence, makes use of the Palestinian descriptions but adds that the original name of this village was Sor’a and that it was known by this name at least until the 16th century.³⁷

Crypto-Jews

A source in Mount Hebron told me once that the Mount Hebron villagers call the residents of Hebron “the Jews.” Although the families of Hebron do not regard themselves as having Jewish ancestry, in the Mount Hebron villages there are traditions with Jewish origins. The most notable examples are the village of Yatta – the Biblical Juttah – and particularly among the Makhmra family.

Israel’s second president, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, was a noted historian who researched the village of Yatta. In 1928 he described the lighting of

Hanukah candles and observance of Jewish customs.³⁸

The tradition that the Makhamra clan has Jewish ancestry is common to this family, noted Ben Zvi. Strikingly, one finds on a Palestinian Facebook page,³⁹ called "All of us are for Palestine," a passage reposted from a different Facebook page called "Yatta is everyone's":

It is said that the Makhamra family is of Jewish origin, and this was proved in the United Nations, and in 1947 Yatta was registered as a Jewish town, and it is said that all the residents of Yatta are of Jewish origin, and that the Samu, the Maharik family, the Carmel, Susya, Bani Naim, the Ta'amar, and the Rashaida and Azazmah tribes [in Jordan] are also Jews.⁴⁰

The Middle East scholar Moshe Elad said on Israel's Arabic television that two members of the Makhamra family had converted to Judaism and were now Israeli citizens living in Israel and that in the village customs of lighting Shabbat and Chanukah candles had been preserved.⁴¹

Unfortunately, the two terrorists who perpetrated the Islamic State-inspired attack at Tel Aviv's Sarona market on June 8, 2016, were members of the Makhamra family.⁴²

A Search for the Conquests

When Arab families investigate their origins, they tend to associate themselves with a glorious chapter of Islam. The Huweitat family claims to be descended from the Imam Ali.⁴³ One should take this affiliation with a grain of salt since honor considerations of the tribes lead them to seek honorable origins.

However, when it comes to the ascriptions of the Arab tribes of

Hebron, there are independent testimonies that the Tamim, a major Arab tribe, indeed has honorable origins connected with the dawn of Islam before the seventh-century conquest of the country. The tribe's traditions, as well as other Islamic sources, such as the books of the *Hadith*, assert that the Hebronite Tamim family is among the descendants of the friend of the Prophet, Aws, from Medina days, and that the Muhammed gave him and his descendants Hebron as a patrimony – Habrun or Habra in the Hadith.⁴⁴ Aws had no sons, but his daughter, Rukiyah, married a member of the Dar family, and the full name of the family is Tamim-Dari.

The family's pre-Islamic origin was Yemenite. It converted to Christianity, and when the Prophet Muhammed came to Medina, the family came to him from "Hebron" (not al-Khalil) to convert to Islam. The family received Hebron and its neighboring villages from Muhammed as a patrimony.

The Jordanian al-Majali tribe of Karak is also "Tamimi," and its name, Majali, signifies that it was "exiled" at some point from Hebron to Karak. Just as Nablus was connected with Balqa of today's Jordan, Hebron was connected with Karak of today's Jordan.⁴⁵

Not Canaanites, but Arab and Kurdish Origins

Whereas the Tamimi tribe consolidated the Arab origins of Hebron, there are testimonies by Hebronites themselves that half of the city is of Kurdish origins.

The reason lies in Islam's wars against the Crusaders. They were not waged by the Arabs but by Kurds and Turks (still before the Ottoman Empire), and the army of Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin) had a Kurdish command. After conquering the country, he transferred a

considerable portion of his army to Hebron to safeguard the country's borders against the Arab Bedouins. Within Hebron, the Arabs led by the Tamim tribe opposed these fighters, and Hebron's history became fraught with the many wars between the Kurds and the Arabs.

Numerous Hebron families, such as the Hashlamun, Kafisha, and other families, are of Kurdish origin. The Kurds also settled in other parts of the country and Transjordan.⁴⁶

By now, the Kurds have completely Arabized, and they retain no connection with their origins. In Amman, however, a Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi Society has been established that seeks to preserve the Kurdish background.⁴⁷

Hebron's demography, then, includes Kurdish families that fought over the birthright with the Arab tribes that united behind the Tamim-Dari tribe, whose origins go back to the dawn of Islam. The prominent Ja'bari tribe formed part of the Arab alignment, and it originated in Iraq.⁴⁸

Just as the wars against the Crusaders brought Kurdish families to the country, the eighteenth-century war of Ibrahim Pasha against the Ottoman Empire brought Egyptian families to it; Ibrahim Pasha's army did not return to Egypt, but instead, settled in the country.⁴⁹ The members of the Masarwa family, the largest one in the Triangle, do not hide their Egyptian origins.⁵⁰

Who Are the Canaanites' Descendants?

A study published by the *American Journal of Human Genetics* on July 27, 2017, reports that descendants of the Canaanites have indeed been found in the Middle East. They are "modern Lebanese." Information of the study was released by *National Geographic*. "While the researchers

were surprised at the level of genetic continuity between ancient Canaanites and modern Lebanese after some 4,000 years of war, migration, and conquest in the area," *NG* reported, "They caution against drawing too many conclusions on ancient history based solely on genetic data."⁵¹

Conclusion

Of late, the Palestinian leadership has been repeating the theme that the Palestinians are descended from the Canaanites. Because it keeps reiterating this narrative, there is a concern that some in the West will fall for it.

The purpose of the "Canaanite" narrative, however, is not to shed light on the Palestinians' real ancestry, but to deny the Jews' narrative. Why the Canaanites? Because they were in the country before the Israelite tribes were and thus have precedence. According to Nabil Shaath, Jewish history is but a "potpourri of legends and fabrications." The Canaanite narrative cannot promote reconciliation and compromise but only the destruction of the Israeli-Jewish narrative, according to the same principle by which the various communities are now destroying each other in Syria.

Hence, it is important to clarify how the Palestinians themselves view their own ancestry. Indeed, not a single Palestinian tribe identifies its roots in Canaan; instead, they all see themselves as proud Arabs descended from the most notable Arab tribes of the Hejaz, today's Iraq, or Yemen. Even the Kanaan family of Nablus locates its origins in Syria.

Some families are Kurdish or Egyptian, and in Mount Hebron, there are traditions about Jewish origins.

This study does not deny the right of the Palestinian families as a whole to define themselves as a Palestinian people. It would be better, however, if the Palestinian leadership were to choose a positive and constructive narrative and not a baseless one that is intended to negate that of the other.

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Notes

1 In Berlin on March 24, 2017,

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/871/289.html>. Mahmoud Abbas said:

My Palestinian homeland has a long history as a lighthouse to all the peoples; our people is an offshoot of the Canaanite people who lived 3,500 years ago. Our country, which has already existed for thousands of years, included the first agricultural community in human history in Jericho, as well as the most ancient city, Jerusalem, the city of peace.

He also referred to "Hebron, which bears the name of the father of the prophets, Ibrahim, and Bethlehem, the place of the Christian prophet's birth. These historical cities constitute a significant change in human civilization."

2 <https://www.algemeiner.com/2014/02/02/pa-negotiator-saeb-erekat-claims-family-was-canaanite-in-israel-for-9000-years/>

3 <http://www.vetogate.com/843797>

4 Video: "Hamas Minister of the Interior and of National Security Fathi Hammad Slams Egypt over Fuel Shortage in Gaza Strip, and Says: 'Half

of the Palestinians Are Egyptians and the Other Half Are Saudis,'" Al-Hekma TV (Egypt), March 23, 2012, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/3389.htm>.

5 David Wenkel, "Palestinians, Jebusites, and Evangelicals," *The Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2007, pp. 49-56

6

<http://www.indaweb.com/oil/editorialopinion/tzemach.news.service01l.htm>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/origin-of-quot-palestine-quot>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine>

7 https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/جند_فلسطين__*A History of Palestine, 634-1099*; Moshe Gil; pg. 111 – best replacement?

8 Muslih, Muhammad Y., *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988. p. 11

9 Khalidi, Rashid, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997. p. 11-12.

10 (http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%201247.pdf)

11 Philip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988, pg. 17

12

https://bookstore.usip.org/sites/usip/resrcs/chapters/1878379887_othe_rchap.pdf, p. 15.

13 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_flag

14 Ibid.

15 <http://elkashif.net/site/news/14211#sthash.hRWZsvul.dpuf>. Saeb Erekat defines Palestinian nationalism as belonging to pan-Arabism in opposition to the Kurds, who seek to divide the great Arab homeland.

16 Palestinian National Charter of 1964.

http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=640&doc_id=8210

17 Radio Palestine, April 23, 2017.

18 <http://www.djelfa.info/vb/showthread.php?t=673850>

19 Pinhas Inbari, *The Palestinian Option* (Jerusalem, 1989), 21. (Hebrew)

20 <http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura5-aya22.html>

21 Munib al-Masri of Nablus placed in the living room of his villa a statue of an ancient Greek fighter that he had purchased in Crete, thereby seeking to express the Palestinians' Philistine ancestry. In a conversation with him, however, he himself admits that the origins of the Masri family of Nablus lie in the Arab tribes of Yemen.

22 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=289095074446673&id=289025174453663

23 <http://dirbaalbitown.syriaforums.net/t33-topic>

24 References to the Tamim tribe took on a political significance in the current crisis involving Qatar after it emerged that the emir of Qatar, Tamim, associated the family of the emirs with the ancient Tamim tribe,

which is dispersed throughout the Middle East, and began to promote this tribe with the aim of building an Arab empire based on it, with Qatar at its helm. <https://youtu.be/4j4l9y164Tw>

25 <http://www.vetogate.com/843797>

26 <http://www.marefa.org/images/6/62/Tarek-jabal-nablis-walbalqaa.pdf> 10 'מַע

27 <http://www.subaa.com/chapterDetails.php?chapterID=12>

28 <https://www.amad.ps/ar/?Action=Details&ID=173589>

29 <http://www.marefa.org/images/6/62/Tarek-jabal-nablis-walbalqaa.pdf>

30 <https://goo.gl/tvuREY>

31 <http://www.asrawi.com/main/?p=10>. The site is associated with a different family that is close to Barghouti and distantly related to him. According to the ascription, the family originated in the Hejaz and converted to Christianity in the pre-Islamic period.

32 <https://goo.gl/Xa1dv1>

33 Ibid.

34 <http://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.1095224>

35 <http://blog.amin.org/assi/2012/03/14/الفلاح-اللسطيني-ذو-اصول-يهودية/>

36 <http://www.palestinapedia.net/اصرعة-قرية/>

37 <http://zochrot.org/ar/village/49368>

38 <http://en.hebron.org.il/news/491>

39 Facebook page, Yatta is everyone's, January 2, 2013. (Arabic)

40 عائلة المخامرة – يطا

يذكر ان عائلة المخامرة اصلهم يهود وقد جرى اثبات ذلك في الامم المتحدة، وجرى تسجيل يطا كبلدة يهودية عام 1947 ويقال ان جميع سكان يطا من اصل يهودي. يذكر ان السموع وعائلة المحاريق والكرمل وسوسيا وبني نعيم وقبائل التعامرة والرشايدة والعزازمة هم ايضا يهود.

41 <https://youtu.be/vEc8CdlWf9s>

42 <https://youtu.be/vEc8CdlWf9s>

43

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/61kradcfbnm7kmi/%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84%201-1.pdf> ; (alternative to wiki?) Origin of Arab Tribes book ;

<https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%AA>

44 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=826718114037098&id=246335405408708

45 Ibid.

46 <https://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=707722>

47 Ibid.

48 <http://www.almadenahnews.com/article/26385-%D8%B9%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%8A->

[%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B6%D9%8A%D9%86](#)

49 "Who Are the Canaanites' Descendants?"

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/canaanite-bible-ancient-dna-lebanon-genetics-archaeology/>

50 <http://alnsabon.com/showthread.php?t=2789>

51 <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/canaanite-bible-ancient-dna-lebanon-genetics-archaeology/>

