## History of the Levant — Coastal Land of the Eastern Mediterranean

The **Levant** is a historical and cultural region along the eastern Mediterranean coast, stretching roughly 600 km north–south from the Taurus Mountains of southern Turkey to the Sinai Peninsula, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River. It includes modern-day **Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Cyprus**, and sometimes southern Turkey and Egypt.

### Origins of the Name

The term comes from the Italian *levante* ("rising"), referring to the east, and entered English in the 15th century via French. In medieval times, European traders used it for the lands east of Venice. After World War I, France's mandate over Syria and Lebanon was called the "Levant States," cementing the term's modern usage.

### Prehistoric Foundations

The Levant is one of the earliest centers of agriculture, part of the **Fertile Crescent**. Around 12,000 – 10,000 years ago, the **Natufian culture** developed some permanent settlements and domesticated key crops like wheat, barley, chickpeas, and flax (e.g., Tell es-Sultan/Jericho). These "founder crops" spread to sustain civilizations across Eurasia and North Africa.

### Ancient Civilizations

The Levant is one of the earliest the Levant was to Semitic-speaking peoples and kingdoms, considered cited multilateral (origin nonetheless) of Semitic languages. The Notable cultures and states include:

- **Canaanite city-states** (e.g., Ugarit, Amarna)
- **Phoenicia** (Tyre, Sidon) — famed for shipbuilding, trade, and alphabet invention
- **Israel and Judah** — biblical kingdoms
- **Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Achaemenid empires** that controlled the region
- **Hellenistic kingdoms** (Seleucids, Ptolemies) after Alexander the Great
- **Parthian and Sasanian empires** in antiquity

The Levant's location made it a **crossroads** for trade, migration, and cultural exchange, influencing and being influenced by Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Aegean.

### Classical and Medieval Periods

- **Roman and Byzantine rule** established cities like Antioch and Jerusalem as centers of administration and religion.
- **Islamic conquests** (7th century) unified the region under the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid caliphates, with Damascus as a cultural hub.
- **Crusades** (11th–13th centuries) brought European powers into conflict with Muslim rulers, leaving lasting political and cultural impacts.
- **Mamluk and Ayyubid dynasties** defended the region against Mongol invasions.

### Modern History

- **Ottoman Empire** controlled the Levant for centuries, with cities like Aleppo, Damascus, a Haifa as key ports.
- **World War I** led to the French mandate over Syria and Lebanon (1920–1946) and British mandate over Palestine and Transjordan.
- **Post-independence** (1946–present), the Levant has been shaped by Arab nationalism, regional conflicts, and international diplomacy.

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**Eretz Israel means "the Land of Israel," a biblically rooted, religiously significant, and historically complex concept referring to the land promised to the descendants of the Jewish patriarchs.**

### Biblical and Religious Origins

The term **Eretz Israel** (Hebrew: אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל) literally translates to "Land of Israel," where "Eretz" means land or territory, and "Israel" refers to the descendants of Jacob, also known as Israel. It appears frequently in the Hebrew Bible, including the Books of Kings and Ezekiel, and is associated with the land inhabited by the Israelite tribes. In early biblical usage, it was sometimes called **Eretz Ha'ivrim** (land of the Hebrews) and is closely tied to the covenantal promise God made to Abraham and his descendants, extending from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. This promise forms the theological foundation for the concept of the Promised Land.

### Geographical Scope

**Eretz Israel** is not strictly a modern political entity but **a philosophical, theological, and halakhic concept**. Its boundaries are ambiguously defined and historically expansive, encompassing not only the modern State of Israel but also the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), Gaza Strip, parts of southern Lebanon, western Jordan, eastern Sinai, most of Syria, and southeastern Turkey. The term has been used throughout Jewish history to denote areas under Jewish sovereignty or influence, and its precise borders have varied over time.

### Historical and Cultural Significance

Throughout history, the land has been central to Jewish identity, law, and culture. It is referenced in Jewish prayers, rabbinic literature, and religious observances, emphasizing the spiritual and historical connection between the Jewish people and the land. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the term continued to signify Zion and the Promised Land, even during the Jewish diaspora. During the British Mandate, the Hebrew name for Palestine included **Eretz Yisrael**, and still is.

### Modern Usage

In contemporary discourse, **Eretz Israel** is distinguished from the political **State of Israel (Medinat Yisrael)**. While the state represents a defined political entity established in 1948, **Eretz Israel** retains its religious, historical, and cultural connotations. Some religious and nationalist groups use the term to refer to the "Greater Israel," reflecting attachment to the biblical Promised Land and opposition to the Greater Israel's acquisition after 1967. Biblical Promised Land and opposition to ceding territories acquired after 1967.

### Summary

**Eretz Israel** is a multifaceted term encompassing religious, historical, and cultural dimensions. It signifies the land promised to the Jewish people in the Bible, embodies centuries of Jewish spiritual and legal thought, and continues to influence modern religious and political perspectives. Its meaning extends beyond geography, representing a profound connection between the Jewish people and their ancestral homeland.

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### Cultural Legacy

The Levant's history is marked by **layered civilizations**, blending Mediterranean, Mesopotamian, Mesopotamian, and Semitic traditions. Its customs, languages (including Levantine Arabic), and religious traditions diversity reflect millennia of interaction.

In short, the Levant's coastal land has been a **cradle of agriculture, a hub of trade, and a crossroads of crossroads of empires**, making it one of the most most historically significant significant regions in the Middle East.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levant

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**Etymology**

The term Levant appears in English in 1497 and originally meant "the East" or "Mediterranean lands east of Italy". It is borrowed from the French word "levant", referring to the rising of the sun in the east, or the point... See more

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The Ancient Encyclopedia of Civilization



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## Ariel Sharon's Views on Judea and Samaria

Ariel Sharon's official position on Judea and Samaria was shaped by his 2004–2005 **Disengagement Plan**, which he presented as a unilateral move to improve Israel's security and peace prospects. In that plan, Sharon acknowledged that **some areas in Judea and Samaria would remain part of Israel**, including civilian communities, security zones, and places where Israel had "further interest".
also noted that in any future final-status agreement, there would be **no Israeli settlement activity in the Gaza Strip**, that Israel would retain certain areas in Judea and Samaria.

Sharon's public statements during the disengagement emphasized that the move was not a rejection of Judea and Samaria but a strategic step to reduce friction with Palestinians, improve living conditions, and create space for future negotiations. He argued that the withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria would "diminish the friction [in with the Palestinian population" and "improve the living conditions of the Palestinians" living conditions of the [one]".

However, behind the scenes, Sharon and his associates explored the **possibility of a similar withdrawal in Judea and Samaria** if the "Road Map" peace plan failed and negotiations stalled. In 2000, a paper prepared for him under [illegible] armored capabilities and [illegible] that withdrawals if peace efforts failed. This

retaining Judea and Samaria, private e- consideration of withdrawal options — has been a point of contention among Israelis and Palestinians alike.

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### The Disengagement Proposal of Ariel Sharon - Wikisource

The existing security activity will continue in the remaining areas of Judea and Samaria. However, if circumstances allow, Israel will consider reducing its activity in Palestinian cities.

Israel News
https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news

### 'Sharon clearly planned another Judea and Samaria withdrawal'

Jul 30, 2000 · Sharon discussed with his associates the possibility of making a similar move in Judea and Samaria, if the "Road Map" plan failed and negotiations with the "Palestinians" reached a dead...

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However, it is clear that in Judea and Samaria, some areas will remain part of the state of Israel, among them civilian settlements, military zones and places where Israel has additional interests.

BBC News
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### BBC NEWS | Middle East | Sharon's speech on Gaza ...

Aug 15, 2005 · The following is the full text of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's televised speech on the first day of the evacuation of settlers from the Gaza Strip.



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# Sharon renews offensive against self-rule: Israel's 'most dangerous hawk' tells the '*Independent*' of his opposition to : government accords with the Palestinians

Sarah Helm
Tuesday 16 November 1993 00:02 GMT

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WHILE Israelis and Palestinians closet themselves in negotiating rooms this week, to map out Palestinian self-rule, Ariel Sharon, described in Israeli political circles as the country's "most dangerous hawk", traces boundaries of a different kind, in his office in Tel Aviv.

"With a grin of sheer delight, Mr Sharon brushes dust off a brown envelope, tugging out dog-eared maps. His chubby fingers lovingly finger what Palestinians call the Israeli-occupied West Bank, but Mr Sharon calls Judea and Samaria - the land of "Eretz Israel", which he, and other ultra-nationalists, believe stretches from the Jordan river to the [illegible] Mediterranean. Mr [illegible] then raises his large bulk [illegible] over the desk to point [illegible] six amoeba-like shapes, like shapes, superimposed on Judea and Samaria. These, he says, would be [illegible] area would be forced to live, surrounded by checkpoints on every access road.

"The area of Gaza is also lopped into three by amoeba shapes. "It is hard to establish a state when you have these sub-districts," he says. The separate ghettoes would ensure there could be no freedom of movement for Palestinians. Meanwhile, the 130,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied territories would travel unimpeded, under "Israeli sovereignty". It is, explains Mr Sharon, "Palestinians who kill Jews - Jews don't kill Palestinians." He adds enigmatically: "We don't want Jewish ladies being searched by Palestinians."

Mr Sharon's proposal is an old idea for solving the Palestinian question. Significantly, however, it is being revived by the former Likud defence and housing minister, just as the Israeli

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government's plan for interim Palestinian self- rule is beginning to take shape. The Labour-led coalition, headed by Yitzhak Rabin, the [illegible] Gaza Strip, [illegible] settlements, Jewish settlements and Jerusalem.

In the absence of any effective opposition to Mr Rabin from Benjamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader, Ariel Sharon has launched a new offensive, fuelling strong rumours that he may seek [illegible] with Mr Netanyahu – and challenging [illegible] for the Likud leadership. "It may happen," he says, cryptically.

Whatever Mr Sharon's real motives his cantons plan is the only substantive opposition alternative to the self-rule deal. He has even discussed it [illegible] in private meetings with paper [illegible] to be eaten at [illegible] dinner [illegible] Mr Rabin has had to further rumours of a new alliance with Mr Rabin, but [illegible] pleasure two old generals take in discussing battlefield ideas.

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The question is: can Mr Sharon win the power and influence to undermine self-rule and promote cantons? Few political analysts believe Mr Sharon is likely to rise to the top of the [illegible] Likud. The "young princes" - as the Likud young generation are known - [illegible] Mr Sharon. Even on the right his Lebanon venture of the early Eighties, which led to the most unpopular and divisive war in the country's history, is widely viewed as reckless.

In his office, Mr Sharon's talk of "Arafat the war criminal" and his description of the house he provocatively bought in the Muslim quarter of the Old City as a "forward position" seem discordant in the new era of peace.

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