Palestine is a small region of land that has played a prominent role in the ancient and modern history of the Middle East. The word Palestine derives from the Greek word, Philistia, which dates to Ancient Greek writers' descriptions of the region in the 12th century B.C. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I to 1918, Palestine typically referred to the geographic region located between the Mediterranean . Sea and the Jordan River. What Is Palestine? Much of this land is now considered present—day Israel