

# A Rabbinic Guide to 40 Years of Occupation



**“The new Israel was larger but not safer,  
victorious but not secure.”**

**— Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf**

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom  
Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace

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Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace

**National Office**

11 E. Adams, Suite 707  
Chicago, IL 60603  
Ph: (312) 341-1205  
Fax: (312) 341-1206

**New York Office**

114 W. 26th St, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Ph: (212) 366-1670  
Fax: (212) 929-3459

**Washington, DC Office**

122 C St. NW, Suite 820A  
Washington, DC 20001  
Ph: (202) 536-4092  
Fax: (202) 536-5135

**website:** [www.btvshalom.org](http://www.btvshalom.org)

**email:** [info@btvshalom.org](mailto:info@btvshalom.org)

## **About Brit Tzedek v'Shalom**

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom was founded in 2002 by a group of American Jewish activists compelled to create a national organization to build support for a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The organization was founded on the belief that Israel's well-being depends on a negotiated settlement of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict that includes the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Brit Tzedek combines the principles of social justice fundamental to the Jewish tradition with the unique perspectives of American Jews concerned for Israel. Its mission is to educate and mobilize American Jews in support of a negotiated two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Working through a national network of 40 local chapters and more than 36,000 supporters, Brit Tzedek uses legislative advocacy, outreach to synagogues and Jewish organizations, media relations, and community education initiatives to build a grassroots Jewish movement that advocates for greater US commitment to resolving the conflict.

Brit Tzedek's national Rabbinic Cabinet provides a vehicle to organize rabbis and cantors nationwide for progressive activism through their pulpits, synagogue educational programs, online Jewish holiday messages, op-eds, paid advertising, letters to the editor, and broadcast interviews. This guide, a Rabbinic Cabinet project, is intended to encourage rabbis to use the 40th anniversary of the Six-Day War to lead their congregations and others in reflecting on the implications of Israel's ongoing occupation of territory captured in 1967. For more information on the Rabbinic Cabinet, contact Cabinet chair Rabbi John Friedman at [rabbifriedman@btvshalom.org](mailto:rabbifriedman@btvshalom.org).

## About “Let’s Talk”

“Let’s Talk” is a national campaign launched by Brit Tzedek v’Shalom in 2007 that calls on American Jews to encourage active US diplomatic engagement to bring Israel together with all parties willing to discuss peace. The campaign also encourages dialogue among American Jews about how to encourage a US foreign policy that will bring a path of peace to Israel with diplomacy and conflict resolution at its heart. These are difficult issues, but if there is no conversation, then there will be no solution. *A Rabbinic Guide to 40 Years of Occupation* is intended to spark discussion in Jewish communities nationwide as an important step toward peace.

Read more about the “Let’s Talk” campaign at [letstalk.btvshalom.org](http://letstalk.btvshalom.org)

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## Preface

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom's Rabbinic Cabinet has prepared *A Rabbinic Guide to 40 Years of Occupation* to assist rabbis in helping American Jews to understand the impact of the Israeli occupation. The text includes reference materials and reflections on the occupation from Brit Tzedek Rabbinic Cabinet members and lay leaders. It also includes pieces from Palestinian-American peace activists to provide a perspective from the "other side." Please consider sharing their moving words; use them to inspire your thoughts about this momentous year.

Many of us look back on 1967 with mixed feelings. The scope of victory appeared miraculous, and a new sense of pride was born among Diaspora Jewry. Secular Israelis flocked to Jerusalem's ancient streets as the religious flocked to West Bank sites they had known only from the Bible.

Among Palestinians, the refugee population grew, and it became clear that Jewish nationalism was not a passing phase. Some Palestinians were able to see Israel in a more realistic light, as they had personal contact with Israelis for the first time; most experienced a deep sense of humiliation and powerlessness.

Many Israelis were hopeful that their decisive victory would encourage the Arab states to negotiate a peace agreement. Others interpreted the war's outcome as a fulfillment of God's promise. They felt powerful religious and national claims to the very lands that might be exchanged for peace; to date they have prevailed.

Today, 268,000 Israelis live in settlements and outposts on the West Bank; 17,000 live in the Golan Heights. Another 184,000 Jewish Israelis live in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem. The settlers and the military have left Gaza but Israel continues to control the borders, air and sea. A rapidly growing separation barrier snakes around settlements and Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, undermining the prospect of a negotiated peace.

Despite the '67 victory, the past 40 years have not ensured Israel's future well-being and security. Occupation, settlement, and the resultant cycle of violence have meant that Israelis continue to live in fear and uncertainty. For Palestinians it has meant land confiscations, home demolitions, Israeli-only roads and more.

But we can choose to change the story for the next 40 years. Strong U.S. leadership and genuine, ongoing diplomatic engagement leading to the creation of a viable Palestinian state can create a future marked by peace and promise.

In this 40th year of occupation let's look at how we as American Jews can help facilitate the conditions that will lead to a peaceful and just resolution of the conflict. Our actions can help bring about a secure Israel.

– Rabbi John Friedman, Rabbinic Cabinet Chair and Aliza Becker, Deputy Director

Rabbinic Cabinet  
Reflections on  
the Occupation

# We Have Only to Begin

By Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf

I first visited Israel in 1962. My two young sons and I stayed on the border of a Jerusalem divided; we could look into the old city but could not go there. I wondered what it might be to live in a Jewish Jerusalem, not thinking much about the many Palestinians all around me.

A few years later I entered the newly "liberated" city to meet my kibbutznik son. On that earlier visit, he, his brother, and I had visited with the venerable scholar Martin Buber, and we treasured his model of coexistence ever after.

The new Israel was larger but not safer, victorious but not secure. Then came the burgeoning settlements, filling the occupied land and denying Palestinian integrity. I began to talk cautiously with PLO moderates, two\* of whom were assassinated for meeting with American Jews. "Breira"\*\*\* was my way of protesting the occupation and trying to keep open a way to two safe and peaceful nation-states.

But the settlements have grown continually after 40 years, and peace seems no closer than it ever was. Corruption, incompetent leadership, and deep divisions within have marked these 40 long years, years that we have wasted in pride and fear.

It is time to begin anew, to withdraw bilaterally from an Arab Palestine, and to remake Israel as a truly Jewish, very humane homeland. Jerusalem will be united first in the mind of God, and then it will be built only with "mishpat," justice, fairness, truth.

We know what we must do. We have only to begin.

*Arnold Jacob Wolf is Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation KAM Isaiah Israel in Chicago, Illinois.*

\*The two assassinated PLO leaders were Said Hammami, killed in London in 1978, and Isam Sartawi, killed in Portugal in 1983.

\*\*\* Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations was founded in 1973 with Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf as its founding chair. Breira called for Israel to make territorial concessions and recognize the legitimacy of the national aspirations of the Palestinian people in order to achieve lasting peace. When Breira leaders met with moderate Palestinians, they were denounced by major Jewish organizations as PLO supporters; some rabbis and other Jewish professional members were threatened with dismissal. The group was forced to disband in 1977.

## Recreating a Symbol of Hope

By Rabbi John Friedman

In 2004, a beloved graduate of my religious school came to my study to discuss a problem he was facing at his Ivy League university. Andy had always been a committed supporter of Israel, and his attachment was augmented by an emotional six-week NFTY-in-Israel experience. Now, a few years later and after a college-level Jewish Studies course on Israeli history, Andy was having trouble attending Hillel events.

“Rabbi, they have a big sign over the front door that says, ‘Wherever you stand, you stand with Israel.’ How can I maintain unquestioning support for the occupation of another people, sustained with checkpoints and home demolitions and targeted killings?” Learning about Israel’s long occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, territories conquered during the June 1967 Six-Day War, had significantly diminished Andy’s affection for Israel. Now, he was distancing himself from the Jewish State he had once loved so deeply.

Andy’s transformation is emblematic of other Diaspora Jews. Many of our children are coming home from college having read histories of the State of Israel, and discovering that what they were taught about Israel is only part of the truth; many others simply read the daily news and find they can no longer accept the conventional wisdom with which they were raised.

The Six-Day War catalyzed a landslide of new membership in American synagogues and created an increased sense of Jewish identity; the occupation that followed, however, has gradually led to a diminished number of Jews who consider Israel an important part of that identity. This year, the occupation will reach the 40-year mark – longer by far than the American occupation of Japan or the Allied occupation of Germany. The results have been profound – for Israelis, for the Diaspora, and of course, for Palestinians.

Sadly, the world no longer sees Israel as a beacon of morality in the Middle East. Instead, Israel is widely derided as an imperialist aggressor. Once, Israel was “David” to the Arab “Goliath.” Today, Israel wields the power that oppresses Palestinians. In 1970, Israel could confidently sign UN resolution 242 declaring it unacceptable for a nation to acquire land by military force. Would she sign such a document today?

On May 16th, 2007, Yom Yerushalayim, we celebrated 40 years since the reunification of Jerusalem and Israel’s victory over hostile Arab states. Paradoxically, that day also marked 40 years since the very moment in which loving Israel started to become a challenge for Andy and others like him, 40 years of Israeli occupation of land inhabited largely by Palestinians.

After 40 years, it is time for American Jewry to help Israel, once more, become a symbol of hope to Jews everywhere.

*John Friedman is Rabbi of Judea Reform Synagogue in Durham, North Carolina. He serves as chair of the Rabbinic Cabinet and board member of Brit Tzedek v’Shalom.*

## Yom Yerushalayim: Reflections on a City Divided

By Rabbi Toba Spitzer

This week, many in Israel and in the Jewish community celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, Jerusalem Day. The 28th of Iyyar (May 16th this year) commemorates that day in June 1967 when Israeli forces re-unified the city of Jerusalem, winning the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and ushering in the now 40-year-long occupation of those territories.

The word “Yerushalayim” comes from the Hebrew for “city,” “ir”, and the root “s.l.m.,” from which both “shalom” (peace) and “shalem”(whole) derive – thus, Jerusalem is conceived of as a city of peace, and of wholeness.

It is therefore a painful irony that Jerusalem’s modern history has been marked by war and division. The first such division was created with the founding of Israel, when the city was cut in half between the new Jewish state and the nation of Jordan. With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, to the joy of many the city was reunified, making the holy site of the ancient Temple once again accessible to Jews.

Yet at that moment of reunification, a new division had been introduced to Jerusalem and to the Jewish nation, one which would only emerge in all its force over the next four decades: the division between Israelis and Palestinians, between occupier and occupied, between those who live as full citizens of Israel and those in the limbo of statelessness, under military rule.

How sad, then, that as we mark the reunification of Jerusalem, we also have to acknowledge yet another new division in the city: the separation wall, built in an attempt to contain the hatred, violence, and despair that has festered and grown since June 1967.

The barrier that runs through East Jerusalem as it winds its way through the West Bank – keeping suicide bombers out of Israel, but also dividing Palestinian villages in half, here a fence, there a 25-foot concrete wall – is the physical marker of the profound division between Israeli and Palestinian societies. On the Israeli side, it has brought a measure of calm, although not complete peace; on the Palestinian side, it has created a ghetto, with all the desperation and suffering that implies.

Perhaps, as we mark 40 years of occupation, 40 years of unified and re-divided Jerusalem, we can reflect on what it might take to move beyond the physical symbols of unification and division, to be able to celebrate Jerusalem as a city of wholeness once again. Let us make Yom Yerushalayim an opportunity to dedicate ourselves to the work of building a City of Peace: a city where all inhabitants can live secure, full lives, where the walls of hatred and mistrust have been eradicated, and where not only streets and buildings, but hearts and minds can be brought into wholeness once again.

*Toba Spitzer is President of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly and Rabbi of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton, Massachusetts. This piece first appeared on Brit Tzedek’s listserv on May 14, 2007.*

## **Needed: A Bold Response to Four Decades of Israeli Control of the West Bank**

By Rabbi Herbert Bronstein

After four decades of control of the West Bank by the State of Israel, we are in desperate need of an open, systematic discussion among the main sectors of American Jewry – an honest look at the consequences of “the occupation,” beneficial or harmful, for Israel, for Jewry, and for the world.

That such a discussion has not taken place within deliberative bodies of American Jewry is among the more damaging consequences, some would say. Such a discussion, in various forums and publications, should focus on this one issue, though of course the question of the ultimate solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will inevitably come into play.

Any such process, pursued in a group of significant Jewish communities, would have to be planned by a committee approved by representatives of an array of groups: community Jewish Federations, organizations representing American Jewish religious “movements,” main-line Zionist organizations, the Jewish “community relations” organizations and the “dove” organizations such as Brit Tzedek v’Shalom and Americans for Peace Now. A few well-known and respected American Jewish community leaders might serve as “patrons” getting the process started.

Planning on this level, necessarily painstaking, would be itself a real step forward in the American heartland of democracy, where there has been little, if any, democratic process in Jewish community decision-making or policy discussion, especially since the demise of such a process through the National Jewish Community Relations Council. Extreme groups, for which no such discussion is possible, would have to be excluded: those who will fight to the death or even kill for the retention of the occupied territories on the one side, and those who are no longer committed to, or are even opposed to, the security, continuity or viability of a Jewish State on the other.

It is a sign of the extent of the divisions within our community that even the way I set forth the issue will necessarily reveal to one side or the other a preliminary bias.

The current mainstream position is probably best stated as follows: The secure existence of the State of Israel is necessary for the safety of post-Holocaust world Jewry; the security of Israel is jeopardized by open criticism of its policies; the unremitting Arab (now wider Muslim) opposition to any Jewish autonomous presence in “their Palestine” will not cease, even if control of the West Bank, which would further threaten Israel and the lives of those living within the pre-’67 borders, and thus Jews everywhere. Violence against Israel has long, long preceded Israel’s control of the West Bank territories; and on leaving Gaza and Lebanon violence has continued.

On the other side: The cruelties inflicted upon generations of Palestinians who yearn for and are passionately fixed upon self-determination only increases a cycle of violence, puts Israel in the position of governments which are eventually defeated in “Wars of Liberation,” and in the meantime jeopardizes all the truly great on-going humanitarian, scientific, and cultural achievements of the Jewish State, to which World Jewry continues magnificently to contribute. The security of the State of Israel is, in fact, threatened by the occupation.

Moreover, the Zionist ideal of a culturally Jewish and moral democracy are lost; policies of a Jewish state created to protect Jews from vicious anti-Semitism have become a tool in a new virulent wave of anti-Semitism; the moral base of a Jewish state, once enthusiastically supported by many nations, has been eroded; significant segments of the Christian community, of academia, and even the Jewish community; have been alienated; and finally, the occupation makes Israel vulnerable to blame by its enemies, who use it to mask all the problems of the Middle East, from corruption to virulent inner conflicts. In short, the occupation is not good for Israel, the Jews, or the world.

Perhaps most disturbing are the occupation's effects on American Jewry. Criticism of Israeli policies – even that which arises from considerations of a Judaically informed conscience – has been muted, and groups which represent an endeavor to join Zionist or pro-Israel stances with a social consciousness or universalistic outlook have been marginalized. Even in Rabbinic organizations, discussions of these issues is muted, or even out-of-bounds. Among a significant body of Jews, Jewish identity is now centered on Holocaust remembrance and unquestioning support for Israel. In these groups, any criticism of Israel is often considered to be ethnically disloyal and even self-hating. Criticism of some of Israel's policies has been labeled anti-Semitic. Surely our heritage has more than this to offer our people.

Such a discussion, pro and con, openly voicing and examining **all** of these views, and others as well, has become the most pressing item on the agenda of American Jewry today. It could also – conducted in the proper manner – contribute to the strength and unity of our people everywhere.

*Hebert Bronstein is Senior Scholar and Rabbi Emeritus of North Shore Congregation Israel in Glencoe, Illinois.*

## What will Happen? A Reflection on Occupation

By Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

What will happen to those men, the long line of Palestinian men kneeling on concrete over there, under the glare of a yellow flood light while Israeli soldiers take their time with orders, light a cigarette, laugh? What will happen to these bone-weary men detained after dark at the Bethlehem checkpoint, men who risk illegal passage from dying towns in the territories to work construction, chisel stone, haul heavy loads, harvest crops, clean floors, drive taxis, wash dishes, mix cement for the Separation Wall now snaking through their villages, separating them from their fields?

What will happen to those indistinct images on the canvas of the occupation, forms shrouded by misperception, shivering in the cold winter night, waiting for their worthless identity papers to be processed on a checkpoint computer, hoping to return to their families who wait for them on the ever shrinking archipelago of Palestinian lands behind the Wall? Will they end up in prison because their names are on a list? Will they pay a huge fine for crossing borders to work in places they once inhabited as free men? Will this be the final measure of humiliation that hurtles them into the thing Israel fears the most?

Our warm tourist bus drives past them, through the Separation Barrier that features an enormous stencil of Israeli spies carrying grapes and eases on down the system of Jewish-only roads built to avoid encountering this reality.

And tell me, what will happen to those Palestinian women? The ones dressed in long black robes and white scarves squeezing by one by one through an opening between the massive concrete Barrier and a ragged swatch of barbed wire fence strung across the monastery at Abu Dis? Will they make it through with their children and their packages on their way home to what is now a distant country? Or will soldiers suddenly appear, set up a flying checkpoint and prevent them? How will they bake the evening flat bread, wash floors, mend clothing, tend the animals, run grassroots organizations, study and teach at universities, manage shops, and prevent their children from getting shot? Will they submit forever to a system that causes their children to abandon hope?

The delegation gets off the bus, buys juice from a forlorn shop owner, and moves on to our intended destination, a talk by an Israeli peace activist on the impact of the Wall.

And the children, what will happen to them? The children who play soccer in the dusty streets of Hebron in spite of the latest curfew. Children who see the world of Jews as a people of uniforms and guns, a people who scream fierce and frightening commands, drive tanks, strip their fathers naked in the street, overturn market stalls, break into their houses, piss on the food, arrest and torture their brothers, demolish their homes, uproot their orchards, prevent them at gun point from going to school, shoot rubber bullets that blind the eye and cripple the body. What will happen to these thousands and thousands and thousands of children who refuse to sleep alone, who pee in their beds, who live in traumatized families with no papers, no civil or national rights and nowhere to go to avoid violence? Will they pick up stones, learn how to set explosives, join a militia, go to university, join a dialogue group, leave the country, dedicate their lives to non-violent resistance, blow a hole in the Wall?

"Don't smile," Doug tells me as he tries to take a picture of a rabbi on the roof of this family's twice-demolished home. "You're sitting on a destroyed house, look serious." But I've been laughing with Jamila and her seven children on account of a funny incident involving a large sandwich that her youngest son stuffed so full that the contents spilled to the floor on the way to his open mouth. In the land of ruined houses, moments of laughter are protected with the same fervor as a queen guards her precious jewels. I survey the ruins around me and it is not difficult to recall my sorrow.

Rodney King asked the world, can't we all just get along? A Palestinian friend of mine reflects on his question as she inhales her ever-present Camel cigarette and sips the thick black coffee scented with cardamom that can take you to heaven. "Of course we can all get along. Why shouldn't we get along? Are we not human beings? We can be nice to each other. But not under the strain of occupation. It's hard to be nice when you're being occupied."

As in times past, I accompany another delegation through the maze of earth barriers, concrete blocks, sniper towers, electric fences, pointed guns, Apache helicopters and tanks trolling for trouble along the vast serpentine barrier that divides the universe into free and not free. Before long I will return home to face all kinds of audiences with whom I will try to share 40 years of witness to Palestinian struggle for human and national rights from the time I first encountered Atallah Mansour in June of 1966 in the city of Nazareth until now. Amidst the healthy barrage of questions, someone will ask me about the Wall that has become the central symbol and reality of occupation and I will share Rami's response to that same question.

Rami's daughter was murdered in Jerusalem by a suicide bomber, as she ate pizza with a friend. Over time, he joined the Bereaved Families Forum, a group of Palestinians and Jews whose loved ones were murdered as a result of occupation. Rami believes the occupation itself is responsible for the death of his daughter.

"There is no wall so high that can prevent people who want to kill each other from doing so," he said, "and there is no wall so thick that it can prevent those who choose to, from loving each other. I choose to love."

The price of loving is gaining an excruciating view of the occupation, to truly see the men, and the women, and the children on the other side of the Wall. But how can we turn away? What will happen to the future if we do?

*Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb is Director of Interfaith Inventions, Inc. in Ojai, California.*

## **40 Years of Deepening Spiritual Disorders: Can We Heal Them?**

By Rabbi Arthur Waskow

There are two profound spiritual disorders that underlie the stubborn and self-destructive attachment of Israel to the 40-year occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, and the similar attachment of some Palestinians to the use of violence to resist the occupation.

The first of these disorders is bound up in the failure of both Israelis and Palestinians to learn from the teaching of Torah, repeated over-and-over in slightly different forms, that "You must not oppress the stranger, for you know the heart of the stranger, for you were strangers in the Tight and Narrow Land."

This is of course wise teaching. But why does it appear so often? Parents and teachers know that when they must insist on a command over and over, it is because their insistence is not being followed.

Why not? Because the simplest response of the oppressed, the abused, is to garner enough power to protect themselves that they can easily fall into oppressing, abusing, another. Every moment of risk, even marginal risk, calls to mind and heart and body the most terrible moments of the past.

It arouses the post-traumatic stress in which some of us still see ourselves as powerless victims, re-experiencing extreme fear as if we were still in death camps rather than owners of one powerful state and possessors of great wealth and considerable power in another – the latter, the most powerful state in history.

Many Palestinians, seeing themselves also as victims of the past and certainly in the present, also turn to using whatever force and violence they can command, in the hope that this will protect themselves from or avenge themselves on their oppressors. This response also reproduces the experience of being abused by acting abusively and ignores the wisdom of the command to learn from being oppressed as a stranger not to oppress the stranger.

Two terribly abused peoples, thrown into a room together to act out their traumas on each other.

The Torah, out of the distilled experience and sacred wisdom of many generations, tries to teach us that this will not work. That indeed we will love our neighbors "as ourselves" – that if we treat our neighbors with violence, it will recoil upon our heads.

The second spiritual disorder is the classic one, always hovering in all peoples and all persons, of idolatry. Idols always begin as useful tools and instruments of life, and become idols only when we invest Ultimate Significance in them. In this case, many Jews have turned a tool that is useful under very limited circumstances – military force – into an idol around which we build our sense of identity and worth.

Perhaps even more insidious, some of us stand on the verge of turning the State of Israel itself – which was intended to be an important tool of Jewish self-protection and of renewing Jewish culture – into an idol.

That is why some Jews could accuse others, who had raised questions about the Ultimacy of Israel as a Jewish state, of enabling anti-Semitism or even being anti-Semites themselves. These accusations were flung even though – or even precisely because! – these same accused were making major contributions to the renewal of secular and spiritual Jewish life. Notably, most or all of these accused – Tony Kushner, Adrienne Rich, Daniel Boyarin, Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz – were involved in questioning the roles and rules of Jewish gender and sexuality. Among these "rules" were the old assumptions of male dominance and heterosexual dominance and also the rules and roles that are only a century old in Jewish life, the glorification of the military as the masculine ideal.

What is the cure for these spiritual disorders? In the short run, certainly it is struggling for political alternatives to the occupation and to the addiction of some Palestinians to violence as a way of resisting the occupation. And in the short run, one way of dealing with two traumatized peoples locked in the same room is certainly to bring into the room others from the international community – especially the United States – with far more compassion for both peoples than has been the case so far.

AND – in the longer run, spiritual disorders can only be addressed by lifting up truthful spiritual alternatives – which means devotion to the One, the Breath of Life, Who intertwines all peoples and all life-forms on our planet.

The only way to restore the state of Israel to its rightful and reasonable place as a tool, an instrument, of Jewish self-protection and renewal is to lift our eyes to a sacred task beyond ourselves.

The Jewish people created Israel in order both to protect Jews and renew Jewish culture. In the 21st century, the greatest danger to Jewish survival is not a danger to Jews alone but one we share with all other peoples and all the other life-forms. It is the human race's self-destructive attack upon the planet that sustains us.

There are within Jewish culture as we have known it – our symbols and metaphors, our festivals and life-cycle rituals, our sacred texts and daily practices – the threads of a transformed Jewish culture. We could from these threads weave a new Jewish culture that could work alongside other cultures to affirm our earth. We could from these threads weave the tzitzit – the fringes on the corners of our garments – that could connect us in peace with our neighbors.

All we have is threads, so far. The weaving of a new sacred garment of Jewish peoplehood is up to us.

*Rabbi Arthur Waskow is an author and Director of The Shalom Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

## How Long Are We Going to Get Banners and Trumpets?

By Rabbi Joey Wolf

שׁוֹפָר קוֹל אֲשֶׁמְעָה נִס אֲרָאָה מִתִּי עַד

“How long are we going to get banners and trumpets?”

In this passage from Jeremiah (4:21), the prophet laments the way the people flaunted the symbols of victory. In his mind, they celebrated a success that raised as many doubts as it brought vindication. In this sense, flattery and self-congratulation stand in the way of wisdom.

Four decades after the Six-Day War, the televised spectacle that defined a Jewish generation’s relationship with the State of Israel, we can look back and wonder about how it captivated us, seeped into our pores. Time gets compressed, and we can feel how only yesterday, it seems, we were convulsed by the worries that Israel would be destroyed by invading armies. And then, by the minute, came news of triumphs that would reverse the fear, bring tears of relief. We watched the expert commentators draw the maps that would redefine the shape of a country in biblical terms. We were regaled with battlefield heroics that July and August, told of a conflict of mythic proportions, even while in America, we basked in a summer of love. The metaphors mixed and reverberated in our souls for years after.

In fact, over many seasons of joy and disappointment, and wars yet to be endured, we came to understand that with victory comes a level of self-realization: It’s a good thing, on the one hand, to stop thinking of one’s people as victims. Yet on the other hand, the switch to embracing a perception that we are powerful requires an ethical transformation, as making victims of others undermines everything that was accomplished. The loss of dreams and ideals sabotages a society. The grief of knowing that in making history we erase another’s cultural geography spills over us like salt on old wounds. Only fools parade their generals through the checkpoints of the downtrodden, without paying attention. To win respect was a good thing; to vanquish and deny others their hopes, a dereliction of our duty not to foster in others the feeling that they must live *their* lives as victims.

Jeremiah used the term *neys*, commonly associated with “miracle” – to mean “banner”. Originally, it connoted some kind of signal or emblem, but in rabbinic literature it conveyed a manifestation of the divine in and around the workings of time and what we come to identify as *history*. The prayer, *Al Ha-Nissim*, recited at Chanukah and Purim, resonates with the Jewish sense that moments we experience as high, cathartic points in the collective drama are freighted with underlying anxiety and fear. Especially, the reversals and intermingling of destinies are cause for gratitude and caution, acknowledgment of good fortune and the need to bring repair to a world around us that has, simultaneously, come undone.

It has taken us 40 years (and even that has been insufficient for some) to come into an awareness of our power. And, subsequently, we have willingly allowed ourselves to become entangled as occupiers of others.

It is, therefore, fitting that we say make an insertion in *Al Ha-Nissim* (a prayer appended to the *Amida* prayer on certain occasions) for the Anniversary of the Six-Day War and the beginning of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, praying the following:

For the miracles (the signs of power), the relief, the deliverance, the redemption, and, yes, the battles You fought for our Ancestors of old, in those days, and over the course of history. When nations surrounded us and refused to recognize our travail, our lyrical journey out of darkness and oppression, and instead, outnumbered us and entered into treaties to destroy us . . . You taught us to defend ourselves, turning new citizens into courageous soldiers and skillful pilots, and led us to ancient landmarks and encounters with places that brought tears to our eyes for reasons that even today we are unsure of. And we donned the dress of long-ago destroyed temples and tombs and ancient destinations, when only a moment ago we were naked and homeless. And we delighted at the expense of others who watched and ached and were humiliated. For all these things, may we recognize that Your Holiness is overwhelming and mysterious . . . and something we must acknowledge as belonging to all of Your creatures. Because we have experienced it right now, we know that it is others' to experience as well. And that in the future a place will be blessed by more than one people's story, and expressions of gratitude will be on everyone's lips.

*Joey Wolf is Rabbi of Havurah Shalom in Portland, Oregon.*

## **Sights I Did Not Want to See; Feelings I Did Not Want to Feel**

By Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman

A few months before the second intifada began, I traveled to Gaza. I was studying for the year in Jerusalem and wanted to see the Israeli occupation with my own eyes. I had a clear idea of what it meant for Israelis, but I wanted to try to understand what it meant for Palestinians.

To understand the Israeli occupation meant to open my eyes to sights that I did not want to see and to open my heart to feelings that I did not want to feel. Having grown up with the myths of Israel as the state that can do no wrong, this is an acutely painful process.

As I walked through the cramped, filthy refugee camp, I felt despair, anger, and shame. This was not part of my childhood stories. This was not part of my childhood dream that had seemed so simple and absolute. This was the harsh reality of occupation – of desperation, hunger, and relentless military rule.

Gaza can best be described as a prison – one million people locked up on a tiny scrap of land. One million people with nowhere to go. I walked into one of the dismal dwellings – two small rooms and home to 13 people. I sat on the floor as my hosts told me stories of Israeli raids, of indiscriminate shooting, of family members taken away: stories of closed borders, checkpoints, and curfews. Fear and anger hung uneasily in the air. A young woman passed me a piece of paper with her name and telephone number scrawled on it. “Help me get out,” she whispered.

I loved living in Israel, and I feel a strong connection to the land and people. But I no longer feel defensive when I hear criticism of Israel. My experiences in Gaza moved me past that all too easy reaction of shutting down in the face of that criticism. It is deeply uncomfortable to open my eyes to sights that I do not want to see and to open my heart to feelings that we do not want to feel. But how can I do otherwise?

Both Israelis and Palestinians have perpetrated violence against the other, and both have endured terrible losses. But there is no parity between the two. There is no symmetry between the occupier and the occupied. Israel has occupied Palestinian lands for 40 years. It has systematically violated international law. It has built illegal settlements, demolished homes, confiscated land, destroyed the infrastructure, shattered the economy, and engaged in widespread torture and assassinations. For this we must hold Israel accountable. And from this we must not turn away.

On this fortieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation, we can accept the myths of our childhood, or we can see things that we do not want to see and feel things that we do not want to feel. We can challenge orthodoxies and put forth new visions. It is time to move beyond what is comfortable and commit ourselves anew to ending the Israeli occupation.

*Laurie Zimmerman is Rabbi of Congregation Shaarei Shamayim in Madison, Wisconsin.*

# The Withering of the Zionist Dream: Reflections on the Occupation after 40 Years

By Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller

Herein 13 propositions about the impact of the occupation:

1. Yeshayahu Leibowitz was right, as was Ben Gurion. Both predicted in June '67 that ruling over a recalcitrant Arab civilian population would corrupt the Israeli people, who would be cast into the role of occupiers.
2. Our Zionist dream of building a liberal democracy grounded in the Judaic-prophetic tradition that recognizes the image of God in every human being has been compromised by the settlement movement. Even if you accept the arguable assertion that there never was a possibility for a negotiated settlement, it was absolutely unnecessary for Israel to engage in a settlement initiative (building settlements). Security is maintained by an army, not by civilian outposts, towns and cities implanted amidst a hostile Palestinian population. There were two options: pursuit of a settlement (negotiated) or of settlements. Israel chose to focus its energy – financial, military, infrastructure development, human resources – on the latter.
3. The settlements and the occupation that they entail are an illegal endeavor that has earned the scorn of all democratic countries and has been judged to be in violation of the Geneva Convention by all but a handful of international legal scholars, thereby rendering Israel an international outlaw.
4. Justice for the Palestinians within the occupied territories is determined by the military and not by Israel's democratic law. In practical terms, this means that within the territories controlled by Israel on the West Bank, two systems of justice are employed: one for the Israeli settlers and one for the occupied population. In addition, there are now separate roads for use only by Israelis to protect them from Palestinian ambush. All of the above calls into question and may well undermine Israel's claim to being the only functioning democracy in the Middle East.
5. The settlements have raised doubts as to the legitimacy of the State of Israel. By claiming that Ofra and Shilo are the equivalent of Haifa and Tel Aviv, the irresponsible messianists and government officials who mouth these inanities have reopened the argument over the partition agreement, which is the internationally recognized basis for the establishment of the State.
6. The demographic time bomb argument is itself an indicator of the ethical taint that the occupation has occasioned. We justify a compromise proposal not on the moral grounds that Palestinians are due a national entity just as we are, but because Palestinians as an ethnic group represent a demographic threat to Israel's Jewish majority. Implicit in this claim is, of course, the understanding that if this were not so we would certainly keep it all.
7. The settlement movement was initiated by messianic zealots whose apocalyptic thinking has permeated all sectors of Judaism – including the secular. It has fomented violence, inured Israelis to the humiliation of another people and led some Jews to promote "murder in the name of God."

8. The occupation has had a devastating effect on the Israeli military, turning a once-vaunted force into little more than a police riot squad, and thus impairing the IDF's performance in Lebanon. It has also transformed every Israeli 18 year old willy nilly into a perceived oppressor.
9. The occupation has left a trail of abuse and persecution – house demolitions, late night searches, land confiscation, destruction of olive groves, etc.– leading to the gradual dissolution of the Palestinian way of life. It has succeeded in creating a new generation of Arabs that hates Israel with unprecedented ferocity.
10. We, the people who enshrined human rights in our classic teachings have, as a result of the occupation and its ensuing policies, become a universal human rights offender, castigated again and again by respectable organizations including our own. (There is no longer any point in enumerating all the Israeli human rights agencies as if their mere existence is a sign of virtue. And regarding the international watchdogs, it is simply offensive and perhaps immoral to dismiss their criticism as the product of anti-Semitism).
11. The occupation has made us a more parochial people, introducing a fearful sense of isolation and abandonment that has occasioned, in turn, the narrowing of our Jewish vision.
12. The period from 1948-67 established Israel as a fact. The interval between 1967 and 2007 has established that the freedom and dignity of Israel's citizens is incomplete as long as there is no concomitant freedom and dignity for Palestinians.
13. A concluding thought: Forty years ago, Menachem Begin sent his friend, Harry Horwitz, to the U.S. to unfold the settlement plan before the American Jewish community. At a presentation that he made to Federation board members in Los Angeles, the assembled guests sat impassively and listened, not reacting at all; no one flinched as the details were laid out fully with maps and charts. In other words, we sat idly by. We must then accept part of the blame for destroying the dream of an Israel that is the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of a land flowing with justice and righteousness (“milk and honey”).

The occupation is the greatest catastrophe to befall the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The settlers and the compliant Israeli governments that have supported them have succeeded in overturning two thousand years of a tradition of justice for the ‘other’ and in transforming the Jewish people into an oppressive occupier. The settlement movement has corrupted the people of Israel to the point that the ideals that inspired the creation of Israel have withered and the moral voice of the Jewish tradition has been compromised. The occupation is the most un-Jewish of projects and from a religious perspective it is a *hilul haShem* – a desecration of the Name. We all bear the burden of guilt and can gain atonement by devoting our considerable energies to the struggle to end the occupation. Otherwise, into the future, the State of Israel will remain as a reminder to humanity not that a people has risen from the ashes with a vision of hope and justice, but that, given the opportunity, the Jewish people has acted no differently from any other conquering power.

I have sadly joined the *aveilei tziyon* and cry for Zion daily as part of my *teshuva*. Not only does the future of Israel hang in the balance but the future of a principled and just Judaism does, as well.

*Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller is Director of the UCLA Hillel.*

## On the Anniversary of the Occupation

By Rabbi Steven B. Jacobs

Claire Luce Booth some time ago reported a frank conversation with a Jewish friend. Booth said, "I must admit being positively bored by all of this talk of the Holocaust and its constant repetition of Jewish suffering." The Jewish friend replied, "I know how you feel. I feel exactly the same way about the Crucifixion."

Each of them would have liked to see the other's story go away. But neither will. Golgotha and Auschwitz, the Crucifixion and the Holocaust, neither will go away. Nor will the occupation and Palestinians' fears, the occupation and the dreams and fears of Israelis – much as both sides might wish they would.

It is easy to damn the occupation, but each side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict brings to the table a very different narrative. Each story – including our own – must be confronted and understood if any progress is to be made.

The Land of Israel holds a sacred place in the words of the Torah, and for many in the Jewish community, these roots justify any act we may take in our Biblical homeland. For many Christians also, church doctrine gives Israel the right to occupy. Some of my evangelical friends say that because Israel was God's chosen nation, America should accept all of Israel's shortcomings. With the threat of Armageddon looming, fear is rampant. The dialogue here in America is more tense than at any other time in recent history.

But the truth is that Jewish roots, Christian doctrine and the fact of the actual occupation are getting in the way of peace in the Middle East.

I once traveled with Reverend Jesse Jackson on an interfaith mission to Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Ramallah where we met with the late PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. Subsequently, after the first war in Lebanon, we visited with the president of Syria, viewed the destruction of Lebanon and met with leaders in Beirut, Jerusalem, Jericho, and Ramallah again. We talked with ordinary citizens in each city. And the stories they told were vastly different.

Different, save for one unifying factor: The people of the Middle East desperately want peace – and they do not trust their leaders.

We can find hope in the Jewish peace activists here and in Israel, as well as the new Christian Covenant formulated among American churches. It offers love and forgiveness to all people regardless of politics or nationality.

When we can accept the narrative that all are God's chosen people, we might have a chance to end the occupation. We must penetrate the darkness with light.

*Steven B. Jacobs is Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Kol Tikvah in Woodland, California.*

## June 2007

By Rabbi Jonathan W. Malino

Forty years  
Six days

Dreams and hopes  
Disappointment and despair  
Perplexity and bewilderment

In Six days God created the world  
In Forty  
He washed it away  
Hoping for better results

In Six days God created the world  
For Forty  
He stuck Moses on a mountaintop  
Frightened Israelites  
Danced about a golden calf

In Six days God created the world  
For Forty  
Years  
Israel wandered the wilderness  
The timid died off  
A new generation  
Entered the Promised Land

In Six days  
Israel conquered Sinai, Gaza, Jerusalem, Hebron, Shechem, Jericho, Bethlehem, Beit El  
For Forty  
Years  
Israel built settlements and roads  
Stole land and water  
Uprooted trees  
Established checkpoints  
Controlled Movement  
Livelihood  
Education  
Health  
Crushed lives

In Six days  
Israel conquered  
The Promised Land  
For Forty years it wandered  
The wilderness of politics  
Without Moses or Joshua  
With nightmares of Amalekites

Creation 6  
Flood 40  
Mt. Sinai 40  
Desert 40  
War 6  
Occupation 40

***Let my people go***

*Rabbi Jonathan Malino is a professor of philosophy at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina.*

## Forty Years Later

By Rabbi David Jonathan Cooper

In our Zionist family, it was the tradition that as the children reached the age of 16, they would go that summer on a tour of Israel for several weeks. As my 16th birthday approached in 1967, I was preparing for my trip while following news of a possible impending war. We were supposed to arrive in Israel in late June, but by the first of the month, our trip was cancelled because war seemed inevitable. By June 15, the trip was rescheduled in the wake of Israel's victory in the Six-Day War.

And thus, I docked in Haifa just three weeks after the war ended. Our itinerary was completely changed: we would see the Western Wall, Bethlehem, even Gaza, all places where my older siblings had never gone. The word was, "Go now! These territories are bargaining chips for peace, so they may not be in Israeli hands for long."

As the weeks advanced, surrounded by songs like "Yerushalayim shel Zahav" and "Sharm el Sheikh," I found myself becoming uneasy for reasons that I could not then put into words. As I rode into Gaza in a bus on the first day that the city was open to tourists, this feeling of unease increased. My fellow tourists were gloating – as I had been before – and the people outside on the streets looked defeated and forlorn. I couldn't gloat for the rest of the summer and I could not express why. I was relieved that Israel had been preserved, but that we should take such smug satisfaction in the defeat of these people seemed at odds with my sense of justice.

I returned home and followed the news closely. Military outposts were built in the territories. This bothered me, since it seemed to indicate that the occupation of the conquered lands would go on longer than I had been led to believe that summer. Then after some time, civilians moved into settlements, and I became dismayed. "If we take over the territories and make them part of Israel, where are our bargaining chips?" I asked. My elders explained that the Israeli government knew what I did not know.

Like many of the cases when I was told, as a kid, that I would "understand" when I was older, it turns out that I was onto something significant. My opposition to the settlements began then – I was afraid that they would derail any efforts toward peace. At the time, it must be remembered, the number of settlements, and their size, was only a small fraction of what they are now, and that was over 35 years ago.

Though our numbers were initially small, I was never alone in my opposition to the settlement project. I am now a rabbi of a congregation serving over 400 households, and my synagogue affirmed its support for a two-state solution fully 20 years ago. Four years ago, we voted for a document called Brit Shalom (see [kehillasyagogue.org](http://kehillasyagogue.org)) calling on both sides of the conflict to negotiate, to stop the violence and to recognize the aspirations of the other and the pains that they have suffered. Peace and justice for both Israelis and Palestinians still require that the settlement project ends, that the settlers return to Israel, and that there be two states with self-determination, autonomy, dignity, security, and the opportunity for meaningful economic development. Then all can gloat over our accomplishments together.

*David Jonathan Cooper is Rabbi of Kehilla Community Synagogue in Berkeley, California.*

# Brit Tzedek Leadership Reflections on the Occupation

## Are 40 Years of Occupation Enough?

By Marcia Freedman

Israel celebrated the 59th anniversary of its founding just recently. On June 5 we mark 40 years of occupation of Arab lands captured in the 1967 war. That is, for two-thirds of its 59 years of its existence as a sovereign state, Israel has been an occupying power.

Though Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, it still occupies East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. In Gaza, even without settlements, Israel continues to control all movement in and out of the Strip and is legally the occupying power. In all the other territories, Israel has built neighborhoods, large and ever-expanding settlements and at least one entire city (Ariel, some 10 miles inside the West Bank).

Two of Israel's three post-state generations have grown up with the fact of occupation as a norm, serving in an army of occupation, visiting friends and families living in settlements, and slowly erasing the Green Line, the pre-1967 border, from consciousness. Traveling through Israel today, it is impossible to know where Israel-proper ends and where occupied territory begins.

Yet, for all that, a growing consensus has taken hold that an end of conflict can be achieved only through a land-for-peace formula culminating in the establishment of a Palestinian State alongside Israel; the great majority of Israelis are prepared to withdraw from most of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights in return for an enduring peace.

Since 1967, the Israeli leadership has been caught between these polar opposites, listing for decades between support for the settler movement, even as the politicians profess to seek peace. The resulting paralysis has made it easy for the very determined settler movement to expand its hold, not only over territory but also over the government's bureaucracies, which now routinely feed the movement's endless appetite for more land, more infrastructure, more housing, more subsidies.

And so, while it is true that Israel's neighbors have not always been willing to negotiate, even when they have been, they have not been met – contrary to conventional wisdom – with similar willingness on the Israeli side.

This was certainly true in 1972 when the Egyptians put forth a land-for-peace option, and Golda Meir's government rejected it, leading to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It was true again in 2000, when Ehud Barak broke off negotiations with Syria over a few disputed miles of the Sea of Galilee's shoreline, and again later that same year, when the Israeli-Palestinian Camp David negotiations broke down – not, as we've been told, because of Palestinian refusal to accept a "generous offer," but as a result of intransigence on both sides. Within months, the Second Intifada had begun.

This aversion to negotiation continued to hold sway in 2004 and 2005, when Ariel Sharon refused to recognize the opportunity presented by Yasser Arafat's death, and subsequent rise to leadership of the moderate leader Mahmoud Abbas; a bloody escalation of violence ensued, Hamas was elected to head the Palestinian Authority, and Israel's south now faces regular rocket attacks. Today, Ehud Olmert refuses to respond positively to clear

and open overtures by Syria and the Arab League, and experts ponder the likelihood of another war with Syria. Active maintenance of the settlement enterprise continues to trump the pursuit of peace.

One major casualty of 40 years of occupation has been the decades-long weakening of Israel's political, military and moral fabric. Last summer's Lebanon War, and Israel's failure either to win or to defend the home front shredded what remained of the public's confidence in its leaders, political, military and moral. The interim report of the Winograd Commission's investigation into the conduct of the war has confirmed, loudly and publicly, that Israel's security has been seriously compromised, that its leadership has failed the country badly, and that none of this can be easily fixed.

But there is one significant change in the political mood as a result of all these grim tidings: The Second Lebanese War finally raised questions in the public's mind about whether Israel can, in fact, rely solely on military might to guarantee its security. There is a sense of vulnerability that never existed before, which may create a more welcoming attitude to the possibility of a negotiated resolution – though such a prospect most definitely would require the kind of willingness for serious territorial compromise that Israel's leadership has chronically lacked. Ironically, a somewhat weaker Israel from the military point of view may mean a stronger Israel as a negotiating partner.

Is Israel ready for peace? Certainly its people are, and have been for quite a long time. Can Israel's political leadership find the courage, the foresight, the vision to move in that direction? One can only hope so. Israel's friends do it no favors by encouraging further intransigence and missed opportunities for a negotiated solution to decades of conflict.

Time is not on Israel's side. The settler population grows, and the settlements and new neighborhoods take up more and more Palestinian land. So, too, does the Palestinian population grow, and thus the space for compromise shrinks from one year to the next. There are many who think that it is already too late for a viable two-state solution; that is not yet the case, but the fact is that the danger grows with each passing year of occupation and settlement expansion.

So, as we celebrate Israel's independence, let us also wish it a speedy end to the occupation.

*Marcia Freedman, a former Knesset member, is founding President of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom.*

## 40 Years After the Six-Day War: The Enduring Legacy of The Seventh Day

By Steven David Masters

Four years ago, when Israel's cabinet considered the Road Map for Peace that was presented by the Middle East Quartet (the UN, US, EU and Russia), then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stunned the world by uttering these words:

You cannot like the word, but what is happening is an occupation – to hold 3.5 million Palestinians under occupation. I believe that is a terrible thing for Israel and for the Palestinians. It can't continue endlessly. Do you want to stay forever in Jenin, in Nablus, in Ramallah, in Bethlehem? I don't think that's right.

Sharon's statement seemed to settle the moral debate that had long been raging in Israel over the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Outside of the religious nationalist camp, there was now a wide consensus, from the left to the right, that the occupation which began with the Six-Day War was destroying Israel, just as surely as it has devastated the lives of the Palestinians.

But a book nearly as old as the occupation itself demonstrates that many have known this all along.

Conventional wisdom has it that Israelis were slow to see this truth, and that in the heady days following the Six-Day War, only triumphant voices were heard, celebrating the lightning-fast vanquishing of surrounding Arab armies and conquest of Palestinian land. For Israeli society as a whole this may have been true, but it was not so for many of the very conquerors themselves, the combatants who fought and won the war.

The first signs of the ethical debate that consumes Israeli society today were seen in a remarkable book published by the United Kibbutz movement only months after the conclusion of the war, in October 1967. In Hebrew the book was titled *Siah Lohamim*, and in translation, *The Seventh Day: Soldiers Talk about the Six-Day War*.

*The Seventh Day* was commissioned three weeks after the war ended by Dov Tzamer, the general secretary of the United Kibbutz movement. He wanted to create a memorial to those fallen in the war that would capture the complex mixture of sadness and euphoria that had not yet been given a public voice. The principal authors were rising literary stars and kibbutzniks Amos Oz and Avraham Shapira. They in turn enlisted other future literary figures on the kibbutz scene, including Muki Tzur and Abba Kovner.

The book consisted of interviews with combatants from more than 20 kibbutzim, and it presented a picture sharply divergent from the public mood, as expressed in the popular songs and books that came out of the war. Through their candid and thoughtful conversations, the kibbutz combatants of *The Seventh Day* revealed a hitherto unuttered soul searching, moral questioning and lack of certainty – an entirely new dimension to the post-war debate engaging Israelis over the wisdom of maintaining the occupation.

*The Seventh Day* is a remarkable work on several levels. Initially printed in small numbers with the intention of modest sales to kibbutzim, the book quickly became a literary sensation, shattering the myth that the nation had no desire to look for a deeper understanding of the implications of its transformation into an occupying power, controlling the lives of nearly a million Palestinians.

Beyond the sheer power of the soldiers' conversations, the book also contains the seeds of the social movements that would come to dominate Israeli politics. Ten years after its publication, its authors would go on to found Shalom Achshav ("Peace Now"), the leading edge of the "land for peace" movement in Israel. And in an ironic twist, the future leaders of the orthodox Gush Emunim movement (proponents of the "Greater Israel" ideology) foreshadowed their messianic quest to settle and dominate the occupied territories in a series of interviews at the Mercaz Harav yeshiva that were intentionally kept out of the book.

A few brief excerpts from *The Seventh Day* give a clear sense of the power of these combatants' voices, of their surprising wrestling with the war's morality and meaning.

At Kibbutz Gat, a fighter named Amnon shared his images of Gaza:

In Sinai, in the last round, I was in Gaza. And I remember one picture ... we drove down the main street. The people stood at the entrances to their houses and clapped. Slowly. As if they were being forced to do so. It was a disgusting image ... I remembered all the pictures and movies I'd seen of occupying armies, and it was an amazingly shitty feeling.

In an interview at Kibbutz Ein Shemer, Avishai Grossman prophesized the next war:

There are those who are trying to convince themselves. They argue and claim that this is the end and the Arabs are finished ... we are holding territories in which there is a deeply rooted Arab population ... the hatred of the Arab community toward us will be more serious and much deeper. Therefore, the war that comes next will be far more ruthless and there will be far more casualties.

At Kibbutz Geva, Amos Oz shared his search for the war's meaning:

One of the men from [Kibbutz] Hulda died during the war ... When I came back from the war, I went to see his parents. A few of the kibbutz members were there and the mother was crying. The father was biting his lips to hold back his tears. One of the older members tried to comfort them: "Look, after all, we've liberated Jerusalem," he said, "he didn't die for nothing." The mother burst into sobs and said, "The whole of the Western Wall isn't worth Micha's little finger as far as I'm concerned." ... If what you're telling me is that we fought for our existence, then I'd say it was worth his little finger. Say what you like – I do have a feeling for those stones – but they're only stones. And Micha was a person. A man. If dynamiting the Western Wall today would bring Micha back to life, then I'd say "Blow it up!" That's how I feel about it. ... Today, I'm completely opposed to all this myth of lands crying out and places calling for liberation. It's worth dying to liberate people. But to liberate places? It's not worth anyone's little finger.

The conversations with orthodox combatants were eventually published in the kibbutz journal *Shdemot*; in his book *In the Land of Israel*, Amos Oz related how he felt when he first read the transcripts:

It was a shocking encounter. The Seventh Day people went with the hope of finding allies against the sentiment that was sweeping the country after the military victory, the nationalistic drunkenness and the general worshipping, the orgies of victory. They came back from their meeting downcast and mourning. ...

And not only were the Merkaz Harav people speaking a different language, not one of them understood what pained us, what our moral problem was. ... To them, the Arab people under our control were not even there, as if they were never born.

The evolving national consensus in Israel against the occupation is the result of a series of clashes between the peace camp and the religious nationalist camp that stand behind many of the defining moments of the last 40 years of Israeli politics. That the essence of each movement was captured in *The Seventh Day* is surely a testament to its enduring value in Israeli historiography; as we mark the 40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, we would do well to heed those once-young soldiers who knew, even then, that untangling Israel from the occupation was the only way to bring peace.

*Steven David Masters is President-elect of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom and an attorney for the Philadelphia City Council.*

## Moments in a 40-Year Journey to Peace Activism

By Aliza Becker

**1967.** With the Six-Day War, Israel changed forever for me, from a faraway land where my cousins romped in shorts and sandals, to a place everyone seemed to know about and celebrate. I was a young girl at the time, and my brother and I responded in a particularly American way to the news of the Israeli victory: We opened a lemonade stand to benefit Israel a few days after the war ended. We got a lot of praise from our proud neighbors, particularly the men. One gave us a five-dollar bill for a five-cent cup.

I was not so interested in Israel's daring military exploits, which I felt were more of a "boy" thing. But I loved looking at the photo of my great aunt and uncle holding their kibbutz-harvested grapes, and listening to my grandfather talk to a captivated audience of family members around his dining room table about draining swamps, building roads, and planting orange groves in the desert so that Jews might live in dignity.

**1977.** In college one day, I was walking past student organization tables when I saw a poster with a stark, grainy photo of corpses that immediately made me think of the Holocaust – but instead of mourning Jews, I discovered, this group was trashing Israel, in sharp contrast to the heroic stories I had grown up with. How could a student group that claimed to be fighting for justice be so confused about who was the victim? I began to tremble.

Afterwards I allowed myself to wonder if there could be a shred of truth in this leftist group's rhetoric. To learn more, I signed up for an independent study course with an Israeli graduate student. He had me read books of revisionist history that introduced me to a more critical version of Israel's story, including the occupation, but I couldn't emotionally reconcile what I was reading with what I already "knew." I did what was required to finish the course, then tried to forget.

**1987.** I was active in New Jewish Agenda, a progressive Jewish organization, but had intentionally avoided their Middle East peace-related work. When a friend asked me to help her at the first meeting of a Jewish-Palestinian dialogue group, I volunteered, not knowing that I would be drawn in for the next five years. I listened attentively to the Palestinian members, and was painfully struck by the fact that the occupation had fomented among young Palestinians a virulent hatred for Israelis and Jews, whom they saw as one in the same. I struggled with many questions. How could I feel pride as a Jew, for my people and the Zionist dream, and simultaneously acknowledge the Palestinian narrative?

I didn't know what to do with my increasing store of knowledge. It felt good to make friends with my supposed enemy, but like many, I couldn't help but wonder what would happen if we made peace and it turned out to be a trick and they wanted us gone altogether. I had all of this information at my fingertips, yet the existential battle continued to plague me.

**1997.** In an effort to better understand the lives of my extended Israeli family, I visited Israel three times in five years. I was not able to consider making peace activism a priority until I could hold in my heart a great love for my people, develop a deeper understanding of Israeli life, and build confidence in my ability to trust my thinking on a conflict whose complexity can seem overwhelming.

**2002.** I went on a tour of the West Bank as the second intifadah raged. We met with Palestinians whose homes were destroyed and olive trees cut down; they pleaded with us as American Jews to do something. At the same time, my young cousin was in a tank in Gaza, doing his compulsory military service. My family was hysterical with concern about his safety, counting the days to his discharge.

Several of us who traveled that spring went on to found Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, hoping to give American Jews a place to work for peace in which we could care about both Israelis and Palestinians. More importantly, it was a place where we could be serious about taking a lead in the efforts to end the conflict. We set out to build a movement that would change US foreign policy, with a systematic long-range plan of advocacy in Washington and grassroots base-building.

**2007.** Five years into Brit Tzedek, we've made enormous progress. I wish we could end today's horror more quickly, but it is slow work winning over allies in the government and among the Jewish community, especially in the context of rapidly changing current events. Yet I know that with persistence we can do it.

From my struggle of nearly 40 years on the road to peace activism, I have learned four important lessons that I believe are critical to our success:

1. We Jews need a place to talk among ourselves, so that we can separate our thinking about the reality of the situation from the emotions that can distort our understanding.
2. We need to reclaim a vision of peace and prosperity for the people of the region, and not simply resign our hopes for present and future generations to "violence management."
3. We have to gain the confidence that we do, in fact, know enough to get involved; we can trust our thinking. There are probably more "experts" on this conflict than any other, yet it rages on.
4. Each one of us can take responsibility to make a difference in ending this conflict. It doesn't matter whose fault it is. What matters is that we decide to resolve it.

*Aliza Becker is Deputy Director of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom.*

## A Moment When We Learned How to Hope

By Carinne Luck

I went with my mum to see a play recently. The play, *Journey's End*, is set in the trenches during WWI and presents the lives of a British company of soldiers living there, as they struggle with the inanity and insanities of war and share dreams for a future they know they will not see. The play is loud – the last three minutes consist of shelling sounds as the lights on the stage go down – and we know that the soldier-actors who have become our friends have not survived.

At the end of the play, my Israeli mum sat in the theatre, shaking. She was born in 1956, and the realities of the wars that followed were the realities of teachers and friends who never returned from their duties. She remembers bagging sandbags. She remembers hearing sirens. She remembers bomb shelters.

The Six-Day War was not the worst war, as far as she is concerned. It was quick and relatively easy. The casualties and fatalities were far fewer than they were only six years later; it is the Yom Kippur war that causes my mother to shake. Her feelings about the Six-Day are far less tortured.

After Israel's '67 victory, my mum and her siblings, like so many Israeli children that summer, were loaded into a truck and driven to Jerusalem to see the bedrock of Judaism. She remembers that moment – remembers how she tried to soak in that momentous feeling, although, let's face it, to an 11-year-old it was still just a wall. Interestingly for a peacenik, she remembers – fondly – the picture of Ariel Sharon and others, seeing the wall for the first time, and that is the memory that causes her voice to quiver. "He was so handsome," she always says. "Look at his eyes as he sees the wall . . . just imagine that feeling."

I do not like to play at war. But I have pretended to be Sharon at that wall on that day; the man who caused so much damage to the Jewish people, at the foundations of Jewish history. Not an ogre – not yet. A handsome man who fought a well-fought battle and won, returning our history to us. Imagining that moment makes my heart beat faster and places a solid lump in my throat. *Just imagine that feeling.*

This is what 1967 means to me; the settlements that followed, the occupation, our new walls, these are the results of choices made – of policies and politics and politicians. But 1967 and the Six-Day War, that is about Ariel Sharon and *that* picture. It is about my mum in a car on her way to Jerusalem in what would be her Bat Mitzvah dress. It is about a moment when the Jews of Israel took a breath and learned how to smile and learned how to hope.

I mourn for that moment. I work for its second coming.

*Carinne Luck is Director of Grassroots and Chapter Development at Brit Tzedek v'Shalom.*

# Palestinian American Reflections on the Occupation

## **Palestinians and Israelis Must "Go back to the future"**

By Ray Hanania

I often hear people sigh: If only we could go back to 1967. Somehow, we believe, today's life might be so much different. Maybe better, given what we've gone through since 1967 and what we've all learned, or not learned.

In a way, the 1967 war is a reminder of how things could have been – two de facto states prior to the war— had Arabs and Israelis been on the same page.

But that is our tragedy. Palestinians and Israelis are never in the same place at the same time. When Israelis are pushing for peace, Palestinians are pushing for conflict. When Palestinians are pushing for peace, Israelis are pushing for conflict.

The 1967 war is more than just a bad memory. For Palestinians, it's a benchmark that only reminds us that things continue to worsen, a memory that only feeds feelings of anguish and hatred and fuels the drive for revenge and vengeance. It's a mental quagmire that cannot be resolved, a Gordian Knot that cannot be unraveled. For Arabs, moreover, the 1967 War is not just about occupation of Palestinian lands – it's about the humiliation of being so firmly defeated by a state believed weak and transitory. This humiliation only adds to the Gordian Knot. Indeed, it's like pouring glue onto the knot, making it that much more difficult to unravel.

Yet we continue to try. We continue to think that if we could only unwind the knot and lay out the strings, we might be able to restore something.

But what would we really restore? A past that was as bad then as it is today?

The truth is that both sides see 1967 in their own way, using the past as a basis for how we move forward in the future. The past haunts us and holds us prisoner.

We have even taken to using a term that describes this mental rut, not even realizing that Palestinians and Israelis share a "One-State of Mind Mentality." It's called "The Narrative."

We Palestinians have our narrative and Israelis have their own narrative. Most of the time, both sides waste their time arguing about "narratives." Past. History. We don't learn from history – we use history to inflict more conflict upon ourselves.

If we are to be freed from this prison, though, we must do something entirely different: We must stop using the past to justify our actions today.

We need to look forward and try, as difficult as it might be, to form a new vision for the future, a vision is based on the only solution to the conflict: Two states. One Israel. One Palestine.

There is no other answer. There is no other solution.

Aside from the tragedy of the conflicts that have grown out of the 1967 War, which is in fact something that grew out of 1947-48, we have also allowed an "Industry of Cause" to evolve.

Without even realizing it, we Palestinians and Israelis have sat back while an entire new industry has risen from the ashes of the 1967 war that serves to continue to feed the conflict.

There are organizations and theories and strategies and visions that have grown out of the 1967 War and the occupation. We are occupied with being occupied; it has become a way of life. We exist in part because the occupation exists.

We need to recognize that we are engaged in something that neither side can easily walk away from because it has become our lifestyle. We need an intervention. We need to be made to understand that this "Occupation of Occupation" must end. We need to create a new profession, one based on peace, not conflict. An occupation based on building a future rather than debating the past.

We need to learn history's lessons, but must stop using the past as the justification for each time we strike out to harm each other.

Justice and fairness are not about whether the border is here or there. They are about addressing each side as human beings, recognizing that we all have feelings, that we all have needs, that we all must be respected.

Once we start respecting each other, we might find a way out of the conflict.

Until then, the 1967 War and the occupation will define who we are. The 1967 War has already told us where we are headed: a dead-end with no solution in sight.

Let's go back to the future together, and leave the past. Let's define a new vision and work towards that as our shared goal, rather than a past that is our shared tragedy.

*Ray Hanania is a Palestinian American syndicated columnist, author, and standup comedian based in Chicago, Illinois.*

## It Doesn't Have to Be This Way

By Saffiya Shillo

Just before the 1967 war, my uncle arrived from the West Bank to my family's Chicago home. He came to America to earn money for the wife and five children he had left behind, to give them a better life. Life was very difficult, he said. There was a sense of impending doom looming over our people since the 1948 Al-Nakba ("the catastrophe" in Arabic). The United Nations Relief and Works Agency had set up a refugee camp in our family's village on the West Bank following Al-Nakba, and many others who had escaped the war settled outside of the camp, taking over abandoned houses. It was difficult with so many people competing for scarce resources.

My uncle was my first real connection to my homeland – to Palestine – with his stories of both the beauty and misery that abounded. My mother had very limited contact with her family after she left for the US in 1954; there were no phones and only occasional letters that took months to arrive. My uncle spoke of the deep blue sky, the sweet scent of jasmine, community bread baking, and crops of grapes, pomegranates, olives, and almonds. He also told us about the horrors of 1948, about the massacre at Deir Yassin and the many Palestinians who had died or were displaced. This was the first time I heard about the history of our people.

Just a few short weeks after my uncle's arrival, all of the adults were glued to the shortwave radio. A war had broken out and the mood in our home was one of sadness and anger. We watched the evening news on television with dread. Children were hushed. Anger and fear marked the faces of the adults. My uncle wept openly – the first time I had seen a man cry. We all shared the fear and anguish he felt not knowing if his family was safe or if they would be killed and we were witness to yet another "nakba." That helplessness still lingers.

I watched my mother pray for the safety of our people while my father screamed about the injustices done to Palestinians as he watched or listened to news updates. "Why is Israel being championed for their displacement and killing of Palestinians" he would yell, "Don't they realize the Palestinians have been wronged." "How can Israel tell the world that we have never existed... then, they kill us and nobody cares." I understood at that moment that we were an invisible people. I became yet another Palestinian saddled with our story– our truth.

It is that very vision of my parents' response to the '67 war that has moved me to act. I refuse to be the armchair warrior. I lived on the West Bank as a teenager and young adult. I experienced the difficulties of life under occupation. I return regularly, but I refuse to become angry and embittered. I make it a point to reach out and be visible and vocal about the plight of my people and the nobility of our cause regardless of how others paint it.

This past summer, I visited my uncle in his West Bank home to which he had returned after many years of struggle and several more separations from his family. He told me that things are worse now than ever before. The people in our village can't sell or barter their olive oil with neighboring farmers because of Israeli imposed travel restrictions and "the wall"; they can't even visit people who live 15 minutes away by car. Families cannot build homes for newlywed children on their own land due to Israeli policies restricting building permits. The forced crowding of families has caused much frustration. Settlements go up nearby and water resources are

diverted to them from our village causing economic and health-related hardships. They feel the Israelis don't value them as human beings and just want them to disappear and be gone. Our daily survival is resistance. I often ask myself why it has to be this way. It doesn't have to be.

We need strong leadership to help us overcome the deep fear, anger and despair that has festered on both sides from this occupation. We need to see more compassion, empathy and respect for the "other side." We need leaders who will not exacerbate the situation by labeling those who work for peace and reconciliation as traitors, collaborators, self-haters, or sell-outs. If we are to move forward, these are issues we must face.

Although I still see dysfunction in my community, fed by pain, anger and humiliation, I am encouraged to see many new organizing initiatives aimed at building a Palestinian state rather than getting short-term revenge. But the ongoing suffering continues to deepen the divide between Israelis and Palestinians, two peoples forever joined by history and their own futures.

What has also been encouraging is the work done by Brit Tzedek v'Shalom. By working to inform Jewish Americans of the realities of the occupation, and offering a venue for Jews who love Israel to express their disapproval of current policies and extremist views, they have enabled and awakened a silent majority that can effect change. However, the Jewish community also suffers from a dysfunction fed by fear – a fear so deeply embedded that it blinds people from seeing the humanity of the Palestinians and the inhumanity of many Israeli government policies. This fear has crippled peace-wanting people from taking action to end the occupation, to the detriment of Israel's own people.

Witnessing the encouraging work on both sides has personally empowered me to reach out even more to the Jewish community. I'm not afraid to work out differences and gain understanding. I know the same holds true for my people back home. Even under occupation, they organize and move forward.

My hope is that for all we've been through, Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs, we will find a way to come together to end this conflict – for if we don't, we will find ourselves writing our reflections again in another 40 years, with more misery, and even less hope.

*Saffiya Shillo is a Palestinian American peace activist, domestic violence/sexual assault consultant, and cultural sensitivity trainer on Arab and Muslim issues based in Chicago, Illinois.*

# Resources

## Chronology: 40 Years of Occupation

**1967.** Israel fights the Six-Day War against several Arab armies, emerging victorious and in control of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights (June).

The Israeli government extends the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem 70 square kilometers incorporating Jordanian east Jerusalem, the Old City, and 28 outlying Arab villages. At 126 square kilometers, it is the largest city in Israel.

The Israeli military establishment – under Defense Minister Moshe Dayan – takes over authority in the occupied Arab territories, beginning what some in Israel call the “enlightened occupation” (July).

The Khartoum Summit of the Arab League declares that there will be no Arab recognition, negotiations, or peace with Israel, often referred to as “The Three No’s” (September).

UN Resolution 242 establishes the “land for peace” formula, which serves as the basis for negotiations between Israel and her neighbors since the late 1970s. (November).

**1968.** The settler movement, calling itself Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), is founded on Passover in a hotel in occupied Hebron (April). Through an agreement with the government, the group later establishes the settlement of Kiryat Arba on an abandoned army base east of Hebron.

Within a year of the 1967 War, 14 settlements are established in the occupied territories, mostly in the Golan but also in northern Sinai, the Jordan valley, and Gush Etzion, to the south and southeast of Jerusalem, in the West Bank.

1968-1970. The undeclared War of Attrition starts with Egyptian attacks on Israel in an attempt to recapture the Sinai. Many Israelis had thought that the Arabs were so crushingly defeated in 1967 that they would actively seek peace; this war dented that optimism.

**1970.** Jordan kills thousands of Palestinians and expels the PLO and thousands of Palestinians to Lebanon in Black September. Israel’s support of the Jordanian government during this crisis earns it the gratitude of the U.S. and marks the beginning of significant increases in U.S. foreign aid.

**1973.** Israel is attacked by Egypt and Syria on Yom Kippur; UN Resolution 338 calls for an immediate ceasefire and implementation of Resolution 242. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger begins his shuttle diplomacy between the three countries (October).

Approximately 1500 settlers now reside in the occupied territories.

**1974.** Rabbi Yehuda Kook develops Gush Emunim into a prominent political force, calling on the Jewish people to fulfill the biblical commandment to settle the land of Israel, with special emphasis on those locations mentioned in the Bible.

**1975.** The government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin grants a special 5% tax break to settlers. The rate increases to 7% under PM Menachem Begin in 1978.

**1976.** Prime Minister Rabin and Defense Minister Shimon Peres, leading a politically weakened Labor Party following the Yom Kippur War, allow the settlement project to continue.

**1977.** The Labor Party is upset in general elections by Menachem Begin's Likud Party, which stands openly committed to the settler ideology of Greater Israel (May).

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visits Jerusalem (November).

**1978.** Encouraged by Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, the settler movement thrives, attracting both religious and secular Jews. Sharon begins implementation of his plan to double the number of settlements. Shalom Achshav (Peace Now) is founded by 348 IDF reservists (March).

**1979.** An Egypt-Israel peace treaty, signed on the White House lawn, includes a vague plan for Palestinian autonomy based on the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" (March). Settlers from Kiryat Arba establish a community within the Arab city of Hebron at "Beit Hadassah", creating a precedent for the establishment of additional Jewish enclaves with government approval and the protection of the IDF.

**1980.** The Knesset passes the "Jerusalem Law" declaring the complete and united city the capital of the state (July). Non-binding UN Security Council Resolution 478 calls on the law to be rescinded. The U.S. abstains from the vote (August).

The 'Civil Administration' is established by the regional commanders of the IDF to administer civilian life of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

**1981.** The Israeli parliament passes the Golan Law, extending Israeli law to the area of the Golan Heights, officially annexing it to the State of Israel (December).

Menachem Begin wins reelection, appoints Ariel Sharon Minister of Defense (July).

**1982.** Israel withdraws from Sinai, in accordance with the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty (April).

The Israeli army, under Ariel Sharon, invades Lebanon (June), forcing the PLO to relocate to Tunis.

**1985.** Israel withdraws from Beirut to South Lebanon, establishing and continuing to occupy a 10-mile wide "security zone" to the north of its international border with Lebanon (June).

**1987.** The first Palestinian uprising, or intifada, begins in Gaza and spreads to the West Bank, lasting five years. The event marks the first time Palestinians in the occupied territories become significantly involved in the movement against Israeli occupation (December).

**1988.** PLO leader Yasser Arafat condemns all forms of terrorism and recognizes the state of Israel within pre-1967-borders. Israel continues to refuse negotiations with the PLO, but the United States opens a dialogue with the group.

**1991.** The Madrid Peace Conference commences under the auspices of the US and the USSR, marking the first time that Israel and its Arab neighbors (with the exception of Egypt) engage in face-to-face negotiations. The Palestinians are represented in a joint delegation from Jordan. It is later revealed that Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir intended to drag the negotiations out for as long as 10 years, with no real intention of achieving a compromise.

94,000 Israeli settlers now live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**1993.** Secret talks begun in 1991 culminate in the Oslo Agreements. Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat sign the Agreement's Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn, granting recognition of, and limited autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza to, the PLO. In return, the PLO gives up its claims to Israel's territory as defined by its borders before the 1967 war and agrees to end the intifada and establish security in the West Bank (September).

116,000 Israeli settlers now live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**1994.** Israel and the PLO sign the Cairo agreement, in which both sides agree on limited self-rule for the Palestinians in the West Bank city of Jericho and 60% of Gaza (May).

Arafat leaves Tunis to take up residence in Gaza and assumes his new position as head of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the representative body formed under the Oslo Agreements (July).

Jordan and Israel sign a comprehensive peace treaty (October).

**1995.** Israel and the PA sign the "Oslo II" Agreement, creating a schedule for the withdrawal of the IDF from six West Bank cities and 400 villages by early 1996, after which Palestinian presidential and parliamentary elections would be held (September).

PM Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by an orthodox Jewish student opposed to Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank (November).

13,000 Israelis now live in the Golan Heights.

**1996.** U.S.-mediated peace talks between Israel and Syria in Wye, Maryland, unravel following multiple Hamas suicide bombings in Tel Aviv (March).

**1997.** Israel – under PM Benjamin Netanyahu of Likud – and the PA sign the Hebron Agreement, requiring Israel to hand over 80% of the West Bank city of Hebron to Palestinian rule, but allowing Israel to maintain its hold on the remainder of the city because several hundred Jewish settlers live there, among 20,000 Palestinians. The city is to be monitored by a temporary international presence (January).

**1998.** Israel and the PA sign the Wye River Memorandum, outlining further Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, after US pressure to end 18 months of stagnation on the Israeli-Palestinian peace track (October).

**1999.** Israel suspends the Wye timetable pending early general elections due to collapse of Netanyahu's government coalition (January).

Under PM Ehud Barak of Labor, Israel and the Palestinians sign a revised deal aimed at reviving the Middle East peace process, based on the stalled Wye River Accord (September).

Final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians stall over Palestinian protest over settlement expansion in the West Bank. Israel responds the following day by announcing a freeze on the addition of 1,800 more houses to Jewish settlements around Jerusalem (December).

**2000.** Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara engage in U.S.-mediated final status peace talks in Shepherdstown, Virginia, but fail to agree on the demarcation of final borders (January).

A summit between Israelis and Palestinians breaks up over a disagreement on a promised Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank under the revised Wye Accord. Israel hands over West Bank territory to the Palestinians amounting to 6.1% of the West Bank --the last part of a transfer originally agreed upon at Wye River (February).

A personal meeting between U.S. President Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad in Geneva fails to salvage Israeli-Syrian negotiations (March).

The IDF withdraws unilaterally from Lebanon (May).

Syrian President Hafez Assad dies (June).

A peace summit at Camp David between Israel and the Palestinians in the United States ends without agreement after two weeks of intensive negotiations. The negotiators are unable to come to complete agreement about the West Bank or to reconcile their competing claims to Jerusalem. Clinton sides with Barak in blaming Arafat for the failure of the negotiations. (July).

Ariel Sharon, the leader of Likud, visits the Temple Mount, sparking a violent and sustained uprising known as the second intifada (September).

The U.S. presides over a summit at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, which produces a plan to bring to an end weeks of Palestinian-Israeli violence. The plan unravels soon after it is agreed upon (October).

174,000 Israelis live in areas of Jerusalem conquered in 1967. 16,000 live in the Golan Heights.

**2001.** Six days of intense peace talks between Israel and the PA in Taba, Egypt end without an agreement that Israeli Prime Minister Barak had hoped to present to voters for his re-election February 6th (January). It is widely agreed among negotiators that they were weeks from achieving a comprehensive peace, but were thwarted by the election campaign and subsequent election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister (February).

Israeli troops seize territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority, including Gaza, marking the first time Israel reoccupies land ceded in the course of the Oslo process (April).

208,000 Israeli settlers now live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, nearly 100,000 more than at the signing of the Declaration of Principles.

**2002.** The members of the Arab League endorse a Saudi peace plan at their summit in Beirut, calling for Arab recognition of and normalization of relations with Israel, in exchange for a two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on 1967 borders (March).

The government of Ariel Sharon begins construction of Israel's separation barrier, a network of fences and 25-foot high concrete walls, mostly in the West Bank, to the east of Israel's internationally recognized border.

The IDF moves to isolate Arafat, leveling his headquarters in Ramallah and besieging him there, and reoccupies major Palestinian cities for various periods of time, including Jenin, Jericho, Nablus, Ramallah, and Tulkarm, with the stated purpose of destroying terrorist infrastructure (August).

**2003.** The US, EU, Russia, and the UN, introduce the "Road Map for Peace", a plan for a two-state solution to be achieved by 2005.

Mediated by the US, Israel and Palestinians meet in Aqaba, Jordan, where Israel agrees to support a Palestinian state and to remove "unauthorized outposts" in the occupied territories (June).

Due to budgetary cutbacks the Finance Ministry cancels the 7% income tax break for settlers in the occupied territories, though other benefits and incentives remain in place (July).

A special investigation by Haaretz reveals that since 1967 the government has spent \$10 billion on settlements. According to the report, \$500 million is spent annually on settlers' civilian needs; the average settler family receives \$10,000 more per year in government spending than Israeli families living inside the Green Line, Israel's internationally recognized border (September).

The Geneva Accord, a model peace plan negotiated by moderate Israeli and Palestinian political and security leaders outside of the framework of official contacts, is introduced. The details of the plan are published in wide-circulation Palestinian newspapers and mailed to every Israeli address as the basis of a grassroots campaign (December).

178,000 Israelis live in areas of Jerusalem conquered in 1967.

**2004.** Prime Minister Sharon and President Bush discuss unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, uncoordinated with the PA; the Bush administration publicly supports the withdrawal and states that final status negotiations will have to consider the reality of large Israeli settlements in the West Bank (April). The Supreme Court of Israel rules that the separation barrier is legal, but orders that its route accommodate Palestinian human rights (June).

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issues a non-binding advisory opinion that the separation barrier is a violation of international law. Israel states the ICJ has no jurisdiction over the state's political issues (July).

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat dies (November).

**2005.** Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) is democratically elected President of the Palestinian Authority (January).

The Israeli parliament approves Ariel Sharon's proposal to disengage from Gaza while the finance committee approves legislation that would provide compensation for the settlers who are evacuated. The government continues to refuse to coordinate its withdrawal with the PA in any way (February).

An official government report by Talia Sasson details the extent of government complicity and corruption in the building of illegal settlements in the West Bank (March).

Israel withdraws unilaterally from Gaza (August).

**2006.** Hamas wins democratic parliamentary elections in the occupied territories (January).

Ehud Olmert wins general elections in Israel based on his proposal to withdraw the majority of settlements, and a total of some 70,000 settlers, from the West Bank unilaterally. This would leave roughly 170,000 settlers in large blocs (March).

A Hezbollah raid on an Israeli patrol and the Israeli response rapidly escalate into a full-scale war. This war has an unprecedented reach into Israel, with Hezbollah rockets falling on Haifa. The war has considerable civilian casualties, with more than a thousand dead, most of them Lebanese, and causes widespread infrastructure damage in southern Lebanon. (July-August).

Peace Now reports that 40% of West Bank settlements are built on privately owned Palestinian land (November).

**2007.** Syrian President Bashar Assad signals his readiness to resume peace talks without preconditions (January).

The Israeli newspaper Maariv reports that the government has allocated special subsidies in the 2007 budget for industries and agriculture in the West Bank and Golan expected to suffer financially under new EU tariffs on goods from the occupied territories (January).

Led by Saudi Arabia, the Arab League revives its 2002 plan for regional peace (March).

100 settlers move into a building in Hebron in an Arab neighborhood, testing the will of the Olmert government, significantly weakened by the second Lebanon War, to confront the settlers over settlement policy.

268,000 settlers live among over two million Palestinians in the West Bank. Another 184,000 live in neighborhoods of Jerusalem conquered in 1967 among 240,000 Palestinians and 17,000 settlers live in the Golan Heights.

## Frequently Asked Questions – 40 Years of Occupation

### **I. When and why did the occupation begin?**

In June 1967, under enormous threat from all sides, Israel launched a preemptive attack against Egypt, initiating the Six-Day War; Jordan and Syria joined the fighting almost immediately. Much to everyone's surprise, Israel was overwhelmingly victorious and seized control of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Then, insisting the Arab nations recognize Israel's "statehood, sovereignty, and international rights," Israel refused to withdraw to pre-war lines without direct negotiations. The Arab League responded with "the three nos:" no peace, no recognition, and no negotiations. Israel quickly established its control over the territories, initially establishing military outposts followed by civilian settlements.

### **2. When did the settlement project begin and why has it continued to expand? Who are the settlers today?**

Messianic notions and religious claims to Biblical lands motivated the first settlers. Happy for help in establishing control over land with strategic advantage, the Israeli government frequently encouraged or directly authorized new settlements. The settler movement developed into a powerful political force, and many Labor leaders, including Yitzchak Rabin, gladly appeased the growing constituency for settlement expansion, both to strengthen Israel's hand in the territories, and to protect fragile government coalitions. With the 1977 victory of Likud and Menachem Begin, however, the settler movement found a leader dedicated to the Greater Israel ideology, insisting that far from being "occupied," the territories belonged to the Jewish people. The settlement project became an openly acknowledged national priority.

Expansion has continued, however, regardless of government make-up and often directly contradicting international agreements to which Israel is committed (Oslo Accords, Road Map to Peace). Every Israeli government, regardless of its position on negotiations, has viewed the creation of a Palestinian state with great suspicion, and has been eager to limit such a state's potential independence. Thus, the settlement project has served to establish "facts on the ground" in order to render difficult the creation of a territorially contiguous Palestinian state.

Some 268,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, 184,000 in East Jerusalem and 17,000 on the Golan Heights. A minority of "ideological settlers" justify their presence in occupied territory in religious and nationalist terms. The majority of settlers are not ideologically motivated, however, having moved to the territories out of quality of life considerations, such as affordable housing and government benefits. Others feel that by living on the West Bank or Golan Heights, they are effectively enlarging the size of Israel, providing the country with greater protection against attack. All tend to identify politically with the Israeli right but "quality of life" settlers have shown a willingness to relocate to Israel in return for financial compensation.

### **3. Why is Jerusalem such a contentious issue in terms of the occupation?**

Since Israel conquered the eastern, Palestinian sections of the city, each government has made a concerted effort to move in Jews, and with deliberate discrimination, “to encourage” Palestinians to leave. The city’s municipal boundaries have expanded into the West Bank, and in 1980, the Knesset declared the entire city the “eternal capital” of the Jewish state. Today, many Israelis don’t see the newly Jewish neighborhoods as settlements, and are often deeply offended when it’s suggested that this, too, is occupation. Successive Israeli governments have counted on the emotional resonance Jerusalem has among Jews to create a new reality, deepening the country’s hold on occupied land under the guise of protecting Jewish holy places. Jerusalem has served as the cultural and political center of the Palestinian population for centuries, however, and Palestinians see the city as the capital of their future state. Several model peace plans, such as the Geneva Accord, have advocated for a compromise on Jerusalem, essentially sharing sovereignty.

### **4. What role does the separation barrier have in the occupation?**

The separation barrier has been represented as a means to prevent infiltration from the West Bank; some believe Israel is using it to establish what could become its permanent border. At many points along its route, the wall cuts well into Palestinian-owned land, dividing villages and rendering local farmlands inaccessible. The barrier also encircles large Israeli settlements located in the heart of the West Bank, essentially annexing to Israel lands internationally recognized as Palestinian.

### **5. What does the Gaza withdrawal teach us about any future West Bank evacuation?**

Based on Israel’s experience in South Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005, it is now widely recognized that unilateral withdrawal emboldens militant extremists seeking to gain public prestige through a perceived Israeli retreat. Any future withdrawal from the West Bank, therefore, must be coordinated with Palestinian leaders in order to pre-arrange appropriate security measures to avoid handing extremists a perceived victory. On the other hand, the Gaza disengagement demonstrated that ideologically driven religious settlers could be relocated to Israel proper with a minimum of violence or threat of domestic conflict.

### **6. Why is ending the occupation important? Why should American Jews care?**

Israelis face daily threat from Palestinians fighting a battle to end the occupation of their lands. Negotiating a withdrawal to the 1967 borders with adjustments agreeable to both parties would both end the immediate reason for anti-Israeli violence, and create a Palestinian government with the authority to rein in the extremist minority who might not accept the plan. Moreover, the occupation continues to serve as an excuse for bordering nations not to recognize Israel and can lead to situations such as the 2006 war in Lebanon, where an extra-governmental movement was able to spark a full-scale war, further endangering Israelis.

Most American Jews support the notion of a two-state solution, but many believe that it is impossible without strong US government leadership to facilitate the essential resumption of talks. American Jews, through home district and Washington-based advocacy, can play a significant role in encouraging our government to lead the way to ending the occupation, leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. The occupation endangers Jews worldwide by buttressing anti-Israeli sentiment, which in many instances becomes anti-Semitic sentiment.

## **7. What is the position of the US government towards settlements?**

No US administration has ever approved of the settlements, viewing their construction as an effort to determine the outcome of final status talks. However, with the exception of the first President Bush, no American president has ever confronted Israel on the issue. In April 2004, however, George W. Bush suggested that future negotiations would need to take into account “realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers,” (i.e., settlements), asserting “it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.”

## **8. What can American Jews do to end the occupation?**

American Jews are critically important in bringing the message of US diplomatic engagement to both the Administration and Congress. Brit Tzedek activities such as letter writing, home-district meetings with elected officials, house parties and speaking tours in the Jewish community focus on seeking a two-state resolution. Our activists also convey the message that discussions shared among friends and family can change the perceptions of our decision-makers. Conventional wisdom may say the American Jewish community is of one mind regarding Israel, lining up unquestionably behind every Israeli policy. Brit Tzedek’s pro-Israel, pro-peace advocacy against the occupation changes this perception, and ensures that our alternative voice will be counted.

## Recommended Resources: 40 Years of Occupation

### Books

Amir S. Chesin, Bill Hutman, and Avi Melamed. ***Separate and Unequal: The Inside Story of Israeli Rule in East Jerusalem*** (2001)

Three Israelis personally involved in formulating Israel's Jerusalem policy describe systematic discrimination against residents of East Jerusalem

Gershon Gorenberg. ***Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977*** (2006)  
Examines the evolution of Israeli policy toward settlement of the territories conquered in the Six Day War.

Sari Nusseibeh and Anthony David. ***Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life*** (2007)  
Nusseibeh, a renowned academic and Palestinian political leader, reflects on his life and ties his experiences to the history of the Palestinian people.

Michael Oren. ***Six Days of War*** (2002)  
Lengthy study of the Six-Day War, considered balanced and comprehensive.

Avram Shapira, editor. ***The Seventh Day: Soldiers' Talk about the Six-Day War*** (1971)  
Contains interviews with kibbutzim combatants about the 1967 war.

### DVDs

***In the Land of the Settlers: DVD Series*** – A five-part television documentary by distinguished Israeli journalist Chaim Yavin chronicling the harsh realities for settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

***Straddling the Fence*** – Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Thomas Friedman travels to the West Bank to investigate the causes and consequences of the separation barrier under construction between Israel and the Palestinians.

### Websites

#### **B'Tselem**

<http://www.btselem.org/English/>

The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

#### **Foundation for Middle East Peace**

<http://www.fmep.org/>

FMEP publishes the Report on *Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*.

#### **Ir Amim**

<http://www.ir-amim.org.il/eng/>

Israeli group that seeks to render Jerusalem a more viable and equitable city.

#### **Shalom Achshav (Peace Now)**

<http://www.peacenow.org/shalom/index.asp>

Israeli peace group renowned for on-the-ground settlement monitoring.

## Activity Ideas for Congregational Tours to Israel and the Occupied Territories

**Note:** These groups are recommended for the tours they provide, but that listing does not imply any endorsement of the political positions or activities of the listed organizations.

**B'Tselem**, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, offers tours of the separation barrier in the Jerusalem area and other activities to increase awareness of human rights issues in Israel and the occupied territories. For more information, email [mail@btselem.org](mailto:mail@btselem.org) or call 011-972-2-673-5599. Website: <http://www.btselem.org/English/>

**Bustan**, a partnership of Jewish and Arab eco-builders, architects, academics, and farmers who promote social and environmental justice in Israel and the occupied territories, offers tours and invites participation in their activities and events. For more information, email [info@bustan.org](mailto:info@bustan.org) or call 011-972-523-711-800. Website: <http://www.bustan.org/>

**Breaking the Silence**, a group of discharged soldiers who believe that service in the occupied territories has distorted and harmed the moral values on which they were raised, offers educational talks and tours of Jewish Hebron. For more information, contact Mikhael Manekin, Administrative Director, at [mikhael@shovrimstika.org](mailto:mikhael@shovrimstika.org). Website: [www.shovrimstika.org/index\\_e.asp](http://www.shovrimstika.org/index_e.asp)

**Coalition of Women for Peace**, a group of nine Israeli and Palestinian women's organizations working for peace and justice for the region, offers "Reality Tours" along the length of the Separation Wall in Jerusalem, Qalqilia and other locations. For more information, call 011-972-505-682-795. Website: [http://coalitionofwomen.org/home/english/activities/reality\\_tours](http://coalitionofwomen.org/home/english/activities/reality_tours)

**Combatants for Peace**, a group of former Israeli and Palestinian combatants who have come together to work non-violently for the establishment of a Palestinian State, alongside the State of Israel, organizes lectures and tours. For more information, contact Suleiman Al Hamri, Palestinian International Foreign Affairs Coordinator at [ssafil9@yahoo.com](mailto:ssafil9@yahoo.com) or call 011-972-599-211-363. Website: <http://www.combatantsforpeace.org/>

**Geneva Initiative**, a joint Israeli-Palestinian effort that suggests a detailed two-state model for a peace agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, offers tours to Jerusalem focused on the Geneva Accord, borders, and the current political situation. For more information, email [noa@heskem.org.il](mailto:noa@heskem.org.il) or call 011-972-3-693-8302. Website: [www.geneva-accord.org/](http://www.geneva-accord.org/)

**Ir Amim**, For an Equitable and Stable Jerusalem with an Agreed Political Future, offers "Jerusalem Study Tours" that take a comprehensive look at Jerusalem as a city shared by two peoples and three religions. For more information, email [studytours@ir-amim.org.il](mailto:studytours@ir-amim.org.il) or call 011-972-2-622-2858. Website: <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/eng/>

**The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions** offers “Alternative Tours” arranged upon request according to several categories of interest: Jerusalem: Circles of Conflict, Prospects of Peace; The Jerusalem/West Bank Interface; Journeys into Palestinian society; Gaza; Journeys into Israeli society; '48 Palestinian society, history, geography; The Golan. For more information, email [info@icahd.org](mailto:info@icahd.org) or call 011 972-2-624-5560.

Website: <http://www.icahd.org/eng/>

**Shuafat Refugee Camp Women’s Center** in metropolitan Jerusalem offers tours of the Refugee Camp and the Women’s Center. For more information, email Jihad Abu Zneid, President at [jihad\\_242@yahoo.com](mailto:jihad_242@yahoo.com) or call 011-972-54-730-1049.

Read about the camp: <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/Eng/?CategoryID=212> or <http://btvshalom.org/resources/israel2007/snapshot2.shtml>

**Kibbutz Metzcer**, which has worked with the neighboring Israeli Palestinian village of Meiser and is now working with the neighboring Palestinian village of Qafin to create an organic spices and olive oil cooperative, welcomes tour groups. For more information, contact Dov Avital , Kibbutz Secretary at [avital\\_@metzcer.org.il](mailto:avital_@metzcer.org.il) Read about the Kibbutz: <http://btvshalom.org/resources/israel2007/strength2.shtml>

**Neve Shalom-Wahat al-Salam**, a village jointly established by Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel that is engaged in educational work for peace, equality and understanding between the two peoples, welcomes visits from groups and individuals, and offers workshops, lectures, and customized programs. For more information email [rita@nswas.org](mailto:rita@nswas.org) or call 011-972-2-991-5621 ext. 101.

Website: <http://nswas.org/rubrique143.html>

**Shalom Achhav (Peace Now)**, the largest and oldest extra-parliamentary peace movement in Israel, sponsors activities and tours. For more information, email [info@peacenow.org.il](mailto:info@peacenow.org.il) or call 202-728-1895 (DC)/011-972-3-602-3300 (Israel).

Website: <http://www.peacenow.org/shalom/getinvolved.asp?rid=0&cid=111>

**Rabbis for Human Rights**, an Israeli rabbinic organization comprised of Reform, Orthodox, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis and students concerned with giving voice to the Jewish tradition of human rights, offers tours and activities. For more information, email [info@rhr.israel.net](mailto:info@rhr.israel.net) or call 011-972-2-648-2757.

Website: <http://rhr.israel.net/>

## Discussion Questions: 40 Years of Occupation

1. Do you remember the Six-Day War in 1967? What do you remember hearing? If you don't remember hearing about the war at that time, when did you learn about it, and what were you told? How did you feel at the time?
2. Has your perspective changed since your first heard about the war? If it has changed, what caused the change? What was the process that led to your new perspective? How did the change affect you emotionally?
3. Have you ever been to Israel? If so, when? Did you visit the occupied territories? If so, what did you see there? If you have been multiple times, what changes have you seen in Israel over time?
4. Has your personal relationship to Israel changed over time? If so, how?
5. What makes you hopeful and concerned about the prospects for a negotiated peace and an end to the occupation?
6. Why is it important to hold onto a vision of peace? What concrete steps can you take to make it a reality in this 41st year of occupation and beyond?

# Fact Sheets

## Settlements

The term "settlements" refers to communities of Jews located in the lands taken by Israel in the 1967 War on the West Bank. (The Sinai, the Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem, also conquered by Israel in that war, have different histories and are treated differently from "the settlements." Israel also had 17 settlements in Gaza but removed them in 2005.) There are approximately 127 settlements and 105 outposts, ranging in size from tiny ones composed of a few mobile homes up to a few with populations of 20,000-30,000. Total population in the settlements and outposts comes to about 268,000 (2006). The larger settlements are located closest to the Green Line, the pre-1967 border. The total number of Palestinians living on the West Bank is more than two million.

The cost to Israel of building and maintaining settlements has been obscured, but in September of 2003, the Israeli daily Haaretz published a major study of the question. By putting together construction costs for infrastructure, subsidies for settlers to move to settlements, and many other costs, the newspaper concluded that the "nonmilitary" cost to Israel was on the order of \$560,000,000 per year. That is over 1% of the national budget, or about \$2,100 per settler. Military costs to protect the settlers, which are considerable and on top of the \$560,000,000, were not determinable. (These figures also include costs that were connected to the maintenance of settlements in Gaza.)

Israelis have moved to the West Bank for one or more of four principal reasons. Some religious nationalist Jews move there because they consider all the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River to have been given by God to the Jews, and thus they feel the obligation to live on this land and control it. Some nationalistic Jews consider the land from the Mediterranean to the Jordan to be historically the home of the Jews, and thus they feel the obligation to reclaim this land. Still others consider living on the West Bank to be a matter of national security, enlarging the size of Israel and providing more protection against attack. And, finally, other Israeli Jews, a majority of the settlers, moved to settlements for economic reasons: they found there homes that are convenient to urban work centers, and they benefited from significant government subsidies to buy homes that would be unaffordable in Israel proper, with more open space and a better "quality of life" than in older Israeli cities and towns.

Israelis living inside Green Line ("Israel proper") have a wide range of opinion about settlements. Many express deep hostility toward settlements as obstacles to peace. Others sympathize with either the settlers' religious, nationalistic, or security feelings. And many Israelis have deeply mixed judgments. Though they may see the settlements as an obstacle to peace, they may also admire the courage of settlers willing to live according to their beliefs, seeing them as descendants of those Israeli pioneers who founded settlements to develop and defend the country, both before 1948 and after. Many Israelis worry that the settlers may be right and that removing settlements will only encourage and increase the number of the Palestinians who "really" want to destroy all of Israel.

Palestinian objection to settlements has been based on the conviction that the West Bank is Palestinian land. Palestinian tactics have included diplomatic pressure, legal action, and terrorist shootings and bombings. The interaction between settlers and Palestinians has included provocation and violence on both sides. Feelings of fear, distrust, and hostility dominate the relationships.

Whether the government should permit or encourage settlements has been a source of controversy since immediately after the 1967 war. Though every Israeli government since 1967 has permitted at least some settlement expansion, some have encouraged it more than others. Those opposed to settlements have argued that:

- the land should be kept available as a bargaining chip with the Palestinians,
- the settlements are illegal,
- the settlements interfere with the development of a Palestinian state,
- that the settlements interfere with Palestinian life and thus make it harder to establish a trust relationship with them, and
- that by angering Palestinians, settlements make security issues worse.

And some argue that creating settlements makes pullback harder or impossible. If pullback does not occur, they argue, Israel will have three terrible choices: to administer a huge and hostile Palestinian population; to allow the Palestinians to become Israeli citizens with the inevitability that Palestinians will become the majority within a predictable future; or to expel large numbers of Palestinians.

Settlements have expanded almost constantly in the last 35 years. Some governments built settlements as a matter of policy. Even governments that did not have such a policy (e.g. that of Ehud Barak, 1999-2001) allowed expansion, apparently with the thought that it would keep settlers satisfied as a political group while a peace agreement would remove these settlements eventually. In addition to supporting construction of new communities, governments also supported the creation of infrastructure among the settlements, including highways and tunnels. This infrastructure has strengthened settlements and also caused the expropriation of large sections of West Bank land.

The initiative of settlers produced settlement expansion even when governments objected. One tactic involved moving physical structures (mobile homes, tents) onto empty land and then refusing to move. When this resulted in a standoff between settlers and government orders to remove the structures, the resulting "compromise" left a new settlement community in place.

The policy of settlement expansion took a sharp turn in 2005 when the Israeli government under Ariel Sharon evacuated all settlers and closed all settlements in Gaza. Though much anxiety preceded the evacuation, it came off with little violence and no fatalities. The settlers, those from Gaza and those on the West Bank, and their supporters, are bitter about the evacuation, and fearful that it portends future withdrawals of settlers from the West Bank. Instability in Gaza, and rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, have been blamed by others on the fact that the withdrawal was unilateral, involving no negotiation with the Palestinian leadership.

The Israeli government makes the case that the settlements are legal under international law, since, they argue, there was no sovereign nation in place when this territory was conquered. This view is not shared by any other country or international organization. There are a number of arguments involved here. They revolve around interpretations of Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council, Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the Oslo Agreement of 1993 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Israel has not been successful at having its interpretations accepted by any official body outside Israel.

Settlements have been the subject of negotiation between Israelis and Palestinians, at Camp David and in Taba in 2000 and 2001, and, unofficially, in Geneva in 2003. Though Palestinians have insisted rhetorically that all settlements must be removed, the actual negotiations have focused on two questions: Which settlements can remain, and which Israeli land (how much and where) will be traded to the Palestinians in return for those settlements that do remain. The Camp David-Taba negotiations (2000-01) called for all settlements to be removed except for the largest (Ariel, Maale Adumim, Etzion Block) that are more or less near the Green Line; the Geneva Accord (non-official negotiation in 2003) came to a similar conclusion except that Ariel was removed.

The arguments about the settlements and defense have two parts. One is that the narrowness of Israel requires a defense structure at least along the Jordan River to protect against ground attack from the east. The counter argument is that military threats to Israel are no longer from advancing armies, but rather from missiles fired from afar. The second security argument is that the major ground threat to Israel comes from Palestinian terrorism. Settlements in this view are seen as a way to separate and weaken Palestinian society, and thus to better control terrorism as it emanates from the West Bank. The counter argument is that terrorism is stimulated by the presence of settlements.

US policy regarding settlements has been consistently opposed to their existence and their expansion, but no US administration has gone beyond rhetorical comment.

*Prepared for Brit Tzedek by David Matz, director of the graduate program in dispute resolution at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.*

## The Occupation

To occupy in the classic political meaning of the term "occupation" is to take control of a place or territory by military conquest or by settlement. Israel is generally recognized and considered to have occupied the territories it conquered as a consequence of the Six-Day War of 1967, with the exception of the Sinai Desert that was returned to Egypt as part of a peace agreement. The settlers and the military were evacuated from Gaza in 2005, but Israel continues to control the borders, air and sea and remains Gaza's occupying power according to most interpretations of international law.

In 1981, Israel formally annexed the Golan Heights, which previously belonged to Syria, and it does not consider itself to be in occupation of East Jerusalem – which it has declared will belong to Israel for eternity. The West Bank is also considered by various religious and political groups in Israel to be part of the land promised to the Jews by God and is referred to as "Judea and Samaria." Israel prefers the term "disputed territories" to "occupied territories" when referring to Gaza and the West Bank. The International Court of Justice considers Israel to be in occupation of the territories, and Prime Minister Sharon has admitted that in fact these territories are "occupied" though he later rejected the legal implications of his remark.

As a military occupier, Israel is subject to a wide variety of regulations of its behavior according to the terms of the fourth Geneva Convention. Israel does not recognize the Convention to apply *de jure*, that is to say legally, but says it applies it *de facto*, which would appear to mean at best, selectively. The most important of the terms of the Convention forbids settlement or colonization ("the occupying power shall not deport or transfer part of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies"), and Israel has engaged in widespread Jewish colonization of the territories since 1967. There are 268,000 settlers or colonists residing in the West Bank amid more than two million Palestinians, and a great many more if one counts those residents in East Jerusalem, once part of the territories and since annexed to the city. The existence of these settlements has been one of the major obstacles to a peace agreement.

The United States consistently opposed Israeli settlement in the occupied territories, and the first Bush administration actually withheld loans from Israel unless they were forbidden for use in the territories. The Reagan and Clinton administrations also regarded the settlements as obstacles to peace and expressed disapproval. The current Bush administration, however, has recently expressed its toleration or even tacit support of Israeli settlement policy, which continues on the West Bank under Ehud Olmert.

Israel is widely accused of abuses of human rights in the territories as well. In an effort to control Palestinian terrorism, it regularly bulldozes the homes of the families of suspected terrorists. It imposes curfews and engages in collective punishment of the inhabitants, a practice also forbidden by the Geneva Convention. As the occupying power, Israel has general responsibility for the welfare of the inhabitants of the territories. The occupation has its defenders, who note the general improvement in public health and hygiene and the eradication of disease in the territories, at least prior to the beginning of the second intifada in 2000. Life expectancy is greater and infant mortality much less since Israel took control and there is, in fact, a kind of population explosion there. But it is impossible to say that this would not have happened in the absence of the occupation, and Israel would be derelict in its occupation responsibilities had it not exercised a maximum effort with regard to public health.

The situation in the territories is further clouded by the two intifadas or Palestinian insurrections against Israeli rule and the often-brutal efforts of the Israelis to repress them. The first intifada broke out in the late 1980s and was one of the major contributing factors leading up to the Oslo Agreement of 1993. By the agreement's terms, Israel was gradually to relinquish control of increasing portions of the territories to Palestinian authority as Israel and the PLO, having formally recognized each other's rights, advanced toward a general peace agreement. Israel, in fact, withdrew from Gaza and Jericho as part of the initial implementation of the agreement, but subsequent steps stalled. Sentiment built in Israel for advancing directly toward a final status agreement rather than proceeding by stages. Meanwhile Israeli settlement activity continued, which Palestinians claimed violated the Oslo Accords, which called for a settlement freeze. Palestinian terrorism grew apace, taking the form of increasing numbers of suicide bombings both in the territories and in Israel proper, inside the Green Line. These bombings generally derailed efforts at a peace agreement and brought world condemnation of Israel for its harsh retaliation for each act of Palestinian violence and the measures it has taken to repress further terrorism and safeguard the safety of the settlers as well as Israeli citizens within the Green Line.

A final effort at a peace agreement took place under the aegis of President Clinton during the summer of 2000. At Camp David, the two sides had difficulty coming to an agreement that would have ended the occupation and resulted in a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Under the American proposal, most of the Israeli settlement blocs near the Green Line would have been allowed to remain, the borders would be adjusted in a land exchange, Jerusalem would be shared while remaining under Israeli sovereignty, and Palestinian refugees would be able to return to a Palestinian state. The Palestinians would have regained roughly 90% to 95% of the territory of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip. At the end of the Camp David talks, however, President Arafat refused the offer that President Clinton had put on the table, and withdrew from the negotiations. While the concessions that Barak had made were significant, they were, in Arafat's view, so ambiguous and full of loopholes and contrary to their interpretation of existing UN resolutions that he didn't think he could take them back to his people.

The negotiations restarted in late January 2001 in Taba, Egypt based on the Clinton "bridging proposals" for compromise between Israelis and Palestinians. Though the two sides came close to agreement, time essentially ran out with the end of President Clinton's term and Prime Minister Barak facing an impending election defeat a few days later. Their replacements, George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon respectively, were adamantly opposed to continuing negotiations given the renewal of violence in the occupied territories and rejected previous concessions. Nevertheless, these failed negotiations form the basis for any future agreements

With the failure of the agreement the second intifada broke out, followed by the election of Ariel Sharon, whose government repudiated the concessions offered by the preceding government of Barak. That intifada reached a peak in 2002 with terrorist attacks on civilians and massive Israeli retaliation. It has largely died down since 2005. As a consequence of the second intifada, the Israeli army re-occupied much of the West Bank and remains in large parts of it. The occupation continues, now entering its 40th year.

*Prepared for Brit Tzedek by Irwin Wall, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Riverside.*

## What is the Green Line?

The term "Green Line" refers to the armistice lines negotiated between Israel and the Arab states at the conclusion of the 1948-49 Israel-Arab war and mediated by the United Nations. These armistice lines became the de facto borders of Israel from 1949 to 1967, and today are widely recognized as the legal borders of Israel.

### ORIGINS OF THE GREEN LINE

In February 1947, Great Britain, unable to maintain the peace under its Palestine mandate, announced that it would evacuate Palestine and leave the problem to the United Nations. Britain had been unable to suppress the violence between Jews and Arabs or to suppress Jewish resistance to British rule.

The United Nations established a commission to recommend a solution to the Palestine problem. It recommended that Palestine be partitioned into a Jewish and an Arab state, and it awarded about 56% of the territory of the mandate to the state of Israel and 44% to the Palestinian state. The Jewish agency accepted this decision; the Arab states did not. They objected to the fact that the partition left a large Arab minority within Israel territory and that the total Arab population of Palestine was in fact larger than the Jewish population. The Jewish population of Palestine in 1947 was about 600,000, the Arab population over one million. The Palestinian Arab Authority argued for a single state with autonomous communities in which the Arabs would enjoy a majority. In November 1947, the United Nations voted for partition in a historic decision that established the legal basis for the existence of Israel. The British pulled out, and Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948.

The Arab states rejected the United Nations decision, and violence broke out immediately between Arabs and Jews. The surrounding Arab states – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq – sent troops to join the Palestinian cause. However, Arab troops were ill-trained and equipped, had poor morale, and failed to coordinate their tactics; despite a numeric advantage and more weapons, they failed to defeat the Haganah, Israel's volunteer army, which managed to expand Jewish-held territory to about 78% of the territory of the mandate before an armistice was negotiated in 1949.

The expanded territory of the 1949 armistice lines constitutes the Green Line as shown on maps as the legal borders of Israel. Jordan then annexed the remaining Palestinian territory, preventing a Palestinian state from coming into existence on the remainder of the land, the "West Bank" of the Jordan River.

### THE 1967 WAR

Israel has fought three major wars since its establishment. In 1956, after the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal and the acquisition by Egypt of Soviet heavy weapons, France armed Israel, and France and Britain enlisted Israeli help in a plot to recover the canal. Israel was to launch the war and invade the Sinai Desert, stopping short of the canal; the British and the French would then occupy the Canal Zone to "protect" it from harm by either Egyptian or Israeli troops. Israel agreed to this plan because of continued incursions over its border with Egypt by Palestinian Arab guerrillas, thus hoping to secure the Green Line from attack. Israeli forces quickly occupied the Sinai Peninsula as a result of a brilliant military campaign. However, the United States opposed the British and French landing in the Canal Zone and mobilized the United Nations against it; President Eisenhower pressured the British to halt operations, and the French followed suit; Israel in turn was

forced to withdraw from the Sinai in February 1957 and returned to its borders behind the Green Line. United Nations peacekeepers took control of the border zone on the Egyptian side to prevent further incursions over the Green Line. President Nasser was successful in holding the Canal, and he continued to arm himself with Soviet armaments. Israel, meanwhile, purchased heavy weapons from France, which also helped it to build a nuclear reactor.

In 1967 Nasser began a general mobilization against Israel in the Sinai Desert and threatened to destroy the Jewish state. He blocked Israeli shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba and ordered the United Nations peacekeepers to leave, which they did, leaving Egyptian forces and Israeli forces in confrontation. Israel mobilized in turn; unable economically to continue the standoff with a citizen army, and fearing that the Egyptians and their Syrian ally would strike, Israel struck first on June 6, destroying the Egyptian air force on the ground, and conquering the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in what became known as the Six-Day War. This is one of the few preemptive wars in history that enjoys general recognition as having been provoked.

The United Nations ordered a ceasefire, to which Israel agreed; in U.N. Resolution 242, the Security Council called for a just peace recognizing the mutual rights of Arabs and Jews in Palestine, followed by Israeli withdrawal from "territories" conquered by Israel during the war. The absence of the article "the" before "territories" in Resolution 242 left deliberately ambiguous the question of whether there could be territorial adjustments in the Green Line in Israel's favor as part of a peace agreement, but it was generally understood that Israel was prepared to exchange territory for peace.

The Arab states, however, refused to negotiate with Israel and joined together in a "rejectionist front" against the Jewish state. In 1973, under Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, Egypt struck across the canal in an attempt to regain its territory, catching the Israelis off guard on Yom Kippur, and provoking the third Arab-Israel war since the armistice of 1949. The Egyptian effort failed, and Israel defeated Egypt and Syria again, thanks to an emergency infusion of American weapons, in what became known as the Yom Kippur War. But the Israelis had been caught off guard, and Israel seriously faced near defeat for the first time.

Egypt felt it had recovered its dignity following its initial success in the Yom Kippur War and Anwar Sadat accepted a public Israeli invitation issued in 1977 to come to Jerusalem to negotiate peace. Israel, under a right-wing government headed by Menachem Begin, did exchange the Sinai Peninsula for peace with Egypt at Camp David in 1979. However, Syria still refused to negotiate with Israel for the return of the Golan Heights, and Jordan now showed no interest in recovering the West Bank, inhabited as it was by Palestinians, nor did Egypt want the Gaza Strip, entirely inhabited by Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war. The result was that Israel was left in military occupation of the entire Palestinian population that still lived within the territory of the mandate; to return to the Green Line was to allow the creation of a Palestinian state, which the Israeli government refused to officially consider until 1992.

*Prepared for Brit Tzedek by Irwin Wall, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Riverside.*

## Jerusalem

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there are two related problems of Jerusalem. The first has to do with whether to divide the city between Israelis and Palestinians, and, if so, how. The second has to do with who will own and control the places considered holy. Both issues generate great passion on both sides.

Jerusalem is an ancient city that has changed shape and size over the generations. When the Ottomans controlled the region, the Old City (within high walls) was divided into four quarters (the Armenian, the Jewish, the Christian and the Muslim quarters). Outside the walls various neighborhoods grew, and this growth continued under the British mandate (1918-1948). One result of the 1948 War was a division of the city between Jordan, which controlled east Jerusalem including the Old City, and Israel, which controlled West Jerusalem. Between the two ran an ugly (concrete) stone and barbed wire divider creating an armed no-man's land, and a single crossing point patrolled by the United Nations. The 1967 War resulted in all of Jerusalem coming under Israeli control. Soon after the war ended, Israel expanded the boundaries of the city by 70 square kilometers, declaring East Jerusalem and 28 outlying Arab villages to be a legal part of Israel (a legal move it has not made regarding (most of) the West Bank or Gaza).

One can think of Jerusalem today as composed of three parts: West Jerusalem, almost entirely Jewish; East Jerusalem, including the Old City and the almost entirely Arab sections of the city; and the newly expanded sections of the city containing the new Jewish neighborhoods and older Arab communities within them, such as Gilo or Ramot. (Though Palestinians sometimes call these new neighborhoods "settlements," general usage leaves that term to denote only the Israeli communities built in Gaza and the West Bank, and not in (expanded) Jerusalem.)

As of 2006, the total population of Jerusalem was about 732,000. The population of the whole city is about two-thirds Jewish, one-third Arab, with the Arab segment having grown as a proportion of the total. Both the Arab and orthodox Jewish populations of Jerusalem have experienced natural growth; the secular Jewish population has declined through emigration. Demographic concerns have thus led the Israeli government to promote housing construction that would increase the population of both secular and Orthodox Jews. In the areas of Jerusalem acquired in 1967, 184,000 Israeli Jews live among 240,000 Palestinians.

Dividing Jerusalem is a very hot issue involving, sometimes indistinguishably, religion, the Bible (Old and New Testaments), the Koran, nationalism and politics. (It also thus attracts the politically significant attention of Jews, Muslims and Christians from around the world.) For Palestinians, Jerusalem has an ancient religious significance that has translated into a commitment to making East Jerusalem the capitol of their state. For Israelis, Jerusalem is the site of the first and second temples, and the central symbol of sovereignty for a Jewish state. Their commitment to an undivided city comes from the memory of 1948-1967, when the Old City and the eastern part of the city were beyond reach, including the Western Wall (see below). Though many Israelis are committed to never dividing Jerusalem, the government of Ehud Barak (1999-2001) at Camp David and at Taba, and various non-governmental actors, have nonetheless explored plans to divide the city. Again, two questions: the first is, where to draw the dividing line? In general the answer has corresponded roughly with what are called the Clinton Bridging Proposals (offered by the President in December, 2000); these allocated the section of the city occupied primarily by Arabs to the Palestinians (i.e. mainly East Jerusalem), and the rest, including the newly

created Jewish neighborhoods, to Israel. The Old City, which is in East Jerusalem, has also been subject to various allocations, often putting the Jewish Quarter on the Israeli side, the rest on the Palestinian. These formulas are not neat, as there are Jews living among the Arabs in East Jerusalem and Arabs living among the Israelis.

The second question about dividing Jerusalem is, what will be the nature of the border dividing the city? A "hard border" would provide a rigid separation with guarded pass through points. A "soft border" would provide more fluid passage between the two parts of the city. Though there is a broad consensus in favor of a city in which all citizens feel comfortable moving throughout all its parts, Israeli security concerns make achieving this today very difficult.

The issue of control of holy places is primarily about the Temple Mount (Haram Al-Sharif) and the Western Wall. The Western Wall, where Jews pray, supports a platform on which stands the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa mosque. Thus a holy place for Jews is part of the same physical structure as a holy place for Muslims. In addition, the earth under the mosque, and thus inside the Wall, is important because it structurally supports both the Wall and the mosque, and because it may contain archeological relics with historical and political implications. There are two battlegrounds: sovereignty, which refers to legal ownership, and control, which refers to practical administrative management. Disagreements have raged over both. As the Western Wall/Temple Mount is located in the heart of East Jerusalem, a division of the city that allocates East Jerusalem to the Palestinians would raise the question of Jewish access to the Western Wall.

Formulas have been put forward that would guarantee access to the holy places to all, which would seem to satisfy the expressed needs of each. But many on both sides have refused to allow the other side any position that might, potentially, lead to exclusion or limitation of access. As the Israelis and the Palestinians have no trust in each other, any plan that gives one side any chance to interfere with the other's freedom of access to worship will be opposed. At present, the Israelis control both the Wall and the Temple Mount. Ordinarily they allow a Muslim organization to control the Mount, though the Israelis do step in when they perceive security to be at issue.

There are also a number of Christian holy places throughout Jerusalem, including the site of the Last Supper, the Via Dolorosa, and the site of Jesus' crucifixion. Christian authorities have complained often that they are not adequately represented in the negotiations though they are seriously affected. In general, Christian interests have played only a small role in the conflict.

With all the conflict Jerusalem has endured, it is important not to forget that it is also a city of great dramatic beauty. Its fascination is not solely the product of its contentious history. Jerusalem has been considered holy by many peoples, including ancient nations that predate biblical history. To this day, people in all parts of the world love and revere Jerusalem as an inspiration, both for what it is physically and for what people have imagined it to be.

*Prepared for Brit Tzedek by David Matz, director of the graduate program in dispute resolution at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.*

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