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GUILLERMIN<sub>1</sub>

The Fifth Gospel  
(The Land Claims of Israel)

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A. Pierre Guillermin

Introduction

The talks were intense. A marathon of violent moodswings and numbing restatements of position.

The two most often heard refrains were "I can't do it." "I won't do it."

Finally, one individual issued a stern instruction--"you can't afford for this to fail, you owe this to future generations."

Four persons were sitting around the conference table. They were the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Israel, the leader of the Palestinians, and the King of Jordan; and they were discussing the prophecies of the fifth Gospel.

All of us are familiar with the four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

But in another millennium year--2000 BC--history was writing what has been referred to as the fifth Gospel - the Land of Israel - the crossroads of history and geography.

Israel is an intense, complex, challenging and ultimately fascinating country. Although it is a small nation, even tiny, it is densely packed with immense geographical diversity; a long rich history: passionate, fractious politics and a religious and cultural diversity that defies belief.

It is such a small country, yet it occupies such a large place in the hearts and souls of so many diverse peoples. To Christians it is the Holy Land. To the Moslems the lost land of Palestine. To the Jews it is the Ancient homeland

reestablished after 2,000 years. This scrap of desert has been center stage for many of the world's miracles and spiritual struggles for 5,000 years.

What is happening in the Middle East today can only be understood if a person has an understanding of the past, the present and the prophecies concerning the Nation of Israel and the Arab world.

Four prophecies emanate from the land and Holy writ:

1. A great nation would come forth: "And I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great...." (Gen. 12:2)
2. The name of this nation would become a byword among the nations: "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb and a byword among all nations." (Deut. 28:37)
3. This nation would be severely scattered among the nations (persecuted): "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall thy sole of thy foot rest...thy life shall hang in doubt...thou shalt fear day and night and shall have no assurance of your life." (Deut. 28:65-67)
4. The nation one day will be regathered and restored: "I will even gather you from the people and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered and I will give you the Land of Israel." (Ezk. 11:17)

Before I continue, please understand I do not consider myself to be a theologian or an expert on Middle Eastern politics. There are others in our group who are much more qualified to address such matters. However I became interested in this subject in 1976 when I was invited to become an advisor to Tel Aviv University. At that time I, along with six other men and women were invited

by the Israeli government to meet with five Israeli leaders - four of whom - later become prime ministers of Israel.

The history of Israel can be separated into ten categories with specific time periods. They are:

- The Patriarchs
- The Kings
- Exile
- Greek and Romans
- Jewish Revolt
- Islam
- Crusades
- Zionists
- The State of Israel
- Israel today

### **The Patriarchs**

Jewish history began about 4,000 years ago with the patriarchs and one individual in particular, Abraham. According to Holy writ, Abraham was called by God in about the year 2000 BC to leave his city of Ur of Chaldees, which was located in what is now Iraq. He was summoned to gather a people with belief in one God and go to the land of Canaan which had been promised to them by God. However, before Abraham and the people arrived in Canaan, they spent 400 years of bondage in Egypt, after which they were then led out of bondage by Moses and wandered for 40 years in the desert enroute to the Promised Land. During this

period of time, the people were forged into a nation and received the Pentateuch, which included the Ten Commandments. The exodus from the years of bondage in Egypt became a universal symbol of liberty and freedom for the Jewish people. It is for this reason the Jewish people commemorate the events of the exodus time with the celebration of the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

During the next two centuries, the Israelites conquered most of the land of Israel, however, the threat of war posed by the Philistine people generated the need for a ruler who would unite the people and make the position permanent, with succession carried on by inheritance.

### **The Kings**

The first king, Saul, bridged the period between loose tribal organization and the settling of a full monarchy under his successor, David. King David established Israel as a major power in the region with successful military expeditions, including the final defeat of the Philistines. At home, he united the twelve Israelite tribes into one kingdom and placed Jerusalem, the capital, at the center of the country's national life.

King David was succeeded by his son Solomon, who further strengthened the kingdom through treaties with neighboring kings, reinforced by politically motivated marriages. He expanded foreign trade and promoted domestic prosperity by developing copper mining and metal smelting; He built new towns and fortified old ones. However, he is most remembered for initiating and organizing the

building of the Temple in Jerusalem, which became the center of the Jewish people's national and religious life.

The end of Solomon's rule was marred by discontent on the part of the people, who had to pay heavily for his ambitious ideas. After Solomon's death, open insurrection led to the breaking away of the ten northern tribes and division of the country into a northern kingdom, Israel, and a southern kingdom, Judah. However, the expansion of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires (modern Iraq) once again brought Israel and Judah under foreign control and ushered in the period of exile.

### **Exile**

The foreign control of Israel brought an end to the First Jewish Commonwealth, but did not sever the Jewish people's connection with the Land of Israel. Following the destruction of the First Temple, built during King Solomon's reign, the Jewish people were exiled to Babylonia which marked the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. It was in Babylonia that Judaism began to develop a religious framework and way of life outside the land, thus ultimately ensuring the people's national survival and spiritual identity, giving it the vitality to safeguard its future as a nation.

### **Greeks and Romans**

Two centuries later, led by Alexander the Great, the Greeks conquered the entire Persian Empire. With Greek rule came Greek culture. The Jews rebelled against radical attempts to promote the culture and a revolt, named the Maccabean Revolt, succeeded in securing religious freedom and political independence for the

Jews. Jewish independence lasted until 63 BC when Palestine was annexed by the Romans.

Under the Romans, the Jews retained their religious freedom and national leadership. However, Herod the Great, King of Judea, known for his extreme cruelty, took complete control of the country with the support of Roman troops.

Although Herod the Great, tried to gain favor with the Jews, the people could not forget he was Rome's ally. Herod initiated several major building programs including the rebuilding of the Temple. It was during Herod's reign that Christianity was born.

### **The Jewish Revolt**

The Jewish Revolt is a period of Israel's history that grew as resentment of the Roman occupation increased. The nationalists involved in the resistance movement were known as Zealots. Tension mounted until the outbreak of the first Jewish Revolt in AD 66. In AD 70 Jerusalem was captured, and the second temple was destroyed by the Romans. Thousands of Jews were taken to Rome as slaves, and the Jewish-held fortress of Masada was taken three years later by the Romans. Finally, rather than surrender, the Zealot defenders of Masada and their families committed suicide. By this time, the Jews were completely crushed. Jerusalem was destroyed and rebuilt as a pagan city, a city they were forbidden to enter.

Rome's attitude toward Jerusalem underwent a profound change in the fourth century. Following the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to

Christianity, Jerusalem became a Holy City again. From that time forward, pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem.

By the end of the 4th century, churches were built on Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Galilee and monasteries were established in many parts of the country.

### Islam

Two centuries later, the Persians invaded Palestine and once again the land was devastated and Jerusalem reduced to rubble. According to Muslim tradition, Mohammed had ridden to Jerusalem on a half-human steed and then ascended to Heaven on the horse. So for Muslims, Jerusalem also became a Holy City. The Dome of the Rock mosque, which still dominates Jerusalem was built over the supposed site of Mohammed's ascension.

### The Crusades

At the outset of Islamic rule, which lasted for more than four centuries, Jewish settlement in Jerusalem was resumed, and the Jewish community was granted permission to live under "protection," the customary status of non-Muslims under Islamic rule, which safeguarded their lives, property and freedom of worship. However, the introduction of restrictions against non-Muslims affected the Jews' public conduct as well as their religious observances and legal status. By the end of the 11th century, the Jewish community in the land had diminished considerably and had lost some of its organizational and religious cohesiveness.

Muslim rule lasted until the 11th century when the Pope urged Christians to recapture the Holy Land. For over 200 years the city was caught up in a tussle

between the Crusaders and Muslim warriors. Eventually, the crusaders were driven back and the city fell under the control of the Marmelukes of Egypt.

In 1517, Jerusalem fell to the Ottoman Turks and the land was again divided. At the outset of the Ottoman era, an estimated 1,000 Jewish families lived in the country. The community was comprised of descendants of Jews who had never left the Land as well as immigrants from North Africa and Europe.

Orderly government brought improvements and stimulated Jewish immigration. The Jewish population had risen from 1,000 to 10,000 and the town had become a thriving textile center as well as the focus of intense intellectual activity.

The 19th century saw medieval backwardness gradually give way to signs of progress. Foreign Consulates were opened and travel by steamship began to use regular routes between Israel and Europe. Postal and telegraphic connections were installed and roads were being built. The Land's rebirth as a crossroads for commerce of three continents was accelerated by the opening of the Suez Canal.

Because of the progress, the condition of the country's Jews slowly improved and their numbers increased substantially. Overcrowding in Jerusalem motivated the Jewish people to build the first neighborhood outside the walls. By 1880, Jerusalem had an overall Jewish majority. Land for farming was purchased throughout the country; new rural settlements were set up; and the Hebrew language was revived. The stage was being set for the founding of the Zionist movement.

## **Zionist Movement**

In 1897, the first Zionist meeting took place in Switzerland. Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, derives its name from the word "Zion," the traditional synonym for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. The idea of Zionism is rooted in the continuous longing for and deep attachment to the land of Israel, which have been an inherent part of Jewish existence.

Zionism emerged as a response to oppression and persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe and increasing disillusionment with the formal emancipation in Western Europe, which had neither put an end to discrimination nor led to integration of Jews into their local societies.

The political Zionist movement promoted the return of Jews to the land; facilitating revival of Jewish national life and attaining a legally secured home for the Jewish people in its historic homeland, where Jews would be free from persecution and able to develop their own lives and identity and secure the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine.

In 1922, the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with the Mandate for Palestine. Great Britain was called upon to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Two months later, it was decided that the provisions for setting up a Jewish National Home would not apply to the area east of the Jordan River. This area constituted three-fourths of the territory included in the Mandate.

Motivated by Zionism and encouraged by British sympathy with Jewish Zionist goals, waves of immigrants arrived between 1919 and 1939, each

contributing to different aspects of the developing Jewish community. Increasing Jewish immigration antagonized the Palestinian Arabs who held that Britain had promised them the land in return for their support against the Turks in WWI. Recognizing the opposing aims of the two national movements, the British recommended in 1937 dividing the country into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The UN voted that Palestine was to be divided into separate Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem as an international city. Under severe pressure from the Arabs in 1939, the British government issued a White Paper which virtually prevented Jewish immigration to Palestine. Jewish land purchases were to stop except in 5% of the country, and Jewish immigration was to be restricted to a maximum of 75,000 over the coming five years, then be stopped forever unless the Palestinian Arabs agreed to it.

Imposing drastic restrictions on Jewish immigration eventually denied European Jewry a place of refuge from Nazi persecutions during WWII when the Nazi regime carried out a systematic plan to liquidate the Jewish community of Europe, during which some 6 million Jews, including 1.5 children were murdered. Many of these lives could have been spared if Britain would have lifted the immigration restrictions imposed on the Jewish people. After WWII, the Jewish community instituted a wide network of illegal immigration activities to rescue Holocaust survivors.

Throughout WWII, the Jews pleaded for the restrictions to be lifted so that refugees fleeing from Nazi Europe could be given a home in Palestine. In 1947, Britain took the case to the United Nations. During the next three decades of

British Mandate, agriculture was expanded, factories were established, new roads were built throughout the country, the waters of the Jordan River were harnessed for the production of electric power, and the mineral potential of the Dead Sea was tapped.

The Jewish national revival and the community's efforts to rebuild the country were strongly opposed by Arab nationalists, and attacks were launched against Jewish population centers and individuals. Attempts to reach a dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews, undertaken early in the Zionist endeavor, were ultimately unsuccessful, polarizing Zionism and Arab nationalism into a potentially explosive situation.

### **The State of Israel**

Israel was declared an independent state on May 14, 1948. With the establishment of the State of Israel, Jewish independence, lost two thousand years earlier, was renewed. The Arabs call the establishment of the State of Israel the "Nakba" or "Catastrophe." In what is known as the War of Independence, the forces from five Arab states attacked the Israelis, forcing Israel to defend the sovereignty it had regained in its ancestral homeland.

When the war was over, Israel focused its efforts on building the state which it had struggled hard to regain. In accordance with the concept of the "ingathering of the exiles," the gates were opened, affirming the right of every Jew to come to the country and to acquire citizenship. In the first four months of independence, some 50,000 newcomers, mainly Holocaust survivors, reached Israel's shores. By the end of 1951, immigrants and refugees doubled the Jewish population.

Despite armistice agreements, the conflict between Jews and the Arabs continued. In 1967 in what is known as the Six Day War - war broke out again; an Israel victory pushed the border from the outskirts of Tel Aviv to the Jordan River, a few dozen miles to the east over a range of mountains and cliffs and the Sinai. The area gained in the victory, which improved Israel's strategic position, was essential for Israel's defense against future attacks. The addition of the mountainous buffer of Judea and Samaria removed Israel's population centers and air fields from the possibility of direct ground attack.

However, the Arab position called for "no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, and no recognition of Israel."

In 1968, Egypt initiated a war of attrition which escalated into full-scale, localized fighting which caused heavy casualties on both sides. Hostilities ended in 1970 when Egypt and Israel accepted a renewed cease-fire along the Suez Canal.

Three years of relative calm were shattered on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, when Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated surprise assault against Israel. During the next three weeks, Israel held back the attackers. Two years of difficult negotiations resulted in disengagement agreements, according to which Israel withdrew from parts of the territories captured during the war.

In accordance with the terms of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, Israel completed its withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula exchanging former cease-fire lines and armistice agreements for mutually recognized international boundaries.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Israel absorbed over 700,000 new immigrants, mainly from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Ethiopia. This boosted

the economy into a period of accelerated expansion, attaining one of the highest Gross Domestic Product growth rates among Western countries.

Since the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979, various initiatives were put forth to further the peace process in the Middle East. These efforts led to the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference in October, 1991. The formal proceedings were followed by negotiations between the representatives and talks addressing regional concerns.

Following months of contacts between negotiators for Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, a Declaration of Principles was formulated outlining self-government arrangements for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Its signing was preceded by the PLO renouncing the use of terrorism and pledging to invalidate articles in its Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist. The PLO committed itself to a peaceful resolution of the decades-long conflict between the Palestinians and the Jews over the land. In response, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

Three years of talks between Jordan and Israel culminated in a declaration by King Hussein and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin which ended the 46-year state-of-war between their two countries.

Two recent rounds of Syrian-Israel peace talks in 1995 and 1996 focused on security and other key issues. Highly detailed and comprehensive in scope, the talks identified important areas of conceptual agreement and convergence for future discussion and consideration. The talks were an integral part of the peace process, aimed at finding solutions for key regional problems, while serving as a

confidence building measure to promote development of relations among the Middle East nations.

After the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, the government named Foreign Minister Shimon Peres as acting Prime Minister and in May 1996 elections brought to power a coalition government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu.

### Israel Today

With goals dedicated to the interests of the State of Israel, the government faces the challenges of the continuation of the peace process, ensuring the country's security.

Israel continues to negotiate for its right to maintain the occupation of the West Bank, which they believe helps to ensure their safety from military attacks. Israel's current width from its eastern front to the sea is forty miles. Israel is being asked to reduce that distance to ten miles. The West Bank is a mountainous territory, a formidable military barrier that guards the slender and densely populated Israeli shoreline and Israel's capital city.

The Arabs maintain that in the area of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel occupation will not provide security for Israel. The Arabs believe that the refugees will continue to constitute trouble because their hatred will be rekindled by the manner in which the Israelites have treated them during the occupation of the land.

The United States government is currently attempting to negotiate with Israel to give up part of the West Bank to the Palestinians, which Israel feels would endanger their current position to adequately defend themselves.

Tremors of conflict in the Mideast will reverberate next year around two epicenters: Jerusalem and Baghdad. In Jerusalem, the most immediate concern is the coming April elections. Israel's Parliament this month called for early elections, effectively toppling Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

After the vote, May 4 looms dangerously on the horizon. It marks the end of the five-year period agreed upon by Israelis and Palestinians to resolve the issues surrounding a historic 1993 peace accord. It also marks the day Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has vowed to declare an independent state.

If Arafat declares statehood, Netanyahu has said he would consider all previous peace agreements null and void. This threatens peace throughout the Mideast.

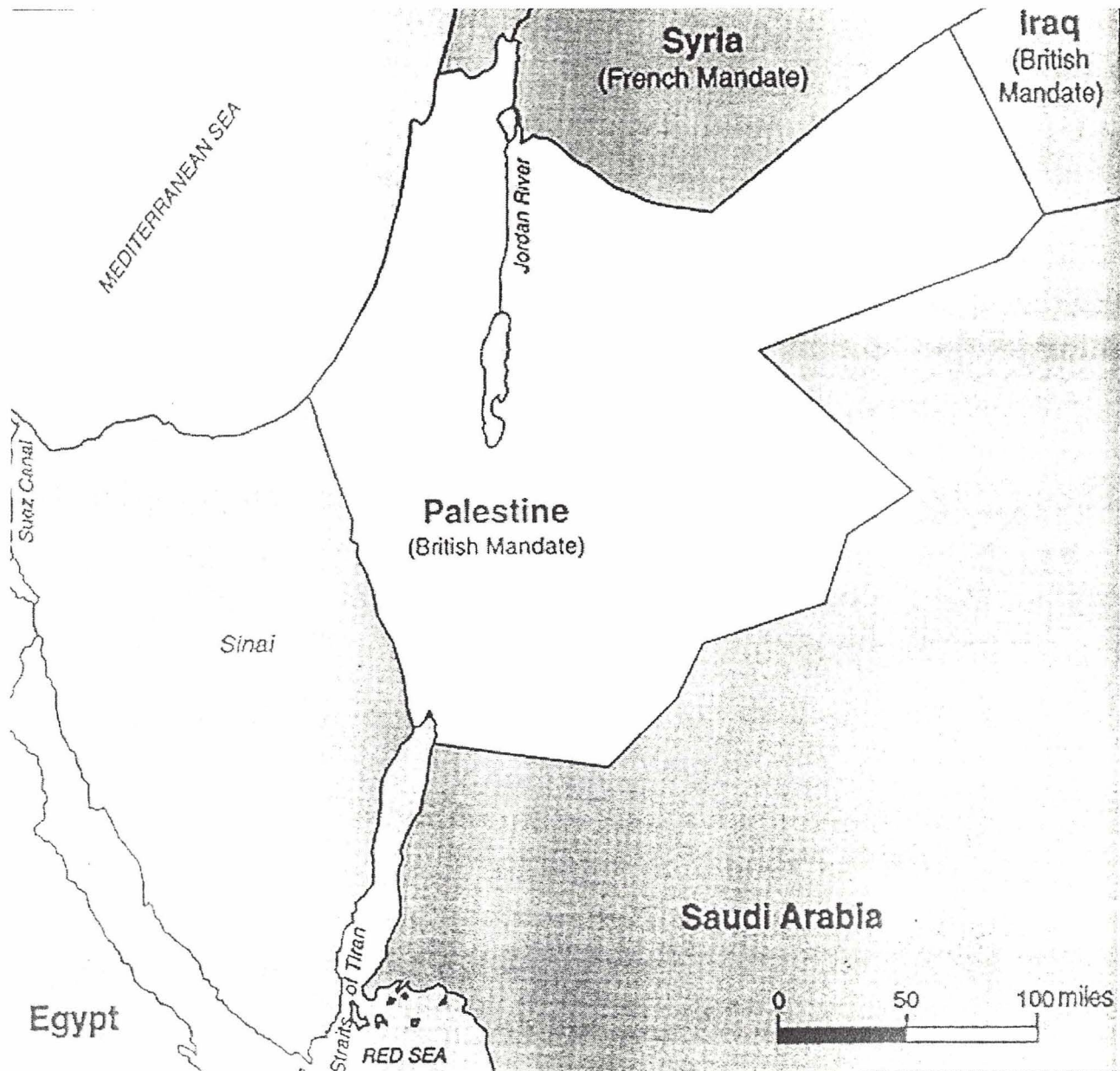
The decision of Israel's parliament to force a new election early in 1999 will have an important effect on peace efforts in the Middle East. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political future is in jeopardy as are the accords between the Israelis and the Palesitines...

At present, Israel has a population of 5.5 million of which 83.7% are Jewish and 16.3% non-Jewish. The single-minded determination to create a homeland for the Jews has united Jewish immigrants from all over the world despite their widely differing cultural backgrounds.

The birthplace of the Jewish people is the Land of Israel. There, a significant part of the nation's long history was enacted. It was in the land of Israel that the Jewish people's cultural, religious, and national identity was formed, and there, its

physical presence has been maintained unbroken through the centuries, even after the majority was forced into exile.

As we enter the new Millennium it appears the prophecies of the Fifth gospel are still unfolding and the history of the land of Israel is still being written.

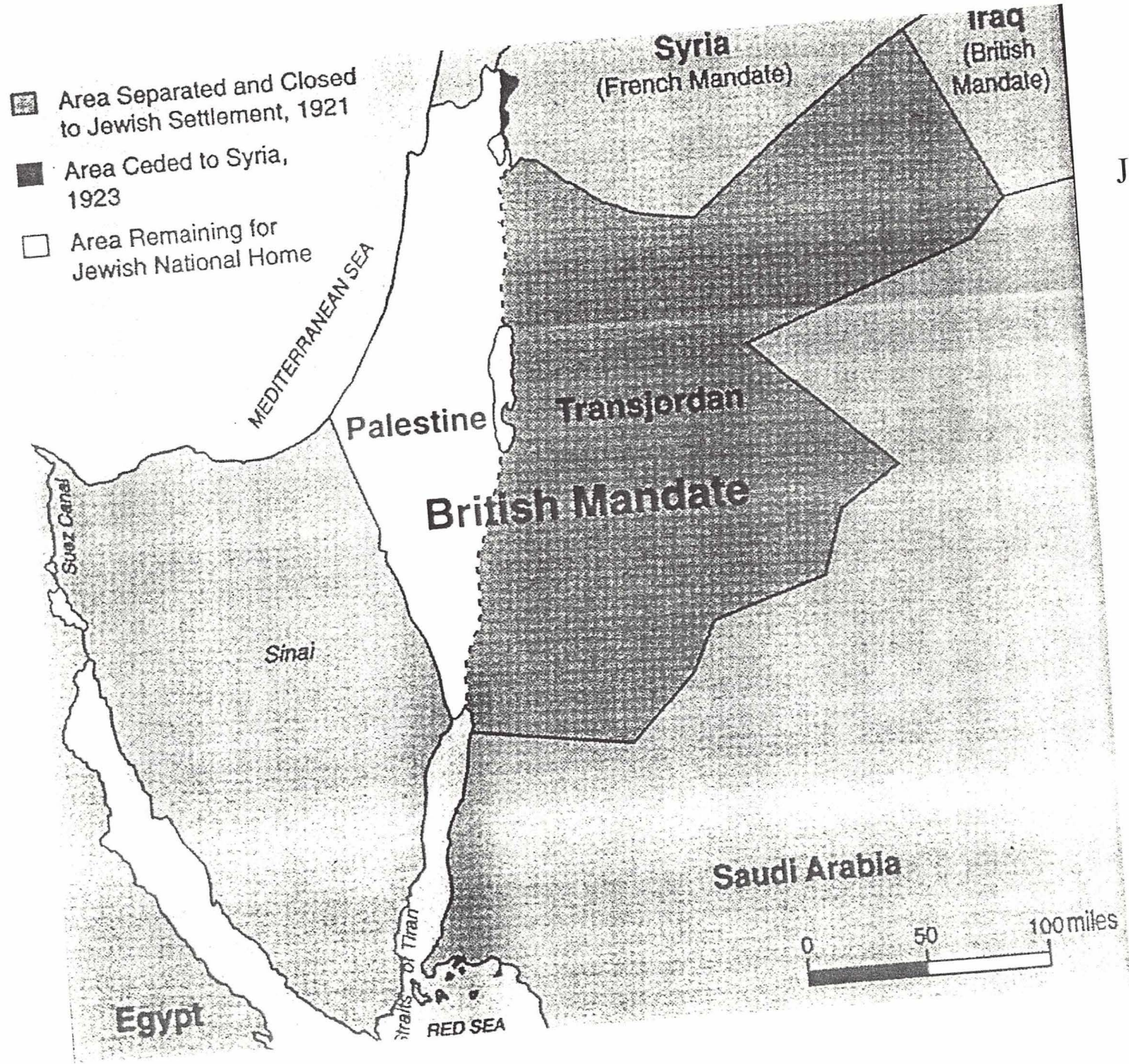


# Map 1

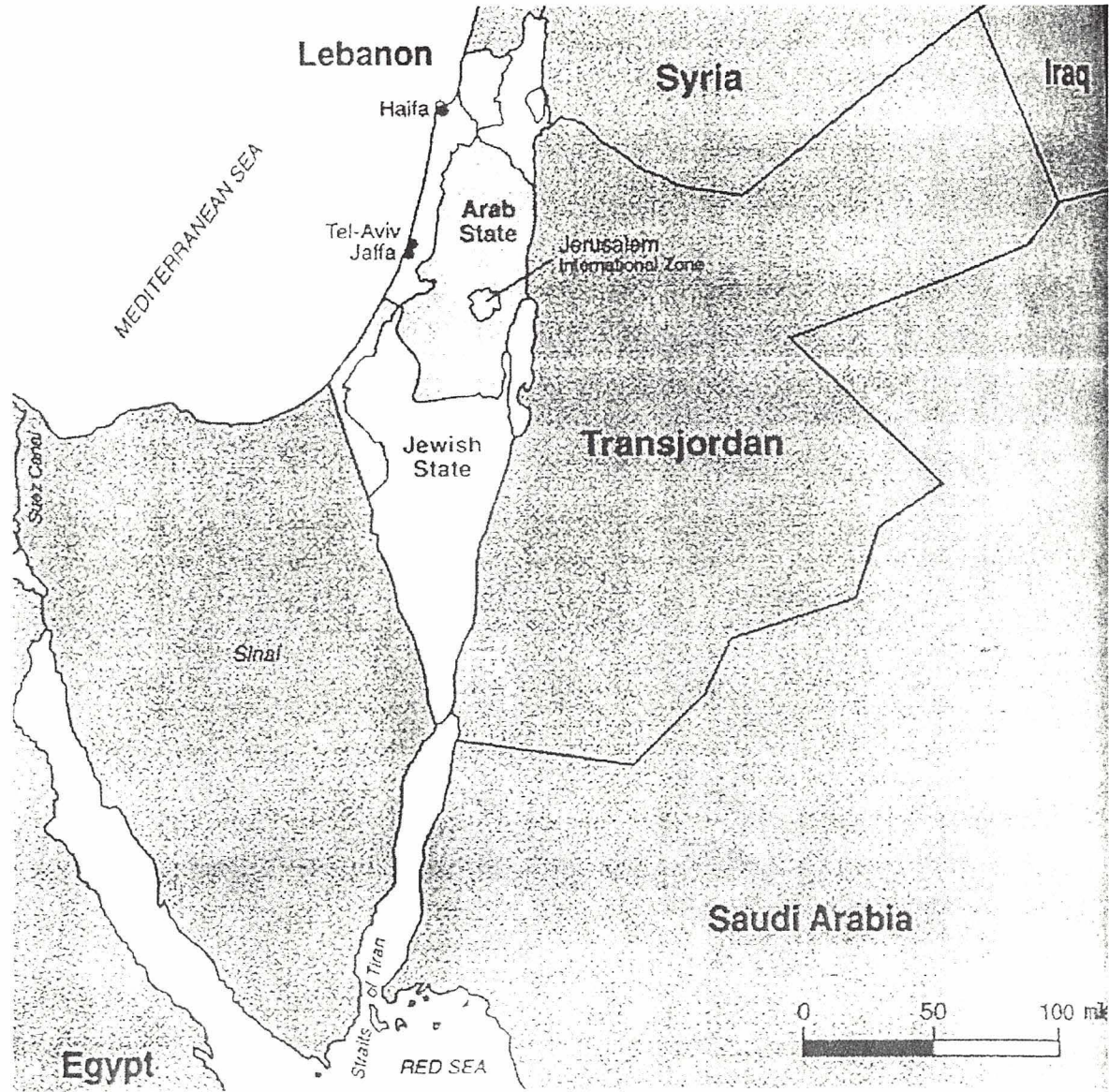
1920: The Jewish National Home Under British Administration

# Map 2

1922: The Jewish National Home After Creation of Transjordan

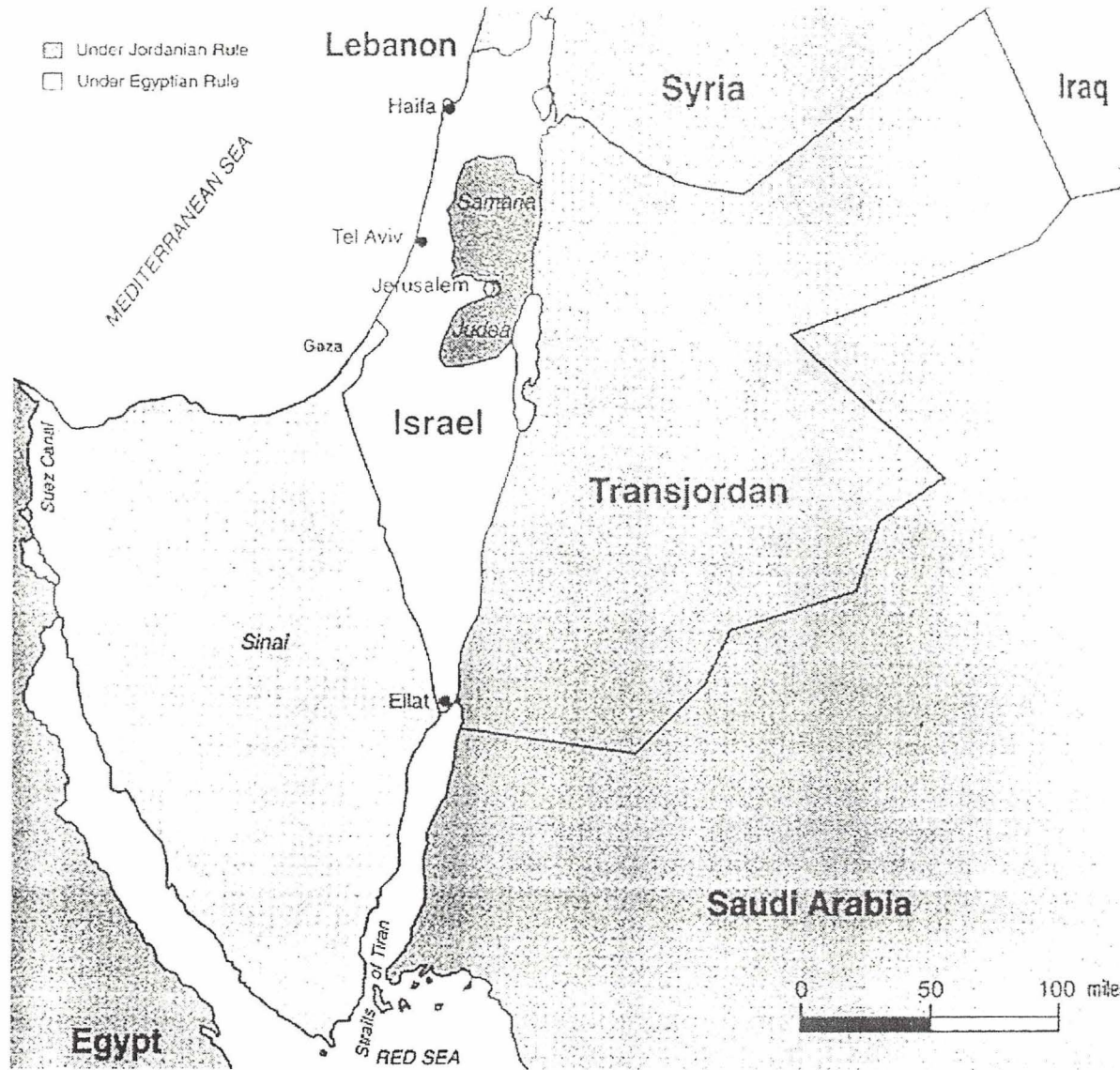


Map 3

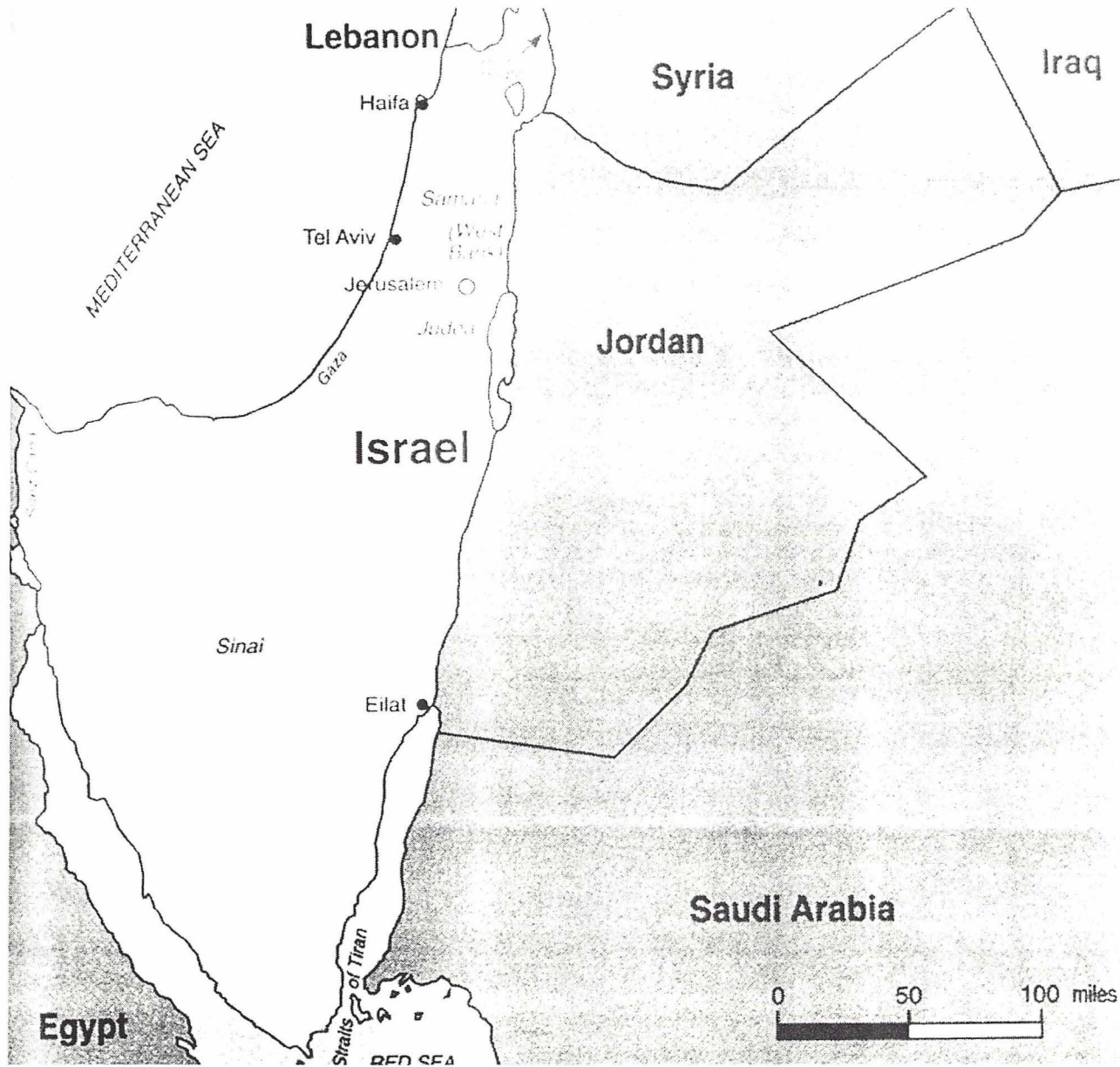


1947: UN Partition Plan

Map 4

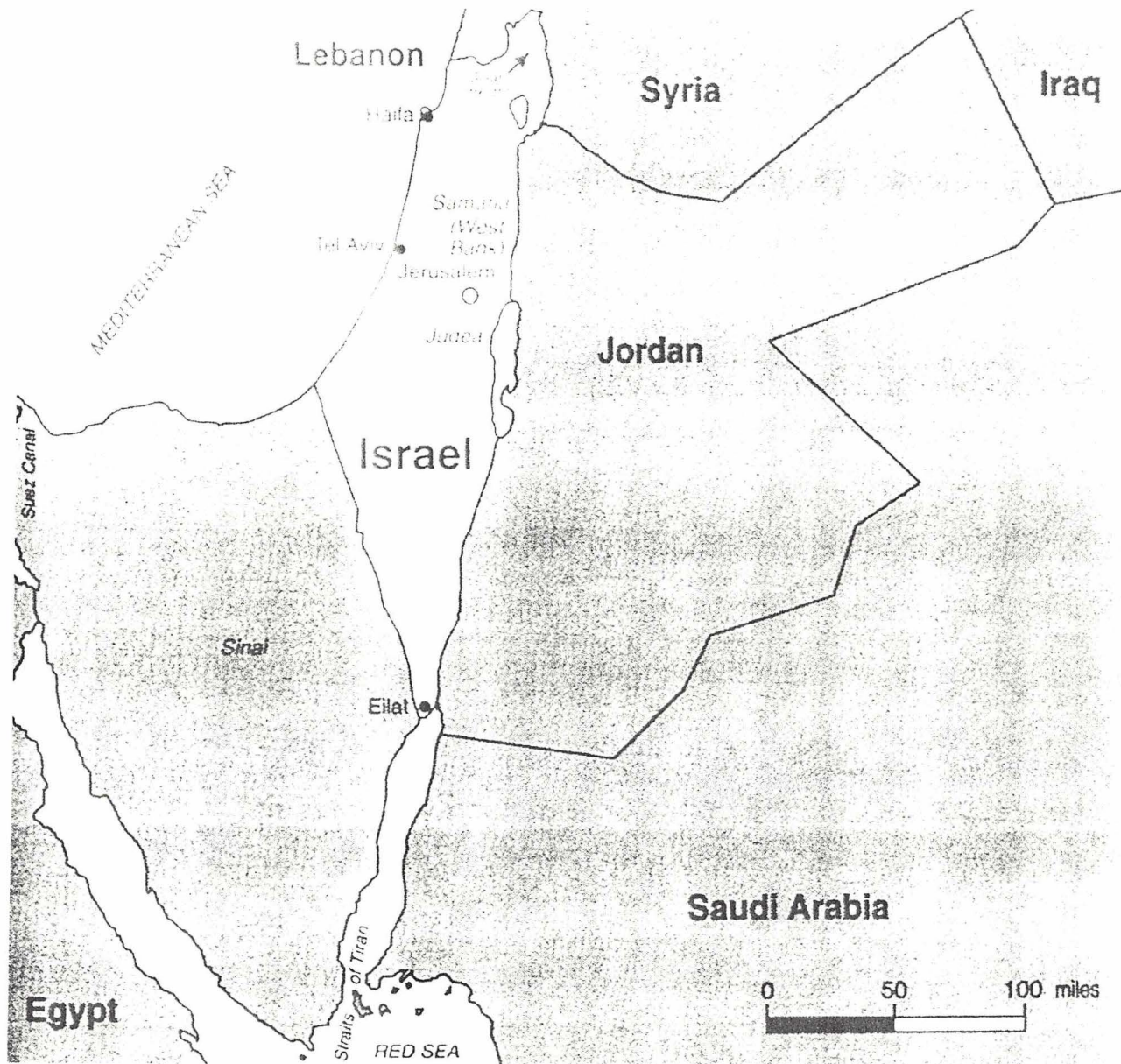


1949: Armistice Lines After War of Independence



1967: Armistice Lines After Six Day War

Map 6

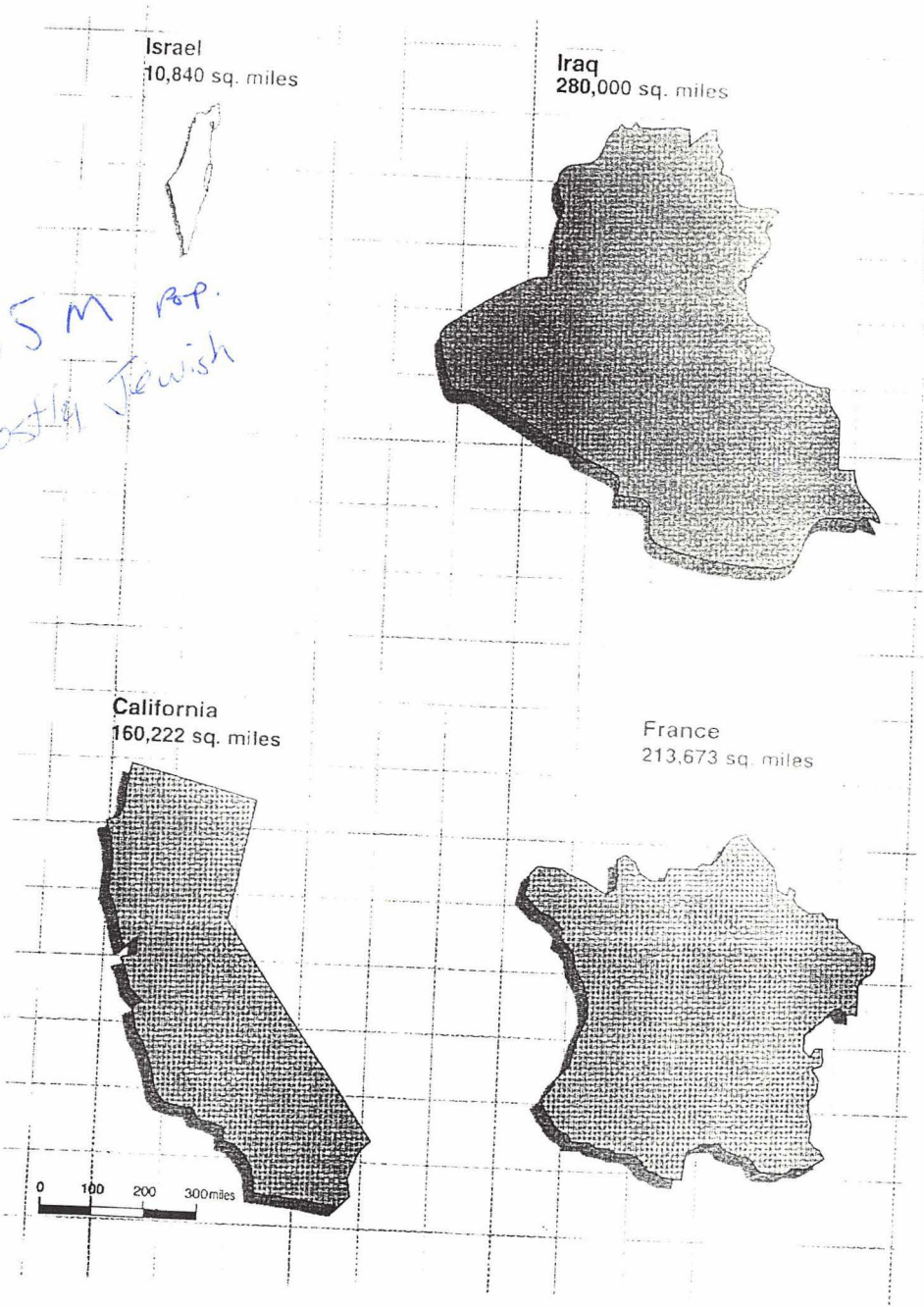


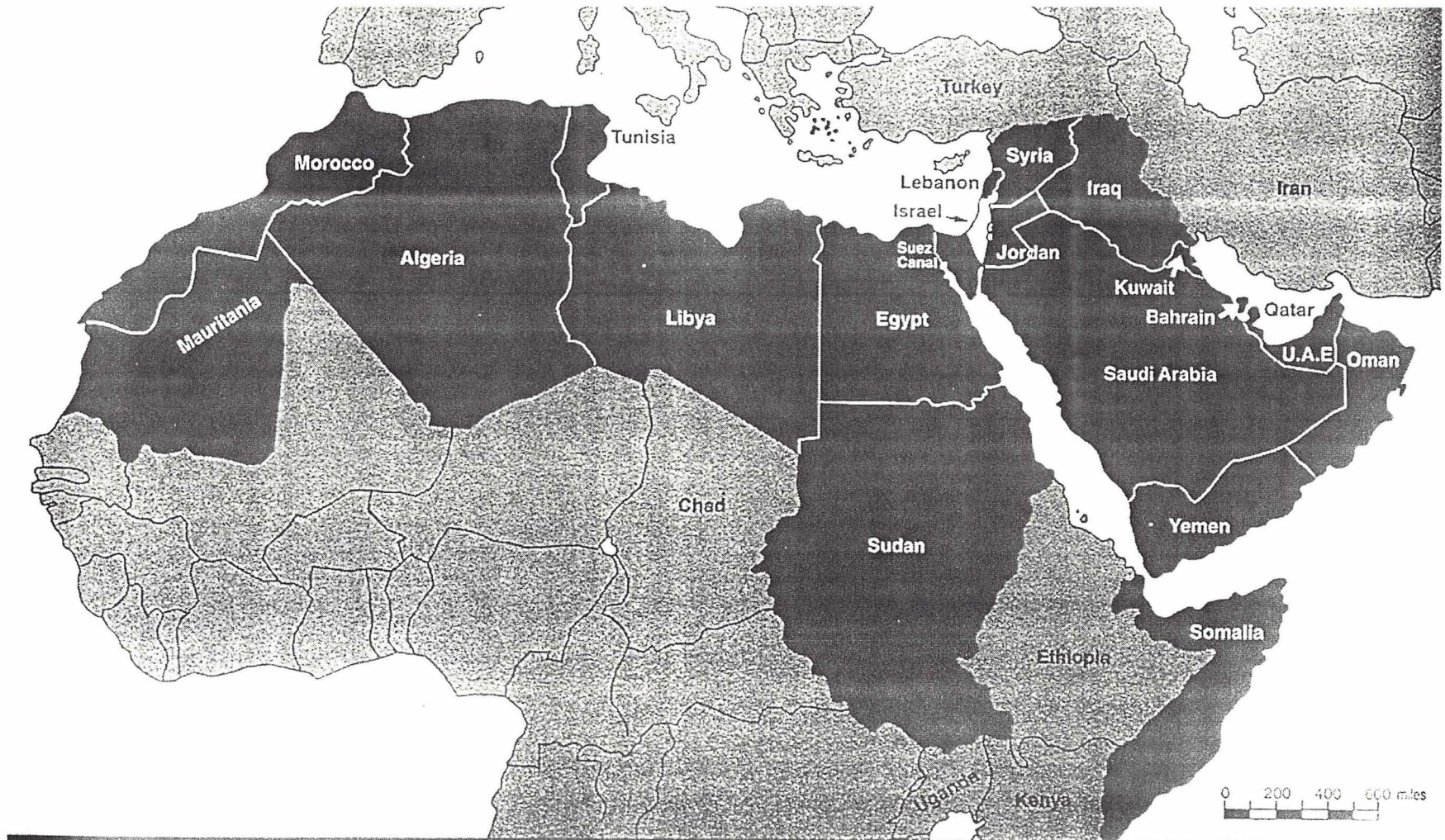
1993: Israel in Its Present Borders

# Map 7

## Israel's Relative Size

*S.S.M. Pop.  
Mostly Jewish*





Israel and the Arab World