



## Israel bought the land first

Israel did not steal any of its lands. Jews, as far back as Abraham and Jacob, bought them. In some cases they bought it back.

### Ancient history of Israel

Abraham bought the first of many parcels of land that would become Israel. Specifically, he bought the Cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite in 1858 BC. ([Sarah](#), his first wife, died in that year.) The price: 400 shekels of silver. (Genesis chapter 23)

Jacob bought another parcel of land near the city of Shechem, for 100 “pieces” of silver. (Genesis 33:19)

Besides these land purchases, Abraham, and his son Isaac after him, made treaties with the Avvites, under King Abimelech. These Avvites lived in modern Gaza. By their treaties, Abraham gained title to land in the Negev, including Beersheba. The Avvites were the first people whom the Bible called “Philistines,” a name that can mean either “immigrants” or “invaders.” In fact, Isaac had to *re-negotiate* Abraham’s original treaty, after Abimelech *broke* it. The quarrel was about the oldest subject in the Middle East: water. (Genesis 26:18-25) Abraham had dug wells in the region. The Avvites stopped them up. Isaac sought to reopen them, and the Avvite shepherds repeatedly randed them off, until finally Abimelech asked for a permanent peace treaty.

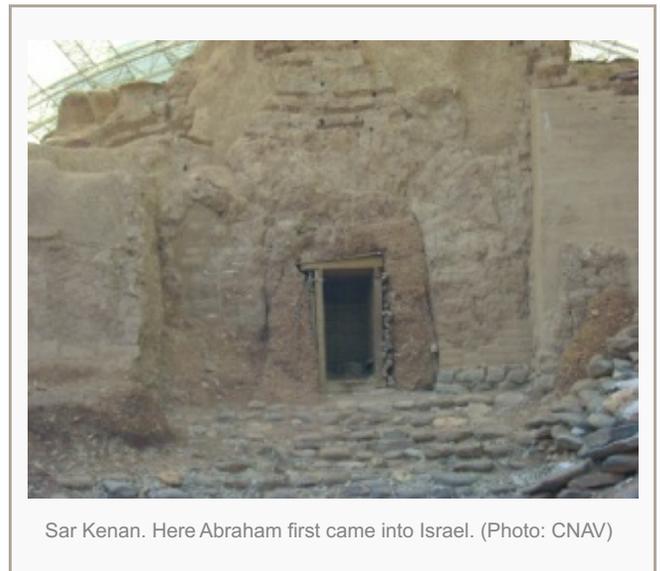
Most people, even those who read the Bible, don’t remember these passages. They show that Jacob’s tribe, the ancestors of Israel, were *not* landless nomads. In the years before the Great Famine, they held the clear title to at least three land parcels.

Then came the Great Famine that affected Egypt and the rest of the Middle East. Jacob’s son Joseph, as grand vizier of Egypt, sold grain to his brothers. Then, with the blessing of his boss the Pharaoh, Joseph invited all his extended family to come to Egypt to stay. This Sojourn lasted 215 years, and ended with the Great Exodus (1491 BC). Forty years after that, the Israelites swept into Canaan and began to possess, or *re-possess*, the land. The Divine land grant (see Joshua) extends from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, and even beyond. (How far beyond is debatable even among Bible scholars.)

That land grant *also* extends to the Golan Heights. That region has a very rich Jewish history, according to the [Jewist Virtual Library](#). Tel Dan, one of two “high places” that King Jeroboam I set up as places to worship other than Jerusalem, stands here. So does Sar Kenan, or the Gate of Canaan, where Abraham first entered the land.

### From Rome to the Baghdad Caliphate

But the most remarkable site by far is Gamla, the “Masada of the North.” A fortified synagogue, where the Jews fought the first battle against the Romans (under the future Emperor Vespasian) in AD 67, stands on that hill. An



Sar Kenan. Here Abraham first came into Israel. (Photo: CNAV)

ancient Roman mounted crossbow, or “scorpion” (in Latin, *catapulta*), still stands on a higher hill overlooking the site.

The Romans won the day, but they did not remove the Jews from the region. The Jewish presence even in the Golan Heights continued until 636, when the Arabs kicked out the Byzantines.

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## The Jews buy Israel back

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The Baghdad Caliphate gave way to the Ottoman Empire. By 1886, the Ottoman Turks still ruled the land, but had let it decline to desert and swamp. In that year, the first Jews started to buy the land back. The Ottomans at first sold it willingly, because they did not think that anyone could make the land fertile again. The Jews proved otherwise. That’s when the trouble began.

Jews bought the [rest of the land](#) that would become Israel in the same way. The Jewish National Fund bought its first parcels in 1903. Baron Benjamin de Rothschild bought his first land earlier, when settlers from the First Aliyah, at Rishon-le-Zion, asked him to. (In 1900, he gave his lands away to the Jewish Colonization Association.)

As they did in the Golan Heights, the Jews planted trees and developed new irrigation methods to reclaim the land. They bought the land from absentee Ottoman landlords, and in many cases hired the Arab tenants to work for them.

## The Golan Heights

The Jewish Virtual Library also shows that Jewish organizations had bought land in the Golan Heights and farmed it as recently as 1947. In that year, French Mandatory Syria became independent Syria. Syrian armies immediately chased the Jews off the land. The only reason that Syria “owned” it was that the British traded it away to the French in 1923.

Israel would finally take the land back in the 1967 War. Your editor has seen it since. Before, it was mostly desert, except for the eucalyptus trees that the Syrians planted around their bunkers. Now it is as fertile as it ever was.

## Where does Israel go from here?

Aaron Klein (*Schmoozing with Terrorists*) now reports that even before President Obama made his State Department speech, US diplomats were [talking about trading away the Golan Heights](#). The idea is to throw a bone to Bashir Assad, so that he can stay in power in Syria. The Obama administration believes that Assad would be easier to deal with than those now protesting his rule. But easy to deal with or not, Assad has no right to the Golan Heights. The Jews bought that land first. That Britain traded it away to France, who then left it to Syria, doesn’t change that. So the land belongs to Israel, not only by right of conquest, but by right of free purchase.

Furthermore, the earlier land buys (Abraham



Farming in the Golan Heights. Only after Israel recaptured the Golan did these farms spring up again. (Photo: CNAV)

and Jacob) and treaties (Abraham and Isaac) clearly show that Israel has had a title to the land going back for thousands of years. The Arabs came as conquerors in 636, until the Ottomans took over. The Ottomans *sold Israel back* to the Jews. The Arabs have no claim to Israel, except by force. Force should not prevail here, in the face of clear prior claims that follow from voluntary consent.

*Featured image: looking at the Damascus Road from the Golan Heights. Photo: CNAV*