

The Covenant Endures: Palestinians' Sacred Right to Their Homeland

The covenant (brit) between God and the Children of Israel, a sacred pact rooted in justice, righteousness, and the sanctity of life, is a cornerstone of the Abrahamic tradition. As articulated in **Deuteronomy 7:6**, God chose the Israelites as “a holy people,” tasking them with a divine mission to embody these values and serve as “a light unto the nations” (**Isaiah 42:6**). This covenant is not merely spiritual—it is intrinsically tied to the land of Canaan, promised to Abraham’s offspring in **Genesis 17:8**: “And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.” The Talmud (**Bava Batra 100a**) underscores the land’s sanctity, binding its inhabitants to the covenant’s duties. Yet, history has tested this bond, raising the question: who are the true heirs of this covenant today?

Palestinians, as genetic and historical descendants of the ancient Israelites, are the covenant’s enduring bearers. Their conversions to Christianity and Islam reflect a continuity within the Abrahamic tradition, while their ancestral ties, continuous presence, and steadfast endurance (sumud) align with God’s commandments, affirming their sacred right to their homeland. Their Islamic stewardship of creation, preserving biodiversity through olive and native tree cultivation, contrasts with the ecological Nakba caused by non-native pine planting, which has fueled Israel’s most catastrophic wildfires in history, signaling divine disapproval. Those who perpetrate violence and ecological harm, claiming divine sanction, desecrate God’s name (chillul Hashem) and invite divine retribution (**Deuteronomy 32:25, Leviticus 18:29**).

Palestinians as Descendants of the Covenant’s Original Bearers

The Children of Israel, descendants of Jacob (**Genesis 32:28**), were the original bearers of the covenant, established with Abraham (**Genesis 17:7**) and reaffirmed at Sinai (**Exodus 19:5-6**). The Talmud (**Sanhedrin 94a**) recounts the scattering of the Ten Tribes after the Assyrian conquest (722 BCE), but Midrash Tanchuma (**Ki Tavo 3**) suggests their descendants persist, bound to the covenant’s legacy. Genetic studies provide empirical support: Nebel et al. (2001) and Hammer et al. (2000) demonstrate that Palestinians share Y-chromosomal haplogroups (J1, J2) with ancient Levantine populations, including Israelites and Canaanites. Archaeological evidence, such as DNA from Lachish (2019, *Science Advances*), confirms this continuity, linking Palestinians to the region’s inhabitants for millennia.

In contrast, many Israeli leaders, such as Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant, and Bezalel Smotrich, trace their ancestry to Eastern Europe—Poland and Ukraine—where Ashkenazi Jews emerged from a diaspora with European admixture (Costa et al., 2013). Their cen-

turies of absence from the region contrast with Palestinians' continuous presence. The brit, tied to the land (**Genesis 17:8**), finds its truest heirs in those who have remained—Palestinians—whose sumud amidst displacement embodies the covenant's call for justice and endurance.

Conversion to Christianity and Islam as Abrahamic continuity

Palestinian conversions to Christianity (1st–4th centuries CE) and Islam (7th–13th centuries CE) do not sever their covenantal status but reflect the Abrahamic tradition's evolution. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a common lineage through Abraham, "the father of a multitude of nations" (**Genesis 17:4**). Early Palestinian Christians, often Jews accepting Jesus as the Messiah (**Acts 2:5-11**), upheld the covenant's ethical core: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (**Matthew 22:39**, citing **Leviticus 19:18**). **Galatians 3:29** declares, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," affirming their covenantal role. Similarly, the Quran recounts the Children of Israel's covenant (**Surah Al-Baqarah 2:40-47**), emphasizing justice and righteousness (**Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:12**). Abraham, "neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a Muslim [submitting to God]" (**Surah Al-Imran 3:67**), frames Islam as a return to his monotheism, with Palestinians' faith continuing this legacy.

These conversions are not ruptures but adaptations, preserving the brit's demands for justice, compassion, and the sanctity of life (**Sanhedrin 37a**).

Palestinians, as descendants of the original bearers, remain bound to the covenant's mission, their religious evolution reflecting its universal call across Abrahamic faiths.

Ancestral Ties and Continuous Presence as Covenant Fulfillment

Palestinians' ancestral ties and continuous presence align with God's commandments, affirming their sacred right to the land. **Genesis 12:7** promises, "To your offspring I will give this land," reiterated as an "everlasting possession" (**Genesis 17:8**). Palestinians, with genetic and historical continuity, are these offspring, their residency a fulfillment of divine will. Their sumud—enduring the Nakba of 1948 (~700,000 displaced, UNRWA) and ongoing dispossession (~700,000 settlers in the West Bank, Peace Now, 2023; ~1.9 million displaced in Gaza, UN OCHA, 2025)—embodies the covenant's mission to be "a light unto the nations" (**Isaiah 42:6**). The Talmud (**Berachot 10a**) calls for justice to redeem the soul, a principle Palestinians uphold through nonviolent resistance and advocacy for self-determination, affirmed by international law (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007).

The Quran reinforces this entitlement, noting God's command to "dwell in the land" (**Surah Al-Isra 17:104**) and uphold justice (**Surah An-Nisa 4:135**).

Palestinians' resilience against violations—Israel's illegal occupation and settlements (ICJ,

2024, citing Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49)—reflects their covenantal duty, their presence a testament to the land's sanctity.

Islamic Stewardship vs. Ecological Nakba: Palestinians as Covenant-Bound Guardians

The covenant's call for justice and sanctity extends to stewardship of creation, a duty Palestinians fulfill through Islamic principles preserving biodiversity. The Quran commands believers to "corrupt not the earth" (**Surah Al-A'raf 7:56**) and sustain gardens (**Surah Al-Baqarah 2:266**).

Palestinians' cultivation of olive, carob, and citrus trees—supporting 80,000–100,000 families and 14% of their economy (Visualizing Palestine, 2013)—nurtures the land's fertility and cultural memory, fulfilling the covenant's demand to "tend and keep" the earth (**Genesis 2:15**, **Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:12**). Their terraced farming and fire-resistant native species embody *sumud*, aligning with Islam's call for righteous stewardship.

In contrast, the JNF's planting of over 250 million non-native pines, replacing over 800,000 olive trees and covering 531 Palestinian villages (Pappé, 2006), has caused an ecological Nakba. These pines acidify soils, harming biodiversity (Lorber, 2012), and their flammable resins have fueled Israel's most catastrophic wildfires in history, burning over 25,000 dunams by May 2025, devastating Canada Park and threatening Jerusalem (The Times of Israel, 2025; Haaretz, 2025). This desecration, erasing Palestinian heritage, signals divine disapproval (**Deuteronomy 28:63-64**), while Palestinians' replanting of olives affirms their role as covenant-bound guardians.

Entitlement to the Land and a Call for Justice

Palestinians' covenantal status—rooted in descent, continuity, and Islamic stewardship—affirms their sacred right to their homeland. **Deuteronomy 16:20** commands, "Justice, and only justice, you shall follow," echoed across traditions: **Micah 6:8** in Judaism, **Matthew 5:9** in Christianity ("Blessed are the peacemakers"), and **Surah An-Nisa 4:135** in Islam. Their sustainable agriculture contrasts with the ecological Nakba, reinforcing their role as the land's rightful inheritors. The ICJ's 2024 ruling against illegal settlements and the UN's recognition of the right of return (Resolution 194, 1948) align with these divine and legal imperatives, condemning ongoing dispossession.

Those perpetrating violence in Gaza (~42,000 deaths, Gaza Health Ministry, October 2024) and ecological harm, claiming divine sanction, commit *chillul Hashem* (**Ezekiel 36:20**, **Yoma 86a**), violating the covenant's sanctity of life (**pikuach nefesh**, **Mishneh Torah**, **Hilchot Rotzeach 1:1**). The Book of Revelation (**20:7-9**) may symbolize Gaza's suffering as an attack on the "camp of the saints," underscoring divine disapproval. Palestinians, as covenantal heirs, embody its call for justice and righteousness, their *sumud* a fulfillment of God's promise.

This is a final warning to those committing violence and ecological destruction: cease the bloodshed, restore the land, seek justice (**Isaiah 1:18**), repent (**Berachot 10a**), and redeem

your souls, or face divine retribution (**Deuteronomy 28:63-64, Pirkei Avot 5:8**).

Palestinians, through their ancestry, presence, and stewardship, honor the covenant's enduring legacy. Recognizing their sacred right to their homeland—not through displacement but through coexistence and equity—unites the Abrahamic faiths in a shared pursuit of peace.