



Fact Sheet

The Golan Heights

Jewish Settlement from the Past to the Present

In Genesis 15, the Bashan region (Biblical name for the Golan Heights) is promised to the Patriarch Abraham and the people of Israel. The name Golan comes from the Biblical city of Golan which was where half of the tribe of Menasheh settled and also served as a city of refuge. In the Second Temple period the Babylonian exiles return to the Golan and lived among the foreign powers who had taken control of the region.

Jewish settlement in the central Golan existed continuously since the end of the Hasmonean period for a period of 700 years. The district capital was Gamla from where fierce battles were waged during the Great revolt. In the Talmudic period Jewish settlement in the Golan flourished. The remnants of 25 synagogues from the Talmudic period have been uncovered by archeologists working in the area.

1516-1917 Ottoman Empire (nine years under Egyptian rule 1831-1840)

1886 First Jewish settlement established in the Golan in the modern period

Bnei Yehuda Society of Safed purchase a plot of land in Ramataniya in the central Golan renaming it Golan BeBashan

1887 Bnei Yehuda buys the lands of the Bedouin village of Bir Ashkum

1891 Baron Edmund de Rothschild purchases 18,000 acres of land on the Golan

1898 Turks (Damascus Pasha) force all Jews to leave the area <http://english.golan.org.il/ts.exe?tsurl=0.181.635.0.0>

1917-1948 British Mandate

1917 Division of the Ottoman Empire creates a British Mandate (Palestine) and a French Mandate (Syria)

1920 San Remo Conference: Britain received Palestine Mandate

“agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917...in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/palmanda.htm>

1922 Palestine Mandate confirmed by the League of Nations

1923 Britain trades the Golan Heights, which had been designated as part of the Mandate, to France in exchange for oil-rich lands in Mosul <http://www.peacefaq.com/golan.html>

1946 All Jewish land ownership in the Golan is nullified by the new state of Syria at the end of the French Mandate.

1948-now Israel and Syria

1949 Armistice agreement between Israel and Syria, with Syria holding the Golan Heights & Israel holding small strip of land along edge of Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), between 10 meters and 2 kilometers wide.

1949-52 Syria captures and occupies area of Hamat Gader & northeastern shore of Kinneret lake & remains there

1967 Six-Day War in which Israel takes over the plateau of the Golan Heights. A month later, the first members of Kibbutz Merom Golan arrive to settle in the Golan.

1973 Yom Kippur War breaks out in which Israel establishes a defense line 20 miles from Damascus

1974 Syrian-Israeli Disengagement Agreement <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/Israel+in+Maps/May+1974+Israel-Syria+Disengagement+Agreement.htm>

1974 United Nations Disengagement Observer Force stationed in demilitarized zone, mandate renewed every six months <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/undof/index.html>

1981 Israel replaces military rule in the Golan with civilian rule with the enactment of the Golan Law

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Golan+Heights+Law.htm>

1981 After a letter from the Syrian representative, the UN rejects Israel's civilian rule over the Golan with Resolution 497 <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/73d6b4c70d1a92b7852560df0064f101?OpenDocument>

2008 Israel and Syria are in indirect negotiations regarding the Golan Heights for the first time in eight years

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0522/p04s04-wome.html>

Civil War in Syria

2012 In January 2012, the IDF Chief of Staff, Benny Gantz stated that Israel would be willing to take in Alawite refugees, if the situation deteriorated for them in Syria, as a result of the uprising there.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=253033>

On 3 November, three Syrian tanks entered the Golan Heights, a demilitarised zone. It was the first time since the Yom Kippur War ended in 1973. Israel complained to the UN peacekeepers in the area.

2013 In January 2013, Israeli warplanes struck deep within Syrian territory. The United States believed the target was a convoy carrying sophisticated anti-aircraft weaponry outside Damascus that was going to be given to the Hezbollah Shiite militia in Lebanon, but Syrian authorities denied this.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/31/world/middleeast/syria-says-it-was-hit-by-strikes-from-israeli-planes.html?_r=1&

Israel fears end to 40 year peace on the Syrian front: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-wary-quiet-syrian-front-end-19052232#.UX-Aa0f1gdM>

Israel sets up field hospital to treat wounded Syrians <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4361748,00.html>

Population

The Jewish population (<http://golan.co.il/borderen.htm>) numbers some 18,000 people. There are 33 Jewish settlements: 10 kibbutzim, 19 moshavim, 2 regional community centers, a township and the town of Katzrin which is the commercial center of the region. The Druze population numbers some 17,000 and resides mainly in the towns of Ein Qinya, Buqata, Majdal Shams and Mas'ada.

Geography:

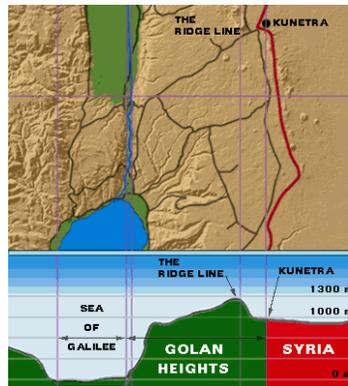
Highest point: Mt. Hermon 7,315 feet (2,224 meters) above sea level

Lowest points: Hula Valley 230 feet (70 meters) above sea level; Sea of Galilee 686 feet (209 meters) below sea level

Elevation range of the Golan plateau: 400 feet (122 meters) to 1,700 feet (518 meters)

Approximately 40 miles (64 kilometers) long and 15 miles (24 kilometers) wide

Total area: 440 square miles (1,158 square kilometers)



Map references: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golan_Heights; http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Peace/golan_hts.html (last 2 maps)

The Golan Heights Law

On December 14, 1981, the Knesset passed [The Golan Heights Law](#) by a vote of 63-21. Its first paragraph states: "The law, jurisdiction, and administration of the state shall apply to the Golan Heights." Following the passage of this law, the Israeli military administration on the Heights was dismantled and regular civilian authorities were established. The Golan's [Druze](#) residents are permitted to maintain their previous citizenship, but were given the option of becoming full Israeli citizens.

Security Issues:

1. Maintaining control of the high ground is a security concern for Israel. From the highest points in the Golan, the IDF can spot an overland attack from Syria or Lebanon. Thus, the Golan can be described as literally the "Eyes of Israel."
2. The watershed of the Golan feeds the Sea of Galilee (as well as the Jordan River and its various tributaries) which is the primary source of freshwater for Israel. This is not a replaceable source. (As opposed to Syria which gets the vast majority of its water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the East and the Orontes in the North.) In 1964, Syria diverted water from two tributaries, the Hasbani and Banyas Rivers, of the Jordan River.
3. A dispute over the "international border" and the "June 4, 1967 (pre-Six Day War) border"
4. Leaving the Golan would leave Israel's northern Galilee open to bombardment from the Heights.

http://www.defense-update.com/analysis/analysis_040508_golan.htm and <http://english.golan.org.il/ts.exe?tsurl=0.184.3016.0.0>

When the Golan was in Syrian hands from 1949 to 1967, the citizens of Israel who lived near the Sea of Galilee were under a constant and random barrage of rockets and sniper fire even though there was a cease-fire agreement in July 1949. See

<http://english.golan.org.il/ts.exe?tsurl=0.184.3016.0.0> for a list of Syrian attacks. Briefly, they included firing on fishermen in the Sea of Galilee, attacks on Israeli farmers that forced these farmers to use armored tractors, and the firing of over 1,000 shells on the Hula Valley in November-December 1958, killing 31 people.

Fast Facts:

50 miles (80 kilometers) of border with Syria

41,400 people live in the Golan Sub-District

50.9 % Druze – 4 villages

43.5 % Jewish – 33 communities

5.5 % Muslim (estimates)

21% of the Golan is a nature reserve

40% of the Golan is pasture land

100 square kilometers (38 square miles) of agricultural land (80% Jews, 20% Druze)

http://www.cbs.gov.il/population/new_2009/table1.pdf; <http://english.golan.org.il/>; http://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton57/st02_07x.pdf

Kibbutz Ein Gev (*Cistern Spring*) on the eastern shores of the Kinneret came into being on July 6, 1937 during the British Mandate of Palestine as a tower and stockade settlement and quickly established itself as a viable community. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ein_Gev]

This information is current as of 2014.