

Hebrew for the Goyim

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The Promised Land

“There is no such thing as a promised land.” You read it right. That is a quote I heard recently. “There is no Promised Land,” this person wrote. “In fact,” he continued, “The word *“promise” does not exist in Hebrew*. So how could there be a Promised Land if the word *promise* does not exist?” Just when you think you’ve heard it all! Some people will go to great lengths to try to prove a hateful point – especially when it relates to Israel and the Jews. But then, what do we say to what he said?

Duh. He’s right. The word *promise* does not exist in Hebrew. Why? Because *promise* is an **English word** - a language written **centuries after Hebrew**. Anyway, people in Biblical times didn’t make “promises” – they made serious **covenants in blood**. Stay with me, however, as we check the dictionary and find the etymology of the word “promise.”

- **Promise is “late ME”** (that’s late **Middle English**) **promis(se)**.
- **ME < ML** (that means **Middle English** comes from **Medieval Latin**) **promissa, or promittere, to promise**¹
Note: Latin also came centuries later, so *promissa* and *promittere* are not Hebrew words either. But let’s zero in on *promittere*.
- **Promittere** means “to allow...to grant permission...an authoritative or official certificate of permission...to let go through...”² “Pro” means “in favor of, before” and is found in borrowed Greek words, a language closer to Hebrew language times.
- **Mittere**, found in the word “remittance,” has a **legal** meaning which is “let go back, to allow, to concede.”³ So basically, *mittere* means “being pro - allowing or conceding something.” In this case ... land. The **Promittere** Land. But what does that mean?
- **MTR is the root of Mittere**. We’re close enough to the time of the Hebrew language to find out what the three letters (**mtr**) mean in Hebrew. Bingo! **Mutar** (מתר - *mem-tov-resh*), undeniably Hebrew, means “permitted, allowed, lawful, authorized.”

Apply that to Land. Now we can call what we used to call “The Promised Land” - what it originally meant. The Permitted Land. The Allowed Land. The Lawful Land. **The Authorized Land**. That is to say, land that was promised (sorry, forget that word) – that is to say, land that was pro-authorized. It refers to lawful **land**, permitted land, authorized land - land authorized - by **God**.

But, then, there is no word land in Hebrew either. Land is also a late English word.

- Hebrew has several words for the English word “land,”

including *yevasha* (יבשה) dry as opposed to water), *adamah* (אדמה - dust, dirt - what Adam was made from), *eretz* (ארץ) earth - nature in general [אר] taken to a limit [ץ] to form the earth, land), *medinah* (מדינה) government), *omah* (אמה) a people), and *yerusha* (ירושה) an inheritance).

- English defines *land* as, “**Any part of the earth’s surface not covered by a body of water**,”⁴ similar to *lann* (Irish) or *llan* (Welsh). These words came from *lon* (לון) or *lin* (לין), meaning “lodge, hostel;” in short, specific direction, an area, a place one lives.

So then, back to what has traditionally been called The Promised Land. Yahweh (יהוה) LORD God) spoke to Abraham. He could have spoken out loud - or in a dream. He could have sent angels - or spoken a strong message to Abraham’s heart. **Whichever.** Yahweh *spoke* (דבר) to Abraham. He told Abraham and his family to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go - **not to just any land** - but to “**The Land (הארץ) that I will show you** (Genesis 12:1). Yahweh God promised - no, no, I take that back. Yahweh God **said** (דבר) He would bless Abraham and make him a **great goy** (nation גוי). But He goes farther. Yahweh LORD God said “I will bless *those* who bless you and curse *him* that curses you (12:3). And, sure enough, Abraham went to **The Land**. Since then, that specific area on earth (*eretz*) is called **The Land, ha-aretz** (הארץ). The Land, The Lawful Land (heretofore called Promised Land) is a stretch of land in the Middle East given **by God** in a **Covenant of blood with Abraham and his descendants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 15)**. This portion of earth given to Abraham in Covenant goes from Lebanon in the North to Egypt in the South, from Jordan in the East to the Mediterranean in the West. **Of course it is only called that by people who believe in Yahweh LORD God.** Battling nations have called it a Nightmare. God’s enemies call it a “Place to be cut off and remembered no more” (Psalm 83:4). Rome called it Palestine. Lots of people call it “Ours.”

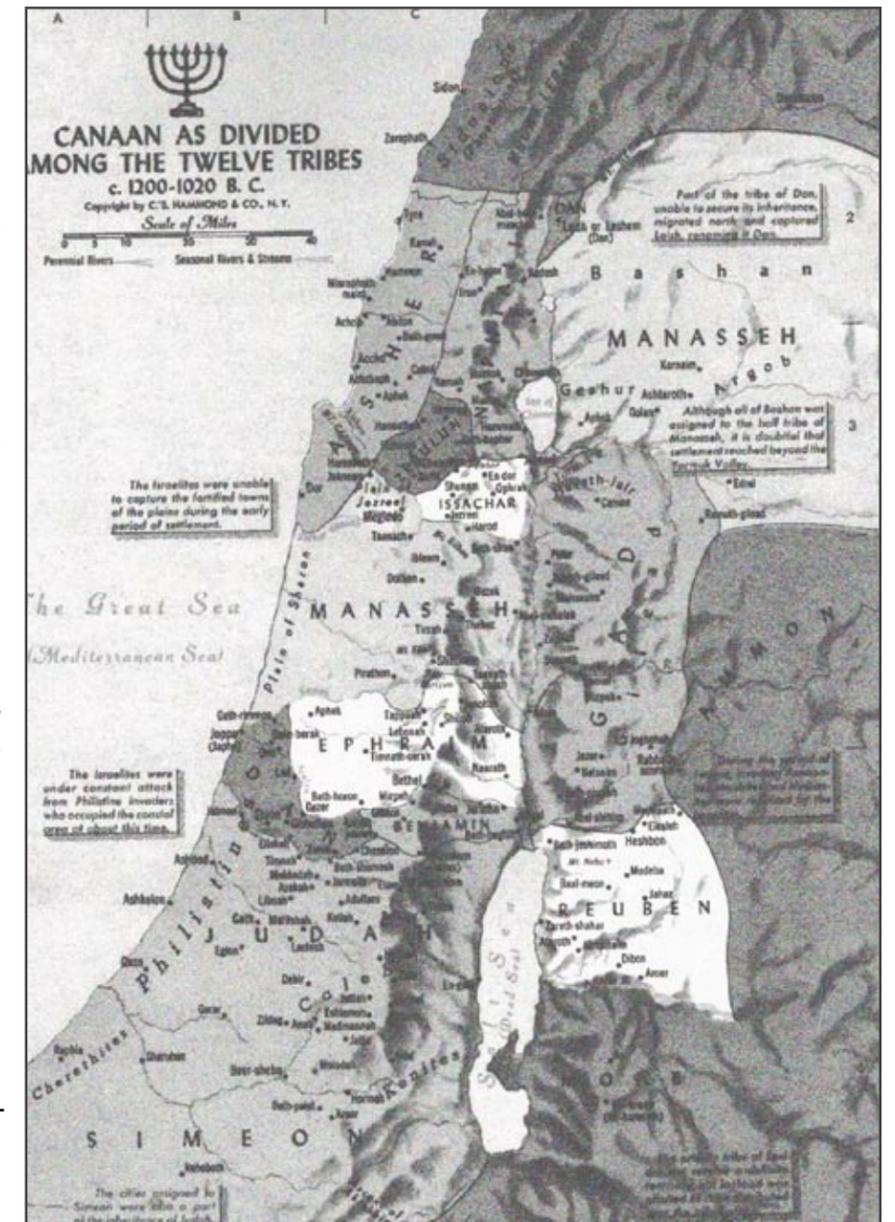
Who really owns The Land? Well, actually, The Land belongs to God.

“The Land shall not be sold forever: for **The Land is mine; for you are strangers** (גרים - tourists, people on a journey) and **sojourners** (תושבים - dwellers) with me (Leviticus 25:23)...I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you **The Land of Canaan and to be your God**” (Lev. 25:23).

Yahweh LORD God chose a group of people to tend it for Him. For about a thousand years, The Land belonged to those descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Saul, David and Solomon were its first kings. When King Solomon died, The Land was divided in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Assyria captured the Northern

Kingdom in 783 B.C. Babylon captured the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C. and Jerusalem was destroyed. For two thousand years most of the Original People God chose to tend The Land were dispersed all over the world, hated, hunted, humiliated and killed. During that time, The Land was captured and recaptured over and over by hireling nations. Eventually The Land ended up forsaken and “left like a wilderness” (Isaiah 27:10). However, although some of the Original People had always been there, in 1948 the Original People came back in force to The Land. They not only established the sovereign Land of Israel again, but they miraculously turned it into a 21st Century Nation - the very same Land God told Moses was “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). That is The Land to which God chose to send His only begotten Son, to give His life a ransom. That is The Land on which our Lord will touch down His feet when he comes to rule and reign.

So, don’t sweat over what The Land is called. Just call it The Land, but think **Lawful Land**. Think **Authorized Land**. When God *says* (דבר) something - well, that *is* a promise. You can count on it. You can take it to the bank. God doesn’t do “cross my heart and hope to die” talk. He just *says* (דבר) what is going to happen. And it does. Every time.



1. Random House Dictionary, p.1151.
2. Ibid, p. 1073.
3. Ibid, p. 1214.
4. Ibid. p. 804.

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we must rethink Paul. He was *not* anti-Judaic in his theology nor anti-Semitic. God forbid! In his critiques of Israel and his Jewish opponents, Paul speaks from *within* the Jewish community, not as an outsider. He speaks with the pathos and the passion of Israel’s prophets, like Jeremiah, as one within and concerned for the well being of Israel. Paul is not a “convert” from Judaism to Christianity; nor does he as a “Christian” turn and attack his former faith, Judaism.

In his own day Paul was misunderstood and maligned even by many of his fellow Jewish believers in Yeshua. He was accused

of forsaking the traditions and the Torah, and urging other Jews to do likewise. By his personal testimony and that of James, however, we know this was not true. Nonetheless, through the centuries Paul has been the favorite son of many opposed to Jews and Judaism, and even the hero of some outright anti-Semites, like the second-century Gnostic church leader, Marcion.

Let us get this straight. Paul was *philo-Semitic!* He was a lover of Israel, of the Jewish people and the Jewish Scriptures. Should not we, too, assume a philo-Semitic stance when reading his letters? To presume otherwise is to bend us toward a misreading of the Apostle and to tip us in the direction of contempt and mischaracterization of Jews

and their God-given faith.

Israel is beloved of God, and his love is everlasting. Therefore, Christians should love the Jewish people as well—not because of their place in prophetic end-time scenarios, but because of their place in the Father’s heart. Paul teaches us this foundationally important truth. We would do well to learn it.

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