3,600 years ago, there was a violent volcanic eruption in the Mediterranean Sea on the island known as Santorini. It blew 33 cubic miles of dirt and rock into the skies, leaving beneath a 1200 ft deep “caldera” or bay, now filled with water from the sea. I have visited Santorini on three occasions and have marveled at the remains, often called “the most photographed island in the world.”

The debris from the eruption blew skyward and was blown south by a wind from the north over the land of Egypt. It is, I think, more than a coincidence that the debris hit Egypt at roughly the time Moses was calling down the Ten Plagues against the Pharaoh who refused to release the Jews from bondage. Did that eruption cause the plagues? We will know in eternity; however, God could use any thing He desired to cause the onslaught to occur on the land of the Nile.

One of the results of that Santorini volcano was a massive tsunami that destroyed the island nation to the north - Crete. When Santorini collapsed, it forced large amounts of ash and debris into the water. This sudden change and displacement of water transfers to kinetic energy and results in waves. More debris can create an even bigger increase in wave amplitude and number. So you can imagine what a 33-cubic mile displacement caused.

I will show you now a video of a tsunami in Japan just a few years ago. It is one of the most terrifying events you will ever see and it left many dead.

I am taking this time to talk about Santorini and the tsunami because the Cretans (people of Crete) who were ocean-going people fled their island in terror. Some of them headed east and ended on the west bank of a place that today we call Israel. Then it was known as Canaan. These transplanted Cretans became known, among others, as PHILISTINES.

The name PALESTINE in truth means THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES.

Around the same time the Cretans (Philistines) invaded Canaan, a man named JOSHUA
was leading millions of Jews out of Egyptian bondage. Coming up the east side of the
Dead Sea, the crossed the Jordan River into the land of Canaan just six miles east of
Jericho. The book of JOSHUA tells of their subjugation of “the land” and their
subsequent and continuing battles with their arch-enemy, the Philistines. It was under
the brilliant leadership of KING DAVID that for the most part the Philistines were
defeated once and for all. Occasional skirmishes would occur from time to time, but, in
truth, it was over for the Philistines.

Following the Noah flood, human beings eventually scattered over the earth causing a
number of cultures to emerge. In the area of the Tigris/Euphrates rivers (Iran/Iraq) small
city-states formed. At the same time the fertile Nile Delta (Egypt) became a strong
power. About 2900 years B.C., the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt were united
and the power of the Pharaohs emerged. Even in Canaan, long before the arrival of
Abraham, there were cities such as Jericho (possibly the oldest continuously-inhabited
region on earth), Megiddo - the guardian tel that overlooked the Valley of Armageddon,
Beth Shan, Ai, Lachish, Shechem, Ashdod and Ashkelon.

Joshua and the Jews came into the land in the thirteenth century B.C. and formed a tribal
confederation. We know the area from Scripture as Israel and Judah. Palestine was
not the name used in Biblical times; in fact, the Old Testament used the name ERETZ
ISRAEL (the Land of Israel).

Numbers 34:1-12

Then the Lord said to Moses, [2] "Give these instructions to the Israelites:
When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your special
possession, these will be the boundaries. [3] The southern portion of your
country will extend from the wilderness of Zin, along the edge of Edom. The
southern boundary will begin on the east at the Dead Sea. [4] It will then run
south past Scorpion Pass in the direction of Zin. Its southernmost point will be
Kadesh-barnea, from which it will go to Hazar-addar, and on to Azmon. [5]
From Azmon the boundary will turn toward the brook of Egypt and end at the
Mediterranean Sea.
[6] "Your western boundary will be the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea.
[7] "Your northern boundary will begin at the Mediterranean Sea and run
eastward to Mount Hor, [8] then to Lebo-hamath, and on through Zedad [9] and
Ziphron to Hazar-enan. This will be your northern boundary.
[10] "The eastern boundary will start at Hazar-enan and run south to
Shepham, [11] then down to Riblah on the east side of Ain. From there the
boundary will run down along the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee, [12] and
then along the Jordan River to the Dead Sea. These are the boundaries of your
land."
This map of Israel shows what some scholars believe is the land given to the Jews by God. If so, only a fraction of that land mass has ever been controlled by them.

Note very carefully: From the beginning of history to this very day, Israel (Judea) has had the only united, independent, sovereign nation-state that ever existed in “Palestine” west of the Jordan River. In Biblical times, Amman (Ammon - better known then), Moab and Edom as well as Israel had land east of the Jordan River, but they disappeared in antiquity until the British invented Trans-Jordan in the 1920s.

Old Testament History Of Eretz Israel (The Land)

When God called Abraham out of Iraq (Ur of Chaldea) it was about 2000 B.C. When he arrived in the promised land, it was controlled by Amorites and Canaanites. For a short time, Abraham lived in Egypt - totally out of God’s control (and where probably Hagar entered the family’s story). The book of Genesis tells the story of the early Jews up and through the life of Joseph, who became the Grand Vizier of ancient Egypt. Some time later, a revolt at the throne brought in a new pharaoh and the Jews were made slaves for 430 years. God raised up a champion in the person of MOSES who led them almost to the Promised Land. He died within sight of it on Mount Nebo (in the land of Jordan overlooking the Dead Sea). Joshua then became the leader of the Jews who led them in
their conquest of the Promised Land of Israel.

The “Golden Age” of Israel came under Kings David and Solomon. But upon the death of the latter (Solomon’s foolish son Rehoboam raised taxes to an unbearable level), around 920 B.C. Israel was divided into two nations, the northern kingdom of Israel with its capital in Samaria (current Sebaste), and the southern and smaller kingdom of Israel with its capital remaining in Jerusalem.

From 606-586 B.C., Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar led three military forays against Israel, finally destroying Jerusalem in that final invasion. Multiplied thousands of Jews were taken to Babylon (Iraq) in captivity. Later, Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians under King Cyrus who graciously allowed any Jews who wished to return to what was left of Jerusalem - which was practically nothing. Israel became virtually a Persian province until the Greeks under Alexander the Great established rule there. Then localized Jewish revolts, under the Maccabees regained control for a short time until Rome’s General Pompey.

Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24 and 25 that Jerusalem would not last long. He was right as the Romans destroyed the nation and the city in 70 A.D. It was at that time that Rome officially named the Promised Land “Palestina.”

It is interesting to the Bible student that after the collapse of Rome in the fourth century A.D., that the land of Israel fell into possession of several Middle Eastern and Arab powers. They included the Byzantines (330-634), the Arabs (634-1099), the Crusaders (1099-1263), the Mamelukes - former Turkish slaves who for a time ruled Egypt (1263-1516) and the Ottoman Turks from then to the end of WWI (1917).

In 1917, the Balfour Declaration** liberated the land from Turkish rule and placed the land under the control of Great Britain. In May of 1948, the modern state of Israel was born and the British withdrew. Almost immediately the Jews and Arabs began their struggle for control of the land. The Arab states do not recognize the Balfour Declaration which was born out of the Zionist movement of the late 1800's.

** The Balfour Declaration was a Nov. 2, 1917 statement of British support for “the establishment in “Palestine” for the Jewish people. It was made in a letter from the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, to the leader of Jewish people at the time. The British government hoped that the declaration would rally Jewish opinion, especially in the United States, to the side of the Allied nations during WWI (1914-1918). The declaration was endorsed by the principal allied powers.
The Formation of the Nation of Jordan

In my travels I have found the nation of Jordan to be one of the most unique and beautiful of lands. It includes, of course, the legendary PETRA (the rose-red city half as old as time) founded in the days of Esau by people known as Nabateans. Petra was literally carved out of the rock.

Shortly after the Balfour Declaration, which also stipulated that the rights of all inhabitants already in the land be protected, Arab or Jew, the declaration also included what we know today as Jordan. However, when a notable Brit “favorite,” Emir Abdullah was forced to leave his ancestral Hashemite domain in Arabia, the British created a realm for him that included all the Mandate Palestine east of the Jordan River. There was no traditional or historic Arab name for this land, so it was named after the river Jordan – first Trans-Jordan and later Jordan. It was the first Palestinian State. With this act, the British violated their own Balfour Declaration since it cut the Jews out of 75% of the territory promised to them. From that time on, Britain progressively restricted where Jews could buy land, where they could live, build, farm or work, until the 1948 statehood of Israel.

The West Bank

(This is portions of the land west of the Jordan River.) Near the end of the British occupation (Mandate) of Israel, the British grew progressively more in favor of Arabs than Jews, even severely limiting Jewish immigration. This made it all the easier for the Nazis to contain Jews in Europe and sent them to their slaughterhouses.

When Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion declared that Israel would be a state, sovereign and independent, an act immediately sanctioned by President Harry S. Truman, the newly-minted Arab states, six of them, violently rejected the Jewish state. They did not succeed in annihilating the new nation; however, they did succeed in taking Judea and Samaria and East Jerusalem, killing or driving out all the Jews who had lived in those places and banning all Jews from anywhere from the holy sites (such as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem). Egypt succeeded in taking the Gaza strip. Those two Arab nations held that territory that legally belonged to the Jews until the Six Day War in 1967. It was only after the Six Day War that Israel was finally able to “settle” some of those lands, which caused much of the world to rise up in anger, declaring the Jews were living in “illegal settlements.”

Three years earlier, in 1964, the Palestine Liberation Movement was founded, led by Ahmed Shukairy and then Yasser Arafat. ITS CHARTER PROCLAIMS THAT ITS SOLE PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE IS THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL.
ARE PALESTINIANS THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM AND HAGAR?

That brings us to the birth of Ishmael. God had long before promised a son to Abraham and Sarah. As Abraham came into his 80's (Sarah in her 70's) with no child, both thought a birth was not a possibility. Here is now Moses described what happened:

Genesis 16:1-16

But Sarai, Abram's wife, had no children. So Sarai took her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, [2] and gave her to Abram so she could bear his children. "The Lord has kept me from having any children," Sarai said to Abram. "Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed. [3] So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram first arrived in the land of Canaan.)

[4] So Abram slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress Sarai with contempt. [5] Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault! Now this servant of mine is pregnant, and she despises me, though I myself gave her the privilege of sleeping with you. The Lord will make you pay for doing this to me!"

[6] Abram replied, "Since she is your servant, you may deal with her as you see fit." So Sarai treated her harshly, and Hagar ran away.

[7] The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a desert spring along the road to Shur. [8] The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I am running away from my mistress," she replied.

[9] Then the angel of the Lord said, "Return to your mistress and submit to her authority." [10] The angel added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count." [11] And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard about your misery. [12] This son of yours will be a wild one—free and untamed as a wild donkey! He will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live at odds with the rest of his brothers."

[13] Thereafter, Hagar referred to the Lord, who had spoken to her, as "the God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!" [14] Later that well was named Beer-lahai-roi, and it can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

[15] So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. [16] Abram was eighty-six years old at that time.

The word “Palestine” has become a political propaganda term with strong anti-Israel connotations. The left-wing press loves that term as a means to question the place of Jews in Israel at all. There might have been a time (prior to 1948) when the word
“Palestine” could have been used innocuously by even Christians; but since 1948 and the 
barrage of hatred fired against Israel by so many, I believe that we Christians should 
avoid using the word as a synonym for Israel.

The word “Palestine” is rarely used in the Old Testament and when used refers basically 
to the coastal strip south of Ashkelon south to the Egyptian border (in the Old Testament 
that was basically the land of the Philistines or PHILISTIA - remember the word 
“Palestine” means “Land of the Philistines.”) Both the Canaanites and the Philistines 
had disappeared as distinct people groups by the time of the Jewish conquest by Babylon 
in 586 B.C. It is important as Christian to remember that the word “Palestine” is never 
used in the New Testament.

So...where is the connection here with the word “Palestine?” The Romans destroyed 
Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The Romans then struck a coin with the phrase Judea Capita which 
meant “Judea has been captured.” The Jews launched a second revolt against Rome in 
135 under Bar Kochba. The Romans also crushed that revolt and the Emperor, Hadrian, 
applied the term Palestine to the land of Israel. He even changed the name of Jerusalem 
to Aelia Capitolina. So note this: THE TERM PALESTINE AS APPLIED TO THE 
LAND OF ISRAEL WAS INVENTED BY THE SWORN ENEMY OF THE BIBLE 
AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE, THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

Enemies of Israel like to say the Jews left the land centuries before and never returned 
until the 20th century. That statement is a denial of reality. In truth, there have always 
been Jews in “the land.” The dispersions - the diasporas - launched Hebrews to the ends 
of the world, to be sure; but there were ALWAYS Jews in the land. Even at the turn of 
the 19th century, there were known to be at least 10,000 Jews there. Today that figure 
exceeds 6 million.

The Jews base their claim on the land for these reasons:

1) God promised the land in perpetuity to Abraham over 3000 years ago. King 
David established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel around 1000 B.C. and King Solomon 
built the great Jewish Temple around 960 B.C. THAT WAS A THOUSAND YEARS 
PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY AND 1600 YEARS BEFORE THE 
RISE OF ISLAM.

2) The Jewish people settled and developed the land

3) The international community granted political sovereignty there to the Jews

4) In defensive wars, the territory was won by Israeli forces

We know the identity of the “seed of Abraham by Sarah” but who truly are the 
Palestinians? And what should be the attitude of Christ toward them? Ironically, I 
know a number of Palestinians - and have for decades - who are Christians. I think of
my great friends the Canavatti's whose family has lived in Bethlehem for decades. The father, Nicola, has been in our services here on several occasions - and even greeted the congregation from the pulpit.

From the seed of Ishmael came the preponderance of Arabs. Not all Palestinians are Arabs. Not all Muslims are Arabs. So we must be very careful in the way we speak of others in the current Middle East drama.

God Committed His Blessings To Ishmael

Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born. 13 years later God made another covenant with him:

Genesis 17:1-10

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. [2] I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation." [3] At this, Abram fell face down in the dust. Then God said to him, [4] "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations! [5] What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram; now you will be known as Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. [6] I will give you millions of descendants who will represent many nations. Kings will be among them!

[7] "I will continue this everlasting covenant between us, generation after generation. It will continue between me and your offspring forever. And I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. [8] Yes, I will give all this land of Canaan to you and to your offspring forever. And I will be their God.

Now note the specific commitment to Ishmael:

Genesis 17:19-22

But God replied, "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants. [20] As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants. [21] But my covenant is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."

[22] That ended the conversation, and God left Abraham.

I am fond of the commentary on this passage from one of my favorite writers, John Phillips:
God gave Abraham a two-fold pledge for Ishmael. His promise was based upon His knowledge of Ishmael’s heart, for God knew that mockery at divine things lurked in the depths of that young man’s soul. The pledge for Ishmael had within it, first and foremost, a RESERVE CLAUSE. “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.” He was saying, “Abraham, in this matter of the covenant make no mistake - the line runs through Isaac, not Ishmael. Isaac will be the believing man. But, having given the reserve clause, God gave this clause as well: “And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac.” God kept His word. The Arab world stretches from the seaboard of the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf and embraces some seventeen of the most strategically placed and economically wealthy countries in the world. But, as God foresaw, they do not know Him. They are gripped fast in one of the most deadly, tenacious and militant errors the world has ever known.”

EXPLORING GENESIS / PHILLIPS / PAGES 148-9 / MOODY PRESS

Who Were The Twelve Princes From Ishmael?

Genesis 25:13-16

Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael’s descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Abdeel, Mibsam, [14] Mishma, Dumah, Massa, [15] Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. [16] These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes that bore their names, listed according to the places they settled and camped.

History does not record the stories of these “princes.” We do know that Ishmael was the founder of the tribal family called ISHMAELITES, also known as Midianites.

The casting out of Ishmael has been productive of bitter fruit, surviving in the religion of Mohammed (Islam). The wild hearts bear on in the bosoms of those who form the Arab world. Little did Sarah know, when she persuaded Abraham to take Hagar, that she was originating a rivalry which has run in the keenest strife through the ages, and which oceans of blood have not stopped. The Moslem Arabs claim descent from Ishmael. Ishmael’s mother Hagar and his own wife were Egyptian, which differentiates from pure Hebrew. Arabian tribes springing from Ishmael are scattered throughout the Arabian peninsula. When Ishmael received his name, the Lord said that he would be “a wild man.”

ALL THE MEN IN THE BIBLE / DR. HERBERT LOCKYER / ZONDERVAN PRESS / PP 159-160

Ishmael died at the age of 137.
The Wild Man

Ishmael was born and lived in Abraham’s family until Isaac was born about 14 years later. Despite his upbringing, Ishmael apparently had little spirituality about him. His attitude was a mocking one when Isaac was born, according to Genesis 21:9 - But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of Isaac. Ishmael was viewing a miracle of God for Isaac had been born to a mother, Sarah, who was 90 years old. And all he could do was mock.

Ishmael had been brought up in a godly home; he had seen his father’s godly life; he had seen Abraham in daily prayer; he had probably even seen the mighty angels when they came into the camp before Sodom’s destruction. But none of these things meant much to Ishmael. He had no spiritual life in him. He had even been circumcised, according to Genesis 17; but it takes more than a religious rite to make one spiritual.

Later, Ishmael would become the father of 12 sons; but little is known of them. In fact, little is heard of even Ishmael from that time on.

John Phillips has observed: Here was a man who was rich and increased with goods, who felt his need of nothing. Here was a man who was destitute of spiritual wealth, poor, wretched, miserable, blind and naked in the things that mattered most. Like his half-nephew Jacob, Ishmael founded 12 tribes. From those tribes sprang the Arab peoples who have contributed much to the world’s culture - and the world’s cruelty. The atrocious African slave trade was largely the work of the Arabs. The abysmal spiritual darkness of Islam is yet another Arab contribution to the woes of the world. And to this day, Israel’s bitterest foes have been of Ishmaelite stock.

EXPLORING GENESIS: PHILLIPS / MOODY PRESS / PAGE 201

From Abraham’s night with Hagar came Mohammed - and Islam.

NEXT WEEK: WHAT MUSLIMS REALLY BELIEVE