RELIGIOUS LAND IDEOLOGIES AND VIOLENCE:
GUSH EMUNIM AND HAMAS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1
Thesis
Definition of Terms
Violence and Religious Rationales
Gush Emunim
Hamas

CHAPTER
1. GUSH EMUNIM AND THE ISRAELI SETTLERS ........................................... 13
 Introduction
Gush Emunim’s Religious Land Ideology
Hebrew Scriptures: Abrahamic Narratives
The Founding of Gush Emunim
Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Mystic Dreamer
Zvi Yehudah Kook, Activist and Revivalist
Gush Emunim, Settlement, and Resistance
The Failure of Sinai
Dispossession: Covenantal Explanation
Rationale for Failure
Jewish Underground and Kach
Escalating Vigilante Violence
Ariel Sharon, Pragmatic Withdrawal
Rabbi Kook, Love and the Land of Israel
Abraham, Diverging Narratives; Land Steward

2. HAMAS ............................................................................................................................. 53
 Introduction
Al-Mithaq and Waqf
Waqf in the Muslim Tradition
Awqaf in Jerusalem; Limited Israeli Tolerance
An Islamic Land
Palestinian Land Rights
Violence as a Means of Action
An Evolutionary Approach
Muslim Brotherhood Offshoot
Yassin, Spiritual Leader
The Pragmatism of Elections and Hudnah
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOLASTIC VITA</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Thesis

Ideologies affirming divine mandates of land ownership act both to impel and to validate actions taken in order to retain or regain control of said land. In the instance of the shared territory of Israel and Palestine, multiple ideologies have asserted and continue to assert competing claims to the land. Two modern entities that voice these religious claims are the Gush Emunim and the Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah, whose competing ideologies seemingly echo long standing claims to ownership of land by various groups, including the ancient Israelites and the early Islamic umma. For Gush Emunim and those who take its ideological stance to heart, a divine mandate legitimates actions that are illegal, some according to the laws of the state of Israel while others violate international law. At the same time, Gush Emunim claims differ from the traditional Jewish claim to the land of Israel based on God’s covenant with Abraham found within the Hebrew Scriptures, commonly referred to as the Tanakh. The divergence between the scriptural claim to land and Gush Emunim undermines the sense that Gush Emunim is acting as a voice for the Jewish people in making its ideological claim to land ownership.

In the case of Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah, also known by its acronym Hamas, the ideology of their divine mandate also validates violence. Utilizing a theological argument based on the Islamic concept of waqf (divine endowment) as well as justification based on an argument concerning inalienable human rights, Hamas combines a version of a traditional Islamic concept with appeals to non-religious international norms to justify violent resistance to the state of Israel. At the same time,
Hamas distorts the long held Islamic conception of waqf, which does not ordinarily refer to a territory such as Palestine, while Hamas also does not respect the human rights of Israeli civilians, whom Hamas holds responsible for the actions of the Israeli government.

Ideologies that affirm a divine right to possess land sanction and legitimate illegal, violent, and immoral actions. Gush Emunim and Hamas depart from the generally held positions of Judaism and Islam in their ideological claims that legitimate violence as a means of obtaining possession of land. Despite this, the systems within which these groups’ land ideologies operate both present space for the disavowal of violence, whether in the form of recognition of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook’s insistence on the primary nature of love in his messianic theology and understanding the promise to Abraham in the model of stewardship, or practicing pragmatic politics and respecting universal human rights.

Definition of Terms

The task of determining the detrimental effects of ideologies, rooted in religious belief, that affirm divinely mandated ownership of land requires first the careful definition of a number of problematic terms utilized in constructing the argument, including “ideology,” “religious,” and “land.” Of these terms, the definition first delineated here is that of the term “ideology,” in large part due to its modern negative connotations. In Clifford Geertz’s The Interpretation of Cultures, Geertz advocates the recovery of “ideology” as an academic term. In agreement with Geertz’s analysis, “ideology” ought to be defined not with a pejorative tone, but as a cultural system. Geertz asserts that ideology acts to name the structure of situations with an attitude of
commitment and a style that is ornate, vivid, and suggestive, thereby motivating action.¹
This is the definition that will be employed here, as the cultural systems in question
explicate the rationale for occupying land, while also committing participants in the
cultural group to action. Used in this context, the term “ideology” does not operate under
the otherwise negative assumptions with which it is often associated.

The second term that must be clarified in order to be used in the specific context
of land ideologies is “religious.” In order to apply the adjective “religious” it is first
necessary to deal with the noun from which it is derived, “religion.” The history of
“religion” as a category has been the subject of recent critical scholarship by Russell
McCutcheon and Timothy Fitzgerald. McCutcheon, the earlier of these authors, wrote
his *Manufacturing Religion* in the latter part of the twentieth century as part of a
movement concerned with critiquing the concept of “religion” as a *sui generis*, self-
generating, and a privileged category. As an alternative, McCutcheon proposes
constructing “religion” as but one aspect of the study of human history and culture.²
From this framework the scholar of “religion” is not talking about “religion” per se, but
about human beings and communities that ascribe particular brands of motivations and
implications to their thoughts, words, deeds, and institutions.³ However, the scholar then
encounters the pitfall of the collapsing of otherwise distinct categories, as “religion”
becomes markedly similar to the concept of culture described in Geertz’s work. The
critique of the term “religion” and collapsing of categories is an issue that Fitzgerald
echoes in his work *The Ideology of Religious Studies*.

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³ McCutcheon, 123.
Fitzgerald critiques the construction of the academic study of “religion” as a category constructed to localize authority. This depends on the assumption that “religion” is not a valid category because it is not a cross-cultural aspect of human life. According to Fitzgerald, “Religion,” should be studied as an ideological category - an aspect of modern Western ideology, with a specific location in history, including the nineteenth-century period of European civilization. Fitzgerald extends his critique to the usage of the term “religious,” specifically criticizing unclear delineation between that which is “religious” and that which is not “religious.” Although Fitzgerald has a valid point in terms of the application of “religion” and “religious” as created descriptors within a particular discourse, these terms can be selectively applied when working within a specific context. Working using the specific contexts of the statements of Gush Emunim and Hamas, it is fair to differentiate the ideological claims each makes as religious. The Hebrew Scriptures contain promises to land ownership that are religious in that the promises are made by the ancient Israelite God, or that God’s divine surrogates. Similarly, Gush Emunim makes claims to land ownership based on assurances from the divine figure of a modern Jewish conception of God, and Hamas’s discourse offers the Qur’an, understood by Muslims as a text revealed by God, as the origin of their entitlement. Because each of these groups make claims dependent on ethereal sources, the similarity of their sources can be understood by using the term “religious,” which imply the need to be faithful through both thought and action.

The final term that needs to be clarified is “land.” In Norman Habel’s The Land is Mine, the author illustrates the myriad definitions for “land.” Amongst the various

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5 Fitzgerald, 4.
6 Fitzgerald, 106.
things “land” brings to mind for Habel are dirt, rocks, sand, planting fields, topsoil, city limits, that area between the oceans that humans live on, and the terra firma. When using “land” within the context of ideologies of land, however, Habel concentrates particularly on making distinctions between arable land, territory, and the domain of the earth. Working within the context of biblical land ideologies, Habel differentiates these connotations of land in order to show the diversity presented within the biblical text in terms of the land promised by God to the Israelites. Within the scope of this paper the primary focus will be on “land” as territory, to inform a discussion of land rights. While Gush Emunim and Hamas may or may not make additional ideological arguments supporting a religious right to particular soil or to the firm expanse of the earth, such arguments are only incidental as practically applicable claims that motivate and legitimate action. In contrast, territorial claims or land rights are public constructions, narratives that impel action in defense of land currently occupied, and legitimate struggle in order to reclaim the land lived upon by previous generations.

Violence and Religious Rationales

In order to make the claim that religious land ideologies legitimate violence, the connection between ideologies and violence must be briefly examined. Attempting to rationalize and understand why a person commits a violent act has been and continues to be the subject of study of a wide variety of fields, including psychology, sociology and anthropology. Ethnographic studies emphasize allowing the perpetrators of violence the opportunity to explain their actions while sociologists focus on the social mores and

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8 Habel, 2.
norms that contribute to the adoption of violence. It is unlikely that any single explanation rationalizes every violent act, but grouping similar acts of violence facilitates discovery of potential reasons and motives for action. In Susan Niditch’s study of war in the Hebrew Bible, she highlights the need to be able to rationalize waging of war and killing human beings. Niditch refers to Quincy Wright whose study of war concluded that most scholars of war agree that it is “extremely difficult psychologically” for a human to kill another. According to Wright, killing and allowing for the possibility of being killed due to participation in war require considerable self-justification, rationalization, psychological and social sanctions. Wright’s work is supplemented by Niditch with an ecological materialist approach that raises questions concerning the role scarcity of resources as well as the need to balance and control resources play in motivating warfare, while still maintaining the importance of other cultural and political factors. Land is a primary resource and controlling land lends itself to controlling wealth. Thus, religious land ideologies work to encourage violence through positing a relationship between economic materialist resources and the divine. In Talal Asad’s *Formations of the Secular*, Asad questions the role that religious authority plays in legitimating violence, noting the many occurrences of violence bereft of religious motivations as well as the innumerable pious people worldwide who are not seized by the need to commit acts of violence. Asad’s critique is certainly valid if one is trying to universalize a general relationship between religions and violence; however in this case the specific claim being made is that religious ideologies work to sanction violence.

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9 Quincy Wright, *Study of War*, 92-93.
10 Ibid., 93.
through particularistic claims to land. In these instances it ought to be implicitly understood that the while religious ideology legitimates the violent actions of individuals who may or may not draw their motivation solely from it, it does not force all believers to actively participate in the acts of violence.

**Gush Emunim**

Founded as a cohesive group in 1974, *Gush Emunim* translated as the “Block of the Faithful,” extols an ideology founded on divine legitimation of the modern Jewish occupation of the territory of Israel/Palestine. Claiming a divine right to the entire Land of Israel as part of a covenant with the divine, the ideology of *Gush Emunim* continues to legitimate violent acts even though the group has formally dissolved. The covenant that *Gush Emunim* invokes is presented as contiguous with the covenant between God and Abraham in the Hebrew Scriptures. Such logic is troublesome due to the elasticity of such claims, as the seemingly monolithic concept of the Abrahamic covenant is really an amalgam, combining differing narratives. The *Gush Emunim* claim to the territory of Israel plays off this concept of an inherited Jewish covenant. This can be explained through examination of the specific historical circumstances that led to the founding of *Gush Emunim*.

The group came into existence following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War commonly referred to as the Ramadan War or Yom Kippur War in which Egypt and Syria briefly reclaimed territory lost in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, only to have Israel counter-attack. According to Gideon Aran’s work on *Gush Emunim*, the group’s ideas had gestated since the 1967 War and suddenly emerged forcefully seeking to resolve the issue of the
territories of the West Bank, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula which were simultaneously once a cradle of Jewish collective identity, an enormous strategic advantage, and additionally the home to the hostile population of 1.5 million Palestinians going through their own process of awakening a national consciousness. The response, a turn by members of Israel’s Orthodox community to an extreme expression of nationalism, adopted the earlier Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook’s messianic interpretation of *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel. Through this renewed devotion to nationalism, *Gush Emunim* came to influence various governments leading to increased support for illegal settlements in territories not counted within the borders of Israel according to the 1948 United Nations division of land. Additionally, the ideology of *Gush Emunim* provides legitimation for violent acts that threaten either Palestinian civilians or Israelis committed to seeking peace through a process commonly referred to as “Land for Peace.” In this process the Israeli government cedes its claim to occupied territories as a means of promoting peaceful relations with the governments of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. The ideology of *Gush Emunim* embraces a comprehensive worldview with *Eretz Yisrael* playing a central role.

The *Gush Emunim* claim to the land of Israel plays on the promises to the land made in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is implicit in what Ian Lustick calls the “semiofficial” *Gush Emunim* slogan in his work *For the Land and the Lord*, which examines the history and ideology of *Gush Emunim* and its religious brethren. Lustick’s rendering of the slogan in English, “The Land of Israel, for the People of Israel,

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according to the Torah of Israel,”

formulates the basic trilogy of *Gush Emunim* ideology. According to Lustick, *Gush Emunim* ideology centers on the cardinal importance of the Land of Israel in addition to the election of the Jewish people and the covenant between God and the people. Focused on the land in this manner, the *Gush Emunim* interpretation of the divine mandate to the land creates a situation in which the state of Israel cannot legitimately concede its authority over *Eretz Yisrael*. Nationalistic support for the state of Israel based on this interpretation of Judaism both motivates and legitimates actions taken by individuals and groups that run counter to the United Nations mandate as well as established Orthodox Jewish ethics. Settlement, anti-Arab violence and even intra-Jewish violence are legitimated by the land ideology of *Gush Emunim*. Despite this connection, the ideological system which the *Gush Emunim* land ideology belongs to has various possibilities for emphasizing a nonviolent approach to settling on the land of Israel including accepting Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook’s interpretation and prioritization on love and using a conception for relationship to the land based on an interpretation of Abraham as a steward, not a settler.

**Hamas**

*Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah* (Islamic resistance movement) or *Hamas* has a clear ideological commitment to gaining control over the territory previously inhabited by an Arab population commonly referred to as Palestinians, and its ideology provides motivation and legitimation for efforts moral and immoral alike aimed at achieving that goal. *Hamas*’s religious ideology claims that the land of Palestine is a divine endowment (*waqf*) to Muslim Palestinians and cannot be conceded. This claim is

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a historical anomaly, as the traditional Islamic understanding of waqf focuses on the endowment of land or wealth sanctified by being given over to possession by Allah. While some properties, especially the religious sites are classified as awqaf (the plural of waqf), the bulk of territory in Palestine was never set aside according to the standard legal Islamic definition derived from the tradition of the Prophet’s Companions. The idea that all territory conquered at any time by the Caliphate is a waqf, land given for possession by Muslims, is an innovation, and one that Islamic religious leaders not affiliated with Hamas have spoken out against. Comprised of savvy leadership, Hamas officials have drawn away from this Islamic claim, while more frequently invoking discourse concerning the dispossession of Palestinian land by Israel as a matter of violating human rights. Hamas’s organizational structure lends its human rights claims credence, as Hamas does work to preserve the wellbeing of poor and marginalized Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip through its charitable wing.

Hamas is a relatively unique organization in that there is a division between its branches which isolates the organization into two separately acting wings, the charitable wing and the militant wing. For this reason simplistic descriptions of Hamas typically fail to take into account both the positive role Hamas serves in providing services to the Palestinian people, primarily in the area of the Gaza Strip, as well as the frequently criticized militant wing that sponsors acts of violence against a variety of targets. Hamas emerged during the first Intifada, a Palestinian uprising against occupation by the state of Israel, as a competitor to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Up until that point the PLO served as the exclusive political representative with the authority to speak for the
Palestinian people, and later for the Palestinian Authority.\(^{15}\) **Hamas**’s challenge of the PLO centered on the conception of authority; the PLO was not affiliated with a particular religious tradition and consisted of Arabs of multiple faiths including Islam and Christianity, while **Hamas** invoked a specific Islamic identity. Islamic elements of this identity are found in the claim to the territory of Palestine that originates in **Hamas**’s ideology, and that **Hamas** utilizes to legitimate violent actions.

**Hamas**’s ideology emerges for study from a select number of influential Islamic thinkers and documents, as well as through interviews given with a number of scholars. The primary voice of religious authority for **Hamas** was Sheik Ahmad Yassin, who is still regarded as the spiritual voice of the movement despite his death, assassinated by Israel in 2004. Yassin’s religious ideology builds upon the legacy of the Islamic revivalist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) begun in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna in 1928. **Hamas** adopts the violent tactics of another important Muslim Brotherhood figure Sayyed Qutb, whose calls for violence are justified by the need to rebuild the world of Islam. However, despite the Muslim Brotherhood’s role in revitalizing Islam as a basis for modern governance, **Hamas** is the sole organization connected with the MB to construct the argument for the land of Palestine as sacred in the tradition of Islam. In fact, Qutb specifically condemns violence waged in Islam’s name that seeks only to further the interests of particular nationalities or territories. Despite this inconsistency in adopting the rhetoric of Qutb, modern statements of ideology by **Hamas**, including their formal charter, make the argument that an Islamic Palestine is to be the site of a particular struggle due to the entire territory’s status as a sacred endowment by *Allah*.

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Additionally, in the discourse of Hamas leaders a second ideological claim to land is maintained, invoking the dispossession of the land of Palestinians now living in refugee camps, thereby supplementing the group’s Islamic ideology with a narrative resonant in terms of the conception of an inalienable human right to retain land ownership. Recognizing the over-reliance of some scholars on the formal declarations of Hamas’s charter, recent researchers, including Azzam Tamimi, have argued that Hamas’s charter has proven more influential for scholars than for the group itself, who viewed the charter as more a hindrance than help due to the unflattering portrayal of Hamas that emerged from a singular focus on the document.16 For this reason research on the ideology of Hamas must include both the group’s formal statements as well as statements taken from multiple scholars’ interviews with group leaders and members. Additionally, one must take into account Hamas’s adoption of pragmatism in the form of electoral participation and advocating of a short-term ceasefire using the classical Islamic concept of a hudnah. The resulting impression of Hamas’s ideology includes both “static” statements that seem immutable, as well malleable statements open to future revision. If statements made concerning the divinely mandated claim to the territory as a comprehensive unit are static, then they will continue to legitimate and to spur future violent actions whether sponsored formally by the group or perpetrated by individuals influenced by Hamas’s religious land ideology. This possibility necessitates reviewing and rejecting the supposedly Islamic argument that Palestine is a waqf as well as examining the extent to which violence can be employed to protest prior actions that violated the basic human right to not be dispossessed of one’s territory.

CHAPTER ONE

GUSH EMUNIM AND THE ISRAELI SETTLERS

Introduction

The ideology of *Gush Emunim* (The Block of the Faithful) inspired repeated attempts at illegal settlement in the territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and continues to legitimate violence taken by Israeli settlers who subscribe to the messianic vision of the group with its emphasis on possessing the whole territory of *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel. For those who adopted *Gush Emunim* principles, *Eretz Yisrael* itself was sacred and could not be bartered away. Possession and settlement of the land was paramount and holding onto and living in the land was seen as bringing peace even at the potential cost of human lives due to any increased tension or renewed violence. While *Gush Emunim* ideology was not the sole motivation for settlement or the violence of later actors, its ideology concentrating on the Land of Israel as divinely ordained for Jewish settlement contributed to and continues to legitimate the violence of dispossession and settling of the Land of Israel.

One source that could be construed as providing legitimacy to *Gush Emunim*’s land ideology is the Hebrew Scriptures. In the text of this ancient work, the narrative repeatedly describes promises made by God to Abraham. These promises provide varying conceptions of a relationship between Abraham, his progeny, and the land. By following up on this claim, the Hebrew Scriptures and in particular the Abrahamic cycle can be seen as a major aspect of the *Gush Emunim* land ideology. Despite this apparent relationship, *Gush Emunim* discourse rarely analyzes the complex evolution of the Abrahamic promise, instead focusing only on the return to the land as part of God’s
continuing redemptive mission. This is largely due to the influence of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, a Jewish mystic and former Chief Rabbi of Palestine.

Although formally founded in 1974 as a reaction to the events of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Gush Emunim traces its ideological history to the figure of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, whose writings in the early part of the twentieth century focus on the role the Land of Israel plays in the process of messianic Redemption. Despite his status as Chief Rabbi of Palestine in 1921, Rabbi Kook’s work came to prominence following the Six-Day War as his son Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook proclaimed the prophetic nature of his father’s writing. Rabbi Z.Y. Kook was himself a minor figure prior to entering the national consciousness during this period, inspiring students at the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva to advance the cause of settlement through references to his father’s writing, particularly the fulfillment of Rabbi A.I. Kook’s theory of Eretz Yisrael and the Redemption.17 Claiming to be the authoritative interpreter of Kook the elder’s work, Z.Y. Kook highlighted the role possession of Eretz Yisrael played in the redemptive process, bringing about the messianic age. This ideology, which focused on possession of the whole Land of Israel, inspired the creation of Gush Emunim as a reaction to the use of land as a bargaining chip by the state of Israel in peace negotiations.

From its founding ideology and resistive stance, Gush Emunim rose to prominence despite its small numbers, capturing public sentiment and helping increase the number of settlers living in the various occupied territories. These territories - the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and the Sinai - were not within the borders established by the 1948 Armistice Line creating Israel, borders referred to as the “Green

Dissatisfied and resistant to the government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Gush Emunim helped usher the Likud party to victory in 1977, supplanting the Labor party, and making Menachem Begin the Prime Minister of Israel. Although Gush Emunim supporters were elated with the possibility of working cooperatively with the Begin-led government, and further increasing settlement, political realities strained the relationship between Gush Emunim and its favored elected political officials. When the initial Camp David accords were signed by the Israeli and Egyptian governments and the spectre of withdrawal and forced evacuation by Israel from the Sinai became a reality, the Gush Emunim ideology faced a crossroads. Mounting an ideological campaign aimed at the hearts and minds of Israeli citizens and soldiers, Gush Emunim-influenced Rabbis pronounced the withdrawal of Jews from the Land of Israel a mortal sin. Despite their efforts, withdrawal from the Sinai and the forced evacuation of the Yamit settlement was completed. In scriptural cases of Jewish dispossession, explanations focused on the actions of the people violating the inherited Jewish covenant with God. Gush Emunim could not agree on who violated the covenant, or how to respond. Equipped with an ideology unable to synthesize the political reality of the their situation, some members of Gush Emunim who had already formed a splinter movement later labeled as the “Jewish Underground” planned to take matters into their own hands, embracing ever increasing violence. Additionally, during this period the Kach (Thus) political party was founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose anti-Arab rhetoric utilized elements of the Gush Emunim land ideology to mandate the removal of all Arabs from the territory of Israel as a means of purifying Eretz Yisrael. In this climate of tension and minor acts of violence, members of the Jewish Underground were arrested for constructing an elaborate plot to blow up the
Islamic Dome of the Rock located on the Haram al-Sharif/the Temple Mount, in the hopes of advancing the messianic ideology of Gush Emunim. Following the arrest of the splinter group’s members, Gush Emunim steadily deteriorated, and finally dissolved in the mid-1980s, but its ideology remained salient for those who still believed in it.

In the words and deeds of public figures like Kahane, the increasingly violent and hostile ideology rooted in the theology of Rabbi A.I. Kook as interpreted by his son and Gush Emunim continued to influence this group of Israelis. Tensions continued to strain the occupied territories, particularly evident in the increasing settler vigilante violence reacting to the first Palestinian Intifada. Following Kahane’s assassination in 1990 tensions continued to build until Baruch Goldstein, a Hebron settler deeply influenced by Kahane, who embraced Kahane’s anti-Arab racism, massacred Muslims worshipping at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron in 1994. With the spectre of peace accords and further territorial withdrawals looming again under the second period of Yitzhak Rabin’s leadership, frequent protests of Rabin and the Oslo Accords culminated in the assassination of Rabin by Yigal Amir, a Jewish Israeli in November of 1995. After Rabin’s murder the peace process ground to a halt with regards to the remaining settlements in the West Bank, Golan Heights, and Gaza Strip. Only after another decade did Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, himself long a proponent of settlement, order the forced evacuation of the Gaza Strip. Despite this overt withdrawal, during the period of his leadership, Sharon continued to support the increase of settlements in the greater Jerusalem area of the West Bank, while also heading the construction of a large wall that may be viewed as indicating a new Green Line. Even with the Israeli withdrawal ostensibly acting to bring peace, settlements seen by some as a primary irritant and cause
for violence continued to remain within territory internationally set aside by the United Nations in 1948 for the Palestinian people. The *Gush-Emunim*-inspired settler movement has recently been acting pragmatically, concentrating settlement in the West Bank areas it refers to as Samaria and Judea as a means of making withdrawal and forced evacuation untenable.

While the land ideology of *Gush Emunim* mandates settlement of the whole *Eretz Yisrael* and has inspired much violence, newly edited collections of the corpus of literature produced by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook draw into question his son’s emphasis on conquering land over preserving the wellbeing of people. The concept of love as a guide for ethical behavior can be seen in the figure of Abraham. Even though a modern interpretation of the promises made to Abraham might synthesize the various promises to imply that God has promised Abraham and his Jewish progeny ownership of the territory of Israel, a promise inherited by modern Jews, the four divergent promise narratives provide varying degrees of legitimacy for the *Gush Emunim* interpretation of the Jewish right to possess the territory of Israel while raising the possibility that it is not truly possession of territory, but stewardship that Israel has inherited from Abraham.

**Gush Emunim’s Religious Land Ideology**

With charismatic Jewish figures to shape their ideology, the religious youth who formed *Gush Emunim* adopted the stance that possession of the whole of *Eretz Yisrael* constituted a divine mandate, one that outweighed all others. Blending what Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar in their book *Lords of the Land* call a mystical and irrational worldview with a modern and rational perception of the balance of forces and possibilities of action,
*Gush* offered a total, higher, state-overriding alternative to the flawed democratic state of Israel and the rule of law.\(^{18}\) According to Ian Lustick in his *Love of the Land and the Lord*, the new *Gush* movement offered spiritual rejuvenation expressed through the single lens of settlement on the greater, liberated *Eretz Yisrael*.\(^{19}\) Armed with the slogan “The Land of Israel, for the People of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel,” the movement concentrated its ideology on a trinity of forces resonant with the Israeli Jewish population - Jews, their Land and their Torah.\(^{20}\) Resistant to the reigning Labor government led by Yitzhak Rabin, *Gush* and settler leaders nonetheless met frequently with government officials in the spring and summer of 1975, culminating in the eventual public revealing of the first *Gush Emunim* settlement in June of 1975.\(^{21}\) Taking advantage of the Yom Kippur War’s devastating effects on Israeli society, *Gush* used the global expression of Jewish solidarity to hammer home their ideology: The wholeness of the Land was an article of faith and was to be achieved by any means.\(^{22}\) During this period settlements were founded in the territories of Sinai, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, as well as the West Bank. Despite the well-known moral complexity of settling in these territories, excluded from Israel by the Green Line, *Gush Emunim* continued to assert their claims to the land. Further breaking down the slogan of the group reveals the complex relationship between the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and the *Torah* of Israel. The Land of Israel is for the people of Israel, which refers to the descendants of Abraham, and the land is promised to the people of Israel based on the *Torah*, indicating that the ideological basis

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\(^{19}\) Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York: Council on Foreign Affairs, 1988), 44.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{21}\) Zertal and Eldar, 36.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 14.
for *Gush Emunim’s* claim to the territory resides within the Hebrew Scriptures. Despite the simplicity of the group’s slogan, the biblical relationship between God, Abraham, and the territory of Israel is complex and fraught with inconsistencies in the changing and evolving promise narratives of Genesis.

**Hebrew Scriptures: Abrahamic Narratives**

In the Abrahamic cycle of stories contained within the text of Genesis various promises are made to Abraham by God, including the central promise of land that is later spun into an ideology of land ownership and used to legitimate narrative conquest and violence. These narratives represent the initial connection between the proto-Israelite people and the territory that would come to be called Israel. As W.D. Davies notes in his work on the connection between the gospel and the land, the promises to Abraham, their author, and their content have been continuously reinterpreted from age to age, giving *Gush Emunim* the ability to reinterpret these promise narratives to support their land ideology. These promises depend on the interaction between the Divine and a man, born Abram, who becomes Abraham. Abram first appears in the genealogies of Genesis 11:26, and is included among the family of his father Terah who set out from the land of the Chaldeans, Ur, for the land of Canaan. The Abrahamic narrative picks up in the twelfth chapter of Genesis as God, rendered here in the traditional Jewish style as *Adonai* calls to Abram after settling for a time in Haran to continue to the land which will be shown to him. This land is implicitly connected with the land of Canaan mentioned in the previous chapter, but as of this point in the narrative the only relationship Abram has

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with the land is as an immigrant. In Walter Brueggemann’s *The Land*, he notes that this early figure of Abram is a sojourner, one who is on the way to live in a land whose future name “Israel,” is not yet known to him. The journey of Abram sets up the promises of land, promises that are continually restated and reworked thereby becoming more complex, while shifting in potential meaning.

The initial promise occurs after both Abram and his immediate family have completed the journey into the land of Canaan, when Genesis 12:7 narrates the appearance of Adonai who tells Abram, “To your offspring I will give this land.” This promise is vague in terms of ownership and unconditional as the promised ground has no borders, thereby lacking definition. The promise contains no limits binding Abram’s reception of the land to behavior of any kind. Nonetheless, Abram responds in the following verses by constructing altars, possibly marking the land as sanctified for Adonai, and journeying throughout the land of Canaan. Despite the absence of covenantal language, Abram reacts to his experience as though he has promised to do these things, and continues to invoke the name of Adonai. The wanderings and gradual migration make it seem likely that in this narrative Abram has no conception of currently owning the land and needing to secure his ownership. Instead he operates as one called to care for the land and sanctify the land, a steward of the land. Abram’s sojourn continues until, due to a famine, he migrates to Egypt. The vagueness of this early promise is unique, and important as subsequent promises refine and complicate the

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connection between Abram, his progeny and the land, increasing the sense of land ownership essential to the inherited land ideology of *Gush Emunim*.

After a set of short stories, Abram is promised current and future ownership of land by *Adonai* in Genesis 13:14-17. In this restated and clarified promise the limits of the land are prescribed as all the territory to the north, south, east and west that Abram could see from his dwelling place located within the land of Canaan. Additionally, *Adonai* promises that the land which Abram sees will be given to Abram and his offspring forever, and that Abram should rise up and walk through the length and the breadth of the land. Abram erects altars while traveling through the land of Canaan and finds himself commanding an army to rescue his nephew from kings in the north. Upon his successful return Abram is blessed by Melchizedek, the neighboring king of Salem, in an encounter showing peaceful coexistence among neighbors. Betsy Halpern-Amaru uses this passage as an idealized example in which Abram’s attitude towards his neighbors highlights a possible method for living in the land, as Abram acknowledges the presence of the indigenous people of King Melchizedek.26 Also, Abram deals positively in this text with the king of Sodom, as part of a sworn promise to *Adonai*. This speaks to the question of ethical behavior, which becomes connected with possession of land. Abram deals with his neighbors in a fair manner due to his understanding of his relationship with *Adonai*, despite the absence of any mention of covenant at this juncture.

The third instance of *Adonai* promising Abram’s descendents control of land occurs in Genesis 15. While verse 7 merely restates a simple promise to possess land, verses 18-21 introduce problems not raised by the previous promises while also first

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making mention of a covenant between Abram and Adonai. These problems include the issues of vastly expanded boundaries as well as an explicit recognition of the land’s status as currently occupied by various indigenous peoples. The first problem of boundaries can be succinctly stated in that this formation of boundaries makes the land promised significantly larger, including vast swathes of territory such as the Sinai and Transjordan. Secondly, the territories promised to Abram are identified in reference to the names of people currently living and possessing the land including the Kenites, Kenizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Gergashites, and the Jebusites. This passage indicates that land ownership can be transferred by divine powers without the knowledge of the current inhabitants, a point that Michael Prior identifies as resonant with later colonialist readings that view this narrative as literal historical pericopae. While Abram has been residing in the land as an alien in the midst of the current inhabitants, this interaction reshapes that relationship giving the land of the peoples to Abram and his descendents without dictating how they are to dispossess the indigenes. Lack of specificity here is troubling – the unaddressed relationship between Abram’s descendents and the inhabitants of the land is particularly problematic. Despite such concerns, this passage is the first that explicitly incorporates the ideological promise of land with a covenantal promise and the concept of inheritance that is so important to the ideology of Gush Emunim. Also what appears to be a throwaway line, “the Lord made a covenant with Abram,” reveals nothing about the covenant except its existence, and its concern

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with land. Nonetheless, this single line becomes an important issue for this ideology of land, as land ownership is frequently tied in later texts to observance of covenant.

Genesis 17 presents the fourth and last promise of land to Abram by Adonai within the context of the changing of Abram’s name to Abraham, presenting the longest and clearest expression of how Abraham and his progeny are entitled to the land of Canaan. In this passage, a number of important details are added to what is now explicitly a land covenant, distinctive from other covenants due to its reference to land. One such detail is that the land is now explicitly defined, even though there are no formal boundaries; the land Abraham is to possess is the land of Canaan, where Abraham had been dwelling as an alien. This creates a formal relationship between Abraham and the Canaanites whose land has been reallocated under the jurisdiction of Adonai. A second major facet is the renewed promise of progeny, who are to become many nations and many kings, which is to be an unending covenant. As a significantly lengthened promise of progeny, this passage includes the additional promise in the seventh verse, “to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”\textsuperscript{29} This intimates a formal relationship between Adonai and Abraham’s descendents as an everlasting covenant, a concept the Gush Emunim slogan invokes. Such an understanding of the covenant as unending without reference to continuous obedience, only the performance of circumcision, is a rare occasion within the Hebrew Scriptures.\textsuperscript{30} The sign of the covenant, circumcision, is detailed in verses 9-14. As an issue of ritual concern and requirement, circumcision signifies acceptance of the covenant, yet it does so without detailing behavioral restrictions, and so has no influence on actions that are legitimated and motivated by this

\textsuperscript{29} *NISB*, Gen 17:7.

\textsuperscript{30} Leviticus 18:24-30 and Deuteronomy 32:46-47 are examples of a conditional covenant.
ideological claim to land. The covenant, as presented in this passage, thus provides for an everlasting claim to the land of Canaan by Abraham’s descendants, whose only requirement for continued possession of the land is the act of circumcision. Moshe Weinfeld recognizes that the idea of a divine promise of land to an ethnic group or tribe who settles in the new territory was not unique to Israel; however, the belief that in order to dwell safely it was necessary to fulfill the will of God who gave the land was unique. Land ownership is legitimated for those claiming Abraham as an ancestor through referring to this passage; they have inherited Abraham’s covenant which stripped the Canaanites of the land and would likewise strip more recent inhabitants. While restated in the narrative of Genesis to Abraham’s descendants, and reinterpreted in the subsequent books of the Torah, this final promise sets up a covenantal relationship in which adherence to the covenant, by performing circumcision, is the necessary precondition for continued possession of the territory of Israel. The land ideology of Gush Emunim summed up in their slogan refers to this covenant, while the group offers a variety of methods for dealing with the Palestinian people.

The Founding of Gush Emunim

Gush Emunim and its ideology coalesced as a product of two Arab-Israeli conflicts, interpreted by believers influenced by Gush Emunim as the divine will, which caused considerable reevaluation on the part of religious Israeli Jews. The acquisition of territory spurred some Israelis, both religious and secular, to attempt settlement of newly acquired territories led by figures such as Hannan Porat and Moshe Levinger. Following

32 Lustick, 19.
the 1967 conflict known to Israelis as the Six-Day War, Israel seized control of new swathes of territory previously owned or administered by the defeated Arab countries of Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, a situation that opened up the possibility of settling a greater Israel. Earlier that same year Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook had given a sermon at the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva bemoaning the partition of historic Eretz Yisrael. In his sermon Kook expressed the hope that the redemptive process would be renewed shortly, a sermon that convinced graduates of the Rabbi’s prophetic status in hindsight after the June War led to Israeli control over much of the territory Rabbi Kook the elder conceived of as comprising Eretz Yisrael. According to Ehud Sprinzak, a scholar who focused on the history and ideology of Gush Emunim, the success of the war revived the concept of territorial maximalism for Israelis who had previously been constrained within the United Nations mandated Green Line. One of the earliest movements asserting the need to control more territory was the Land of Israel Movement (LIM), which released a manifesto in September of 1967 signed by a number of significant Israeli figures, including political and cultural leaders who were not connected with the proto-Gush Emunim movement. The LIM, as Sprinzak notes, was neither an opposition group nor a protest movement, and asserted that the Israeli conquest of the territories was irreversible. Nonetheless, the pragmatic Israeli government approached the prospect of settling the territories with the caution and reserve of a politically cognizant body.

The first settlers, well known figures in Israeli history such as Hannan Porat in Kiryat Arba and Moshe Levinger in Hebron, encountered resistance on the part of the

34 Sprinzak, Ascendance, 35.
35 Ibid., 38.
36 Ibid., 39-40.
Israeli government while capturing the sentiments of some Jewish Israelis. Porat, considered to be the very first settler, moved into the West Bank in September of 1967, describing the return to the land as nourishing his burning faith in the divine promise of the Jewish people’s right to their land. This ideology was echoed by Moshe Levinger, who led a group attempting to return to Hebron while also claiming that the Jewish people’s right to return and settle came from the biblical era. These claims seemed to resonate with some nationalist religious Israelis for whom the Six-Day War became their Big Bang, fundamentally reshaping the universe, yet their narrative, drawing on the ancient claim of Israel to the land through the promise God made to Abraham, only reflects the surface of the deeper and more comprehensive land ideology of Gush Emunim’s spiritual leader Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook and his father, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda utilized the teachings of his father Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, whose writings became like scripture for the newly forming Gush Emunim in setting forth an ideology that could only accept continued expansion of the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Mystic Dreamer

Living during the period of Zionist figures like Theodore Herzl, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook developed a mystical interpretation of redemption and the messianic age that recognized the return of Jews to the land of Israel as an indicator that the Redemptive Age had begun. Immigrating to Palestine in 1904, Rabbi Kook experienced a spiritual awakening that led to the deepening of his nascent spirituality and a period of prolific

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37 Zertal and Eldar, 3.
38 Ibid., 4.
39 Ibid., 18.
40 Ibid., 5.
writing. With access to Rabbi A.I. Kook’s writings limited by his son’s position as inheritor of his father’s manuscripts as well his claimed role as sole authorized interpreter, the image of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook that emerged for the developing Gush Emunim movement was focused on the role that the Land of Israel played in the redemptive process. In his early work on Gush Emunim, Sprinzak notes that the elder Rabbi Kook was not focused on a political movement of any kind, rather his focus was nearly entirely on messianic redemption and the role that the Land of Israel played in that process. Other scholars such as Peter Demant have also noticed Rabbi Kook the elder’s emphasis on the messianic role of the land, as Rabbi A.I. Kook argued that a Jewish “break into history” was permissible because of revealed signs of the Messianic times. According to Demant, Rabbi Kook the elder saw that the only way to hasten the process of the Messianic times would be Jews living and working in the Land of Israel, which he considered to be the highest commandment. The emphasis on the ability to live and work in the Land is also apparent in some of the collected writings of Rabbi Kook.

For instance, in the reader on Zionism including some of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook’s work edited by Arthur Hertzberg, Rabbi Kook ruminates at length on the redemptive role of the Land of Israel. First among this collection, the piece “The Land of Israel” speaks to Rabbi Kook’s ideology of land. Rabbi Kook writes,

43 Sprinzak, Ascendance, 45.
45 Ibid., 5. Zionism at the time was largely led by secular Jews, making Kook’s support a bridge for claiming Orthodox approval of the Zionist endeavor.
Eretz Yisrael is not something apart from the soul of the Jewish people; it is no mere national possession, serving as a means of unifying our people and buttressing its material or even spiritual survival. Eretz Yisrael is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and being.46

This sacralization of the Land of Israel continues as Rabbi Kook notes that true Jewish creativity is impossible outside of Eretz Yisrael and that revelations of the Holy are mixed with dross and impurity outside of the Land.47 Despite dying prior to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Rabbi Kook concludes this essay with the observation that Israel blazes deep in the heart of every Jew.48 In the volume’s subsequent essay, “The Rebirth of Israel,” Rabbi A.I. Kook stresses the role the Land of Israel plays in the global redemptive process, noting that the whole world is waiting for the Light of Israel and the Messiah, important because this is how the peace of redemption will be achieved.49 In Rabbi Kook’s view this is because the Jews are people fashioned by God, who granted them the heritage of the blessing of Abraham, and commanded them to live apart from other nations.50 Included also in this essay is the admonition against the effort to fragmentize the higher unity of Israel,51 which reappears in the thinking of Rabbi Kook’s son Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook as a commandment against relinquishing possession of any part of the territory of Israel due to the sacred nature of territorial completeness.52

Although Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook served as the Chief Rabbi of Palestine beginning in 1919, he never lived to see the founding of the State of Israel, and did not win adherents

47 Ibid., 420.
48 Ibid., 421.
50 Ibid., 424.
51 Ibid., 426.
52 Aran, 313.
or followers until a full generation after his death in 1935.\textsuperscript{53} Rabbi A.I. Kook’s mystical ideology, focused on the Land of Israel as a key component in the process of Divine redemption, was reshaped by his son who lived through the creation of the State of Israel as well as a time when Israel’s military triumph seemed to indicate the continuance of the Messianic age.

\textit{Zvi Yehudah Kook, Activist and Revivalist}

Taking the messianic view of the Land of Israel as a key component of the redemptive process and applying it to the historical situation of the State of Israel, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook’s ideology of land possession influenced the settlement emphasizing philosophy of \textit{Gush Emunim}. Claiming to be the authoritative interpreter of his father’s works, Rabbi Z.Y. Kook languished at the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva prior to the previously related narrative of his 1967 sermon bemoaning the division of the territory of Israel. Zvi Yehudah first gained influence with a select group of students at the yeshiva, a group going by the name of \textit{Gahalet} (Ember) that focused on a historic religious mission and entered the yeshiva with a specific interest in the work of A.I. Kook.\textsuperscript{54} In light of the seemingly prophetic sermon given shortly prior to the 1967 War, the students conferred spiritual authority on Rabbi Z.Y. Kook, leading to the younger Kook’s realization of educational power, which he swiftly transferred into political power.\textsuperscript{55} Rabbi Zvi Yehudah did this through translating his father’s teachings into a “language of action,” thereby blurring difference and creating overlap between theological and political

\textsuperscript{53} Ravitzky, 122.
\textsuperscript{54} Zertal and Eldar, 189-190
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 192.
discourse. In this new discourse, working from the father’s writings, Rabbi Z.Y. Kook took his father’s expectant messianism and transformed it into a political program. 

With confidence in the state, Rabbi Kook the younger endowed the existing state with holiness in his writings which transformed all of the state’s concrete actions, phenomena, and symbols, giving them sacred power. One such example is his view of the Israeli army, which for Rabby Z.Y. Kook embodied what is morally and spiritually noble in Judaism. Rabbi Z.Y. Kook had taken the work of his father and applied it to the historical reality of the state of Israel, and continued to expand and interpret his father’s work in order to affirm the expansion of the state through settlement as a means of furthering the redemptive process.

This early period of influence and appreciation for the state led to a dramatic turn with the conclusion of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in light of the prospect of relinquishing Israeli control of some of the newly held territories. Rabbi Z.Y. Kook in this context further adapted his father’s theory of the cardinal importance of the land, emphasizing that there could not be a people of Israel without a complete or whole Land of Israel. Practically, this meant that even the smallest withdrawal must be opposed. Rabbi Z.Y. Kook thus proclaimed, “Be killed rather than transgress,” in reference to leaving the settlements in Sinai, an admonition normally reserved for the gravest of sins such as incest, idol worship, and murder. Rabbi Z.Y. Kook’s ideology identified three stages of the redemptive process, beginning with the return of Diaspora Jews to Eretz

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56 Ibid., 196-197.
57 Ibid., 196.
58 Ibid., 196.
59 Aran, 310.
60 Demant, 6.
61 Demant, 6.
62 Aran, 313.
Yisrael, followed by the reunion of the Jewish people with the biblical lands of Judea and Samaria which were located in the modern territory of the West Bank. Finally, Rabbi Z.Y. Kook posited that Jews, enlivened by contact with the Holy Land, would bring the Messiah and fulfill Redemption. Rabbi Z.Y. Kook even argued that the sovereign Jewish state itself actually is redemption. While his father’s narrative of land ownership emerged prior to the State of Israel, the son’s ideology both shaped and was shaped by his place at the center of shifting historical forces and burgeoning national power. Rabbi Kook the younger’s ideology of divinely sanctioned land ownership became embedded in the narrative of the emerging Gush Emunim movement and the hearts and minds of its members, as the prospect of Israeli concession of parts of the Land to secure lasting peace continued to grow.

Gush Emunim, Settlement, and Resistance

The ideology of Gush Emunim coupled with limited government support led to settlement and dispossession of the land by Israelis. These included more than just religiously motivated Jews, as the Israeli government, prodded by Gush Emunim, helped fund settlements, offering new opportunities to disadvantaged Israelis in particular. This was encouraged by Gush Emunim as a program of de facto annexation, as settling the territories with non-ideologically motivated Jews was designed to force the majority of Israeli Jews into a relationship with the whole Eretz Yisrael. Settlement by non-ideologically motivated Jews was particularly common in Sinai during this early period,

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63 Lustick, 34-35.
64 Ibid., 35.
65 Aran, 308.
66 Lustick, 33.
as in that region the settlers tended to be less privileged Israelis or adventuresome Israelis, as opposed to the ideological-messianic settlers of the West Bank.\textsuperscript{67}

Nonetheless, the ideologically motivated settlers dominated the discourse concerning settlement,\textsuperscript{68} and continued to buck against the hesitant government of Rabin, who as early as July 1974 declared that the settlements did not determine the borders of Israel and did not contribute to national security.\textsuperscript{69} The \textit{Gush Emunim} leaders of course rejected Rabin and continued to challenge both the policies of the Israeli government as well as the policy-making procedures.\textsuperscript{70} Seeming to come out of nowhere, this response apparently resonated with Jews both in Israel and worldwide and likely helped lead to the ouster of the Labor Party and Rabin, placing the government in the hands of the conservative Likud Party of Menachem Begin who became Prime Minister in 1977.

While the ideology of \textit{Gush Emunim} was absolute in its declarations concerning the preservation of the entirety of the Land of Israel, the newly elected government’s position was anything but, leading to the signing of the Camp David Accords with Egypt and the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Prior to the signing of the Accords, despite \textit{Gush Emunim’s} status as a non-political organization, it had supported the Begin government, even celebrating the election with the hope that the new government would systematize and implement a coherent settlement policy.\textsuperscript{71} Despite these hopes, frustration set in with Begin’s failure to openly support all the planned settlements.\textsuperscript{72} Even with this

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\textsuperscript{67} Zertal and Eldar, 70.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{71} Zertal and Eldar, 55.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 57.
\end{flushright}
resistance from the Prime Minister, others in the government operated more in line with Gush Emunim’s ideology. One notable such figure, Ariel Sharon, presented a settlement map with a systemic plan operating on three primary principles: massive establishment of as many settlements as possible, in the least amount of time possible, spread over the vastest possible territory. Despite this plan, the Camp David Accords indicated a government withdrawal from the territory in Sinai including the forced evacuation of the settlement located in Yamit. At the time, Rabbi Z.Y. Kook declared that the peace process was a “government betrayal,” and that anyone who takes pieces of the Land away from Israel or helps those who do will be cursed by God. From the ideological view of Gush Emunim, withdrawal went against God’s intentions and would constitute the forfeiture of redemption. According to an article published by Rabbi Z.Y. Kook, the chosen land and the chosen people comprise a completed, divine unity, joined together as a vital and integral one. Because they were meant for the land, which was meant to be unified, Haim Druckman claimed that the “settlements are the essence of our existence and flesh of our flesh. We shall not accept the amputation of our living flesh.” Settlement was for Gush Emunim followers a priority outweighing human life, as the returning of the territories to save lives was considered erroneous, along with the notion that human life is more valuable than possession of Eretz Yisrael. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, an influential thinker and student of Rabbi Z.Y. Kook argues that the Jews must settle over all of the Land even at the cost of Jewish lives, placing it over the principle of

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73 Ibid., 59.
74 Ibid., 70.
75 Ibid., 226.
76 Sprinak, Ascendence, 46.
79 Ibid., 112-113.
pikuach nefesh (preserving life rather than following halakhah). This passion for preservation of the whole Land of Israel led first to informal protests which grew into the formal Movement to Halt the Retreat from Sinai.

The Failure of Sinai

Gush Emunim ideology failed to halt the retreat from Sinai for a number of reasons, yet the process that had led up to this failure led primarily to increased antipathy and sharpening of rhetoric, leaving the ahistorical ideology unable to grapple with the reality of failure. In particular, rabbis supporting Gush Emunim proclaimed that surrender of land was a mortal danger, and that one should prefer to be killed rather than commit such a sin. This was because the whole Promised Land was needed as the territorial basis of serving God, and the sanctity of the land overrode the sanctity of the state. Given their fierce ideological statements and their perceived popularity, the failure of the Movement to Halt the Retreat from Sinai might have come as a surprise. Nonetheless, a quick overview of the problems with settling the Sinai provides some compelling reasons for the movement’s failure. Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar point out that the gap between the secular Yamit settlers and the West Bank religious messianic settlers led to a conflict of messages during protests, as the actual settlers in the Sinai were more concerned with improving their standard of living and were thus protesting for greater compensation, while the Gush-Emunim-influenced West Bank settlers argued that no amount of money in the world should be enough to uproot them. Lustick describes

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81 Ibid., 113.
82 Demant, 6-7.
83 Zertal and Eldar, 72.
the way in which for the actual settlers of Yamit the government assistance and encouragement had helped them to establish a comfortable and profitable life, leading to mainly economic motives for resisting the evacuation. Additionally, the location of the Sinai Peninsula seemed to be controversial in terms of whether it was truly part of historic Israel, prompting numerous rabbis to proclaim it to be an integral part of the Land of Israel. Even after the real settler population left and Gush-influenced youth occupied the homes of Yamit, the forced withdrawal brought no greater displays of violence than pushing and shoving, despite reports that extremist groups planned acts of violence and possibly suicide if forced to evacuate. The ideology of Land as indicative of progressing redemption took a serious blow as territory considered to be part of Eretz Yisrael was voluntarily ceded from Israeli control, throwing the theology of Land of Rabbi Kook the Elder and his son into question. One means of explaining the loss of territory revisits the biblical dispossession of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Dispossession: Covenantal Explanation

Using a covenantal explanation to legitimate dispossession of the land reframes the ideology of land ownership to temporarily invalidate occupation of the land. The removal of the elites during the Babylonian exile and subsequent return during the period of Ezra and Nehemiah illustrates both an explanation for exile based on failure to maintain the divine covenant and renewed concern with purity. An explanation for this focus according to Michael Prior was the need to reconstitute national and religious

84 Lustick, 59-60.
85 Ibid., 60.
86 Ibid., 61.
identity in the wake of the Babylonian exile. Harking to the divine ideologies of land ownership, the post-exilic communities focused on the covenant and purity as a means of recovering national and religious identity.

Covenantal theologies explain the loss of the land by locating blame on the part of the people, as opposed to failure by the divine. Betsy Halpern-Amaru notes that the covenantal theology of Sinai explicitly connects the land and obedience to the law. The possibility of Israel’s own dispossession of the land is one of the primary punishments for the conditional covenant. This parallels the forfeiture of the Amorite right of possession which was rooted in the moral quality of the occupants’ life in the land.

Using covenantal theology, clear expectations limiting actions and prescribing purity are laid out as preconditions for continued occupation of the land. These include banned behavioral practices as well as criticized intermingling of the followers of Adonai with the competing cults of the area. In general, the foci on acting according to the covenant and observing the purity code set up a relationship between the land and inhabitants based on post-conquest behavior.

These concerns are echoed in the later post-exilic writings of Ezra and Nehemiah, who exhibit concern over the mixing of the returning exiles with the people who had remained in the land. Walter Brueggemann addresses the concern for obedience in this community noting the belief that land could be kept by judicious, discreet obedience focused along the lines of rigorous observance of purity. In the ninth chapter of Ezra this concern with purity is expressed in denunciation of mixed marriages. Reflecting the

87 Prior, 249.
88 Halpern-Amaru, 18.
89 Ibid., 19.
90 Ibid., 16.
91 Brueggemann, 13.
same rationale that mandated the expulsion of previous inhabitants mixing the holy seed with that of the peoples of the lands, indicates faithlessness and will lead to destruction without remnant or survivor.\textsuperscript{92} Much the same sentiment, blaming failure to adhere to the covenant for loss of land, is on display in Nehemiah 9 which stresses all that Adonai has done to honor the covenant, and all that the people have done in failing to observe it. This is particularly clear when the text reads, “Many years you were patient with them, and warned them by your spirit through your prophets; yet they would not listen. Therefore you handed them over to the peoples of the lands.”\textsuperscript{93} According to this ideology of land, failure to observe the covenant led to removal from the land. The forced evacuation of Sinai similarly led to questions about following the covenant, but focused not only on the actions of Gush Emunim, but the failure of other Israelis.

**Rationale for Failure**

The failure of the Movement to Halt the Retreat from Sinai thus prompted an internal questioning and trauma that shook Gush Emunim and its ideology to its core. Shortly following the evacuation of Yamit an emergency meeting was held aimed at studying the lessons to be learned from the Yamit expulsion.\textsuperscript{94} Lustick notes the numerous Gush Emunim rationales for the failure to halt the retreat, including overconfidence in divine intervention, spiritual imperfection on the part of the Yamit settlers, and attributing the failure to the inscrutable will of God.\textsuperscript{95} According to Lustick, out of these many explanations two primary political conclusions were drawn. The first

\textsuperscript{92} NISB, Ezra 9:2, 9:14
\textsuperscript{93} NISB, Nehemiah 9:30
\textsuperscript{94} Zertal and Eldar, 73-74.
\textsuperscript{95} Lustick, 61-62.
proposed expanding the program of *Gush Emunim* to better integrate the movement’s efforts into the mainstream while the second emphasized the unreliability of the Israeli government and public in terms of the process of redemption.\textsuperscript{96} This split in interpretation led to the competing responses of increased focus on public political and cultural outreach or direct action and violence stressing the imperatives of pure and decisive action.\textsuperscript{97} Both of these responses entail illegal activities according to Israeli law, as the first uses cultural persuasion to legitimate continued settlement and dispossession of land that is primarily in the West Bank, legal only under certain circumstances according to the Israeli government. The second response however employs the overt violence of vigilantism, bombing, and assassination. Two marginal groups which had been heavily invested in preventing the withdrawal illustrate the danger of violent direct actions mandated by the ideology of land that could not disentangle messianic expectations from continued occupation of the whole Land of Israel.

**Jewish Underground and Kach**

The “Jewish Underground,” a splinter group of *Gush Emunim*, and the political party Kach led by Rabbi Meir Kahane, both emphasized violence in the form of direct action taken as a response to the failure of the Movement to Halt the Retreat from Sinai as a means of reenergizing the redemptive process and renewing the Israeli program of expansion. The Jewish Underground is best known for the violence it planned but failed to carry out, the bombing of the Dome of the Rock located on the remains of the Temple Mount. The group of young *Gush Emunim*-influenced Israelis was also responsible for

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 62.
other acts of vigilantism that help underscore the group’s commitment to preserving *Eretz Yisrael* regardless of the consequences in terms of human life. Kach achieved minor electoral success, placing Kahane briefly in the Knesset despite Kahane’s endorsement of TNT (Terror Against Terror) and his support for violence directed at Arabs.\(^98\) Both the Jewish Underground and Kach utilize the messianic land ideology of *Gush Emunim* to legitimate violence.

As a resistance group dedicated to furthering the messianic expectation of *Gush Emunim*-influenced religious Zionists, the Jewish Underground represents an interesting case study in terms of its adoption of violent tactics and the eventual response by officials in the government to the arrest of a number of group members in 1984. The group was responsible initially for violence as a direct vigilante response to the murder of six yeshiva students, targeting local Arab mayors, yet this initial violence was sophisticated, attempting to injure and maim the targets without killing them in order to avoid the creation of martyrs.\(^99\) From this inauspicious beginning the group organized a series of violent acts with the intentions of discouraging future Arab attacks on Israelis,\(^100\) yet the group’s actions also belie an outlook whose aim and visions are of the Jewish people in its land, Israel, in this revival generation.\(^101\) The group’s carefully planned coup de grâce was to be the catastrophic destruction of the Al-Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, Muslim holy sites located on the site of the Temple Mount.\(^102\) Zertal and Eldar describe the destruction as conceived originally as a means of stopping the evacuation of Yamit by

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98 Ibid., 67.
99 Zertal and Eldar, 78-79.
100 Ibid., 78.
101 Ibid., 82.
102 Lustick, 69.
realigning Israel with the redemptive process. After the arrest of a number of the group’s members in 1984 in the midst of a plot to commit intentional mass murder by blowing up buses full of Arab civilians, the bulk of the group’s active members in prison finally revealed the elaborate plan as well as the reason they did not carry through on their actions: the group was unable to gain explicit support for the destruction on the Temple Mount from any leading *Gush Emunim* rabbis. Despite their belief in the validity of their actions, the group did not carry through with that particular action without explicit *Gush Emunim* religious validation, which suggests that the other, smaller scale violence had been explicitly supported by *Gush Emunim* rabbis. Having failed to carry out either of their master schemes, members of the Underground were in jail and their imprisonment could have been expected to match the conditions of jailed Arabs responsible for vigilante violence. The Israeli judges however displayed leniency, consistent with much of national opinion that these were “good religious boys.” Amongst the judges’ rulings were remarks such as “among them are those who have written glorious pages in settlement, defense, and help to the needy. It is untenable that these should not stand them in good stead at this difficult hour of theirs,” and the description of one of the young men saying that he was a man of “the book and the sword, a hero of Israel’s battles.” Despite perpetrating violent acts and clearly displaying the intention to destroy holy sites and civilians, the members of the Jewish Underground were considered sympathetic figures by *Gush Emunim* and those who

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103 Zertal and Eldar, 76.
104 Ibid., 86-87.
105 Lustick, 67.
106 Ibid., 70.
107 Zertal and Eldar, 93.
108 Ibid., 92.
supported settlement as the reasoning for the planned violence became known.\textsuperscript{109}

Compared to the short-lived and relatively unorganized Jewish Underground, the Kach party and Rabbi Kahane had significantly greater support, despite being a marginal party within Israeli politics as evidenced by electoral results.

Kahane’s utilization of the \textit{Gush Emunim} ideology helped gain Kach a platform and brief election to the Knesset, setting the stage for his later assassination and the retaliatory violence that followed. An American-born Rabbi who emigrated to Israel in 1971 and formed his party Kach, Kahane had run numerous times on the platform of anti-Arab racism prior to 1984 when he finally was elected to the Knesset.\textsuperscript{110} According to Ian Lustick, Kahane was elected primarily due to the support of poor Sephardic Jews who accounted for around 29,000 votes.\textsuperscript{111} Although never formally affiliated with \textit{Gush Emunim} during the group’s existence, Kahane’s racist rhetoric attracted some of the movement’s members during its waning days.\textsuperscript{112} Kahane insisted on the positive role Judaism was to play in shaping the nation’s morality and identity,\textsuperscript{113} while calling for the immediate expulsion of all Arabs from biblical greater Israel.\textsuperscript{114} Although, as Ehud Sprinzak notes, \textit{Gush Emunim} proper had never openly embraced an ideology of violence, the \textit{Gush Emunim} assertion of the Jewish claim to Judea and Samaria helped Kahane legitimate his plan for reclaiming the land.\textsuperscript{115} Kahane was barred from re-election due to his racist politics, while the peace experienced by Israel following its

\textsuperscript{109} Lustick, 70.  
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 67.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 67.  
\textsuperscript{112} Zertal and Eldar, 237.  
\textsuperscript{113} Mark Juergensmeyer, \textit{Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al-Qaeda} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 55.  
\textsuperscript{114} Sprinzak, \textit{Brother against Brother}, 145.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 146-147.
withdrawal from Lebanon led to the realization of the right’s slogan “Peace Kills,” as the first victim of sustained peace was *Gush Emunim* itself.\(^{116}\) Between the weight of Z.Y. Kook’s death in 1982, the failure to prevent the retreat from Sinai and the relative peace brought by the withdrawal from Lebanon, *Gush Emunim* dissolved into a strictly ideological voice, while the settlement organization spun off and only a remnant of activists remained.\(^{117}\) With the uprising of the Palestinian Intifada, the *Gush Emunim* ideology reconnected with many settlers living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, leading to an increase in vigilante violence that continued to escalate, culminating in the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995.

**Escalating Vigilante Violence**

As fire-brands like Meir Kahane repeatedly called for the complete expulsion of Arabs from the Land, the violence of the Palestinian Intifada inflamed hostilities and promoted increasing levels of violence by the ideologically assured Israeli settlers. With the pronouncement in 1986 that *Gush Emunim* had completed its role in the redemptive process and no longer existed,\(^{118}\) the remnants of *Gush Emunim* joined Kahane’s Kach party.\(^{119}\) Kahane’s plans to rid the Land of Israel of its Arab population through intimidation, discriminatory legislation, and enforced servitude met with resistance and eventually proved impossible, yet his anti-Arab ideology rooted in the land ideology of *Gush Emunim* legitimated increasing anti-Arab vigilante violence. Sprinzak references an in-depth study of settler violence in 1983 that found 28 percent of male settlers and 5

\(^{116}\) Zertal and Eldar, 235-236.
\(^{117}\) Drezon-Tepler, 221.
\(^{118}\) Zertal and Eldar, 240.
\(^{119}\) Ibid., 237.
percent of females admitted to participation in violent anti-Arab activity.\footnote{Sprinzak, \textit{Brother against Brother}, 170.} While some \textit{Gush Emunim} figures held more lenient views in terms of coexisting with Arabs, violence was inherent in slogans like “No rights for the Arabs to the Land of Israel,” and the statement by Dor Lior of Kiryat Arba that the only suitable solution for the Arabs is death.\footnote{Zertal and Eldar, 219.} During times of crisis and conflagration in particular, these violent, trigger-happy responses to living amongst Arabs predominated.\footnote{Ibid., 221.} According to Sprinzak’s interpretation of the vigilante violence, it was the work of agents of the community carrying out a strategy of control.\footnote{Sprinzak, \textit{Brother against Brother}, 170.} Mark Juergensmeyer, in his \textit{Global Rebellion}, notes that the Intifada in particular inflamed the sentiments of Kookists and settlers who subscribed to Kook’s messianic view of the land.\footnote{Juergensmeyer 57-58.} For these Israeli settlers, the Intifada required that the flag of vigilante suppression be raised.\footnote{Zertal and Eldar, 110.} The response came from a gunman who shot and killed Kahane following a speech in New York City in 1990. El Sayyid Nosair was an Egyptian immigrant, who had connections to the perpetrators responsible for bombing the World Trade Center in 1993, an event for which he was also convicted due to involvement in the plan. Although Kahane was dead, the ideology of hatred spun by Kach influenced the violence of Baruch Goldstein.

Goldstein, a settler living in Hebron, went to the Tomb of the Patriarchs early in the morning of February 25, 1994 and opened fire into the crowd of worshipping Muslims. Although estimates from the Palestinian and Israeli government differed concerning casualties, something like 125 people were injured and 29 people killed.
before Goldstein was surrounded and beaten to death by the crowd he had attacked.\textsuperscript{126} Having died as the result of his actions, the reconstruction of Goldstein’s motives continues to be conflicted. Peter Demant, in his work on \textit{Gush Emunim}, suggests that Goldstein acted as an avenger, retaliating for the assassination of Meir Kahane.\textsuperscript{127} Juergensmeyer also depicts Goldstein as deeply influenced by Kahane, suggesting that Goldstein had adopted Kahane’s Jewish messianistic beliefs.\textsuperscript{128} Zertal and Eldar on the other hand promote an image of Goldstein focused mainly on the context of 1994 and the imminent signing of the Oslo Accords. Suggesting that Goldstein “delivered his soul to his maker” for the sake of the commandment to salvage the land, Zertal and Eldar set up Goldstein’s massacre as a violent response to the call to “Stop Oslo.”\textsuperscript{129} The protests against Oslo were primarily directed at the morning papers’ report on the final preparations for withdrawal by the Israeli army from Gaza and Jericho, and in that context the perception that army withdrawal would lead to future evacuation of the settlement would have likely weighed heavily on Goldstein’s heart and mind.\textsuperscript{130} Possibly foreseeing a potential forced removal from his home in Hebron, Goldstein unleashed his fear and anger on unsuspecting civilians. The actions of this lone man prompted condemnation from Prime Minister Rabin who, in a speech to the Knesset, labeled Goldstein’s actions political, arguing that the massacre was intended to kill the making of peace.\textsuperscript{131} Rabin also criticized the settler movement and their religious leaders as the milieu that spurred on Goldstein’s actions, saying.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{127} Demant, 9.
\textsuperscript{128} Juergensmeyer, 60.
\textsuperscript{129} Zertal and Eldar, 119.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 121.
You are not part of the community of Israel… You are not partner to the Zionist deed. You are a foreign body, you are pernicious weeds. Sane Jewry vomits you from its midst. You have placed yourselves out of the bounds of Jewish law. You are a disgrace to Zionism and a blot on Judaism.\(^{132}\)

The violence of mass vigilantism had escalated to massacre, and the final step in the escalation of violence would target the Prime Minister as another Jewish Israeli reacted to the condemnation of Goldstein and the enacting of Oslo by assassinating Rabin on November 4\(^{th}\) of 1995.

Yigal Amir, who shot and killed Rabin, interrupting the implementation of the Oslo Accords and shocking the national consciousness, was motivated by the need to put an end to the compromises of the peace process and follow in the footsteps of Baruch Goldstein. After the assassination Amir told police, “It began after Goldstein. It’s then that it dawned on me that one must put down [Rabin].”\(^{133}\) The long held enmity towards Rabin on the part of *Gush Emunim* and the Israeli settlers was part of a reciprocating relationship, as Rabin referred to *Gush Emunim* as a cancer in the body of Israeli democracy in his memoirs.\(^{134}\) Due to their twin ascensions in the mid-70s, Rabin and *Gush Emunim* were each other’s absolute nemesis according to Zertal and Eldar, struggling for political power against each other.\(^{135}\) This antagonistic relationship could have logically ended in violence but for the considerable taboo against Jews using violence against Jews,\(^{136}\) a taboo that Amir’s actions transgressed. In order to legitimate breaking a cultural taboo of such importance, Amir must have felt like such an action was absolutely necessary, and that motivation appears in Juergensmeyer’s account of Amir.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 121.  
\(^{133}\) Ibid., 122.  
\(^{134}\) Ibid., 128.  
\(^{135}\) Ibid., 227.  
\(^{136}\) Demant, 16.
Juergensmeyer posits that Amir thought he was helping save Israel’s honor.\textsuperscript{137} Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky in their analysis of the Rabin murder note the “law of the informer” which Amir later invoked to justify the killing, as Rabin giving Jewish persons or property over to non-Jewish rule or authority constituted informing.\textsuperscript{138} Rabin posed just such a threat to Israeli honor, Jewish persons, and property not just in the mind of this lone gunman, but in the rhetoric of Israeli settler protests of the Oslo Accords. Zertal and Eldar make a point of connecting the assassination to the depiction by religious Zionists of Rabin’s leadership as an existential danger to Israel.\textsuperscript{139} According to their research, the Oslo agreement was viewed by religious Zionists as handing over parts of the sacred and indivisible land in a misguided effort at obtaining peace.\textsuperscript{140} The Yesha Council, one of the two groups that replaced \textit{Gush Emunim}, albeit with a stronger focus on political affairs,\textsuperscript{141} in particular adopted a conciliatory tone following the assassination. However, figures like Hannan Porat condemned the murder, but also condemned the victim, saying, “A person who lifts his hand to uproot Jewish settlements from the land…He is raising his hand against the word of God that ordains that thy children shall come again to their own border.”\textsuperscript{142} Some settlers did however acknowledge the origins of the murderer in their own camp - for instance Yehuda Amital, a \textit{Gush Emunim} founder said, “This assassin came from our own midst. It is extremism that brought this about.”\textsuperscript{143} Amir, inspired by Goldstein and fueled by the oppositional

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Juergensmeyer, 61.
\item Zertal and Eldar, 130.
\item Ibid., 136.
\item Ibid., 236-237.
\item Ibid., 154.
\item Ibid., 155.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
hatred for Rabin, struck a blow that could have brought Israelis together in the pursuit of peace, but the political aftermath was not fruitful and the territories of the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank continued to be controlled by the State of Israel.

Ariel Sharon, Pragmatic Withdrawal

Not until a decade after Rabin’s death could international pressure and the rising of the Second Intifada press Israeli leadership to cede control of more territory. However, the withdrawal commanded by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2005 covered up his program of continued settlement in the West Bank. Sharon, previously an outspoken supporter of settlers and the settlements, was pressured by external forces to embark on the road to disengagement, showing his strong survival instinct and pragmatism.\textsuperscript{144} Disengagement and withdrawal from the Gaza Strip harkened back to the Sinai withdrawal, but this time peace did not manifest itself. On the contrary, the Gaza Strip has been the site of recent (2008-2009) Israeli military action, leading to increased fear that withdrawal from the West Bank would lead to a similar situation. Sharon’s plan, aimed as it was at deepening the occupation in the West Bank and perpetuating domination over the Palestinians,\textsuperscript{145} could not sway an ideology that viewed the territory of the Gaza Strip as something no single Jew had the right to compromise. As Zertal and Eldar observe, the settlers had not learned to negotiate away even an inch of territory in order to keep hold of a mile.\textsuperscript{146} The land ideology which affirms that the land belongs to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[144] Ibid., 445.
\item[145] Ibid., 445.
\item[146] Ibid., 447.
\end{footnotes}
the Jewish people and their future generations cannot permit a single person, even a Prime Minister, to barter away control over the Land of Israel. Whether or not Gaza had ever been a part of the Land of Israel is debatable as the Biblical verses, Judges 20:1, I Samuel 3:20, II Samuel 3:10, 17:11, 24:2, and I Kings 5:5 all give the boundaries of Israel as between Beersheva and Dan, territory which excludes Gaza, while I Kings 8:65, II Kings 14:25, and Amos 6:14 limit the southern edge to the “wadi of Egypt” and only Genesis 15:18 includes territory stretching to the “river of Egypt,” although the New International Version of the Bible footnotes this instance as being “wadi of Egypt” as well. Weinfeld notes the debate over whether the “Wadi of Egypt” refers to the Nile, a Wadi in the Sinai, or a Wadi at the Northern edge of Gaza, concluding that the best interpretation of the passage does not include Gaza in the promise.

Grappling with withdrawal proved catastrophic to Gush Emunim following Sinai, but in recent years events have shown increased savvy on the part of the group. Refocused on increasing settlements in Judea and Samaria, the government of Sharon assisted settlers by constructing an immense barrier wall that cuts through the West Bank and keeps large pods of settlement on the Israeli side of the wall, acting as a de facto Green Line. This raises the possibility that mass settlement of areas across the Green Line could be absorbed into Israel, making relinquishment impossible. Demant notes that the presence of contiguous ethnically homogenous blocks gives settlements a much better chance to remain permanently in Israel’s hands. Additionally, an ideological answer for avoiding forced withdrawals focuses on the necessity of perpetuating the settlement in

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148 Weinfeld, 53-54.
149 Zertal and Eldar, 429.
150 Demant, 19-20.
Judea and Samaria, continuing to endow the final victory of redemption with meaning.\textsuperscript{151}

Despite renewed political efficacy, \textit{Gush Emunim} and the settlers inspired by its ideology of land do not represent the sole ideology of land in modern Israel. One competing land ideology comes from an understanding of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook’s work without depending on his son for translation and interpretation.

\textbf{Rabbi Kook, Love and the Land of Israel}

As previously described, Rabbi A.I. Kook lays out a messianic interpretation of \textit{Eretz Yisrael} that stresses the role the land plays in bringing about redemption, but open access to his work has buttressed Rabbi Kook’s land ideology with expectations for acting that counter the violence that \textit{Gush Emunim}’s ideology of land legitimates.

Following the death of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook in 1982, the collection of Rabbi A.I. Kook’s manuscripts was available publicly for a limited time. Amongst these are musings by Rabbi Kook the elder that seriously challenge the land ideology which \textit{Gush Emunim}, and the settlers influenced by it, used to legitimate violence. Of particular interest is \textit{The Moral Principle}, in which Rabbi A.I. Kook examines the concept of love. Rabbi Kook writes,

\begin{quote}
The heart must be filled with love for all. The Love of all creation comes first, then comes the love of all mankind, and then follows the love for the Jewish people, in which all other loves are included, since it is the destiny of the Jews to serve toward the perfection of all things. All these loves are to be expressed in practical action, by pursuing the welfare of those we are bidden to love, and to seek their advancement. But the highest of all loves is the love of God, which is love in its fullest maturing. This love is not intended for any derivative ends; when it fills the human heart, this itself spells man’s greatest happiness.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 20.
\end{flushright}
For Rabbi Kook, love must gird one’s actions, including actions taken during the return to the Land of Israel that Rabbi Kook saw as indicative of the time of redemption.

Further connecting the need to live with love in one’s heart to the covenant and the Land of Israel, Rabbi Kook writes of covenant,

> The basis of entering a covenant as a commitment to a moral discipline is so that the obligation to the ideal that emanates from the highest level of morality shall become deeply fixed in the nature of heart and soul and there will be no need for admonitions and precautionary measures to assure one’s conformity.  

These writings shows that for Rabbi Kook, observing covenant with God meant acting with love toward all one’s fellow humans, religious Jew, secular Jew and non-Jew alike.

In Aviezer Ravitzky’s examination of Kookist messianism, he notes a disagreement at the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva between Rabbi Z.Y. Kook and another instructor who suggested that the future of the state depended on the behavior of the Jewish people. Interpreting conditionality as part of Rabbi A.I. Kook’s teachings threatened the basic convictions of Rabbi Z.Y. Kook and the Yeshiva, leading to the removal of the unnamed instructor. Yet this conflict, between the implicit necessity of the Land of Israel in the process of redemption and love in the soul of the righteous that embraces all creatures excluding nothing, points to the problem of integrating the messianic return to the Land with the historical founding of the State of Israel and the displacement it necessarily caused.

Expulsion or extermination of Arabs as a means of removing them from the Land of Israel is not consistent with Rabbi Kook the elder’s interpretation of love, challenging the messianic land ideology that *Gush Emunim*, influenced by Rabbi Kook as interpreted by his son, used to legitimate initial settlement and later violence in the face of withdrawal.

153 Ibid., 150.
154 Ravitzky, 134.
155 Ibid., 134.
In addition, Abraham provides an alternative model for settling in the land that is consistent with Rabbi Kook’s affirmation of love as an overriding ethical principle.

**Abraham, Diverging Narratives: Land Steward**

Throughout the Abrahamic narratives, the series of promises made by *Adonai* refine a concept of divinely sanctioned settling while offering differing concepts of the behavior expected of Abraham, including the conception of Abraham’s land ownership as stewardship. These varying expectations begin with the non-existent requirements of the initial promise, and start to shift following the second promise which asks Abraham to walk the length and breadth of the land. Despite the lack of specific moral requirements, Abraham acts as a neighbor to Melchizedek and the King of Sodom, presenting a positive model for living as a foreigner in the midst of a new land filled with strangers. The third promise shifts the understanding of Abraham’s relationship to his neighbors and land, naming the land he is promised by referring to the current inhabitants. Clearly this indicates that the land that was *theirs* is now in some sense *his*. Despite being the first promise narrative to mention a covenant, the vagueness offers neither support nor rejection for later biblical narratives of violent conquest. The final promise to Abraham again lays out the claim for Abraham and his progeny, this time with a more explicit covenant; however, this formalized covenant is dependent upon ritual participation, not moral obedience. The divergences among these narratives suggest varying plausible readings and understandings of the connection between Abraham and the land promised by God. Despite the dominance of readings that legitimate violence based on an ideology
of land ownership like the ideology of *Gush Emunim*, the Abrahamic narratives can also provide a positive model for a Jewish relationship to the land, that of land stewardship.

This interpretation of Abraham and the varying promises understands the initial promise to Abraham not as the promise of ownership of the land, but as a promise to stewardship of the land. Interpreted in such a manner, this land ideology legitimates neither the violence of extermination, nor the violence of forced expulsion. If there is no expectation of land ownership, but rather the expectation that the land itself is holy and one is obliged to care for it as such, then the ethical norms that will be required are implicit and carry greater weight. Foremost among these norms is the concern with the purity of the land, particularly in terms of that which is irreversibly polluting, the shedding of blood. As noted in Numbers 35:33-34, this is the case for the land in which God abides: any number of actions, from bloodshed to adultery, theft, taking false oaths and other sins, will curse the land and turn it into a wasteland. Through combining these two concepts a competing ideology of land emerges that forbids conquest as polluting the land by shedding blood while simultaneously defusing the claim to ownership that legitimates dispossession in the first place. Although this is only one interpretation of a divergent land ideology in the Hebrew Scriptures, it challenges a monolithic conception of Biblical land ideology and coheres to Rabbi Kook’s conception of the importance of love. As such, although the Hebrew Scriptures present land ideologies that legitimate conquest, they also offer a model for dwelling in a land as a steward tasked to care for the land with the expectation of peaceful interactions with the indigenous peoples.
CHAPTER TWO

HAMAS

Introduction

The land ideology of *Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Resistance Movement), better known by its acronym, *Hamas*, presents the group’s members with both a mandate and a legitimating rationale for utilizing violence. The ideology of *Hamas* is difficult to flesh out fully even now due to a number of factors, but the initial presentation of its land ideology is clearly laid out in *al-Mithaq*, the *Hamas* Charter. The Charter employs Islamic theology in arguing that Palestine is a *waqf*, a land previously controlled by Islam, and as such is holy territory. According to the argument constructed by *Hamas*, this holy territory is set aside for current and future generations and thus cannot be bartered away by any individual or group. Along with this Islamic land ideology that stresses the need for liberating the land of Islamic Palestine is a later addition, the frequently stressed argument that the Palestinian people are occupied and oppressed by colonial Zionism, constituting a violation of the Palestinians’ human rights. This second land ideology utilizes the language of liberation to legitimate violent actions taken to protest the injustices done to the Palestinian people. The group’s religious land ideology is simplistic in reasoning and concise in providing a crucial element of the group’s identity. However, it is in its invocation of the second, non-religious land ideology based on an ethics of human rights that *Hamas* continues to show its adaptability. Despite the adaptability and pragmatism evinced by embracing these positions, both ideologies allow for the usage of violent tactics in resisting the presence of Israelis. While the theological ideology explicitly claims that the land is completely
indivisible and not transferrable, the liberation ideology makes these same claims by being used on behalf of the entire territory of Palestine, not just the territories occupied by Israel after 1967. Thus, both land ideologies make maximalist claims to territory. *Hamas* justifies its usage of violence through references to its ideology, and in particular to these two land ideologies. Affirming its right to utilize violence, using Islamic land ideology and liberation ideology to support its claims, *Hamas* continues to employ violence as a resistance strategy. Doing so makes violence, particularly retaliatory violence, acceptable to those influenced by *Hamas*’s discourse.

The constant adaptation of *Hamas* requires an approach to the group that recognizes the ever evolving nature of the group’s political and religious ideology, a concept that stands in contrast to the narrative of some Western scholars who depict *Hamas* as a static group. Studying *Hamas* as a static entity results in the implication that the movement ought to be considered a total spoiler of regional compromise. Any serious study of *Hamas* must include examination of the group’s evolution, as the movement grew from being an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood to its founding as a unique group in 1987. Rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood, a movement begun in Egypt by Hasan Al-Banna, *Hamas* was founded as a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood’s chapter in the Gaza Strip. Under the spiritual leadership of Sheik Yassin, *Hamas* developed from its roots as a movement primarily concerned with teaching Islam in line with the rhetoric of the Muslim Brotherhood, to a fully fledged resistance movement. With the outbreak of the Intifada in 1987 and the formal founding of *Hamas*, there arose a need for a formal document entailing the group’s ideology, and so the *Mithaq* (Charter) was put forth. Although only a snapshot of the group’s ideological stance, the *Mithaq* usefully covers
Hamas’s position on a number of issues, including laying out the theological justification that legitimizes the use of violence in pursuit of reclaiming an Islamic Palestine.

Despite employing violence, Hamas continues to show evidence of its political and ideological pragmatism. An early display of political pragmatism was Hamas’s participation in the Palestinian elections of 1996, which Yassin had encouraged. Electoral participation was a difficult decision for Hamas, as being a part of the establishment could have undermined the legitimacy of its voice as a resistance movement. Another major pragmatic display highlighting the evolving nature of the movement is the growing acceptance of responding to the continued Palestinian oppression by Israeli forces through diplomatic means. The primary form of diplomatic response indicating evolving behavior is embodied in the concept of the hudnah, an armistice which Hamas advocates instead of a formal peace agreement or treaty, as a means of differentiating between possibly achieving short-term peace and continued adherence to long-term goals. Despite the ideological pragmatism which the hudnah indicates in recognizing the value of diplomacy in addition to armed struggle, official recognition of Israel and conceding the Palestinian claim to the entire territory as conceptualized in Hamas’s land ideology function as static barriers to achieving a long term resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli territorial dispute.

Hamas’s religious land ideology remains static, and as such is opposed to negotiating peace, and even the nonreligious liberationist land ideology that Hamas invokes more recently functions as a static claim to an entire territory with little room for negotiation. Although Hamas is a movement enjoying current popular support among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the possibility of future diminishment could lead one to
expect that the dissolution or disempowerment of Hamas might lead to increased chances for peaceful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Despite this seeming possibility, the efficacy of Gush Emunim ideology following the group’s formal collapse informs expectations for continued actions in line with past and current Hamas ideology. For these reasons, although the group may theoretically evolve and adopt an emphasis on peace, its current discourse will continue to legitimate acts of violence taken by individuals who reject Palestinian forfeiture of any part of the endowment.

**Al-Mithaq and Waqf**

The Charter, al-Mithaq, that Hamas released seized upon the ideals of the Palestinian nationalist movement and reframed them with an Islamic character, particularly the Palestinian claim to territory. The Charter has not been formally translated into English, so no authoritative interpretation of it exists, but scholars invested in the study of Hamas have provided their own translations including two excellent recent examples, the first by Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela and the second by Khaled Hroub. Of particular importance in understanding Hamas’s land ideology is Article 11 of the Charter which defines the land of Palestine as a *waqf* (endowment) that is held to be whole and indivisible.\(^\text{156}\) As a land formerly under Islamic rule, “the land of Palestine is an Islamic land entrusted to the Muslim generations until Judgment Day.”\(^\text{157}\) Because it is guaranteed for future generations, no individual, state, or group has the right to dispose

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of the land or relinquish or cede any part of it. This imposes ethical restrictions on land concessions utilizing an ideology based on Islamic law, where agreeing to cede ownership of land is labeled as immoral and illegal. As a result the ideology effectively succeeds in delegitimizing any peace agreements like the later Oslo Accords that recognize the possibility of Israel’s existence as a nation-state and implicitly cede Palestinian claims to territory. According to Gunning, the waqf argument has been criticized privately by Islamic scholars and theologians since the Charter was first approved, as Hamas elevates the land of Palestine above other tracts of land that were part of the Caliphate such as Spain, clearly using Islamic arguments to support its particular nationalism. Despite this private criticism, these arguments utilize Islamic discourse in constructing an imposing narrative that cannot be challenged without casting negative aspersions on the organization responsible for concessions. Additional arguments for the uniquely sacred nature of the land of Palestine note that it is special because Jerusalem was the first focal direction of prayer for Muslims, and because Jerusalem has been a central point of the struggle between faith and unbelief. In the fifteenth article of the Charter the Palestinian struggle is labeled a religious cause on a similar basis, as the Islamic holy sanctuaries of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram Mosque are both located in Palestine. Interestingly enough, these religious sites are actually operated under the authority of the Awqaf Administration, a Jerusalem-based organization responsible for overseeing the various properties that have been given as

158 Ibid., 273.
either a private or public *awqaf*. The presence of discrete properties identified by Palestinians as *awqaf* separate and distinct from the territory of Palestine illustrates the traditional application of the Islamic legal concept of *awqaf*.

**Waqf in the Muslim Tradition**

The traditional Islamic understanding of *awqaf* differs substantially from the way *Hamas* applies the concept to legitimate its claim to Islamic Palestine. As noted in C.T.R. Hewer’s recent introduction to Islam, the definition of a *waqf* as a charitable trust is the broadest general Islamic understanding of the concept. The study of British India’s dealings with *awqaf* by Gregory C. Kozlowski lays out an explanation related by several older Islamic sources providing the canonical origin of the institution. In this narrative, Umar, who later became one of the five rightly guided caliphs, received property after a military conquest, and after questioning the best use of his newly gained assets queried the Prophet. The response came that Umar should “tie up” the properties, and devote any income generated to the welfare of the faithful – an explanation for the concept thus supported etymologically by the resemblance between *waqf* and the verb *waqafa* which means “to tie up.” Kozlowski relates one of the earliest references to *awqaf* in Muslim sources in which Umar’s caliphate responded to a situation of conquered territory in Iraq, where the particular conquered province Sawad was too large to easily be split up and distributed amongst Umar’s army, leading to the designation of

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the entire province as a \textit{waqf}.\footnote{Ibid., 11-12.} In this situation the inhabitants continued to dwell in the land, but the surplus fruits of their labor were sent to benefit both the army and believers in the Holy Cities.\footnote{Ibid., 12.} Of course, as Kozlowski notes, over time the endowment was gradually encroached upon by military and political leaders, leading to the impermanence of a supposedly permanent institution.\footnote{Ibid., 12.} \textit{Hamas}’s claim that Palestine as a whole is a \textit{waqf} echoes this earlier designation of large territories as \textit{awqaf}, but contrary to the situation in Sawad, Palestine was never designated in its entirety as a \textit{waqf}. In fact, as examined by Kenneth W. Stein in his \textit{The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939}, while there were 26,325,600 dunams of land in Palestine in 1930, only 80,000 to 100,000 dunams were endowed to charitable, religious purposes, or family trust, while 600,000 to 1,000,000 dunams were state owned by the Ottomans with individuals renting the right to farm the property in a situation similar to that related in Umar’s Sawad.\footnote{Kenneth W. Stein, \textit{The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939} (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 12.} Quick calculations reveal that the combination of these two types of \textit{waqf} amount to roughly four percent of the total territory of Palestine. While certainly a noteworthy figure, this amount of territory designated apart hardly stands as a legitimate rationale for claiming the entirety of Palestine to be a \textit{waqf}, much less to be a \textit{waqf} designated for religious purposes as done by \textit{Hamas}. Nonetheless, the presence of this respectable amount of land legally designated with this special status leads to a necessary examination of the purposes and expectations placed upon a \textit{waqf} by the Muslim community.

Contrary to expecting that an entire state designated as a \textit{waqf} must be reclaimed by any means necessary, the traditional understanding of \textit{awqaf} informs an expectation...
that Muslims would certainly want to reclaim and retain seized religious sites, but that
ambivalence concerning private properties designated as *awqaf* could be expected.
According to Hewer, the purpose of the *waqf* is to provide a trust that benefits the
impoverished. Yet, the legal implications of *waqf* illustrate how Muslim jurists deal
with these endowments. Noel J. Coulson’s examination of Islamic jurisprudence
highlights the variety of modes in which *awqaf* operate – as endowing a property
relinquishes ownership, which then belongs in perpetuity to *Allah* and cannot be
transferred. As Coulson describes it, the jurisprudence issue with these endowments
comes from their common usage, since being able to legally endow properties in this
manner provided for the benefit of named recipients, thereby circumventing the normal
Islamic rules of inheritance. Essentially, the property that was endowed became either
an actual religious site or a non-transferrable parcel of land whose operation was
dedicated to taking in money to benefit endowed individuals. Regardless of the type of
*waqf*, the institution was the subject of disagreement by various Muslim jurists. In a
discussion on the history of Wahhabi Islam, a revivalist form of Islam that is currently
influential in many parts of the Muslim world including Palestine, Natana Delong-Bas
notes that the institution of *awqaf* was an outlier. In Wahhabism, *waqf* was the only
example in which the Companions of the Prophet were considered authoritative due to
the concept’s absence in both the Quran and Sunna. Delong-Bas’s study indicates that
*awqaf* were common establishments in the Islamic world despite the lack of Quranic

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169 Hewer, 106.
170 Noel J. Coulson, *Conflicts and Tensions in Islamic Jurisprudence* (Chicago: University of Chicago
171 Coulson, 89.
University Press, 2004), 55.
173 Ibid., 55.
basis.\textsuperscript{174} According to Kozlowski’s work, even early influential scholars of Muslim law disagreed over the validity of awqaf, among them Imam Abu Hanifah, founder of the still influential Hanafi school, who completely disapproved of the institution.\textsuperscript{175} Nonetheless, even some among Hanifah’s own students such as Abu Yusuh and Ibn-Muhammad disagreed with their instructor’s interpretation, alternatively considering awqaf a valid means of allocating property.\textsuperscript{176} The institution continued throughout the Muslim world, albeit controversially due to its occasional usage in redirecting properties that would otherwise fall under the traditional rules of inheritance, as previously described. Despite the irregular misuse of the practice in this manner, Wahhabi asserted that awqaf should nonetheless be considered valid until the benefactors of the endowment have died off, labeling it a duty to maintain the property’s waqf status in perpetuity.\textsuperscript{177} For this reason, regardless of the type of waqf, Wahhabi Islam as well as many other Islamic legal traditions support respecting existing awqaf. The presence of awqaf within Jerusalem, however, falls under competing claims of Palestinian and Israeli rule, leading to the need to examine the Israeli position on awqaf.

\textit{Awqaf in Jerusalem; Limited Israeli Tolerance}

Israel generally ignores the claim that certain properties within Jerusalem are designated awqaf, yet shows limited tolerance and recognition of the properties as differing from other regular pieces of real estate. Within the territory of modern Jerusalem both types of awqaf exist, with sites such as Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram

\textsuperscript{174} Delong-Bas, 119.
\textsuperscript{175} Kozlowski, 13.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{177} Delong-Bas., 120.
al-Sharif being examples of religious sites long ago designated as *awqaf*. According to Michael Dumper’s extensive research of the politics of sacred space in Jerusalem, various other properties are designated as *awqaf* and divided into two categories, revenue-producing and non-revenue-producing *waqf*. Types of revenue-producing *awqaf* in the Old City include shops, residences, offices, banks, hotels, court buildings, school buildings, a car park, a bus station, and surrounding shops, while non-income producing properties include mosques, fountains, cemeteries, wells, educational institutions, and saints’ tombs. Given that these properties are specifically designated as *awqaf* and presided over by the Awqaf Administration, which Dumper notes is the single largest property owner in the Old City, the relationship between the Israeli government and the Awqaf Administration provides another important element in evaluating Hamas’s claim of Palestine as a *waqf*. By tacitly endorsing the role played by the Awqaf Administration through low level contacts and showing some respect for the Administration’s properties, the Israeli government subtly accepts the existence of these endowments without officially recognizing the endowments’ legitimacy. Thus, while gradual encroachment on Palestinian *awqaf* has occurred, Dumper notes that the range of activities, such as control over diverse properties and the proactive role taken by leadership indicate the Awqaf Administration’s continued relevance in considerations of the future of Jerusalem. Tacit recognition of *awqaf* by the Israelis could be considered quite an accomplishment, except that research on the initial Jewish settlement period in

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179 Ibid., 87.
180 Ibid., 73.
181 Ibid., 82-83.
182 Ibid., 100.
the late 19th and early 20th centuries indicates a knowledge and concern for the possible creation of Islamic *awqaf*.

Although a known concept in Islamic history, the endowment of property was not popular in lands such as Ottoman Palestine and pre-British India. Returning to Kozlowski’s account of the history of *awqaf* in British India, the author argues that prior to the establishment of British rule possession of land and the tradition of *awqaf* were not concerns for most of the Muslim population, due to poverty or a focus by those with wealth on trade and control of crops, not land.\(^{183}\) This further undermines Hamas’s claim that the whole territory of Palestine constituted a *waqf*, as similar concepts of land ownership would have likely operated in Ottoman Palestine prior to the British takeover. In fact, in Ottoman Palestine land was rented but frequently not owned by the Palestinians living and working in the land, while the Jewish presence in the land began with purchasing land, frequently from the absentee landowners.\(^{184}\) With land ownership largely relegated to absentee owners of large amounts of land and Ottoman-owned parcels, the creation of *awqaf* made little sense. However, as Stein rightly notes, the increasing awareness of Jewish land purchases led by 1919 to rumors of vast areas to be dedicated as *waqf* as a means of preventing the land from being sold.\(^{185}\) The Jewish colonizing interests were well aware of the traditional Islamic inference that *awqaf* were to be permanent and unsellable, as the possibility of massive *awqaf* creation was viewed as a threat by those in charge of the development of the land.\(^{186}\)

\(^{183}\) Kozwolski, 192.
\(^{185}\) Stein, 41.
\(^{186}\) Ibid., 167.
seizing all property within its boundaries when the state was formed in 1948. And the idea that the whole of Palestine was a waqf was not even considered. Although not a waqf in any sense, the land of Palestine nonetheless does clearly have religious meaning for the Islamic Palestinians living in the land.

**An Islamic Land**

Despite never being mentioned as an endowment except in the literature of Hamas, the land of Palestine has a special place in the Islamic tradition, due to its religious sites and the history of Islamic rule over the territory. In Ziad Abu-Amr’s *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, the Muslim Brotherhood’s explanation for the sacrosanct nature of the land of Palestine is fleshed out. According to Abu-Amr’s explanation of Islam, Palestine is “The most sanctified and honored spot on earth, a spot to which Allah sent a herald angel, and where the Prophet Muhammad made his midnight journey.”¹⁸⁷ The midnight journey of the Prophet, or the Isra and Mi’raj is detailed in the seventeenth sura of the Qur’an and describes an encounter with the divine in which the Prophet travelled in the night to the “farthest Mosque,” and at that site ascended briefly to heaven. Traditionally, the “farthest Mosque” is associated with the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa Mosque which is located there, and also connects the Prophet to the site of Haram al-Sharif (The Dome of the Rock). In addition to being the location of these sacred sites, Jerusalem is commonly acknowledged in the Islamic tradition to be the initial direction in which Muslims prayed prior to establishing the kaaba in Mecca as the second and current direction of prayer. These traditions clearly

connect Islam with Jerusalem in particular in a significant way. The history of conflict between Christians and Muslims over Jerusalem and the land is also well known, as the Muslim Brotherhood extols the liberation of the land of Palestine from the Crusaders under the banner of Islam.\textsuperscript{188} Jerusalem, in addition to its sacred role as the site of these holy landmarks also figures into the Muslim tradition of the Last Days according to Amikam Elad, who writes that in this tradition Paradise will be transferred to Jerusalem and the Gate of Paradise will open over the city.\textsuperscript{189} In this regard Jerusalem is special, and is designated one amongst five earthly cities belonging to Paradise including Hims, Damascus, Beit Gavrin and Zafar.\textsuperscript{190} Thus, in addition to the pilgrims visiting the holy sites in the city, Jerusalem figures into Islamic theology as an important place, worthy to be fought over. Jerusalem and Palestine can then be understood as having import for Muslims regardless of the claim that Palestine is a \textit{waqf}, and for some this may be sufficient in validating \textit{Hamas}’s struggle to reclaim Islamic Palestine. In addition to the explicitly Islamic argument which \textit{Hamas} makes to legitimate its use of violence in protest of the occupation of the land by the state of Israel, the Islamic Resistance Movement employs liberationist discourse.

\textbf{Palestinian Land Rights}

By claiming that the Palestinian people are entitled to maintain political possession of the entire land of Palestine based on their status living in and on the land, \textit{Hamas} invokes a narrative decrying the state of Israel as an immoral and oppressive

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 81.
occupying power and arguing that Hamas’s use of violence is validated by the need for the liberation of the Palestinian people. Khaled Hroub in his analysis of Hamas’s ideology notes that while religious discourse dominates the charter, Hamas has vacillated between constructing its struggle with Israel as a purely ideological one and portraying the struggle as a resistance narrative. 191 Hamas leaders including Sheik Yassin, Abdelaziz Rantisi, Ismail Haniyeh and Khalid Meshal, all invoke humanitarian claims in arguing for the Palestinians’ right to control their political destiny, return to the land, and establish a solitary Palestinian state, therefore refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel. This argument appears prominently in Hamas’s 2000 document This Is What We Struggle For, which Azzam Tamimi notes Rantisi considered to be a better representation of Hamas’s ideology than the Mithaq, 192 and reappears in Hamas’s 2006 Election Manifesto. Utilizing the resistance narrative in addition to the Charter’s religious rationale for the indivisibility of the land, Hamas has constructed a secular humanist argument asserting its right to total control of the territory of Palestine-Israel.

This second ideological argument that Hamas makes asserting its right to total control over the territory of Palestine is based on a liberation narrative which contends that the existence of Israel impinges on the human rights of the Palestinians. Invoking the colonization of territory by Zionists in the early part of the twentieth century, this ideology claims that Israel, as a colonial state, has displaced Palestinian natives, denying them self-determination and their right to their land, thus reinforcing the religious discourse with an argument concerning inalienable human rights and justice for

refugees.\textsuperscript{193} According to Edward Said, while prior to 1987 the very concept of “Palestinians” and the subsequent necessary consideration of their joint human rights was questionable, the Intifada altered image consciousness, and for the first time in the modern Western world, the concept of “Palestinians” acquired the irrevocable status of a people dispossessed and under military occupation.\textsuperscript{194} In Tamimi’s \textit{Hamas: A History from Within} he notes that this liberation language is utilized explicitly in the late 1990s \textit{Hamas} document “This Is What We Struggle For,”\textsuperscript{195} which asserts that Israel is a “racist colonial entity in the land of Palestine.”\textsuperscript{196} According to Tamimi’s translation, this release from \textit{Hamas}’s Political Bureau argues that \textit{Hamas}’s struggle is for the “liberation of the Palestinian occupied lands and for recognition of Palestinian legitimate rights.”\textsuperscript{197} Tamimi also relays a 2004 conversation with a senior \textit{Hamas} leader who affirmed the movement’s liberation ideology, as opposed to continuing to make the religious argument of the Charter.\textsuperscript{198} Additionally, the Charter itself has come under review according to Tamimi, who notes that a draft for a new Charter was produced in the 2000s that was to refer only to the historical basis of the Palestinian cause rather than the Islamic argument.\textsuperscript{199} This new charter is expected to affirm that \textit{Hamas}’s opposition to Israel is based not on faith or race, but solely on the injustice committed in the colonial enterprise of occupying land that ought to be Palestine.\textsuperscript{200} Tamimi quotes an interview with another

\begin{footnotes}
\item[193] Gunning, 200.
\item[195] Tamimi, 147.
\item[197] Tamimi, 147.
\item[198] Ibid., 148.
\item[199] Ibid., 150-151.
\item[200] Ibid., 155.
\end{footnotes}
*Hamas* leader in 2004 who said that “If a Muslim were to attack me and steal my land, I have every right to fight back.”\(^{201}\) This encapsulates the liberation argument, that there is nothing special about the land of Palestine or about Israel except that Israelis occupied the land that rightfully belongs to the Palestinians. In addition to Tamimi’s work and interviews, *Hamas* leaders including Rantisi, Meshal, and Haniyeh have employed this argument in diverse English publications as further detailed.

Although possibly mistakenly viewed only as a narrative intended to influence a specifically non-Islamic audience, the inclusion of this liberationist argument in Hamas’s recent electoral campaign suggests an internalization of a pro-human rights position. In a collection of writings conveying various Palestinian perspectives, Rantisi charges, in an essay titled “Hamas Towards the West,” that Western powers have supported and enabled Jewish settlements in Palestine, thereby contradicting Western “slogans and morals such as: freedom, democracy and human rights.”\(^{202}\) The following essay by senior *Hamas* official Ismail Abu-Shanab presents *Hamas*’s strategy in the present and the future returning to the Islamic argument of the *waqf*,\(^{203}\) but the juxtaposition of the two essays illustrates the relationship between the dual ideological arguments. In addition to Rantisi’s essay published in 1999, the 2006 election cycle brought numerous publications repeating these liberationist claims. In a 2006 article in London’s the *Guardian*, reprinted by Tamimi, Khaled Meshal, the current head of *Hamas*’s Political Bureau wrote, “We shall never recognize the right of any power to rob us of our land and

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\(^{201}\) Ibid., 156.
\(^{202}\) Abdelaziz Rantisi, “Hamas Towards the West,” in *Palestinian Perspectives* ed. Wolfgang Freud (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Gmbh, 1999), 162.
deny us our national rights,” reiterating the claim to land based on human rights discourse.²⁰⁴ In the same article Meshal states that Hamas’s problem is with those who came to the Palestinians’ land, forcibly imposed themselves on the Palestinians, destroyed the Palestinian society, and banished the Palestinian people.²⁰⁵ These claims repeat the refrain of Israeli illegitimacy due to past and current colonial practices and oppressive, racist government-supported policies, including refusing to recognize a right of return for the Palestinian refugees living outside of the territory of Israel. An article published in the same day’s newspaper and also reprinted by Tamimi, penned by the newly elected Palestinian National Authority Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, also decries Israel’s denial of the Palestinian people’s basic rights,²⁰⁶ while noting that “our land is occupied, our people enslaved and oppressed by the occupying power.”²⁰⁷ These articles support the position Hamas put forth prior to the election in its Election Manifesto, which states that “Historic Palestine is part of the Arab and Islamic land; the Palestinian people’s right to it does not diminish with the passage of time and no military or alleged legal procedures alter this fact.”²⁰⁸ The Election Manifesto also lays out a specific justification for employing violence on behalf of the cause of liberating Palestine stating that the entirety of Hamas “consider occupation to be the ugliest form of terrorism and resisting it with all means a right that is guaranteed by divine religions and internal

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 286.
²⁰⁷ Ibid., 291.
Thus, though this shift in the basis of ideology from Islam to humanism may seem helpful in condemning the use of violence to assert control over the land, it does not diminish the power of Hamas’s land ideologies to legitimate and mandate violence taken in order to reclaim the territory occupied by Israel.

Violence as a Means of Action

Hamas utilizes a number of means for accomplishing its goals, including the operation of a number of charity services that help the citizens of the Gaza Strip and have given Hamas leadership of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. Yet it is the affirmation and usage of violence that is responsible for negatively influencing the perception of Hamas as a legitimate political movement. Although Talal Asad rightly critiques an understanding of violence based solely on ideological motivations, noting that violence does not need to be justified by the Qur’an or the Torah, Hamas explicitly affirms the role violence is intended to play in transforming reality. Within al-Mithaq, the fifteenth article separates Hamas from other Palestinian resistance groups by making the usage of violence obligatory in extolling every individual Muslim to wage jihad, which is composed of fighting and joining the ranks in confronting the unlawful seizure of Palestine by the Jews. While on the one hand jihad has a number of nonviolent meanings according to John Esposito, including leading a good Muslim life, spreading the message of Islam, and supporting oppressed Muslim people, here however Hamas seems to be referring to the violent interpretation of jihad as overthrowing

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209 Ibid., 297.
governments. Additionally, the postscript of the Charter labels the members of the Islamic Resistance Movement as soldiers, noting that, “The Islamic Resistance Movement is only its soldiers, nothing else.” The usage of violence by Hamas then is not surprising. Nonetheless, according to Mishal and Sela, the shift from the non-violent founding branch of the Muslim Brotherhood to Hamas was primarily a matter of necessity due to competition with other nationalist Palestinian groups. Adopting violence with the rise of the Intifada, Hamas began in its first year by sponsoring shootings at military patrols and road side charges before escalating in scope, sophistication, and daring to the planned kidnappings and killing of Israeli soldiers, knife attacks on civilians, and burning forests inside Israeli borders. In relating Hamas’s history of escalating violence, Mishal and Sela note the role played by the 1992 deportation of Islamic activists, as the activists were sent to Lebanon where they learnt a number of techniques for military activity including how to utilize suicide bombers. Mark Juergensmeyer argues that one primary reason Hamas reconfigured its use of violence, shifting from targeting primarily soldiers to targeting civilians, was as retaliation for the Goldstein massacre, which killed Palestinian civilians. In Gunning’s analysis of the increasingly violent measures Hamas employed, he highlights the role the opposition to the peace process, retaliation for Israeli actions, and an intra-Palestinian

215 Ibid., 57.
216 Ibid., 61.
rivalry played in motivating surges in violent activity.\textsuperscript{218} Gunning also notes that in Hamas’s discourse the violence was responsible for accelerating Israel’s withdrawal from Palestinian territory, using the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as an example.\textsuperscript{219} Hamas’s ideology encourages the usage of violence, and its stated goal both in Al-Mithaq and its later publications is the reclamation of territory considered to comprise Palestine, not only the territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, but all the territory lying between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. This maximalist claim to land is used to rationalize Hamas’s refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel and justify a continuing program of violence.\textsuperscript{220} Despite this ideology supporting violence, Hamas has displayed flexibility and pragmatism in terms of its political ideology.

\textbf{An Evolutionary Approach}

The preferred approach to studying Hamas is one that accepts the argument that Hamas is a consistently growing, flexible, and evolving movement, capable of change. This approach opposes discourse contending Hamas is a static entity, and thus incapable of change. Edward Said was an early critic of portrayals of Hamas that fail in this manner, noting that every article published at the time of his The End of the Peace Process describes the group as occupying an ahistorical world of pure despotism, rage, and violence.\textsuperscript{221} More recent scholarship provides a corrective lens to this problematic portrayal. In Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela’s The Palestinian Hamas, for instance, the authors argue that Hamas displays flexibility and adaptability. Mishal and Sela contend

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{218} Gunning, 208-209.  
\textsuperscript{219} Gunning, 213.  
\textsuperscript{220} Abu-Amr, 23-25.  
\textsuperscript{221} Edward Said, \textit{The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After} (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), 48.}
that *Hamas* is not unlike other political and social movements, in that its members are involved in the project of translating their principles and goals into practical decisions and workable objectives.\(^{222}\) Like other opposition movements, *Hamas* balances out the confusion and uncertainty that comes with failure to adhere to its stated dogmatic vision with the benefits of a balanced decision-making process.\(^{223}\) This decision-making process combines realistic considerations with the movement’s traditional beliefs and arguments, thus evidencing conformity with formal doctrine while showing signs of political flexibility.\(^{224}\) One such example, according to Mishal and Sela, is that *Hamas* demonstrates flexibility by differentiating between the short term objective of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the long-term goal of establishing a Palestinian Islamic state thereby replacing Israel.\(^{225}\) Flexibility, as evidenced in moving away from an isolated focus on a long-term goal and recognizing the value of a short-term goal controverts the polemical assumption that *Hamas* has never changed and is thus incapable of future adaptation and evolution.

In opposition to viewing *Hamas* as an inflexible movement is an approach that highlights the evolving nature of *Hamas* as a sociopolitical entity. One modern scholar explicitly embracing this approach is Jeroen Gunning. In Gunning’s *Hamas in Politics* he demonstrates the adaptability of *Hamas* through emphasizing the changing practices of the group depending on particular socioeconomic and political circumstances.\(^{226}\) Gunning specifically critiques the static approach as not interested in contradictions between *Hamas*’s actions and its ideology, or the possibility of *Hamas* changing its goals.

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\(^{222}\) Mishal and Sela, 6.
\(^{223}\) Ibid., 2-3
\(^{224}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{225}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{226}\) Gunning, 34.
or means in the future.\textsuperscript{227} In Gunning’s view, neither Hamas nor its ideology is static; rather both are affected by changes in the wider political arena, creating new and unique opportunities for sociopolitical gain.\textsuperscript{228} Gunning points to the methodology of scholars who view Hamas as static, critiquing such scholars for relying too heavily on second-hand analysis, repeated and reinforced statements, and too rarely utilizing interviews and analysis of praxis as a means of studying Hamas.\textsuperscript{229} One such scholar who bases his work primarily on first-hand sources is Azzam Tamimi, whose study of the movement emphasizes the degree to which Hamas’s ideology cannot be fully appreciated solely through study of the Charter (al-Mithaq). In Tamimi’s interviews and study of Hamas, the Charter was hardly ever quoted or referenced,\textsuperscript{230} and he notes that Hamas leadership was convinced that the Charter had been a greater hindrance than help for the movement.\textsuperscript{231} Tamimi’s work also illuminates the flexibility of Hamas, moving away from the more problematic polemical discourse in the Charter, including particularly the conflation of Israel, Zionism, and Jews.\textsuperscript{232} Recognizing the complex relationships between the State of Israel, Zionists and Jews shows attention to a distinction that a non-flexible ideology would have difficulty addressing. Flexibility and adaptability are also evident in the history of Hamas, a history that influences the group’s land ideology originating with the movement’s beginnings in the constantly adapting Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.

\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{230} Tamimi, 147.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 148.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., 152.
Muslim Brotherhood Offshoot

_Hamas_ was formally conceived as an independent movement in 1987, concurrent with the eruption of the first Palestinian Intifada. The first Intifada was an outpouring of Palestinian grievances through active resistance to Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Memorably captured in images of Palestinian children throwing stones at the Israeli military, the Intifada was part of a renewed sense of Palestinian resistance, and _Hamas_ took advantage of the mood in the territories to gain prestige and power. Prior to the Intifada, the individuals who came together to form _Hamas_ were associated with the Muslim Brotherhood’s chapter in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood is an organization founded in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna that first opened a Palestinian branch in Jerusalem in 1945. Al-Banna formed the movement with the twin goals of re-Islamizing Egyptian Society and liberating Egypt. During this period, prior to the formal 1948 declaration and founding of Israel, a Palestinian national movement had taken the place of an earlier Arab liberation movement due to economic, social, political, and religious factors. Zionism had been present in the region since just prior to the turn of the century, and with the Balfour Declaration following the First World War, the Arab population of the region was in a state of unrest and frustration. Following the discovery of oil in the Middle East, Britain utilized Zionism as a supposedly friendly political movement to safeguard British oil interests, and by the mid-1940s a climate of antagonism between the Zionists and the Arab Palestinians was at its height. In this

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233 Mishal and Sela, 16.
234 Gunning, 26.
235 Abdelaziz A. Ayyad, _Arab Nationalism and the Palestinians 1858-1939_ (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1999), 5.
236 Ibid., 191.
237 Ibid., 183.
climate the Muslim Brotherhood branch of Palestine flourished with its focus on social and cultural activities, refraining from active political involvement or violence according to Mishal and Sela.\textsuperscript{238} Despite the rapid expansion of the group during this period, the Palestinian chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood disappeared as a cohesive unit following the 1948 establishment of Israel and division of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which placed the territories under Jordanian and Egyptian control.

Within the separate territories the Muslim Brotherhood was reestablished, albeit under the control of the respective Jordanian and Egyptian chapters. This fragmentation and subsequent Jordanian influence led to the West Bank chapter’s establishment as a moderate opposition group reflecting Jordan’s neutral relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{239} Over time this moderate stance in turn contributed to a singular focus by the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank on welfare services and local politics. Gunning attributes this focus on charitable services instead of national politics to the weakness of the Muslim Brotherhood vis-à-vis the powerful nationalism of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO.\textsuperscript{240} Meanwhile, Egypt and its difficult relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood within its borders led to brutal repression following the attempt by Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members on Egypt’s president’s life in 1954.\textsuperscript{241} As a result of the repression, the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, which was under Egyptian control, adopted a clandestine, militant form.\textsuperscript{242} With Israel’s victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israeli took control of both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, a procedure that led to the enmeshment of the two differing chapters of the Muslim

\textsuperscript{238} Mishal and Sela, 16.  
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 17.  
\textsuperscript{240} Gunning, 28-30.  
\textsuperscript{241} Mishal and Sela, 17.  
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 18.
Brotherhood.\textsuperscript{243} Hamas’s predecessor movement had adapted to the differing climates of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with their differing sets of conditions, and the political unification of the territories together under Israel led to the first stage in Hamas’s historical narrative of its own founding. During this early period, between 1967 and 1976, Hamas was constructing its “hard core” in the Gaza Strip,\textsuperscript{244} taking advantage of the Gazan members’ familiarity with operating clandestinely due to their experience under Egyptian oppression. The subsequent stages of expansion and institution building from 1976 until 1981 and the establishment of mechanisms of action and preparation for struggle between 1981 and 1987 represent the necessary precursors for the formal founding of the group with the outbreak of the Intifada in 1987.\textsuperscript{245} Mishal and Sela note that Hamas was founded explicitly as the combatant arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.\textsuperscript{246} In order to utilize violence as an acceptable means of resistance, Hamas needed to rework its ideology to emphasize the validity of aggression.

The violence employed by Hamas utilizes the ideology of another important figure in the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb. Although Hasan al-Banna had supported the usage of political violence and the creation of an armed force,\textsuperscript{247} Qutb is generally credited with transforming the reformist work of al-Banna into a modern Islamic revolutionary movement engaged in warfare. Employing a particular understanding of the Islamic concept of jihad, Qutb equated the non-Islamic world with jahiliyya, the time of darkness and ignorance prior to the coming of Islam that must be

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid, 29.
fought. Conceptually, a holy war in defense of Islamic lands became for Qutb and those who adopted his ideology a useful rallying myth and instrument of political mobilization. While Qutb provided an Islamic justification for violence and emphasized individual responsibility for carrying out transformative jihad, according to Andrea Nüsse, Qutb rejected attachment to any specific territory. Qutb himself states his position on the matter of nationalism in his work, Milestones, stating that,

*A Muslim has no country except that part of the earth where the Shari’ah of God is established and human relationships are based on the foundation of relationship with God; a Muslim has no nationality except his belief, which makes him a member of the Muslim community in Dar-ul-Islam.*

Ignoring this element of Qutb’s ideology and instead focusing solely on the cause of Palestinian nationalism under the spiritual leadership of Sheik Ahmad Yassin, Hamas incorporated aspects of the ideologies of both al-Banna and Qutb.

**Yassin, Spiritual Leader**

Sheik Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, helped formulate the ideology of violence connected to claiming Palestinian control over the territory stretching from the sea to the river. Born in territory that would be claimed by Israel in 1948, Yassin was forced to move to Gaza, where a 1952 injury to his spinal column left him paralyzed. From this early period he was active in the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated mosques of Gaza, eventually becoming a religious teacher, which led to his position heading up the

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248 Ibid, 29.
249 Ibid., 30.
250 Nüsse, 48.
Adapting techniques gleaned from the experiences of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Yassin focused his efforts primarily on expanding the religious and social services network during Hamas’s early period following the 1967 war. By the early 1980s, however, Israel began to take notice of Yassin’s actions, particularly weapons caching, for which he was arrested in 1984. As Mishal and Sela note, during this period there was a popular perception amongst Palestinians that the PLO was militarily and politically bankrupt, which induced contemplation of the possibility of founding a real alternative. With the outbreak of the Intifada, which John Esposito attributes to the desperation of young Palestinians suffering under Israeli occupation, Yassin and Hamas were able to take advantage of the frustration and found the new movement. In Mishal and Sela’s estimation Yassin was responsible for conducting and controlling Intifada activities through publication of Hamas’s leaflets, and so when Hamas released its formal Charter just eight months after its founding, it utilized the religious ideology Yassin inherited from the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Pragmatism of Elections and Hudnah

Countering the charge that it is a static ideological movement, Hamas displays its flexibility, pragmatism, and ability to change in actions such as opting to participate in politics in the form of Palestinian elections and in adopting the concept of hudnah as a means to achieving a short term peaceful resolution. Given the group’s identity as a

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253 Ibid., 34-35.
254 Mishal and Sela, 34.
255 Ibid., 33.
257 Mishal and Sela, 55.
resistance movement, the decision to participate in Palestinian democratic elections beginning in 1992 was a difficult one to make for its members. According to Mishal and Sela, a secret document was circulated among senior members of Hamas outlining potential options for participation in or boycott of the Palestinian Authority elections.\textsuperscript{258} Although the paper was classified, Mishal and Sela recovered a copy of it and present it translated into English. Within this internal Hamas communication pragmatism is clearly shown in a lengthy cost-benefit analysis of four alternative positions toward the elections including Hamas participation, boycotting of the elections, boycotting and attempting to disrupt the elections by force, and participating in the elections under another name.\textsuperscript{259} Of particular interest are the arguments for participation, including “Proving the movement’s popularity,” “Preventing political isolation,” and “Securing a greater chance to confront the concessions in the phase of final negotiations from a position of elected popular representation.”\textsuperscript{260} Alternatively, the advantages of boycotting and disrupting the elections include “Affirming the absence of legitimacy of negotiations and concessions,” and “Deepening Hamas’s popularity and power.”\textsuperscript{261} Amongst the disadvantages to participation is the recognition that “It will be difficult for Hamas to play a role of political participation and resistance at the same time” while boycotting with violence “Might mean an entrance into a military confrontation with Fatah, that is, a civil war, for which we would be held responsible by the people.”\textsuperscript{262} Clearly the authors of the document have given careful thought to the political realities of participation or

\textsuperscript{258} Mishal and Sela, 121.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., 124-125.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 124-125.
nonparticipation in the PA elections, and have done so in pragmatic terms which appear to ignore ideology or theology.

In addition to this document, scholars also note the pragmatism displayed by Sheik Yassin, especially in regards to the possibility of electoral participation. Esposito, in his recent text *Unholy War*, notes that Sheik Yassin in particular displayed pragmatism in encouraging Hamas’s participation in the PA elections. Following a long relationship interviewing Yassin, Zaki Chebab notes in his *Inside Hamas* that Yassin was a wily and pragmatic operator, despite his ideological assertion that the liberation of Palestine would follow the 40 year generational model of the Jewish liberation from Egypt, applying the Biblical narrative to Hamas’s struggle. Taking its cue from Yassin, Hamas began participating in elections and in 2006 won a majority of the seats in the parliamentarian elections, for the first time supplanting its rival political party Fatah in control of the Palestinian National Authority in Gaza. Although governments including Israel and the United States and the European Union have labeled this government as illegitimate, other states such as France at the time and more recently Norway have recognized Hamas’s election and pushed for its inclusion as a necessary voice in a renewed peace process. For this reason Mishal and Sela assert that political activity in the form of electoral participation has been, and continues to be, in Hamas’s best interest. Whether Hamas uses its elected status to push its ideological goals or to seek peace is difficult to assess due to the Israeli government’s refusal to negotiate with Hamas. A complicated matter, the refusal likely has greater roots than just Hamas’s

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263 Esposito, *Unholy War*, 102.
265 Ibid., 105.
266 Mishal and Sela, 170.
sponsoring violence - for instance, Hamas’s opposition to any formal recognition of Israel would likely be a major roadblock to negotiation.

Hamas refuses both formal recognition of Israel as well as participation in treaties, but circumventing its own ideology and demonstrating flexibility, Hamas has proposed an armistice using the Islamic hudnah as a model. The concept of hudnah dates back to classical Islam and was notably instituted as a result of the Christian Crusades, setting aside conflict for a longer term, but still a finite period of peace. In terms of Hamas’s goals, the concept of instituting a short-term solution that would bring temporary peace dates back to 1991, with the primary goal being Israeli withdrawal from the territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. According to Hroub, a possible agreement for short-term peace with Israel during this period focused along the line of Israeli withdrawal was rejected due to the Israeli government’s insistence on recognition of the State of Israel as part of any such agreement. This led to the 1995 suggestion by Hamas officials of implementing the hudnah which would be explicit in setting a finite duration and not relinquishing any land rights to the Israelis. The hudnah would focus on stipulating a return to the pre-1967 borders as a trade off for the temporary peace, but Hamas continues to be unwilling to give up the Palestinian claim to the entire territory of Palestine, making it likely that the expiration of a hudnah would only see renewed conflict. Tamimi highlights Hamas’s continued resistance to allowing for the existence of a state of Israel in noting a fatwa reissued in the mid-90s that echoes the group’s land ideology, stating, “Palestine is an Islamic land that cannot be forfeited

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267 Gunning, 221.
268 Hroub, 73-74.
269 Ibid., 75.
270 Ibid., 75.
271 Tamimi, 159.
voluntarily.”

Hamas’s refusal to compromise on the long term solution of a single Palestinian state presents a continued obstacle to peace and a continued motive for implementing violence as a strategy of resistance.

Although Hamas has shown flexibility, adapting to changing sociopolitical environments and making the choice to participate in Palestinian Authority elections, both its static Islamic land ideology and its maximalist liberationist discourse are used to justify its demand for control of territory, acting as spoilers for possible long-term negotiations that would presumably require such concessions. Scholars like Hroub and Gunning would point out that innovation is essential to evolution, and Hamas’s history of flexibility suggests a wide valence of future possibilities, including moving away from rigid adherence to the movement’s land ideology. Additionally, the assassination of a number of founding senior leaders of Hamas including Yassin and Rantisi in 2004, ostensibly sponsored by Israel, opens up the possibility of ideological change coinciding with the ascension of new leadership including Meshal and Haniyeh, despite both new leaders having repeated Hamas’s liberationist discourse as previously discussed. Nonetheless, even if Hamas does publicly renounce violence its religious land ideology functions not just to legitimate actions taken by the group itself, but also actions taken by individuals influenced by Hamas’s current discourse. Much like the Jewish discourse of Gush Emunim that continues to influence Israeli settlers after the dissolution of Gush, Hamas’s religious land ideology will likely continue to influence individuals’ worldviews, and it is impossible to predict whether those individuals would accept Hamas’s evolution and flexibility concerning its claims to the territory of Palestine.

272 Ibid., 157.
Conclusion

The land ideologies of Gush Emunim and Hamas invoke claims to territory based on religious understandings. These claims that land was given by Adonai to Abraham and inherited by modern Jews, or that Allah has set aside Islamic Palestine as a waqf, legitimate violent actions taken by individuals and collectives who affirm the authenticity of these religious claims. Violence is a response to a number of stimuli and, as discussed in the introduction, may emerge from non-religious motives, while nonviolence may be a preferred tactic of a religious group. There is no absolute connection between religion and violence, but when religious movements such as Gush Emunim and Hamas make absolutist, maximalist claims to land ownership based on their respective religious traditions, they establish a powerful force for motivating and legitimating violent action taken to secure the claimed land.

The redemptive messianic understanding of the duty to possess Israel by Jews that emerges from Gush Emunim legitimates violence taken to further control of Eretz Yisrael. Based on a claim of inherited ownership of land dating back to the biblical figure of Abraham, this group encourages settlement throughout the Land of Israel regardless of the reality of non-Jewish ownership and occupation of the territory. Dispossession is the standard course of action in claiming the land for Jewish settlers, setting up conflict over the resources between the settlers and their new Palestinian neighbors. Actions taken by the Israeli government to suppress and cut off settlement, including actual removal of settlers from the land as well as peace agreements confirming plans to eventually dismantle settlements, have drawn the ire and violence of those motivated by the ideology of Gush Emunim who refuse to see the settlements as anything
other than a commandment to fulfill the God-given right to Jewish occupation of the land. Even the formal disbanding of *Gush Emunim* has not diminished the ability of the nascent ideology to inspire resistance to dismantling settlements, failing to prioritize the potential bringing of peace and stability to the region through withdrawal from the territories of the West Bank and Golan Heights. With deceased figures such as Rabbi A.I. Kook and his son Rabbi Z.Y. Kook serving as posthumous mouthpieces for modern settlers to justify seizing territory across the Green Line, the religious land ideology of *Gush Emunim* persists and continues to act to motivate and legitimate violence.

The Islamic resistance movement, *Hamas*, utilizes an understanding of land as endowed by *Allah* to affirm continued struggle, while also buttressing this theological argument with discourse affirming inalienable human rights. *Hamas*’s evolving discourse evidences knowledge of the difficulty of making an isolated Islamic claim to ownership of territory due to the lack of history of such claims outside of the holy Islamic city of Mecca and the practical need to gain the support of non-Muslim Palestinians for the movement’s success both in terms of elections and financing. This well-crafted ideology effectively combines two strategies for mandating continued violent struggle against Israel, even if every member of *Hamas* does not actually commit violent acts. While *Hamas* as a political movement evolves to accomplish its goals and retain the power it has gained in the Gaza Strip, the movement’s ideology remains decidedly static in its absolutist, maximalist claim to territory for the Islamic state of Palestine. Both the Islamic argument that the entire territory of Palestine is a *waqf* and the argument that all dispossessed Palestinians have the right to return to their families’ territory invalidate the existence of the State of Israel, and justify *Hamas*’s continued refusal to recognize the
State. Even were Hamas to make changes in its political approach to Israel, its current ideology would serve to validate future violent resistance by those who refuse to accept conceding territorial claims as a prerequisite for attaining peace. Much as Gush Emunim’s ideology continues to inspire settlers, Hamas’s ideology can continue to inspire those committed to violently resisting the existence of the State of Israel.

Contrary to the approach of some scholars such as Samuel Huntington who posits a “Clash of Civilizations,” the violence waged by those influenced by Gush Emunim and Hamas does not reflect a de facto conflict between the religious traditions of Judaism and Islam. The existence of peaceful relations between Jews and Muslims both within the State of Israel and worldwide serves as a reminder that conflicts are not simply about or because of religions -- conflicts are rather about the application of religious beliefs and practices to practical disputes. In this case, it is the religious land ideologies of Gush Emunim and Hamas that motivate and legitimate acts of violence, and while these ideologies may appear to be infallible religious interpretations to those who believe in them, the histories of the scriptures, groups, and movements from which they emerge are complex and full of elements that can be interpreted so as to delegitimize the use of violence. The concept of land stewardship, a focus on love for all humanity, and pragmatic political participation leading to negotiation, as well as the recognition of inalienable human rights - all these elements work to undermine not the religious systems of Judaism or Islam, or even the disparate land ideologies that affirm a connection between Israelis or Palestinians and the land, but rather the violence that is motivated and legitimated based on these ideologies.
Religious land ideologies can impel and validate violence, but the ideological systems that depend on religious traditions supporting them are also capable of undermining and invalidating that violence. Land ideologies are not solely religious in nature, but religious land ideologies have the peculiar connection to long cherished beliefs and practices that give these ideologies the appearance of being expressions of a divine will. The connections between the religious traditions and violence taken to secure land are not, however, absolute. Rather, they are the product of these particular movements involved in the struggle over the territory and its resources at this particular time. Only time will tell if the multiple, diverse, nonviolent elements of the ideological systems employed by Hamas and Gush Emunim will gain more traction with followers, or if the perpetration of violence will continue indefinitely.
WORKS CITED


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