

POINTING THE WAY TO
PEACE & SECURITY



“The Palestinians cannot be ignored as we celebrate our own successes. We must face our responsibilities with candor, and find a way to rapprochement, if we would see the Jewish State continue to succeed and inspire.”

- Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf

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The Rabbinic Cabinet of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom organizes and amplifies the voices of American rabbis and cantors in support of a negotiated two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nationally and locally in the print and broadcast media, within Jewish and clerical organizations, and at the synagogue and community level.

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom thanks the following foundations who have made our work possible:

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FOREWORD

Israel at Sixty by Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf

We learn from Pirke Avot (5.24) that 60 is a time for maturity (*zikhnah*). Israel, having weathered youth and adolescence, now faces the perils and opportunities of age. *Zikhnah* requires patience, compromise, and empathy. It's a time finally to relinquish messianic dreams and narcissistic pretensions. Peace, fairness, and realism must supplant our wide-eyed, naïve former expectations. It is a time to evaluate the past and face the future with honesty and courage.

For two-thirds of Israel's existence, it has been in a state of daily conflict with another people, a people who would also claim it as home. The Palestinians cannot be ignored as we celebrate our own successes. We will have to face our responsibilities with candor and find a way to rapprochement, if we would see the Jewish State continue to succeed and inspire. As rabbis, as leaders of communities and spiritual guides, we are the ones to point the way.

The Jewish people welcomed the establishment of the Jewish State with great rejoicing and not a little fear. After centuries of mortal oppression, would Israel become the Jewish homeland we longed for? Would the young state survive?

Sixty years later we see a state that is firmly established, the source of much learning and culture, a home in the truest sense.

And yet we cannot pretend that the path has been smooth. Those 60 years have brought war as well as success, occupation of another people even as our own people have struggled to find its place in the world.

The struggle has been singular for clergy, as we have had to walk our personal path, and respond to the needs of our congregations. Inspired and informed by scripture and the teachings of our sages, many of us took a stand for peace, in spite of resistance, in spite of anger.

Some members of our community, horrified by the specter of war, turned to us for guidance. Others rejected that guidance out of hand. But to have turned our backs on the need for reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians would have meant turning our backs on all that we knew to be true.



As the decades have passed, one thing has become perfectly clear: Violence is not, and it has never been, the way. We must place our trust not in weapons, but in our God-given ability to work for *tikkun olam*. And we have to convey this – in spite of resistance, in spite of anger – to the American Jewish community.

For indeed, we have also seen the ways our own community has contributed to the conflict. Successive American administrations have supported Israeli policy – often without question – in the mistaken belief that they are thus meeting the needs of their Jewish constituency.

We must raise our voices above the roar of this conventional wisdom, and speak the truth: The American Jewish people want peace and stability. We want to see Israel and the Palestinians living without fear.

As rabbis, we set the tone in the community, whether from the pulpit, at educational institutions, or in the pages of the daily newspaper. It is our job to challenge and provoke, to conduct the conversation, and to trust our community to engage new ideas.

We honor Israel's very much-needed independence and liberty. We expect its fullness of age to give us not only pride and love, but self-criticism and balance. We pray that it will achieve true peace, and thus, true security.

Happy 60, beloved Israel! May middle age bring you security and realistic hope.

***Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf** has spent his life drawing the connections between religious imperative and social action, insisting in both word and deed that Judaism calls us to pursue justice on all fronts. He has long been an outspoken advocate for a just and tenable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: as the American representative to Brit Shalom in the 1940s, as a founder of Givat Haviva Educational Institute in 1949, and as founding chair of Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations, in 1973. He is Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation KAM Isaiah Israel in Chicago, Illinois and serves on Brit Tzedek's Honorary Board and Rabbinic Cabinet.*

PREFACE

On May 8th, Jews everywhere will begin a year-long celebration of the 1948 founding of the State of Israel. Our communities will celebrate with party and song, falafel will be served, Israeli goods will be promoted, and the hora will be danced. As these celebrations are taking place in Jewish Community Centers and synagogues, many will hunger for a thoughtful evaluation of Israel's successes.

What cultural riches have we gathered in 60 years? What have been the successes of aliyah and how has the ingathering of the exiles fallen short? Is world Jewry safer today because we have a Jewish State? How has Israel acted to bring about peace with the Palestinians and the Arab States, and when has its leadership fallen short?

From its earliest conception, Zionism sought to create a center for Jewish cultural renewal. At the founding of Israel 60 years ago, its leaders particularly hoped to provide physical refuge for a diminished and fragile Jewish people. While Israel's pioneers aspired first and foremost to restore Jews to their ancestral homeland, many also reached out to their neighbors in peace. Israel's founders extended a "hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness..." Yet, since 1967, Israel has also occupied land that would be a Palestinian state. What has 60 years of statehood taught us? And what has 41 years of occupation taught us? What can we do with its lessons? How do we reckon with the many facets of the Israeli national narrative with honesty and respect?

This booklet aims to provide material for discussion, and resources for articles and sermons that may help us evaluate and learn from the most important project of the Jewish People in the 20th century. Rabbis Brant Rosen and Toba Spitzer provide reflections on Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Independence Day) during this 60th year of independence, and Brit Tzedek Rabbinic Cabinet members and staff provide a rich list of possible activities for your community or synagogue. Rabbi John Friedman, chair of Brit Tzedek's rabbinic cabinet, shares a short bibliography of important works discussing the conflict. Many of these sources make use of Israeli documents that only became public decades after the state was established, revealing for the first time primary accounts of the aspirations, actions, and decisions of Israeli leaders in the country's early days. A chronology of the key events in the peace process, dating back to 1919, is provided to help with discussions about Israel's efforts to live in peace with its Arab neighbors. Finally, we recount the stories of Israeli Rina Eilon, who fought with the Haganah as a teenager, and Rashid Irsheid, a Palestinian who experienced the 1948 war first-hand.

Our writers and editors were invaluable: Jan Jaben-Eilon, Todd Goodman, Emily Hauser, Larry Rosenberg, and Jessica Rosenblum. Thanks to Laurie Sucher (www.lauriesucher.com) for the drawings and to Andrew Barton (www.andrewfrancisbarton.com) for the book design. Finally, we owe a special thank you to Aliza Becker who conceptualized this booklet with us and oversaw every aspect of its production.

Rabbi John Friedman
Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller
April 30, 2008
Chair and Co-Chair
Rabbinic Cabinet of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom

YOM HAZIKARON

The Silver Platter Revisited by Rabbi Brant Rosen

May 7, 2008 | 4 Iyar 5768

“The state will not be given to the Jewish people on a silver platter.”

So went the famous statement attributed to Chaim Weizmann in 1947, not long after the UN's decision to partition Palestine. While historians debate as to whether this quote was actual or merely apocryphal, it attests to the profound sense of foreboding in the days leading up to the 1948 War – and to the realization that Jewish independence would almost certainly entail grave sacrifice.

No silver platter, indeed. Now, after 60 years of sacrifice more painful than we ever could have ever imagined, we find ourselves back where we began: witnessing an international effort to partition the land into Jewish and Palestinian states. We might well ask ourselves, what was it all for? As Yom Hazikaron – Israel's Memorial Day – approaches, we would do well to ask ourselves: were the deaths of the fallen in vain? And if not, then how might we honor their terrible sacrifice?

There can be no doubt that the stakes of the current “partition effort” are unbearably high. If Israel does not find the wherewithal to forge a two-state solution with the Palestinians, the tragic sacrifices of the past 60 years can only give way

to one of two scenarios: the end of Israel as a Jewish state or a Jewish apartheid state living in perpetual conflict with a majority Palestinian population. Do any of us really believe that either scenario would honor the sacrifice of those who died defending the dream of Jewish independence?

No, the state was not given to Israel on a silver platter. But on this Yom Hazikaron, it is time to ask, how much sacrifice will be enough? How much tragedy must the peoples of Israel and Palestine endure before they realize that their mutual futures depend on their living together and not dying together?

This point was never made more eloquently than by the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in a 1993 speech that now resonates with tragic poignancy:

Let me say to you, the Palestinians: we are destined to live together on the same soil, in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battle stained with blood, we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes, we who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents,

we who have come from a land where parents bury their children, we who have fought against you, the Palestinians.

We say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: enough of blood and tears. Enough. We have no desire for revenge. We harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, to live side by side with you in dignity, in empathy, as human beings, as free men. We are today giving peace a chance, and saying again to you: Enough. Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say: Farewell to the arms.

In the end, there is only one way we can honor the memory of the fallen: by redoubling our resolve to pursue peace.

Rabbi Brant Rosen is the immediate past President of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. Newsweek recently named him as one of the top ten pulpit rabbis in the country. Rosen serves as the rabbi of the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston, Illinois and as a member of Brit Tzedek's Rabbinic Cabinet.

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

On the Road at 60 by Rabbi Toba Spitzer May 8, 2008 | 5 Iyar 5768

This year, the state of Israel turns 60. In a human life, a 60th birthday marks maturity, a time of accumulated accomplishment and accumulated challenge, a time to look back while still looking forward. In the life of a nation, 60 years is not a particularly long time at all. How do we mark 60 years in the 3,000-year journey of the Jewish people?

The Zionist leaders who founded the state of Israel clearly had a sense of their place in the long line of Jewish history, even as they made a historic break with the past two millennia of that history. In re-establishing Jewish political independence, they sought to meld historical and mythic Jewish connections to the land of Israel with modern ideals of democracy, equality, and pluralism. Thus they began an experiment – the creation of a particularistic Jewish state that would also, according to Israel's Declaration of Independence, “ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex;” a refuge for the world's Jews that would also “be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel.”

Yom Ha'atzmaut is an opportunity to return to these basic principles, a time to reflect on and wrestle with the contradictions and complexities at the core of the modern Jewish state. Sixty years after the drafters of the American Declaration of Independence declared that “all men are created equal,” the United States was dishearteningly far from realizing its own founders' ideals. Another 170 years down the road, we are getting much closer on some fronts and still struggling on others. Where will the Israeli reality be, in relation to its founders' vision, in another 100 years? 200? What will have become of the experiment to create a Jewish, democratic nation?

While 60 years is not a long time in the life of a nation, there is a good deal of urgency today among those who care deeply about Israel, a sense on both the right and the left that perhaps we are running out of time. There are many who fear that Israel is facing a physical existential threat, that the proponents of radical Islam will stop at nothing to eradicate the Jewish state, and that the Palestinian people's struggle for independence is at heart a component of this larger plan for annihilation. There are those who fear that without the establishment of a viable Palestinian state in the very near future, Israel's ability to exist as both a Jewish and a democratic nation is at an end. Others fear less for Israel's physical safety than its moral viability, concerned with the extensive damage the 40-year-old occupation has wreaked upon Israel's founding values, its commitment to socio-economic equality, and its social coherence.

In the midst of all this anxiety and despair, what is our responsibility as American rabbis? I would suggest that we embrace 60 both as a time of maturity and as a marker on a much longer road. American Jewish discourse about Israel, while certainly better than it was 20 years ago, is still far from mature. While open debate flows freely in Israel itself, here we are still debilitated by a fear of allowing public discussion of the very real difficulties and complexities inherent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Too many of us silence ourselves, for fear of being cast out of the mainstream community. Too many of our constituents either cling to an outmoded, naïve vision of Israel as blameless and victimized, or see in Israel little but the embodiment of the sins of imperialist Europe.

A mature person can acknowledge the damage she has caused without feeling her own selfhood threatened; a mature person does not need to cling to either an idealized or a demonized version of his own past. To achieve maturity on this issue, American Jews need our leadership in having conversations about Israel that acknowledge the “catastrophe” that was the Palestinians’ mirror experience of the founding of the Jewish state. They need our help in articulating pride in the accomplishments of Israeli society without minimizing the past and ongoing traumas suffered by Palestinians in the occupied territories, or the very real inequalities facing Israel’s Arab citizens. In a mature relationship, one can still love another without pretending that she has no faults. It is far past the time for the American Jewish community to have a mature relationship with Israel and its citizens, and such a relationship will only emerge when our communal discourse embraces the full reality of the Jewish state.

As a marker on a much longer road, we also need to have the faith that 60 is not the beginning of the end. None of us can know where the current situation will lead. Perhaps, with our leadership, the American Jewish community will become a powerful force pressuring the U.S. government to work actively to bring about a viable two-state solution, a solution that will provide for a lasting, just and secure peace for all the inhabitants of Israel and Palestine. Perhaps Israel will continue to evolve, and will someday fulfill in new ways its democratic and Jewish commitments. Perhaps, another 100 years down the road, we can imagine a cosmopolitan Israeli nation at the heart of a revitalized, dynamic, and democratic Middle East. The founders of the state of Israel had the chutzpah to dream big and to act on those dreams. We are asked to dream no less big, and to also have the courage of our convictions – with the benefit of hindsight, and the experience of the past 60 years, to guide our dreams and our actions.

Rabbi Toba Spitzer is national President of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association. Newsweek recently named her as one of the “Top Fifty Most Influential Rabbis in America.” Spitzer serves as the rabbi of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton, Massachusetts and on Brit Tzedek’s Rabbinic Cabinet.





ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR PROMOTING ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

As Jewish clergy it is “our job to challenge and provoke, to conduct the conversation, and trust our community to engage new ideas,” as Arnold Jacob Wolf writes in the foreword to this booklet. Here are some ideas on how to do just that.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

- Hold events that involve pairing Jewish and Arab presenters who model dialogue and mutual respect. These can include speakers from the diaspora or organizations on the ground in the Middle East such as the Parents Circle-Families Forum (www.parentscircle.com).
- Invite progressive Israeli and Palestinian policy analysts, spiritual leaders, politicians, and grassroots activists to speak at your synagogue.
- Offer programming about progressive Israeli-Jewish organizations such as Rabbis for Human Rights.
- Screen Israeli documentaries that shine a light on human rights, pro-peace activities, and the impact of the conflict on the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike. The documentary “Inner Tour” is a challenging and compelling film made by an Israeli director with a Palestinian assistant director just before the start of the second intifada. It follows a group of Palestinian “tourists” from the West Bank as they travel through Israel and can serve as a good basis for a discussion about the differences and similarities between Palestinian and Israeli narratives.
- For 60th anniversary programming, screen Israeli movies and take excerpts from Israeli books that touch on Jewish-Arab relations before and during the creation of Israel. The movies “Crossfire” and “My Michael” and the books *Benei Arav* by Moshe Smilansky and *Tale of Love and Darkness* by Amos Oz are highly recommended.
- Invite Sephardi/Mizrachi Jews to talk about their memories growing up in Arab countries. See the article, “Jewish Arabs and a New Middle East” by Marc Gopin at <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/opinion/?id=25108>.
- Host a Brit Tzedek program in your synagogue.

MUSIC PROGRAMMING

- Showcase Sephardic/Mizrachi music and use the opportunity to explain how the music reflects the history of Jews in Arab countries, or to demonstrate the connections between Sephardic/Arab music and Ashkenazi Jewish music. The Hijaz mode used in Arabic music migrated through Turkey to the Balkans and from there to Eastern Europe. In Ashkenazi circles, this mode is known as the “Freigish” mode, and can be heard in the Hava Nagila melody.
- Showcase Arab-Jewish music ensembles from Israel such as Bustan Avraham, Sheva, Yair Dalal, or Atzliut: Concerts for Peace (Arab and Jewish musicians in concert together) from Philadelphia. They perform Arabic and Sephardi/Mizrachi Jewish music (www.concertsforpeace.com).

LANGUAGE PROGRAMMING

- Offer a workshop on the links between Hebrew and Arabic. After a brief overview of the two languages regarding their alphabet, vocabulary, and grammar, you can lead people in a matching exercise of Hebrew-to-Arabic/Arabic-to-Hebrew cognate words and phrases on a two-column worksheet (See How Many Pairs You Can Find!). E.g.: shalom – salaam; ibn – ben; Moses – Musa; Solomon – Suleiman; Allah – Ha-El/Eloah; Gei Hinom – Gehenna; shuk – suuk.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Suggest Mitzvah projects to Bar/Bat Mitzvah students involving progressive organizations in Israel. For example, they could donate money to one or more of the many Israeli peace groups found at <http://btvshalom.org/links/>
- Many maps lack a Green Line, making no distinction between Israel and the occupied territories and Gaza. Have students put a piece of green yarn on the approximate location of the Green Line and explain its origin. Facilitate a discussion on Israel’s

border issues and the occupation.

- Teach about the origins of Rabbinic Judaism in *Eretz Yisrael* and Babylonia and demonstrate how much of modern-day Judaism was formed under the influence of Islam.

PROGRAMMING ON 1948

Organize study sessions with Israeli and Palestinian speakers on perspectives of what happened in 1948. Offer your congregants the opportunity to grapple in a comfortable space with the refugee problem and what Palestinians call the 1948 “catastrophe.”

PEACE PRODUCTS

Sell bottles of “Peace Oil”, a fair trade extra virgin olive oil, at Israel-oriented events, and distribute brochures describing this cooperative Israeli-Palestinian project. For more information, see <http://www.peaceoil.net>.

PEACE-ORIENTED TAGLIT-BIRTHRIGHT TRIPS

Inform your young adult congregants about Taglit-Birthright Israel trips that include visits to co-existence and other peace-oriented groups. For more information, contact the Union of Progressive Zionists at director@upzshalom.org

SYNAGOGUE TOURS TO ISRAEL

Take your synagogue on an afternoon or full day peace-oriented tour in Israel and/or the West Bank to provide them with a new perspective. For a list of activities sponsored by Israeli peace and coexistence organizations, see Brit Tzedek’s website at <http://btvshalom.org/resources/activities.shtml>

RABBIS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS “MEGILLAT ATZMAUT” STUDY MATERIALS

Rabbis for Human Rights has updated and translated into English their “Megillat Atzmaut” study materials. “This truly is a time to celebrate Israel’s accomplishments, to reflect on the dreams, vision and commitments of 60 years ago, and to rededicate ourselves to fulfilling the dreams and commitments we have not yet realized... The Tractate is broken into study units, each with their own topic. Just as in the Talmud itself, you will find that some passages repeat themselves when they are appropriate for more than one topic. The beauty of the Masekhet is that each unit stands on its own, but you are free to pick and choose passages and even to add materials to create your own study units.” Electronic and hard copies in English and Hebrew are available by request at office@rhr-na.org

PRO-ISRAEL, PRO-PEACE CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY

Rabbis and cantors play a very important role in Brit Tzedek’s pro-Israel, pro-peace advocacy in Congress. Jewish clergy are looked upon as leaders of the community, but too often the clergy who are heard most clearly are those with the most hawkish positions. Being an active member of Brit Tzedek’s advocacy network—whether by attending home district advocacy meetings, going to Washington during Brit Tzedek’s annual National Advocacy Days (held in June), or making a direct phone call to a Member of Congress—is an excellent way to demonstrate to our elected officials and the broader Jewish community that Jewish religious leaders stand side-by-side with lay activists in the pursuit of peace.

More specifically, your presence at a meeting often serves to upgrade that meeting’s importance in the eyes of Congressional staff, and may increase the likelihood of actually meeting with your representative, rather than just staff. Moreover, calls from clergy are likely to be returned more quickly when important legislation is moving in Congress. All of this helps to amplify Brit Tzedek’s voice and increase support for our message of peace in the halls of power.

For more information, contact Rabbi John Friedman at rabbifriedman@btvshalom.org

Contributors: Cantors Michael Davis and Jack Kessler, Rabbis Joab Eichenberg-Eilon, Edward Feld, John Friedman, Marc Gopin, Lynn Gottlieb, Maurice Harris, Paul Joseph, Nina Mandel, Julie Saxe-Taller, Gerry Serotta, and Laurie Zimmerman, and Brit Tzedek staffers Aliza Becker and Rob Levy.

RECOMMENDED READING ON THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

by Rabbi John Friedman

End of the Ottoman Empire:

Fromkin, David, [A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East](#), Henry Holt, 2001. Fromkin illuminates the history of the Middle East from 1914 to 1922, a period when the Great Powers were drawing lines to define countries. He explores why particular decisions were made and what the alternatives might have been.

British Mandate period:

Black, Edwin, [The Transfer Agreement, The Untold Story of the Secret Pact Between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine](#), Brookline Books, 1999. This update of a 1984 book by a child of holocaust survivors tells the riveting tale of an agreement made in desperation in 1933 to save 60,000 German Jews from Hitler. The cost: abandonment of the boycott of German goods. Many of the Jews who were saved ended up in what was then Palestine.

Segev, Tom, [One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate](#), Henry Holt, 2001. Contradicting widely held beliefs, Segev brings forth evidence that the British were pro-Zionist, not pro-Arab. This book is a thoroughgoing account of the early events that helped to bring us to where we are today. A New York Times Editor's Choice Best Book, and a recipient of the National Jewish Book Award. "The best single account of Palestine under the British mandate . . ." – The New York Times Book Review.

Independence and shortly after:

Segev, Tom, [1949: The First Israelis](#), Henry Holt, 1998. Drawing upon a huge range of sources, Ha'aretz columnist Segev

produced this controversial book about Israel's first year. Clashes that played out during that year – between secular and religious Israelis, between immigrants and Sabras – as well as early Israeli-Arab relations – are echoed in today's reality.

Segev, Tom, [The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust](#), Henry Holt, 2000. In this controversial work, Segev explores the impact of the Holocaust, and of Holocaust refugees, on Israel. "The Zionist community's first pained, uncomprehending encounter with the Holocaust survivors, according to Segev, gave rise to the silence that surrounded the Holocaust through the 1950s." – Publishers Weekly.

1967 and after:

Eldar, Akiva, and Idith Zertal, [Lords of the Land: The War over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007](#), Nation Books, 2007. Written by an influential Israeli columnist and an Israeli historian, this book offers a detailed history of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. It focuses on the settlers and on actions of the Israeli government that have led to settlements now scattered throughout the West Bank.

Gorenberg, Gershom, [The Accidental Empire: Israel And the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977](#), Times Books, 2006. Gorenberg examines the history of the settlements and sheds light on the role of Dayan, Meir, and other Israeli leaders. He also looks at the role the United States played in allowing the settlements to be established. "The book works powerfully on two important levels: as a deeply informative counterhistory and as a mournful reminder of what happens when a democratic government acquiesces in the face of its own militants." – The New York Times.

Israel and the United States:

Grose, Peter, Israel in the Mind of America, Alfred Knopf, 1983. Grose documents the views of American presidents and the American Jewish community, as he recounts the development of American interest in Israel. Throughout, he relates events to the shared values of the two countries.

Ross, Dennis, The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004. The chief negotiator for Middle East peace for Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Ross gives a behind-the-scenes look at negotiations from pre-Oslo to Camp David and beyond, along with portraits of the main protagonists, including Arafat, Clinton, and Rabin.

General history:

Morris, Benny, Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001, Alfred Knopf, 1999. Morris offers a detailed and insightful history of the conflict, from its origins until recent times. A controversial Israeli historian, he helped to reveal some of the devastating realities of post-Independence Israeli history and then went on (though not in this book) to give his view of why Israel had to do what it did.

Scham, Paul, Benjamin Pogrund, and Walid Salem (editors), Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue, Left Coast Press 2005. This book is an attempt to arrive at a common understanding of Israeli-Palestinian history. Delving into the early years of Zionism, the roots of Palestinian nationalism, and the many interpretations of historical events around the founding of Israel, the editors present views and counterpoints to them in a way that challenges preconceptions.

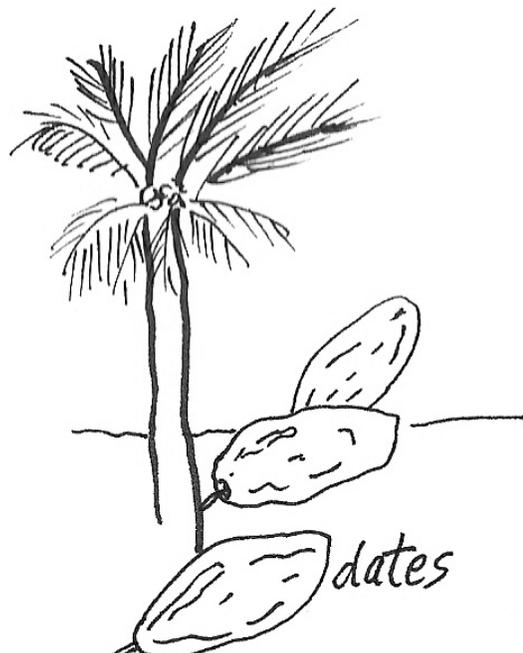
Shlaim, Avi, The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, W. W. Norton & Co., 2001. A controversial and particularly readable account, this book challenges the most common narratives of the founding of the State of Israel and dissects Israel's "Iron Wall" strategy. A professor of history at Oxford, Shlaim is one of Israel's "revisionist historians".

Shulman, David, Dark Hope: Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine, University of Chicago Press 2007. A member of the Israeli peace group Ta'ayush (Arabic for "living together"), Shulman focuses on the injustices suffered by Palestinians at the hands of Israel and draws a picture of efforts to hold back Israeli actions against the Palestinians.

Zionism:

Hertzberg, Arthur, The Fate of Zionism: A Secular Future for Israel and Palestine, Harper-Collins, 2003. Hertzberg, who was president of the American Jewish Congress and vice-president of the World Jewish Congress, puts forth secularism as the key to a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and calls for hardliners on both sides to step back.

Hertzberg, Arthur, (editor), The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader, Jewish Publication Society, 1997. First published in 1959, Hertzberg put together this anthology of writings by leading Zionist thinkers, including Herzl, Buber, Jabotinsky, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion.



DEFINING MOMENTS

IN THE HISTORY OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS

As Israel and the Palestinians continue to struggle through violence and tentative negotiations, it's easy to lose sight of the long history of efforts to resolve the conflict between the two peoples. The work done by Brit Tzedek v'Shalom builds on groundwork laid by others going back to the early 20th century.

Yet much of the early peace work failed to see the conflict as one between two peoples sharing the same land; it frequently bypassed the Palestinians in an effort to achieve reconciliation between Israel and the larger Arab world at the Palestinians' expense. This often served not only Jewish and Israeli interests but also those of the Arab nations, where particularist notions of nationalism were subsumed between 1948 and 1967 under an ideology of pan-Arabism, and when Egypt, Syria, and Jordan were eager to claim Palestinian lands for themselves.

Pre-Independence

JANUARY 1919

Emir Faisal (then ruling in Damascus, soon to be King of Syria and later of Iraq) and Chaim Weizmann (President of the World Zionist Organization) signs the short-lived Faisal-Weizmann Agreement. Under this agreement, Faisal pledges to support Jewish settlement in Palestine, with the understanding that the Zionist movement would support the establishment of an Arab State alongside the Jewish homeland. The two leaders hope to present a united front at the Paris Peace Conference, not knowing that the British and French had already divided up the Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire between themselves.

1925

A group of Jewish intellectuals in Jerusalem founds Brit Shalom ("Covenant of Peace"), in order to seek peaceful coexistence between the Jews and Arabs living in Mandatory Palestine. In their founding statement, they write: "the object of the Association is to arrive at an understanding between Jews and Arabs as to the form of their mutual social relations in Palestine on the basis of the absolute political equality of two culturally autonomous peoples, and to determine the lines of their cooperation for the development of the country." Members include Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and Henrietta Szold.

Such tendencies can be seen in the 1919 Faisal-Weizmann Agreement and the secret talks held in 1953 between Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Sharett and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Though the 1978 Camp David Accords paid lip service to the Palestinian cause, it was an agreement struck between Israel and Egypt, and its Palestinian clauses went unfulfilled.

It was only 15 years ago that official Israeli and PLO negotiators met in Oslo to attempt to forge a two-state solution; significantly, such meetings were still illegal under Israeli law, though the PLO had officially endorsed such a solution in 1988. Indeed, prior to 1993, the idea that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert might someday sit at the same table with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, as he has recently, would have been unthinkable.

A true two-state concept, inherent in the 1947 UN Partition Plan by which Israel was established, was largely unspoken of between Israel's War of Independence and the Six Days War. The idea resurfaced again in 1974 when Palestinian leaders associated with the PLO began to float the idea of recognizing Israel and establishing a state in Gaza and the West Bank.

The two-state solution then reemerged as a new paradigm, a result of both back channel and public efforts, and in no small part because of the efforts of peace-minded American Jews. One such group founded Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations in 1973, and initiated several then-controversial meetings between moderate Palestinians and American Jewish leaders.

Finding a true path to peace and justice is never quick or easy. The work we do today evolves from the work done in the past; by learning the lessons of the past and building on the strengths of those who went before us, we can contribute to achieving the goals of all who have strived for peace since the earliest days of the Jewish nationalist movement.

1953 to NOV. 1967

NOVEMBER 1947

UN votes on a partition plan (Resolution 181) to create a Jewish state and an Arab state in Palestine. The majority of the Yishuv (as the Jewish community of Mandatory Palestine was known) supports partition, with the exception of some far-right nationalist and anti-Zionist religious groups. Though partition is roundly rejected throughout the Arab world, the communist parties of the Middle East fall in line behind Soviet policy in support of the plan. Supporters include the Palestinian Communist Party, which consists of both Arabs and Jews.

1953

Shortly after being elected prime minister of Israel, Moshe Sharett holds secret talks with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. These discussions result in the drafting of a formal peace treaty, including refugee resettlement and the future status of Jerusalem, but ultimately fail to bridge the gap between the countries.

NOVEMBER 1967

The UN passes Security Council Resolution 242 calling for the establishment of "a just and lasting peace in the Middle East," including the return of "territories occupied in the recent conflict" (in the West Bank, Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, and Sinai Peninsula) and "respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area." While 242 is now the internationally accepted basis for peace-making between Israel and the Palestinians, it was at the time accepted by the Israelis but rejected by the Palestinians, as it did not refer to Palestinian self-determination.

JULY 1967

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon makes a cabinet proposal calling for Israel to annex the Jordan River Valley, largely unpopulated and considered a strategic necessity, along with part of the southern West Bank and the Gaza Strip. He proposes negotiating with local leaders in order to create an autonomous region in the rest of the West Bank, one with economic ties to Israel. Over time, the parameters of the plan change considerably, and in its final version, some two-thirds of the West Bank was to be returned to Jordan.

1974

Originally formed in 1964 as an arm of the Arab League, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is re-formed in 1968 under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, redrafting the organization's national covenant and denying Israel's right to exist. Six years later, individual Palestinians associated with the PLO begin to float the idea of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, implying an acceptance of Israel's existence. With the rising profile of the PLO and the gradual move away from zero-sum game tactics, a paradigm shift is underway in which the conflict begins to be seen not as an Arab-Israeli problem, but rather a conflict between two distinct peoples, Israelis and Palestinians.

APRIL 1968

President Lyndon Johnson's administration sends an airgram from the State Department to the Embassy of Israel stating its "continuing opposition to any Israeli settlements in the occupied areas.... By setting up civilian or quasi-civilian outposts in the occupied areas the [Government of Israel] adds serious complications to the eventual task of drawing up a peace settlement. Further, the transfer of civilians to occupied areas, whether or not in settlements which are under military control, is contrary to Article 49 of the Geneva Convention."

Every subsequent U.S. administration has likewise expressed opposition to settlement in the occupied territories.

- Reagan Plan, 1982: "Further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be freely and fairly negotiated."
- Secretary of State James Baker, 1991: "I don't think there is any greater obstacle to peace than settlement activity that continues not only unabated but at an advanced pace."
- Secretary of State Colin Powell, 2003: "Settlement activity must stop. And it has not stopped to our satisfaction."

MID-1970'S

Several Israeli Knesset members and activists from the center-left publicly espouse a position of "two states for two peoples"

NOVEMBER 1977

President of Egypt Anwar Sadat flies to Jerusalem to launch peace talks with Israel about the Sinai peninsula and self-determination for Palestinians.

MARCH 1978

Shalom Achshav (Peace Now) is created after 348 Israeli military reserve officers respond to a possible collapse in Israeli-Egyptian peace talks by petitioning Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to continue to pursue an agreement.

DECEMBER 1969

US Secretary of State William Rogers proposes a plan calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Egypt, clearing the Suez Canal, and for discussions among Israel, Egypt, and Jordan on implementation of UN Resolution 242. Egypt and Jordan accept the plan in 1970, but Israel refuses, saying that it needs assurances of lasting peace.

1973

Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations is established, with Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf serving as its founding chair. Breira calls 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 meet with moderate Palestinians, they are denounced by major Jewish organizations as PLO supporters; some rabbis and other Jewish professional members are threatened with dismissal. The controversy leads the group to disband in 1977.

OCTOBER 1973

In the wake of the Yom Kippur War (known among Arabs as the Ramadan, or October War) the UN passes Resolution 338, calling for ceasefire, implementation of Resolution 242 and negotiations aimed at “establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.”

DECEMBER 1978

Israel and Egypt agree on the Camp David Accords. The peace treaty subsequently signed on the White House lawn in March 1979 includes a period of autonomy for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, after which an “elected self-governing authority” is to be established. The treaty with Egypt has held without threat to this day, but its Palestinian-specific clauses were never implemented.

1980

New Jewish Agenda is founded. This multi-issue progressive American Jewish organization had a prominent Middle East peace task force that supports the establishment of a Palestinian state. In 1983, NJA circulated a petition for a “Freeze on Settlements in the West Bank” that enabled a public education campaign about the effects of settlement policies on the Middle East peace process.

1981

Americans for Peace Now is established. Their activities include fundraising for Shalom Achshav, bringing Israeli peace leaders to the U.S. and advocating for pro-peace policies with Congress and the administration.

APRIL 1982

In keeping with the 1978 Camp David Accords, Israel completes return of the Sinai to Egypt.

JUNE 1982

Yesh Gvul (“There is a Limit”) is founded by Israeli reservists who refuse to serve in the Lebanon War and instead request that they be allowed to fulfill their reserve duties within the borders of Israel-proper. This first organized refuser group continues to support soldiers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories and, more recently, in the second war in Lebanon.

JULY 1982 to 1988

JULY 1982

Israeli peace activist and former member of Knesset Uri Avnery meets with Yasser Arafat under Israeli fire in Beirut. This is believed to be the first time Arafat has ever met an Israeli. The meeting breaks a long-held taboo in Israel and sets the stage for a sea change among Israelis regarding the legitimacy of the PLO as a negotiating partner and the justice of the Palestinian cause.

SEPTEMBER 1982

The Reagan Peace Plan is floated. It offers full autonomy for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza during a transitional period of five years, which would begin to run after an election of a self-governing authority and a concurrent freeze on Israeli settlements. In return for peace, Israel would withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza, except from such parts as would be required to ensure its security. The final status of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem would be decided through negotiations.

SEPTEMBER 1982

In response to the Reagan Peace Plan, Arab leaders announce the Fez Plan at an Arab summit in Morocco. The plan calls for the withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967, including the Arab part of Jerusalem; the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories; freedom of worship and performance of religious rites for all religions; and the placing of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the supervision of the United Nations for a transitional period (“not exceeding a few months”), until an independent Palestinian State could be established with Jerusalem as its capital. The Fez proposal further reaffirms “the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and the exercise of its... inalienable national rights under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization.”

DECEMBER 1989

Peace Now stages the Hands Around Jerusalem demonstration in which some 30,000 Palestinians and Israelis form a human chain around parts of the old city of Jerusalem, calling for peace between the sides. The demonstration is broken up by Israeli police and military using water cannons and rubber bullets.

SEPTEMBER 1991

Israeli Abie Nathan is arrested for meeting with members of the PLO, including Yasser Arafat, over the course of a decade; he is sentenced to 18 months in prison. (It is later revealed that Israeli government officials had also been secretly conducting similar meetings during these same years.) Nathan goes on a hunger strike to protest the law (passed in 1986) forbidding such meetings, suspending his protest after 40 days at the request of Israeli President Chaim Herzog, who later shortens Nathan’s sentence to less than six months.

OCTOBER 1991

The Madrid Peace Conference is launched. Israel requires that Palestinian delegates arrive as members of the Jordanian delegation and have no official ties with the PLO, but Palestinian delegates vet all their positions with the PLO leadership by fax.

1989 to 1995

JULY 1982 to 1988

SEPTEMBER 1982

Peace Now holds what was and is still the largest protest rally in Israeli history, calling for a commission of inquiry into massacres in two Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Sabra and Shatila; hundreds of thousands attend. The protest quickly becomes a demonstration against the war itself and for the first time since the State was established, Israeli public opinion openly questions its government's security policies.

SEPTEMBER 1985

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres calls for an international Middle East peace conference. He hopes to achieve an agreement with Jordan's King Hussein, excluding the PLO from the negotiations and any final arrangement.

NOVEMBER 1988

The Palestinian National Council officially renounces terrorism, accepts UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and calls for a two-state solution to the conflict.

1993

Representatives of the Israeli Foreign Ministry meet with PLO officials in Oslo to launch the secret, back-channel negotiations that culminate in the Declaration of Principles (DOP), signed on the White House lawn by Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in September of that year. Arafat commits to annulling the parts of the PLO Charter that deny Israel's right to exist, and Israel recognizes the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

MAY 1994

The Gaza-Jericho Accord is signed, allowing for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), an interim governing body, in the West Bank and Gaza.

JULY 1994

Jordan and Israel sign a peace treaty ending the state of conflict between the two nations and agreeing on security arrangements; this accord has held without threat to this day.

SEPTEMBER 1995

Further agreements are reached between Israel and the PLO, frequently referred to as Oslo II. These establish a system of graduated and shared control over the occupied territories, with the Palestinian Authority solely responsible for some small areas, control shared by Israel and the PA in others, and Israel in sole control of other areas.

1989 to 1995

OCTOBER 1998

The Wye River Agreement is signed, in an effort to restore momentum to peace negotiations after nearly two years of stagnation and growing violence, and with the intention of establishing comprehensive negotiations and a final peace settlement.

OCTOBER 1999

The Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum is signed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat, establishing a timetable for a permanent peace settlement, aiming for a declaration of principles on final status issues by February 2000 and a permanent settlement by September of that year.

DECEMBER 2000

At talks in Taba, Egypt, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators make tremendous progress toward peace, saying that they are mere weeks away from reaching an agreement; Barak tells Clinton that he won't sign an agreement before elections are held, and calls elections eight weeks early. He loses to Ariel Sharon.

JULY 2000

President Bill Clinton gathers Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at Camp David in an attempt to bridge the gaps between the sides. The talks fail.

NOVEMBER 2003

Former Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian Cabinet Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo announce the Geneva Accord, an unofficial draft peace treaty that would bring about a two-state solution, the sharing of Jerusalem as a capital, and a mutually acceptable resolution of the refugee issue. The Geneva Accord is based on the results of the 2000 Taba negotiations, known as the Clinton Parameters. Ultimately, this is the plan that captures the world's attention, and to which Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon responds when launching his plan to withdraw from Gaza.

APRIL 2003

The Middle East Quartet (the U.S., U.N., E.U. and Russia) launch the Road Map to Peace; the PA is to call for an immediate end to violence against Israelis, and Israel is to freeze all settlement activity. A permanent-status, two-state agreement and end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to be achieved over the course of 2004 and 2005.

MAY 2007

The Arab League again endorses the Arab Peace Initiative, this time calling for "a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem." Israel doesn't respond.

1998 - 2002

JANUARY 2002

Fifty-one reserve combat soldiers and officers sign a “Combatants’ Letter,” declaring their refusal “to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.” They letter ultimately gains 633 signatories, and they establish Ometz LeSarev (Courage to Refuse). Subsequently new refuser and ex-combatant groups are founded including Shministim (Israeli high school students who refuse IDF service), Combatants for Peace (a co-existence organization of former Israeli and Palestinian combatants), and Breaking the Silence (an organization of former Israeli combat soldiers who speak out about military abuses of power in the territories).

2007

Support in Congress for a two-state solution mediated by the U.S. makes tremendous gains. June: Senators Feinstein and Lugar introduce Senate Resolution 321, calling for active U.S. engagement to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, garnering 37 co-sponsors (several of them Jewish), significantly more than any similar resolution has ever gained. November: Representatives Gary Ackerman (D-NY) and Charles Boustany (R-LA) – a Jewish American and an Arab American – craft a bipartisan letter to Secretary Rice commending her efforts to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and calling for “robust, hands-on U.S. leadership and diplomacy” to bring about a two-state solution. The letter is signed by 135 representatives.

MARCH 2002

The Arab League endorses the Arab Peace Initiative, proposed by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at the Beirut Summit. The initiative offers Israel security and “normal relations” in exchange for a withdrawal from the occupied territories, establishment of a Palestinian state, a shared Jerusalem, and an unspecified “return of refugees.” Israel rejects the plan.

APRIL 2002

Brit Tzedek v’Shalom is formed and establishes its national office in Chicago. Brit Tzedek aims to organize a grassroots base of American Jews who will press the U.S. government to work for a negotiated two-state settlement of the conflict.

NOVEMBER 2007

President Bush convenes the Annapolis Conference, at which 20 Arab leaders, including Palestinian President Abbas, meet with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. The Annapolis Declaration expresses the parties’ “determination to bring an end to bloodshed, suffering and decades of conflict between our peoples; to usher in a new era of peace, based on freedom, security, justice, dignity, respect and mutual recognition; and to propagate a culture of peace and nonviolence.”

JULY 2002

The first non-official draft of a negotiated peace plan is presented by Ami Ayalon, former head of the Israeli General Security Services (Shabak), and Sari Nusseibeh, former PLO representative in Jerusalem. The Ayalon-Nusseibeh Plan, signed by some 60,000 Palestinians and 100,000 Israelis, calls for two states with borders based on those established in the Six-Day War, and Jerusalem as the capital of both countries. According to the plan, Palestinian refugees could choose to return to the new Palestine or be compensated, and Palestine would be demilitarized.

2008

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators hold regular meetings, but both express ambivalence regarding the possibility of achieving an agreement before the end of the Bush Presidency.

APRIL 2008

J Street and JStreetPAC are founded in order to create the political arm of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement, raising money for candidates who support diplomacy and Middle East peace.

2003 - 2008

RINA EILON

An Israeli's Memories of 1948

Rina Eilon was born in Jerusalem and currently lives in Ramat Eshkol, the first settlement built beyond the Green Line in what is now Jerusalem. Here she relates her experiences in the Jewish underground during the pre-State period and recalls the first hours and days of statehood. Rina is the mother of Rabbinic Cabinet member Rabbi Joab Eichenberg-Eilon and mother-in-law of Brit Tzedek board member Jan Jaben-Eilon.

I believe that Israelis and Palestinians can live together, because I remember a time when the two peoples did.

At age 77, I am not oblivious to reality, even though I don't keep up with either local Israeli politics, nor the seemingly never-ending efforts to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I don't read a newspaper, for instance. Only rarely have I disclosed how I voted in an Israeli election, and that was to my daughter-in-law.

But that does not mean I grew up as an idle bystander in the excitement and traumas of the land of my birth. In fact, I am aware of the privilege of having lived and been a part of history-in-the-making.

I was born in Tel Aviv in 1931. But I moved as a one-year-old to Jerusalem where my father was born, and I've lived there ever since. Jerusalem was a totally different world than what it is today. I recall traveling with my parents and older brother to Tel Aviv to visit our grandparents in the mid-1930s. The taxis traveled by convoy for protection. The first part of the trip, from Jerusalem to Arab Ramle was the scariest. Stones were often thrown at the vehicles. But after passing Ramle, we could breathe easier.

Although the family didn't talk about politics, it was in the air. I grew up in a home where it was always



spoken that we need our freedom. That had meant freedom first from the Turks, and then from the British. My father had fought with the British against the Turks in World

War I, but later joined the underground Israeli Haganah, the least extreme of the underground movements fighting for independence from the British. My older brother followed suit by joining the Palmach, and at age 15, I was the first of my friends to join the youth Haganah.

I remember the swearing-in ceremony where I swore allegiance [with my hand] on both the Bible and a handgun in a secret location, hidden from the British. The Haganah was considered an illegal organization by the British. My strong belief that the Jews should have their own state superseded any fears I might have had.

I was taught how to operate a handgun, how to disassemble and reassemble it in the dark. I smuggled guns and bullets in my bra. I carried pails of glue and posters and, again illegally, pasted them on walls and trees. The posters expressed both anti-British sentiments and attempted to motivate the Jews for self-rule. Although I was never stopped by the British, I was prepared. I had been taught how to navigate at night and trained in self-protection for hand-to-hand combat with batons.

In October 1947, my family and I stayed up late waiting for the United Nations vote that ended up being delayed until the next month. So on Novem-

ber 29, 1947, I wasn't sure there would be a vote. I went to bed early. My parents were out for the night. The telephone rang. A friend called to tell me that the U.N. voted in favor of the Partition Plan, the arrangement to divide the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River into a Jewish State and a Palestinian State.

I didn't have far to go to join the celebrations. I lived on Shmuel Hanagid Street not far from the national Jewish institutions. I called my boyfriend, woke him up, and we joined the throngs of Jews singing and dancing in the streets. We went to the courtyard of the national institutions, which was packed with people waiting until Golda Meir came out to the balcony. I remember her saying, now is our opportunity and our hand is stretched out to peace.

As the crowds dispersed, I passed by British armored vehicles. The soldiers sat on the top and people threw flowers at them and shook their hands. Since I spoke English, I yelled out, "Now you'll be going home soon!" Walking down Ben Yehuda Street, I remember a wine shop owner bringing out bottles and barrels to share with whoever walked by.

Everybody was happy; we'd achieved something.

The next day, I went to school as usual, but in the afternoon, I received a message from the underground to meet at a secret location where I received the order to help disperse Jews still partying in the streets, because there were reports about Arabs knifing Jews on the streets.

Within a few weeks, the Arabs bombed and destroyed all pumps bringing water to Jerusalem. Convoys bringing food were attacked. Electricity was damaged. I remember that we had coupons for water rationing. Tankers would come to the homes and give one-half pail per person per day. Electricity was on for three hours twice a week. Eventually, the schools were closed because the Jewish authorities didn't want many people congregating in one place.

One evening a week, I was on guard duty in the Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem, making sure no Arabs came from the other side to attack Jews. Each young person was paired with an "adult" of 18; my pair was given one revolver and seven bullets in a box. Although I never saw any Arabs try to infiltrate the Jewish neighborhoods, one night my partner and I heard noises, so my partner placed a bullet in the revolver. When morning came, however, we discovered the source of the noise: a donkey was tied to a tree and trying to break free.

I remember returning home from the freezing night guard duty. I jumped into my mother's bed and she jumped out because I was ice cold. There was no heating in the homes.

Years earlier, I had volunteered at the Mount Scopus Hadassah Hospital, playing with the sick children. After a few months of doing guard duty, I reconnected with the hospital, which by that time had moved from Mount Scopus into various buildings within Jerusalem. The emergency room relocated to the British compound. That's where I was working when the new State of Israel was declared on May 14. I heard about it that evening. Without consistent electricity, there was no radio to listen to. In any case, the declaration was overshadowed by events.

“I believe that Israelis and Palestinians can live together, because I remember a time when the two peoples did.”

For me, May 14, was very traumatic. My best friend (and soon-to-be sister-in-law) and other friends had been sent to [protect] Gush Etzion, south of Jerusalem, and on May 14, it fell to Arab insurgents. Unfortunately, several of the teenage girls, afraid of being raped and murdered, committed suicide. While many people were killed, my friends were taken prisoner, first to Bethlehem, and later to Transjordan. In Bethlehem, the British-trained Jordanian army took

the prisoners and placed them in jail, thereby protecting them from the Arab insurgents. The insurgents tried to take the prisoners from the jail to lynch them, but the Jordanian Army shot into the crowd to protect the prisoners.

I didn't grow up being afraid of Arabs. On the contrary, pre-1948, we had more contacts with Arabs than most people. My mother had a knitting salon and her clientele were Jewish women, English wives of the British officers, and aristocratic Arab women. We had a lot of contact with the Arab families. We were invited to their homes for festive celebrations. I remember those times fondly.

In about February or March of 1948, I remember that an aristocratic Arab couple came to Jerusalem from Jaffa and warned my mother that when [the British left], the Arabs would attack and the Jews would lose the war and be killed. They offered to take me with them to Jaffa to protect my life. Knowing that so many Jews had just been murdered in the Holocaust, they wanted to help me survive. But I was nearly 17 years old and my mother declined the offer, saying the family was going to stick together.

I was not afraid of Arabs. Every Shabbat we went to the Christian quarter in the Old City and mingled with the British and Arabs. We had fun and ate a special ice cream. There was little hatred of Arabs in the Jewish community then. Nowadays I hear the hatred among Jews and it surprises me that they are Jewish. But then, there was no visible hatred. Even in the underground, the hatred was for the British, not the Arabs. Revenge was only against the British, not the Arabs.

Once the war began, I don't recall any fear – only the intensity of staying alive another day. The Arabs were shelling Jerusalem from sunrise to sunset. My mother was at home recuperating from an operation, but my step-father and I had to “work” every day. I was either on guard duty or working in the hospital, while my step-father, like other older people, served as a guard.

During the first ceasefire in June 1948, I received special permission to travel, via the Burma Road, to Tel Aviv to visit my father. Most youth of military age were not allowed out of Jerusalem, but because my parents had divorced, I was allowed to visit my father. I recall hitchhiking to Tel Aviv, then taking a

“I remember that an aristocratic Arab couple came to Jerusalem from Jaffa and warned my mother that when [the British left], the Arabs would attack and the Jews would lose the war and be killed. They offered to take me with them to Jaffa to protect my life. Knowing that so many Jews had just been murdered in the Holocaust, they wanted to help me survive.”

taxi to northern Tel Aviv where my father lived on Ben Yehuda Street.

The streets were so quiet. It seemed like there was a curfew. I asked the taxi driver what was happening. That's when I learned about the historic shelling of the Altalena, the ship that was bringing in weapons for the extremist Jewish underground group known as the Irgun, led by Menachem Begin. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion believed that the new State should have only one authority, only one army, and he had been trying to bring the extremist groups together into the newly created Israel Defense Forces.

After my two-week stay in Tel Aviv, I returned to Jerusalem just hours before the ceasefire was broken and war started anew. This time I served as a scout in the Italian hospital building. Within weeks, another ceasefire was declared. That's when Jordan took control of the West Bank and Egypt took over Gaza.

My life, however, returned to normal. I returned to school, eventually graduated and married. My first paying job was working for the new Israeli government that was transitioning from the shadow government that had been housed in Tel Aviv, as it relocated to the newly declared capital of Jerusalem.

All the ministries had to be moved. We had to find buildings for them, mostly former British offices. My job was to find hotel rooms for the government workers to live in during the week. From there I moved to the Prime Minister's office, first working in the typist pool and then I started to work directly for the judicial department that was then part of the Prime Minister's office.

The main job of the government then was to prepare for one of the first laws to be enacted by the Israeli government: the Law of Return. To me, that's the meaning of the Jewish State: allowing all Jews in exile to move to Israel. This was the highlight of independence for me, not the declaration of independence and not moving of the government to Jerusalem.

This was an exciting time. Things were moving. Ministries were working. We no longer had just a shadow government. There was a feeling of hope and optimism. Already immigration had started and we needed land for the tents, and we needed to provide food and health care for the immigrants, many of whom were sick. Water had to be brought back to Jerusalem. But we felt the war was over.

As I look back, I believe the Arabs made a mistake by not agreeing to the Partition Plan. I think the Palestinian leadership should have created a shadow government like Israel did. I hope that someday the Palestinians will have leadership that would make courageous decisions like Ben-Gurion did, to unify the army.

The Palestinians lack the kind of leadership that would drop the dream of conquering Israel. But I believe Palestinians should have their freedom the way we wanted our freedom. I love Israel and I understand Palestinians who love Jerusalem the way I do. I believe in a two-state solution, and I believe there should be open borders, allowing Israelis and Palestinians to go from one country to the other, as in Europe. I wish full rights so that Jews could live in Arab places and vice versa. But I don't expect to see this in my lifetime.

My two children served in the Israeli army, and currently my two grandchildren are serving. I haven't followed the intricacies of the debate about the two-state solution. I really don't like to discuss politics. I don't even know what my father's politics were. I know he co-owned a fabric shop with an Arab in Jerusalem near the Jaffa Gate, but they had to dissolve it when the war started between the Jews and the Arabs.

The one time I spoke to my husband about politics was right after the Six-Day War, in which he served. He said, "We are close to peace." I said, "We'll walk on the moon first."

Today I'm afraid to hope for peace. I have hoped for too long.



RASHID IRSHEID

A Palestinian's Memories of 1948

Palestinian-American Rashid Irsheid was born in 1928 in Walajha, a small village outside of Jerusalem that was annexed to the Jerusalem municipality in 1967. He now resides in Chicago.

My father never did any outside work. He always worked in our fields. He grew olive trees, apricots, plums, figs and other crops. He sold some [of the produce], but not much, because we lived off of it. For instance, we would dry lentils and eat them in winter. We grew lots of tomatoes in the summer time. [Then we] would cut the tomatoes in half, and put them on the roof to dry in the sun for a week or so. We had everything homemade.

I'm the only one [of my brothers] who didn't like to work in the fields [with the] hot sun and all that! Luckily, I worked for the British Army. I was very young. I never finished high school; I only went up to the fourth grade. I worked for them in supplies.

[When] I was maybe 14 years old, a Jewish man from Iraq would come to our village. He would replace the cotton in the mattresses and pillows and beat them until they were fluffy. And he would never go any place to sleep but my mother and father's house. He lived in the Old City of Jerusalem, and his name was Abu Yusef, father of Joseph.

I remember after supper, in the summer time when we would eat on the roof. After sunset, it was time for prayers. My father would get up, and he would face Mecca, and Abu Yusef would face Jerusalem, so they were back to back!

These people, whether they were Jewish or Palestinian, they were all so good to each other, and



those politics, they just destroyed everything. My parents, they knew very well that we [Jews and Muslims] are cousins. We know that Abraham was the father of the prophets. And of course Hebrew and Arabic are almost the same.

My father used to say, there was a blind Jew and a blind Arab, sitting side by side. And then, a British officer came and said, "Here is a piaster [coin from the Mandate period]." But he doesn't give it to either of them. He just says "Here's a piaster." So one says "Give me half of it," and the other says, "No, you give me half of it!", "You give me," "No, you give me!" See? That's how they made enmity, you see.

With Hitler and all that, people came [to Palestine] from Europe. We gave a Polish family a place to stay. I don't know if they were Jews. They wanted to offer my father something, and he said: "You're refugees, it's ok. Here's a room, and whatever you want to plant, you can plant."

The Irsheid family didn't know it at the time, but the Poles they hosted during World War Two were actually high-level diplomats. Returning to Poland after the

“MY PARENTS, THEY KNEW VERY WELL THAT WE [JEWS AND MUSLIMS] ARE COUSINS. WE KNOW THAT ABRAHAM WAS THE FATHER OF THE PROPHETS.”

war, they sent word to the Consulate that they wanted to thank Rashid's father Mahmoud by offering him a trip to Poland. A consular official traveled to Walajha to convey the invitation.

My father knew about Poland and about communism. He said, “You know, your country is Bolshevik, and they don't believe in God, and I'm sorry... I can't come. So thank you very much! But I request one thing. This son of mine, he doesn't like to work in the fields. And if you have any job for him, I would like it!” So right away they took me to work in the Consulate. I worked as a telephone operator, messenger, stuff like that.

I heard about the partition plan in 1947. People started talking but they couldn't understand it. The people thought it won't succeed. I didn't know much about politics at that time [nor did most] of the Arabs. Everybody liked to make a living and that's it.

The others, that wanted to govern and be big shots [felt differently], but the population, they liked to live with the Jews. But they couldn't say anything, they couldn't say anything at all. A simple Palestinian man has no words.

The Arab nations at that time, and even after, were not free. They were governed by other [European countries]. Nobody was [really] independent. [*Here Rashid refers to British commander John Glubb who held a central role in the government of Transjordan at the time, the British backing of Egypt's King Farouk, and Italian rule in Libya.*]

And the Arabs were never, never ready for anything.

The Jewish people were well organized with everything. That's why they defeated [the Arabs].

On May 14th, I was working in the Polish Consulate. On that day, I went with a driver to the post office at around 11:00 in the morning. In order to go to the post office, we had to go near the Jewish Agency, where Ben Gurion was. And across from there, across Mamila Road, were the Arab [forces].

While we were driving, our car was shot at by the Arab side. I opened the door of the car, and I jumped out and ran to the sandbags near the Haganah.

The consul told the driver: “Wait here, I have to get Rashid”, because otherwise they would take me as a prisoner or something like that. So he told the Haganah I was his employee and they said “OK.” While we were gone, the driver took off with our car and went to the old city!

We went to the Belgian Consulate for lunch. At around 2:30 the Belgian consul told his driver to take us back to the Polish Consulate – about a mile and a half away. I sat next to the driver, and the consul was in the back.

The British were supposed to leave at 12 midnight, but they left at 12 noon. They gave [certain buildings] to the Haganah, They were shooting at the Arabs in the hills. A bullet came through the door and burned my shirt. Then the driver was shot in the arm. We stopped, and we all went down on the ground. We stayed there for three and a half hours.

The Polish consul took his shirt and gave first aid to

the driver. He started calling: "I am the Polish consul general! Please send some help!" He was calling to the Haganah, in the windows of a building, where they were shooting. "We need help, we need help!"

Finally they took us to the Jewish area. And they gave us first aid, and then it was back to the Belgian Consulate where we stayed the night.

Because the Belgian consul was dean of the diplomatic corps, the consuls general gathered on the morning of May 15 at the Belgian Consulate.

All the consuls general came, the Americans, the French, the Italians, including Ben Gurion. The consular corps said, "You know, we have to talk to the Arabs." So they decided to call the Arab headquarters in the Old City of Jerusalem. And [Ben Gurion] said "We need someone who speaks Arabic." So the Polish Consul said "I have my employee Rashid. He speaks Arabic, and English, and Hebrew, and Polish." And Ben Gurion said "Ok. Call them and tell them we request a ceasefire."

I called and said "We are here, the consular dean and the all these consul generals, including Ben Gurion. And they are asking for a ceasefire. Stop shooting, and we are ready to make ceasefire."

And the guy who answered me, he was reckless. He said "Tell

“ We are here, the consular dean and all these consul generals, including Ben Gurion. And they are asking for a ceasefire. Stop shooting, and we are ready to make a ceasefire. ”

them fa'at." In Arabic, that means, that's it. It's all over. I said to myself, my God, such a word, it's hard to explain. So I told Ben Gurion, "They mean, it's all over, no discussion." And I remember he said: "Let it be." And that's it. A state!

During the fighting, Rashid's family fled their village, escaping to the lands they owned near Bethlehem, living for some time in their fields. Rashid's brothers watched as the Israeli army destroyed their homes in Walajha.

We had eight houses. Big ones – Arabic-style houses with a dome – beautiful, high, with thick, thick walls. In 1950 they bulldozed them. They dynamited them.

We know where our land is. It's all leveled, but still we would know. Land is land. We have documents and everything.



“The Palestinians want peace. Every person wants to live in peace. The ingenuity of the Jewish people, the Palestinians also have good minds, they can make a lot of good things. It would be wonderful.”

After the war, most of Walajha found itself in the no-man's land between Israel and Jordan, though some of the lands, such as the Irsheid family's holdings, were included in what was now Israel proper.

Because he was in the State of Israel when the war concluded, Rashid was given Israeli citizenship, but he was unable to cross the armistice lines to see his family for many years. He eventually chose to leave behind his Israeli citizenship and move to Jordan, at which point he was able to see his family again. He married an American diplomat he met while working in Jerusalem, and in 1958, they and their young son moved to the United States. Rashid became an American citizen in 1965.

When I visited Israel in 1972, we went to see the land where my family lived. To my astonishment, they built a memorial to John F. Kennedy on our land. They didn't ask us. It's hard, but what can we do. It isn't just me, it's so many people.

We are Sufis. My father was a Sufi. Our sheikh, Ali Yashruti, was in Acre. He was preaching about Brotherhood. We are all One, you know what I mean. Islam is peace, it's peace! Certain Muslims will tell you different things, which is wrong.

The worst thing is that if these big nations, if they really are interested, there would be some peace. I know the people [Israelis and Palestinians], they want it very, very much. But these big governments, they don't want it. Even when Jordan had the West Bank, they didn't want a Palestinian state. These Arab states just want to grab a piece for themselves. If they really wanted a Palestinian state, [they would say] here's your flag, here's your state, and goodbye Charlie.

It would be much better for the Israelis to have these things done peacefully... We should go back to the partition. And Jerusalem should be for everyone.

The Palestinians want peace. Every person wants to live in peace. The ingenuity of the Jewish people, the Palestinians also have good minds, they can make a lot of good things. It would be wonderful. But the politics keep people apart.

I would tell the next American President, bring both peoples [to the negotiating table] and say “Enough is enough. And that's it, don't bring in Egypt or Jordan, and just co-exist, peacefully.”

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**EVERYONE SHALL SIT UNDER
VINE AND FIG TREE AND NO
ONE SHALL BE AFRAID.**

MICAH 4:4