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God's Just Gaza War: Futurity Foreclosed through Evangelical Apocalypse as
Orthogonal Promise of Eretz Israel

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ABSTRACT

After the evacuation of the Gush Katif settlement and intensifying with the 2008-2009 Israeli War on Gaza, the border town of Sderot and its surrounding landscape became, for American Christian Zionists, a pilgrimage landscape and therefore a sacred space as it was performed as an event site portending the apocalypse. Christian Zionists interpreted the war and the landscape it took place on as a *mise-en-scène* of hope: the hollowing out of Gaza in anticipation of Christ's return. Christian Zionists read the future as history. To explain this, I employ Philip K. Dick's conceptualization of 'orthogonal time'. Time and space merge as always already existing prophetic kairos time manifests itself in prophetic space. Watching Operation Cast Lead from pilgrimage landscapes overlooking the Gaza Strip, I conducted a yearlong ethnography before/during/after the 2008/09 war on Gaza with American Christian Zionists. They justified the war through colonial imaginings of *terra nullius* in three ways: 1) by denying that Palestinians exist as a legitimate national identity; 2) by denying the Palestinians' ability to reason; and 3) prophetic inevitability. Gaza is therefore interpreted as God's land and the demise of Gazans—present and future—is not only anticipated and preempted, but will have (already) happened.

Keywords: Gaza; apocalypse; orthogonal time; Christian Zionists; anticipatory geographies; Operation Cast Lead

Introduction

To Ehud Sprinzak (1991), political scientist and former advisor to Yitzak Rabin, 1967 marked Zionism's turn to the radical right. In his book, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, he explains that Israel's occupation of Palestinian land was interpreted as a sign from God to settle it. Predominantly led by Rabbi Rav Kook and social movements like Gush Emunim, there was a growing demographic of settlers who believed that the capture and occupation of Palestine was a sign from God that the Messiah would soon return. Similarly, the Six-Day war renewed evangelical interest in Israel, and 'evangelical involvement with the Jews intensified' (Ariel 2000, 198). Billy Graham, who was the most prestigious and universally trusted evangelical in America at the time, produced the film, *His Land*, shortly

after the war to mark the messianic promise of Israel's colonial expansion (Kaplan 2018). Christian Zionist visions of an imminent return of 'Yeshua' and subsequent apocalypse rest on their racialized map that imagines Israel's prophetic territory to expand to the Mediterranean and Euphrates (Gen 15:18). This prophetic story of territorial maximalism is predicated on the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and the return (and protection) of Jews (Numbers 30:50-55).[1]

The 2008-9 Operation Cast Lead invasion of Gaza is seen by Christian Zionists as a continuation of the events of the 1967 Six-Day War. Because Gaza is a non-religious site, it is transformed into one as it functions as a holdout to prophetic fulfillment of a territorially maximal Israel. As Kong (2001, 226) advocates for future directions of religious landscape research, this example extends the focus 'beyond the "officially sacred."' Pilgrimage to Gaza's border landscapes thus provides a clear example of how the Judeo-Evangelical national synergy is performed, and how these borderlands are made sacred through those performances. In making it sacred and part of their apocalyptic prophecies, American Christian Zionists drew a red-line for the foreordained future of Gaza: it was as important for Israeli settler colonialism as Jerusalem.

This article concerns the disproportionate war on Gaza termed Operation Cast Lead (henceforth 'OCL'). I document this invasion of Gaza as witnessed by American Christian Zionist Pilgrims upon landscape lookouts near the Israeli town of Sderot.[2] I argue that from these lookouts, Christian Zionists perform three types of terra nullius (empty land) to righteously countenance their prophesized dispossession of Palestine. Immediately below, I provide a brief history of the lead up to OCL. I then give a brief background to Christian Zionist theologies of the future, formally called eschatologies. Using Philip K. Dick, I argue that such eschatologies are best understood as 'orthogonal time': non-linear enclosed space-time within which future events have already happened. The first form of terra nullius and

toward developing their logic of orthogonal time, Christian Zionists claim a prophetic inevitability of a future without Palestinians. In other words, if the land is part of God's greater plan, then Palestinians have no right to future territory, sovereignty, statehood, property, or settlement. Second, through the space of orthogonal time, Christian Zionists deny Palestinians exist or have a legitimate claim to nationality. They are Arab/Muslim interlopers of Armageddon. Last and as an outcome of the former observations, through this localized apocalyptic geopolitics Christian Zionists deny Palestinians possess the ability to reason and thus deny them their morality and humanity. I conclude by challenging the orthogonal foreclosure of settler colonial apocalyptic logics via a provocation to rescue the radical openness of apocalypse as immanent, conjunctural, earthy, contingent, and redemptive as the occupation's atrocities are 'unveiled'.

Gaza, Six Day War to Operation Cast Lead

The renewed Christian Zionist interest after 1967 was furthered by the first politically endorsed settlements of the era (Kaplan 2018; Hummel 2019). After the successful capture of the West Bank and Gaza from Jordan and Egypt respectively, the settlement movement began as Israeli politics shifted to the religious right. Towards an 'indefinite strategy' for territorial control of what Israel saw as its frontier, Menachem Begin, founder of the Likud party and sixth Prime Minister of Israel, encouraged settlements in the West Bank and Gaza via financial incentives to religious settlers (Hughes 2020, 217). This settler colonial project was overturned in 1995 under the Labour Party but was again reversed with the first Netanyahu government only to be overturned again in 2000 (Friedland and Hecht 2000). The second Intifada (2000-2005) proved too dangerous for the IDF military occupation of Gaza and the protection of Israeli settlements. In September 2005 Major-General Dan Harel declared

‘disengagement’ with the Gaza Strip, leaving internal affairs to Gazans and removing the 8,000 settlers from the Gush Katif settlement.

In January 2006, Hamas was elected as the democratic representatives of Gazans. Israeli’s perceived the Hamas government as a threat (Carter 2006). In response, Israel attempted a failed coup and collectively punished Gazans via an import/export blockade on everything from food to medicine (Roy 2009; Salamanca 2011). The coup, blockade, and several assassinations led to Qassam rocket fire into the civilian communities adjacent to the strip.

In June 2008, Hamas entered a ceasefire with Israel. But in November, Israel broke the truce by conducting a raid in Gaza that was a ‘pretext for inciting war’ (Finkelstein 2010, 24). While there were random mortar and rocket fire originating from Gaza after the June 2008 ceasefire, Hamas claimed they did not order the strikes (B’Tselem 2009). Israel launched OCL on 27 December 2008 on the grounds of self-defense and justified it via the rabbinate as a Holy War (Levy 2016). By the end of the war, Israel dropped 1000 tons of explosives, Gazans fired 770 rudimentary rockets and mortars into Israel (Goldstone 2009). Between the start and end of the war on 18 January 2009, 1,385 Palestinians were killed, over half of whom were civilians. Of these, 318 were minors. Gazan rocket and mortar fire killed three Israeli civilians, one member of the Israeli security forces, and wounded dozens (Journal of Palestine Studies 2009). Nine soldiers were killed within the Gaza Strip, four of which were by friendly fire (B’Tselem ND).

For Christian Zionists, the Six-Day War and OCL while separate events, are understood on a continuum of prophetic orthogonal time, the former a future past, the latter a future present, both of which gather continuity for the ultimate End upon Christ’s return. OCL is understood through the in-betweenness of bounded time and ‘unbounded’ territorial

colonialism as an event to beget events ‘on the road to Armageddon’ (Hughes 2020; Weber 2004).

Landscapes bordering Gaza: Christian Zionist framing and methodology

The landscape of this research was the Eshkol region bordering Gaza and Sderot, a small Israeli city bordering Gaza from which I conducted an ethnography of two Christian Zionist congregations, Shemen Sasson and King of Kings. I regularly attended their congregations as well as seven field trips to Sderot (three before OCL, and four during OCL) between September 2008 and October 2009. Sderot is located roughly 1km from Gaza where as many as 25 Qassam rockets would land each day. About 20 Israelis had died from them between 2007 and the end of the war. Because of this, various government services limited home delivery of goods to those with mobility issues. Trips were then organized by Christian Zionists to deliver essential goods. At the conclusion of each trip, the pilgrims were taken to a landscape lookout from which the edge of Gaza city could be seen on a clear day to watch the bombing of Gaza (See figure 1).

[Figure 1 Here]:

In addition to these trips, I also attended a pre-war and post-war fieldtrip to Eshkol and Sderot with two shuttle buses of Christian Zionists with the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem’s annual Feast of Tabernacles conference. The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ), the largest Christian Zionist organization in Israel, has created a space for Christian Zionists to imagine Jerusalem as the world’s Christian capital and national representative. Its chosen location in Jerusalem is an attempt to internationally recognize the city as the Israeli capital. While one cannot report a lost passport or request consular assistance, it is through its function as an inter-cultural “embassy” that pilgrims are

able to deepen their identification with an imagined Jewish state and nation. The ICEJ is best known for its yearly Feast of Tabernacles conference. The conference is the largest non-Jewish festival in Israel, bringing as many as 7,000 Christian Zionists from ‘over 100 nations’ to Jerusalem. The ICEJ claims, ‘Our Feast of Tabernacles celebration has impacted more than a hundred thousand Christians with the biblical perspective of recognizing the hand of God in Israel’s modern day restoration and the need to work with what God is doing, and bless it.’ This global affect is illustrative of the increasingly post-American demographic of Christian Zionism (McAlister 2018).

Israelis located within the Qassam rocket strike radius are looked upon by American Christian Zionists as victims of a racialized evil that is concentrated at Israel’s doorstep. Since the disengagement with Gaza in 2005 and the withdrawal of Gush Katif settlement that saw all Israeli settlers in Gaza expelled and their settlements razed, the borders of Gaza and these settler ‘refugee’ camps are increasingly common pilgrimage sites marketed as a way to personally ‘do God’s work’ by assisting the elderly, listening to the settlers’ stories, and donating substantial sums of money for many projects that help settlers return or pay for bomb shelters.

American Christian Zionists: Orthogonal time and Premillennial Dispensationalist eschatology

Croft (2007, 692) argues the American Christian Right has developed its own views on foreign policy that challenge Realist, Liberal, and Marxist positions, what he terms an ‘evangelical foreign policy’. Creating new material realities on the ground and boosting the Israeli tourism industry with hundreds of millions of dollars, nearly 100,000 American Christian Zionist pilgrims enter Israel and Palestine each year (Belhassen and Ebel 2009, 362). In late October 2009, Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace laureate Elie Wiesel gave a

speech at the John Hagee's Christians United for Israel (CUFI) conference. Internationally broadcast on GodTV, Hagee presented \$9 million in donations to 29 Israeli and US Jewish organizations. Hagee is well known to have given millions to the settlement Ariel as well as Nefesh B'Nefesh (a Jewish organization that encourages Jewish immigration to Israel) and a hospital in Ashkelon, often hit by Qassam rockets (Duke 2009). Within the context of OCL, John Hagee claims to have contributed \$58 million to such causes in 2009 alone (Durbin 2018).

As a key voting demographic, Christian Zionist religious nationalism has become the 'sacred will of the Republican Party' (Sturm 2017, 14) and President Donald Trump has been anointed a messianic title as King Cyrus (Durbin 2020; O'Donnell 2020a). Trump has delivered on several Christian Zionist demands, systematically dismantling four decades of U.S. foreign policy between Israel and Palestine, including: recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, moving an American Embassy to Jerusalem 'for evangelicals' (Folley 2020), endorsing Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, backing accelerated settlement building in the West Bank, and a peace plan that includes the 'Gaza criteria' of disarming and ousting a democratically elected party from representing its people.

The paradox of Christian Zionist eschatology is that while it is often understood as the hermeneutics of ends (one in which the Apocalypse occupies a central place), eschatologies are always situated within present social, cultural, and economic contexts (Curry-Roper 1991, 159; Kaplan 2018, 212-215). The apocalyptic tradition, as a sociological phenomenon, is often framed as an attempt to cope with oppression, persecution, disaster, and a *ressentiment* perception of a minority status by imagining a better world to come, even if that world must first deepen into the darkest of ages (Cohn 1957; Connolly 2008; Megoran 2013).

Most believe in a biblical end to history and approximately two-thirds of these evangelicals are premillennial dispensationalists—they believe Christ will return 'pre'-vious

to Christ's 'millennial' rule (Weber 2004, 9; cf. Hummel 2019, 2-3). Premillennial Dispensational (henceforth 'premillennialism') eschatology posits that the world, since Christ's resurrection, has been on a steady moral decline. In this eschatology the world will only see accelerated war, famine, and pestilence until Christ's return at the battle of Armageddon in Israel's Jezreel Valley. Seven years before the millennium is to begin—a period called the Tribulation—all true believing Christians will escape the violence via the Rapture. Many of these Christian Zionists are 'neocharismatics' evangelicals that see the struggle between evil and good manifesting on earth between states and national groups (McCloud 2015).

The most important part of this eschatology for our interest in Christian Zionist geopolitics is the linking of biblical allegory with the shape of the world, what Yorgason (2010, 67) calls, 'geo-eschatology.' Here God has a firm grip on history through an earthly immanent engagement with geopolitical events and his central territorial concerns are America and Israel (Sturm 2012). Succinctly put, they have converted 'geography into eschatology' (Bercovitch 1978, 41). With the reestablishment of Israel in 1948, premillennialists believed that the prophetic wheels have been greased and God's hand has once again entered world history, dividing it geographically into regions of friends and enemies. In other words, there is a spiritual war where political commitments and ritual actions resonate with the aim of God's millennial revelation and rule (Graziano 2017; Connolly 2008; O'Donnell 2020b). Divine revelation is also seen as an historical process where God intervenes in human history, a 'future history' as one scholar of eschatology put it (Schussler 1985, 40). The present is motivated, according to the historian Bernard McGinn (1998, 378), by a 'psychological imminence' that he defines as 'the conviction that the final events of history are already under way.'

Susan Harding (2001) argues that the premillennialist arrow of time is not linear in the Enlightenment sense from past to present to future, but instead starts at the prophecy of future events and extends backwards. Future events are ‘foregone conclusions’ according to Bernstein (1994, 29), as Christian teleological eschatology judges all human value and action from the position of ‘The End’. Pushing Harding’s and Bernstein’s observations further, I argue that the apodictic certainty of these prophetic events read from an inerrant Bible means that these events are understood to have already happened. In Christian Zionist’s prophetic geopolitical and temporal frame, the *mise en scène* is the Middle East centered on Jerusalem and the tense is future perfect (Massumi 1993, 9), ie, Iran and Russia will have invaded Israel which will have brought about the Battle of Armageddon (Sturm 2020). Therefore, while Christian Zionist narratives are anticipatory of those events, they are also a (future) history. As Massumi (2007, np) explains of ‘the traditional tense of threat, the indefinite future of the what-may-come, has been translated into the future perfect: the “will have” of the “always will have been already.”’ The discursive logic is not only one of anticipation and preparedness, but importantly the certainty of an imminent/immanent war (Anderson 2010; 2011).

Harding’s arrow of time, however, is still presumed to be linear in reverse, a progressive movement across space from ending to beginning. There is another temporality at work, ‘orthogonal time’, a term I borrow from Philip K Dick. Orthogonal time is a divergence from the linear timeline—whether past \mapsto future or future \mapsto past—that instead spirals at a right angle. In his essay ‘Man, Android, and Machine’ ([1975] 1995, 215-16), Dick writes of orthogonal time as a vinyl record:

A clue lay in St. Paul's reiteration that the Final Days of the world would be the Time of Restoration of All Things. He had evidently experienced this orthogonal time enough to understand that it contains in it as a simultaneous plane or extension everything which was, just as the grooves on an LP contain the part of the music which has already been played; they don't disappear after the stylus tracks them. A phonograph record is,

actually, a long helical spiral, and can be represented entirely in a plane geometry sort of way: in space, although I suppose you can talk about the stylus accumulating the music as it goes along. The idea of dysfunctions such as bounce back and bounce forward are possible, here, but these wuld [sic] serve no teleological purpose; they would be time-slips.

Here, Dick is inspired by Henri Bergson's concept of accumulated time or duration—'the subsistence of the past in the present' and future (Grosz 2004, 186)—where space-time is whole (Bergson, 2001, 75–101). Time and space for Dick are the agentic subjects, people do not pass through time and space, rather time and space passes through us. Events have simultaneously already happened and yet can come to happen as the stylus 'slips' orthogonally to the next event. For our purposes here, Christian Zionists think of time and space orthogonally, their slips are: Armageddon, the Return of Christ, the Millennium, and OCL. Christian Zionists jump the stylus forward to war portending Armageddon on a spiraling right angle (Kairos or 'eschatological time') to linear lived space-time (chronos), thus illustrating a future perfect tense of their inerrant biblical prophecy (Sipiora 2002, 115). Future orthogonal time and space are virtual—known and therefore real—but acted upon as actual (Massumi 2002). All past and future states exist simultaneously within orthogonal time and orthogonal space. Here cause and effect cannot exist because they can run in reverse or simultaneously between past and future states (Dick 2011, 115). The geopolitical result of orthogonal space-time, is a spatio-temporality of ultimate politics, in which debate is lost to a future fatalism where time is 'dated' to dispensations of truths about what is to come in our near future. In sum, Christian Zionists have constructed a parallel universe, a parallel future, and a 'parallel culture' with alternative knowledge practices and institutions (Stephens and Giberson 2011, 20).

Prophetic inevitability

Christian Zionists along with many ‘national religious’ Israeli settlers believe that the achievement of biblical *Eretz Israel*, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, is not only prophetically inevitable in linear chronos time, but is also orthogonal to it in God’s already existing kairos (ful/filled eschatological) time.[3] Evidence for this politicization of space, and the temporalization of this process, is provided below via Christian Zionist discourse during OCL where their eschatology that poses a fatalistic view of history and inevitable certainty of God’s dealings with humankind, is the prism with which the war was interpreted.

Since its inception in 1980, the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem has promoted Israel as the site portending the apocalypse. Their self-affirmed ‘mandate from heaven’ is taken from Isaiah 40:1-2 which reads, ‘Comfort ye, comfort ye My People. Speak comfort to Jerusalem and cry out to her, that her warfare has ended’ Israel is imagined as an embattled nation-state surrounded by profane Muslim neighbors. In a June 2009 interview with Malcolm Hedding, the former executive director of the ICEJ (2000-2011), he denied having a racially-based hierarchy for salvation, claiming it was not ‘Arabs’ but rather ‘Muslims’ who were the ‘evil forces’ in the Middle East. The Gaza war he added, was ‘a mission to weaken the Muslim position in the country.’ Hedding then outlined what he terms ‘a Prophetic call’ where ‘God who has brought His people back from the nations has done so with blessing and redemption in mind. It is the encouragement of and expectation of a glorious future.’ In other words, the prophetic sign that Jews are returning to Israel promises an imminent orthogonal millennial utopia. He continued, ‘The scriptures do foresee... The remarkable Messianic prophecies... Israel’s warfare is indeed about to come to an end and when it does, the whole earth will be amazed.... He will unravel a problem....’ Christian Zionists largely believe that there will be no peace between Israel and Palestine, not because Christians do not want peace, but because peace is not possible within the eschatological framing of the conflict. As one popular prophecy expounder, Mark Hitchcock (2009, 145),

writes in his lamenting book, *The Late Great United States*, ‘the Bible says peace will come to the Middle East only when the Lord Jesus sets His feet back on this earth to rule and reign.’ This prophetic return of Christ is only possible when the world’s Jews immigrate to Israel, Palestinians are expelled, and Israel reaches its biblically defined territorial extent.

The ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles conference’s importance to both the economy and particularly the political support these Christian Zionists take back with them to their home states, is reflected by the fact that the Israeli Prime Minister has personally addressed the conference every year for the last 20 years. Although the Israeli PM normally addresses the gathering in person, in October 2009 Netanyahu video-recorded his welcome address. Still backpedaling over the OCL and humanitarian crisis, Netanyahu attempted to justify Israel’s treatment of Gaza by making a clear distinction between the ‘good guys’ and the ‘bad guys’: you ‘people assembled in the hall [today] have crystal clear answers’, suggesting that those listening already knew God’s plan for the future. He continued, ‘take a clear stand for us against those terrorists who stand behind civilians.’ Netanyahu was trying to balance the body count between Palestinians and Israelis during OCL by suggesting that because Palestinians are cowardly, they used civilian human shields, and because of this, the civilian body count was inevitable and justifiable (see Joronen 2016; Gordon and Perugini 2020).

Yuli Edelstein, Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs, also personally addressed delegates at the conference. Edelstein said, ‘we Jews stand proud with a gun in one hand and a plow in the other.’ He concluded his speech (for which he was given a standing ovation), ‘the state of Israel is here not because we are colonizers, or because we are an expansionist people, but because of the divine promise of our forefathers.... Israel is promised to us by God.’ Edelstein was able to resonate with the delegates by performing their shared orthogonal space-time script which defines the war on Gaza as an act of defense, a way to protect their God-given landscape that they plowed, settled, and made bloom. As the

Minister of Diaspora Affairs, Edelstein had much to gain from appealing to Christian Zionists knowing well that their donations helped Jews immigrate to Israel.

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Shemen Sasson and the Gaza War

One of the largest Christian Zionist congregations in Jerusalem is Shemen Sasson. It consists of about one hundred mostly American congregants who worship on Saturday (aligning with the Jewish Sabbath). It is led by an American expatriate from Virginia, Pastor John Meyers. In a sermon on 10 January 2009, he said, ‘the IDF says they will accelerate the war tonight. We need to accelerate our prayer. Pray for the soldiers protecting this great nation. Only one hundred miles away people will die tonight. In Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beer Sheba, Sderot.’

Although it initially seemed to adopt what sounds like a rather one-sided moral concern for Israelis, Shemen Sasson and the preachers who occupied its pulpit noticeably altered their characterizations of Arabs and Palestinians in the months leading up to the war, even going so far as to hire Marcel Rebiai, an Algerian and former Muslim, as an associate pastor. While their attitude toward Muslims remained rather intolerant, their distrust and antipathy towards Arabs noticeably faded, specifically as the Gaza War progressed. Nevertheless, the ‘Muslim’ categorizations ‘designate an implicit foreign policy’, which is a way of dealing with the land and the people (Tuathail and Agnew 1992, 194). In the closing of this service, Meyers said ‘God bless the settlements around Gaza, bless our soldiers and army generals. Let’s help them root out Hamas and pray for the innocent in Gaza’. There is a certain hesitant benevolence for Palestinians in this quotation that challenges the official Christian Zionist discourse that positions them as stalling orthogonal prophecy. While getting short shrift compared to ‘our [Israeli] soldiers’ and avoiding the term ‘Palestinian’ there is still a distinction between the ‘innocent’ and the ‘evil’ Hamas.

With Shemen Sasson I participated in two pilgrimages to Sderot during OCL. The pilgrimages were officially organized to help residents with limited mobility, but the pilgrimages were more than this, they served an affective role for the pilgrims as they imagined themselves as embattled with the forces of evil. On our first trip in mid-January (after being prepped on how to respond to the air raid sirens), we had to stop, exit, and lie beside our vehicles on three occasions when sirens sounded and rockets flew overhead. At the conclusion of both trips, our cavalcade of cars reunited at the south-western end of Sderot, the same landscape lookout from which Malcolm Hedding addressed his Operation Lifeshield video audience. The landscape location was about 200 meters from the official ‘press hill’ of the war (see Wigoder 2012). The edge of Gaza City was visible but blurred by the humidity. We were there to watch the war take place on the landscape, a setting sun on our benevolent acts in Sderot that day. The lookout was a theatrical performance which served as evidence for many pilgrims there that God’s work was being done by the ‘the world’s most moral army’. Said (1979b, 63) argued that all representation was of a theatrical nature, ‘the idea of representation is a theatrical one... a theatrical stage affixed to’ the national origin of the viewer. Despite seeing the various dense pluming puffs of white smoke that signified an Israeli bomb, it was the sound energy of the war that was most arresting and affecting, the blast wave energy pushed through our bodies.

It was during my second trip to Sderot with Shemen Sasson on 18 January 2010, as we approached the landscape lookout that concludes the trip, that a ceasefire with Egypt was to take effect in 72 hours (Figure 1). Upon arriving at the look-out, I asked one of the American leaders of the trip what he thought about the ceasefire, and he replied skipping the orthogonal stylus across Gaza’s landscape: ‘The wars will never stop until Yeshua our savior returns. My father said it would be the last war when I was a child. There have been five wars since. We must realize that there cannot be peace, and we cannot know when He will return, but he will return to end all of this. This might be it [the precursor to Christ’s Return], could be.’ He then bumping his fists together, and continued, saying ‘They will have their land we will have ours. Just separate, but not in peace... Muslims are a people of death, and Jews and Christians are peoples of life.’ What was clear to him was that this was a Just War, a battle against ‘death’ and evil.

The empathy for Gazans, potentiated by the embodiment of the bombing, exists on the plane of linear clock time (chronos) for the pilgrims which contrasts to their performed eschatological orthogonal time (kairos): not only the necessity for Israel's biblical territorial maximalism but also the certainty of Gaza's future occupation and transfer/death of Gazans preceding Christ's Return. For them, the record of time is set, negating any affect of hope for Palestinians as the temporal and spatial *mise en scène* are predetermined to take place orthogonally with the slip of God's spatio-historical stylus. As the Christian Zionist above speculated, was OCL the precursor to the Rapture and Armageddon, God moving the needle to Earth's swan song? Here, the premillennial eschatology is 'co-constitutive with the violent sensorium' (Griffiths 2017, 618) landscape lookout, shockwaves, and bombings. All 'resonate' (Connolly 2008) together: the closed pilgrimage spaces, the embodied, discursive and ocular events, and the foreclosed eschatological time and space.

Palestinian existence

Orthogonal thinking is not only a temporal phenomenon, the jumping stylus embeds itself in space orthogonally as well. As Philip K. Dick ([1975] 1995, 216) noted, 'a phonograph record is, actually, a long helical spiral, and can be represented entirely in a plane geometry sort of way: in space'. Christian Zionists, despite their fatalistic ontological commitments, nevertheless seek cognitive and political justification for their beliefs. Eschatology, as Northcott (2004) has argued forcefully, is the most politically decisive component of Christian Zionism. As such, they seek to discursively reason the spatial vacuity of Palestinians and Palestine, a *vacuum domicilium* (empty of inhabitants) (Jennins 1975, 82). This practice is reminiscent of the legal practice of *terra nullius*. Palestine was imagined as 'a land without a people and a people without a land' a phrase coined by Church of Scotland

clergyman, popular author, and proto-Christian Zionist Alexander Keith (1843, 43; Muir 2008, 55-56).

The concept of terra nullius can be genealogically traced to Roman Law's reference to *res nullius* (an empty thing) and later to political philosophers, John Locke and Hugo Grotius. There are other references to similar concepts including the French term, *territoire sans maitre* (territory without a master), but is more commonly referenced, as was employed by the New England Puritans, as simply 'virgin' wilderness or in the case of Zionism, empty desert (Pateman 2007, 36; Long 2009; Yiftachel 2017).

Terra nullius was always a foregone conclusion, rendered knowable, through bio-*theo*-political projections of homogenous and normative futurity as totality and transcendence into the future. This is what Pexa (2018, 4) calls 'futurity foreclosed' which acknowledges the 'necessity of the apocalyptic within settler colonial ways of reckoning time.... settler colonialism's exterminatory logic and its apocalyptic temporality.' Their settler imaginaries would find justification for colonization through the preemptive logic of terra nullius as orthogonal time and orthogonal space. In other words, terra nullius was perceived as a rational preemptive logic of natural law for appropriating inhabited lands.

Gregerson and Juster (2011, 8) describe what Zakai (1992, 72) termed 'geoeschatolic and geoapocalyptic' logics for colonizing New England, as spurred on by 'Biblical narratives of expulsion, salvation, and the apocalypse were thus deeply embedded in early modern imperial projects'. For Foucault, the apocalyptic inspiration driving this 'wave of colonization' gave way to heterotopic practices or 'enacted utopias' (Foucault 1986, 27). The logical impetus for Christian Zionism has not shed these eschatological instantiations, their aim is to actualize the virtuality of the future.

Within the context of the OCL invasion, Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas, did not support ceding Gaza's settlements (Levy 2010). On a Christian Zionist tour

of Israel, Huckabee allegedly told a rabbi at a kosher breakfast, ‘I have to be careful saying this, because people get really upset—there’s really no such thing as a Palestinian. That’s been a political tool to try to force land away from Israel.’ Huckabee denies that there is a cohesive nationalism and contiguous history tying Palestinians together.[4] Huckabee was performing a form of terra nullius by denying a group of people the right to self-definition and as a result, sovereign territorial rights.

Conversely, while denying Palestinians national identity, Christian Zionists try to position themselves as proto-Jews. In 2010, wearing a *kippa* on his 14th trip to Israel, Huckabee said to the Christian tour group he was leading, ‘I think what I should do is convert. This [*kippa*] covers my bald spot completely.’ His statement is not merely a joke. He was positioning his faith and identity through an imagined Judeo-Christian continuity. He continued, ‘I worship a Jew!... I have a lot of Jewish friends, and they’re kind of, like, “You evangelicals love Israel more than we do.” I’m like, “Do you not get it? If there weren’t a Jewish faith, there wouldn’t be a Christian faith!”’ Huckabee’s religion is not just Christian, it is also Jewish. By virtue of being Christian, he is not only post-Jew but part-Jew, as his national allegiance is not only American but increasingly Israeli (Sturm 2018; Hummel 2019). At this time, a Rasmussen poll had Huckabee as the likely Republican favorite for the 2012 primary. He also had his own Fox News television show. Huckabee believes that history will end and that the Rapture will come, but he doesn’t tie himself to a timeline, allowing instead for the orthogonal stylus to jump in God’s time: ‘I was a lot more sure when I was eighteen! I thought it would be one heck of an end-of-the-world war’ (Levy 2010). Through Huckabee’s apocalyptic lens, the land is not a right based on sovereignty or land improvement or national identity, but a God given prophetic destiny. In other words, the orthogonal ‘anticipatory spatializations’ of terra nullius stabilizes orthogonal time to which myths about one’s origin and destiny can be attributed (Shields 2003, 3).

On a Christian Zionist bus tour headed for the Kerem Shalom crossing, I mentioned ‘Israel and Palestine’, to which one middle-aged woman from Alabama turned to me and asked, ‘Israel and what?’ I repeated myself rather casually, ‘Israel and Palestine. What would you call them?’ Trying to avoid confrontation, the woman did not challenge me again. She was not looking for confrontation, she was, it seems, trying to correct what she believed to be slippage from the Christian Zionist normative discourse: ‘There are no such people as Palestinians.’ They are merely Arabs, or more commonly, ‘Muslims’ without ethnic or national distinction. Granting Palestinians ethnicity or national identity did not fit the discourse of the pilgrimage. After all counter to Turner and Turner’s (1978) liminal space of pilgrim encounter, the goal of the pilgrimage was to reinforce and further convince pilgrims of their spatial presuppositions (Bowman 1991, 99; Feldman 2016). The bus was a space filled with discourse about faith-reaffirming facts, orthogonal expectations, and stories about what they had heard about ‘Muslims’ in Gaza and the suffering rightfully located Jews have had to bear, not ‘Palestinians’.

Edward Said (1979a, 82) writes of Zionism’s *vacuum domicilium*,

[A]ll the constitutive energies of Zionism were premised on the excluded presence, that is, the functional absence of ‘native people’ in Palestine; institutions were built deliberately shutting out natives, laws were drafted when Israel came into being that made sure that natives would remain in their ‘nonplace,’ Jews in theirs, and so on. It is no wonder that today the one issue that electrifies Israel as a society is the problem of the Palestinians, whose negation is the most consistent thread running through Zionism.

Said further criticizes the teleological destiny of the Israeli colonization of Palestine. Israel was not a natural result of history or God’s kairos promise, it was the result of colonization cleansed in the myth that Palestine was ‘a land without a people’ (Pappé 2008). To Said and as I’ve illustrated above, Zionism was reminiscent of the Puritan Exodus’ charge that America was an empty land: ‘Zionism (like the view of America as an empty land held by the Puritans) was a colonial vision unlike that of most other nineteenth-century powers, for

whom the natives of outlying territories were included in the redemptive mission civilisatrice’ (Said 1979a, 68). The social histories of Exodus, Manifest Destiny, and American exceptionalism, are model forms of this logic and therefore certain eschatological socio-territorial processes are shared across the colonial spectrum and used today in both Christian Zionist and Jewish Zionist reasoning for appropriating, containing, and dehumanizing Gaza. Christian Zionists, however, prophetically collapse linear time here through the space of orthogonal futurity by ‘spreading time out in space’ (Boyarin 1994, 19).

Reason and moral humanity

Christian Zionists also, with little exception, see Israel as having a teleological ascendancy that is morally higher than that of any other place or people on earth. They support the Chosen People in a Promised Land. Any war in this cleansing effort is considered a ‘Just War’ (cf Megoran 2008; Thaler 2014). As an outcome of prophetic orthogonal time metaphysics and the orthogonal space logic of denying Palestinian existence, Christian Zionists morally justify the dehumanization of Palestinians within the localized geopolitics along the landscapes of Gaza during OCL. Prophetic orthogonal time and orthogonal terra nullius space preempt a justification to deny Palestinians morality and reason. John Locke used Hugo Grotius’ conclusion that aboriginal peoples lacked reason and that ‘uncultivated land ought not to be considered as occupied except in respect to sovereignty’ (Pateman 2007, 50). Without reason, a state could not be legitimately claimed nor sovereignty established.

In 2009, the Goldstone Report commissioned by the United Nations Human Rights Council, set out to clear the ideological and material debris of the war. Its authors found that War Crimes (and possibly crimes against humanity) were committed on both Israeli and Palestinian sides. It found, however, that Israel’s military assault on Gaza was ‘a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population,

radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability.’ Israeli President Shimon Peres responded to the report saying that it ‘makes a mockery of history’ and that ‘it does not distinguish between the aggressor and the defender.’ Christian Zionists echoed Israeli top brass, saying the report was ‘rewarding terror, demonizing Israel and seeking to constrain Israel’s capacity to protect itself’ (Jerusalem Post: Christian Edition 2009, 12). Despite the clear evidence that the IDF committed war crimes, the IDF, to quote former Defense Minister Ehud Barak, declared itself ‘the most moral army’ (Leibovitz 2009). This phrase was frequently repeated during sermons at both Christian Zionist congregations in Jerusalem. As God’s guided army, it was necessary to grant the IDF impunity and absolve them of any immoral behavior.

These rebuttals are at the root of the counter-argument by the Israelis: that they are the ‘invincible victim’ (Kaplan 2018, 3). By Israelis scripting themselves as victims, as we will see below, Palestinians are imagined in counter distinction as ruthless and inhuman aggressors. Such a definition of savage inhumanity delegitimizes any Palestinian claim to national identity by the Lockian definition of terra nullius. Following Grotius, Locke argued that without humanity and reasonable limits on violence, a claim to land is denied on the basis that the population is of an animal nature (Fields 2012).

During the October 2008 Feast of Tabernacles conference, I attended the ‘Tour of the Sderot Region’, one of three tours offered by the ICEJ and by far the most popular. The tour filled two coach buses totaling nearly one hundred pilgrims. The tour’s advertisement read,

Many Israelis today live under the constant threat of rocket attack, especially in the north and western Negev. Visit communities along the Gaza border that have endured years of rocket barrages and find out how Christian can help support and defend them through Operation Lifeshield—a non-profit initiative that donates portable bomb shelters and reinforced bus stop shelters to protect residents of these embattled areas.

The tour functioned both as a fundraiser for the Operation Lifeshield bomb shelter project, and also as an opportunity to experience, ‘suffer’ with, and ‘comfort’ Jewish settlers hardest hit by Qassam rockets (Figure 2). The tour fell into the period of the ceasefire agreed upon by Israel and Hamas on 4 November 2008, therefore no rockets were fired during the day. Some pilgrims expressed disappointment at this non-event, that they were not witness to God intervening in space.

Our tour leaders, Shep Alster, the *Grateful Dead*’s marketing manager, and Josh Adler, a religious settler originally from Brooklyn, addressed the departing bus: ‘Sderot is under threat of missile attacks because of something Israel would call ‘peace’. We don’t believe it will because the situation doesn’t promise this. Sometimes there are dozens of missile attacks and red color alerts.’ He wore an orange band on his arm to show solidarity for the 8,000 Gush Katif settlers who were evacuated from Gaza in August 2005. ‘These shelters save lives’, Adler explained, ‘The rockets may have stopped for now, but not for long. The rockets get longer and longer ranges, soon we will need to cover the entire country.’

[Figure 2 Here]

At the Eshkol community centre, the group was shown an ICEJ video ‘Campaign Lifeshield’ (2009) appealing to Christian Zionists to close the victim/savior gap and expand the good/evil proximity gap between Israelis and Palestinians, by donating money for bomb shelters. Shelters would distance victims from immediate danger of being caught in the crossfire between rocket attacks launched by Hamas and the violent incursions into Gaza by the IDF. The video encourages the viewer to take sides, specifically to perceive Israelis as

victims, and without explaining the history of the conflict, to perceive Gazans as irrationally violent.

The video begins with Malcolm Hedding, gazing over Gaza's landscape from a look-out site on Sderot's south-western edge. He explains his location, 'Here we are at Sderot. The focal point where Palestinian Hamas have attacked over the last years.' The video pans to a still photo from the same site where Hedding stands showing the smoke trails of two rockets, and Hedding continues, 'This tiny town has received thousands of missiles and the community has literally been terrorized in many respects and most of all the psychological damage done to children is immense.' The video returns to Hedding's live shot, and focuses on the remnants of rockets piled for display, then to children covering their heads under their classroom desks, an image resonant to some viewers of the Cuban Missile crisis (Figure 3). 'And if you stand where we are today on this little, hilly mound, you can easily see Gaza City and the closeness that Hamas has to this town and therefore the ease in the past with which it launched hundreds if not thousands of missiles against this community.' The video then zooms into a heavily pixelated agricultural landscape at the edge of some houses, then pans again to a still of a Jewish Somali girl crying. The video continues with sombre music to the smoke trails of rocket attacks, and then to a little girl holding a Jack Russell Terrier puppy in a brazen attempt to square the conflict on the most vulnerable.

[Figure 3 Here]

The shot then pans to stills of Sderot's mayor talking with Hedding, and then a crane lifting portable bomb shelters off a flatbed truck, and children playing in one of the shelters. Hedding concludes, framing the conflict through the landscape as it presents a danger to Israel's citizens. Gazans are simply too close for 'comfort'. Showing a still photo of balaclava clad Palestinians setting up Qassam rockets on stands, Hedding concludes:

And once again, if you look from this vantage point over my shoulder out to Gaza City you will see the living threat under which these people exist and of course a threat that has in recent months has escalated by the acquisition by Hamas of new generation missiles. Therefore we come here today to express our solidarity, our support, and our practical action to this community.

After Hedding's plea, the video asks its viewers to donate for the provision of 'portable bomb shelter and bus stop shelters for the vulnerable Israeli communities along the Gaza border' especially 'the embattled town of Sderot... where dozens of schools and kindergartens are without any shelters to protect their students from the constant threat of Qassam rockets from Gaza.'

A few common tropes concerning Israel's vulnerable landscapes emerge in this video:

(1) That of smallness, where both Sderot is a mere small town and Israel a small state. There is an assumption in Israel and propagated in the media generally that because Israel is a small territory, it is not only vulnerable but also requires a greater territory promised to them by God to accommodate its ambitious demographic, economic, and social status. (2) That Israel are not only historically oppressed and vulnerable, they are the orthogonally present and future victims. (3) While Christian Zionists are fatalists in the kairos record of prophecy, they do possess 'practical action' to change the world. This is justified as guided and predetermined by God where agency is bestowed upon Christian Zionists to help reverse or mitigate this violence by donating money to the defensive solution put forth by Operation Lifeshield (Gallaher 2010). (4) There is a distanced removal for the viewer portrayed by Hedding, showing only a 'point-on-high' view of Gaza City. This landscape distancing strategy enables the viewer to both 'foresee', in Cosgrove's (2008, 8) words, and 'picture the nation' in Daniel's (1993, 5). The ICEJ's appeal to its viewers – in contrast to the absence of any sympathy for Gazans – is striking. The visual techniques of emotionally evoking the pathos of 'victim' through the use of images of desks as protective barriers, helpless women and children under duress, and even children holding distressed puppies further entrenches

Palestinians as ruthless, inhuman, and unreasonable. The contrast is one where there is a clear absence of the more extreme and telling signs of violence and victimhood across the border in Gaza where 1,385 Gazans were killed and thousands more seriously injured while comparatively 14 Israelis soldiers and civilians were killed. The Israeli blockade created the inhumane ghettoization—suffering, poverty, and suffocation—of Gaza’s 1.5 million residents into an area 365 km², which controls their land, sea and air space. Blinded to these realities by the promise of a foreclosed future, Israelis and Christian Zionists reason ‘Gazans... [as] different, unbalanced, even dangerous’ (Allen 2012, 270). This ‘ethical polishing’ reverses the circumstances, the occupation is the reason not the result and therefore gaslights the responsibility for Gazan deaths squarely on their shoulders (Joronen 2016, 338). For Gazans, OCL, like Operation Protective Edge that followed in 2014, was a battle in a larger spatio-temporal apocalypse: the occupation. Their apocalypse does not have to be orthogonally singular, but could be made radically open, as I conclude below, as immanent, conjunctural, earthy, contingent, and possibly redemptive as the occupation’s atrocities are ‘unveiled’.

Other End Times

The Apostolic Congress, a Christian Zionist lobby of the United Pentecostal Church (UPC) concerned about President Bush’s ‘Road Map’ plans and Israel’s rumoured disengagement from Gaza, was given an off the record briefing by Elliot Abrams, the former Near East and North Africa director of the National Security Council, in an attempt to assuage their worries over Israel losing territory. Abrams said, ‘the Gaza Strip had no significant biblical influence such as Joseph’s tomb or Rachel’s tomb and is therefore a piece of land that can be sacrificed for the cause of peace.’ But the Pentecostals didn’t acquiesce, rather his speech provoked indignation. The lead pastor of a UPC affiliated congregation in Jerusalem, *King of Kings*, said in a video posted immediately following the Gaza War, ‘We do not want to hurt these

people [Gazans].... Over 13 Israeli soldiers have died and *apparently* a 1000 Gazan soldiers.... These rockets are being launched against us... Lord, we know that you have a strategy in this war.... We pray that you would make a permanent end to this crisis.... we pray you'll give the IDF supernatural powers' to succeed (Hildsen 2009). All of Israel and Palestine was sacred because all of it played a prophetic role in the imagined miracle of the modern Jewish return from Exile as a functional, but orthogonal, step toward Christ's return. Being script(ur)ed as a sacred place, Gaza's future becomes a space for Israeli territorial maximalism that is justified by God's plan.

As I argue above, Operation Cast Lead was largely interpreted as inevitable – orthogonally pre/fore-ordained by God in time and space. Through ethnographic engagement with Christian Zionists upon the landscapes overlooking Gaza during the war, I found that Palestinians were denied their national identity and territory through narratives and practices that are reminiscent of the historical use of terra nullius in three ways. First, they performed that biblical *Eretz Israel* is not only prophetically inevitable, but will have already happened. Using Philip K Dick's concept of 'orthogonal time', their eschatological time (or Kairos), sees history as whole, inclusive of future events: a future that only ends with Christ's return and a new millennium. Events are orthogonal to linear time, skipping the stylus forward to an event understood in the future perfect tense. Second, through the orthogonal space of terra nullius, Christian Zionists refused Palestinian claims to a national identity (they were generalized as 'Arabs' or 'Muslims') and as a result their right to territory. Third, and as a corollary, they attempted to dehumanize Palestinians' by denying them a sympathetic humanity, a moral compass, and an ability to reason. The orthogonal certainty of the Christian Zionist apocalypse governs and disciplines Palestinian futures by reducing temporal complexity to a few prophetic geopolitical signs that have material consequences for the

future of Gaza, and therefore closing off and limiting alternative Palestinian futures (cf. Joronen and Griffiths 2019a; Ritskes 2017).

Generative hope or incremental progress for Palestinian territorial sovereignty, peace, and national recognition are limited by the ultimate politics of apocalyptic orthogonal space-time (cf. Joronen and Griffiths 2019b, 571). OCL was described for Gazans as an ‘apocalyptic scene’ (Campbell 2009, 12) and in the subsequent war ‘Gazans face an IDF-scripted apocalypse’ (Kucinich 2014). The agents of Palestinian apocalypse among the more than a dozen wars on Gaza are more than the Israeli state military apparatus, but also Christian Zionists via their political, discursive, and economic support.

Toward the building of democratic constituencies that might resonant with Christian Zionists, how could a radical politicization of the apocalypse open-up the future for Palestinian life rather than closing it off through the temporal determinism of orthogonal time and space? Inspired by what can be called an ‘apocalyptic turn’ by geo-humanities scholars (Ginn 2015; Gergan, Smith, and Vasudevan 2020; Schlosser 2015), political geographers (Sturm and Dittmer 2010), and radical geographers (Swyngedouw 2013), philosophers (Žižek 2009), and theologians (Keller 1999; 2004), I ask how we can think of an open, radical apocalypics? Perhaps one that exposes and exploits the paradoxical praxis within eschatological cultures (Gallaher 2010). In this vein, the radical theologian, Catherine Keller, (1999: 57-58) writes: ‘Apocalypse means unveiling, disclosure. So we had better tease its contemporary incarnations out of their bitter sense of closure, toward their own dis/closive potential. Counter/apocalypse allows us to strengthen the relation of the apocalyptic unconditional to the relativizing, relational conditionals of the larger biblical tradition... in the process perhaps emergency gives way to emergence, and uncertainty to adventure.’ In conclusion, and furthering the eco-precariat manifesto developed by Sturm and Lustig

(2021), I offer six principles as a provocation for a radically open apocalypics for Palestinian life:

1. *Immanent*. However imminent the apocalypse is for Palestinian life or even postapocalyptic, it is also immanent (ahead of them, upon them, behind them, and within them) to their ‘colonial present’ and apocalyptic present (ie, post the 1948 Al-Nakba/catastrophic dispossession) (Gregory 2004). Recognition of this immanence can sharpen the Christian Zionist sense of complicity, responsibility, and potential.
2. *Uneven*. A counter-apocalypticism intent on earthly justice for Palestinians, and specifically Gazans here, requires an awareness and emphasis on the geographical and social unevenness in the causes and consequences of the apocalypse that “erases or obscures the daily struggles of particular communities” (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 4).
3. *Earthly*. A radically open apocalypics must reject any transcendental ideas, claims, or expectations: there is no Savior or teleological forces determining the shape and impact of a Palestinian counter-apocalypse. Toward the acceptance of Palestinian life, apocalypses are earthly events.
4. *Contingency*. As a corollary, this resultant materialism is grounded in contingency (i.e. unpredictability where conditions could have been different, and can be different) that forces us to consider Palestinian apocalypses as fundamentally grounded in transcendently ungroundable decisions.
5. *Conjunctural*. The Palestinian apocalypse includes political, economic, technological, and ecological dimensions and causes. An appreciation of these multiple dimensions of a composite apocalypse is crucial for considering the contingency of the unfolding of a Palestinian counter- or anti- apocalypse (Quinby 1999).

6. *Redemptive*. The apocalypse contains unprecedented transformative potential. We should see the apocalypse as a possibility for redemption: of the countless ‘unveiled’ horrors of Palestinian history and of our complicity in any of the causes of apocalyptic events.

End notes

[1] In the Book of Joshua, according to the Christian ethics scholar Oliver O’Donovan (2003, 128-9), gives ‘with great detail delineating the widest plausible boundary for Israel’s possession while overlooking such major interruptions as the presence of Philistine civilization on the [Gaza] coastal plain. Geography is here the object of that minute attention normally reserved for genealogy and ritual’, and continues, ‘geography was charged with transcendent meaning.’

[2] In July 2008, in front of dozens of spent rockets, President-elect Barak Obama visited Sderot and held up a shirt with the Sderot mayor, Eli Moyal, that read “I Heart Sderot”. Asked for comment during OCL, Obama’s spokesperson said, “There is only one president at a time” (Abunimah 2009).

[3] On the philosophical and politicization of ‘Kairos’ within recent geography see, Meyerhoff, Johnson, and Braun 2011; Braun 2014; Joronen and Griffiths 2019a.

[4] In 1851, according to careful estimates by McCarthy (1990), there were an estimated 327,000 ‘Filistines’ living in the Ottoman territories that today make up Israel and Palestine alongside 13,000 Jews. By 1925 there were 765,000 Palestinians and 100,000 Jews.

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