

## **The Middle East:**

### **Where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going**

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The following is an educational program that studies the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

#### **Goals:**

1. To study the core of the Middle East conflict .
2. To learn about the history of the Israelis and Palestinians, both biblical and modern.
3. To explore the physical, emotional, and cultural barriers that currently exist in the Middle East.
4. To examine the psychology of people in the midst of strife.
5. To understand the past and present of the conflict while look towards the future of the Israelis and Palestinians.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Participants will discuss the issues and tribulations in the past and present of the Middle East conflict.
2. Participants will consider metaphors and symbols as a means to studying the conflict.
3. Participants will engage in a simulation concerning the Israeli/Palestinian attempts at negotiation.
4. Participants will examine treaties and peace initiatives to develop opinions about the future situation of the Middle East.

#### **Time Table:**

00:00-00:05	Assign and break into groups (if applicable)
00:05-00:10	Looking at the Conflict: Story time
00:10-00:20	Discussion I
00:20-00:30	Looking at the Past: History
00:30-00:40	Discussion II
00:40-00:50	Looking at the Present: Presentation of barriers
00:50-00:70	Discussion III
00:70-00:75	Looking toward the Future: Peace initiatives
00:75-00:90	Discussion IV
00:90-00:95	Wrap-up

#### **Optional addition:**

00:00-00:10 Break into two new groups and explain negotiations

00:10-00:40 Simulation

00:40-00:60 Discussion

\*\*The program leader can choose to use this optional addition if the TYG has time for a longer program and if he/she wants the participants to have some hands-on, action-based, educational experience. The optional addition write-up is attached to this program.

**Materials:**

Copies of resource materials, websites, etc. (attached to this program) for participants

Copies of documents, maps, etc. for discussions

Computer and screen (for the PowerPoint presentations)

**People needed:**

One or two program leaders

Group leaders (number depends on number of participants)

Time keeper/roamers

**Key:**

Group leaders: GLs

Program leader: PL

Program Participants: PPs

**Detailed Procedure:**

**Assign and Break into Groups** **00:00-00:05**

The most desirable place for this program is a large room, where the PPs can break into small groups yet remain in one room together. If the number of PPs at the program is 10 or less, there is no need to break into smaller groups. It is best that, if larger than 10, the PPs break into groups of about 7. The number of GLs depends on the number of groups. There should be one GL per group. The PL can break the PPs into groups in numerous ways (numbering off, stickers, birthdays, etc.) The groups should then spread out around the room.

**Looking at the Conflict: Story time** **00:05-00:10**

The PL stands in a place where all of the PPs can hear her/him. The PL reads the story (attached).

(Information for the PL and GLs: This story is a metaphor that seems in some respect to portray the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. One family might be Israeli and their neighbors, Palestinians. This information should not be shared with the PPs; they should, instead, be able to infer this metaphor and discuss the story in the following discussion.)

GLs lead a discussion within the small groups about the story/metaphor the PL just presented. Suggested discussion questions are as follows:

1. What is the metaphor the PL conveyed in this story?
2. What are the different components of the story, and do they parallel the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? How are they different?  
*[GL: you can expect widely different opinions here; if you don't get them, give voice to opinions that haven't been voiced (based on the background reading)]*
  - i. Initially moving into the house – is it clear to the group who came first, who ‘moved into the neighborhood? In what circumstances might this matter?  
*GL: For example:*
    1. *Might the metaphor be more accurate if the new family is moving into a neighborhood (i.e. the Middle East)?*
    2. *To the Israelis, it is the Palestinians who are trying (now) to establish a house and perhaps take over theirs (Israel); to the Palestinians it is Israel who is the newcomer (since start of Jewish settlement) even though there was no Palestinian State*
  - ii. Does it all begin from the initial miscommunication with the branch? What are the core causes of this story unfolding as it does?
  - iii. What causes the lack of communication following the acts?

*GL: Note here that countries are not single people – in fact there are conflicts within societies about how to address problems and issues. The assassination of Rabin is a tragic example of how extreme these can be. So the situation is more complex, always, than any simple metaphor.]*

3. In the story, is a certain family to blame?
4. In the case of Israel and the Palestinians: As we recount the ‘story’ of the Middle East and the Israelis and Palestinians, we are partly working out ‘Who started this’ and ‘Who is to blame’:
  - a. How much do you have to know to decide whether someone, no one or everyone is to blame? Do the participants feel they know enough?  
*(Encourage modesty and praise knowledge!)*
  - b. Is laying blame important? What function does seeking to establish who is worse play in the dynamics of discussion (that is, why do some people seek to apportion blame)? Can we move beyond blame? How?
  - c. Do we believe Israelis because they are (for the most part) Jewish and not believe the Palestinians because they are not? How can we sift through the charges and counter-charges from both sides? Who can we trust; or do we just need to “win the argument?”

5. A two-state solution is accepted by many today; one for each people. The Reform Movement accepts this idea. This means that both peoples' (Jewish and Palestinian) claims to a State are just and legitimate, even if some actions of their leaders or groups are not (just and legitimate). If we believe that one side has often tried to achieve peace and the other has not, does this affect the basic claims of both sides?
6. We sometimes wonder whether either or both sides have it within their power to start a de-escalation of violence and seek Peace. If you were the girl in our story, what actions could you take to do this? What obstacles do you expect would stand in your way?
7. What if you were a cousin of the girl who lived in another neighborhood, what might you do and what obstacles would you expect? Is this an appropriate metaphor for your role as American Jews – if not, what is?
  - a. As we learn more, we can start to picture our own sense of what happened, of what the key issues are. As a metaphor for Israel/Palestinian history, can anyone think of significant additions or subtractions to this story to make it more accurately reflect the actual Middle East conflict? (*Note to GL: This should be asked tentatively or even rhetorically as a link back to the earlier question regarding knowledge and a lead in to the learning, not answered at this stage.*)

### **Looking at the Past: History**

**00:20-00:30**

There are a few options for presenting historical information. The PL (and/or GLs) can decide before running the program how he/she wants to present this information.

#### **Option 1:**

In each group, the GL reads/presents a brief biblical-to-modern history of the Middle East. (This information is in the “history” attachment.) The GL utilizes these timelines and information, which the PPs have as well. *This history presentation is interactive*; PPs can offer information and additions to the history. Additionally, the GL ties in the metaphor from the last part of the program with the history. (The branch incident is parallel to...) Discussion follows after the GL reads the information.

#### **Option 2:**

The timelines are cut into separate events and taped on the wall around the room in chronological order. The PPs then walk around the room, observing the timeline, events, and dates. While walking, the PPs stick colored post-it notes next to each date. Blue (any color) means that event shifted power to the Arab countries/Palestinians, while yellow (another color) signifies that event/time shifted power to the Israelis. After completing the walk around the timeline, PPs move into discussion.

### Option 3:

Preceding the program, the PL separates the dates from the event/treaty, etc. During this part of the program, the PPs are given a pile of dates and a pile of events/treaties, etc. Both piles should not be in chronological order. The PPs then have to pair the date with the event. PPs learn about history while doing a hands-on activity. Discussion follows.

\*Also attached to this program are maps of Israel from the early 1900s to the year 2000. These maps will allow the PPs to see a visual representation of recent history.

### **Discussion II**

**00:30-00:40**

1. After learning the history, is the story about the neighbors accurate as a metaphor for the Middle East? How is it inaccurate?
2. What was the progression of people on the land that is now Israel throughout history?
3. How does the international community play a role in both the ancient and recent history?
4. How does history shape the current situation?
5. Is it legitimate to base current situations and future decisions on history? What other considerations should be taken into account?
6. Does history determine and fix Israelis' and Palestinians' culture, emotions, and psychology? When might we wish to overcome what our history seems to "teach us" for the sake of other values? [For e.g., what if the peace deal hinged on giving away Jerusalem as the Israeli capital?] When should we not do this?

### **Looking at the Present: Presentation of barriers**

**00:40-00:50**

The PL begins by presenting information about the security fence erected by the Israelis with the attached PowerPoint presentation, showing only slides 8-12, and 15. If unable to present the PowerPoint slides, PL presents the following information about the security fence:

#### What is the security fence?

- *A defensive barrier between the West Bank and main Israeli population centers; from Beit She'an in northern Israel to Arad in the south*

#### The Security Fence area includes:

- *Intrusion detection fence*
- *"Sterile" dirt tracking path*
- *Observation systems*
- *Police and military patrols*
- *The Security Fence is not an electric fence*

- *The Security Fence has detective sensors that indicate when it is touched/crossed/cut*
- *It does not cause harm to those that touch it*
- *94% will be constructed of chain-links; an impermanent structure*
- *Only 6% of the Security Fence will consist of concrete sections*
- *This is necessary to prevent Palestinian sniper attacks on Israeli roads and neighborhoods*

PL then offers the following thoughts:

The security fence is a physical barrier between the two “worlds:” Israeli and Palestinian. In the discussion that will follow this presentation, we will discuss not only the fence and other physical barriers, but also cultural and emotional barriers between the Israelis and Palestinians. Right now, I would like to read a summary of an essay called “Israel on the Couch: The Psychology of the Peace Process,” by Ofer Grosbard (a clinical psychologist, author, and Ph.D. candidate at George Mason University). This essay examines the psychology of the Israelis and Palestinians. As I read, think about how this argument answers the questions: What is the psychology of people living in conflict? What could be going on in their minds?

\*PL should also mention that assertions and opinions in this policy brief are solely those of Dr. Grosbard.

### **Discussion III**

**00:50-00:70**

1. What do you all think about the fence?
  - a. Is it a needed barrier?
  - b. Does it help or hurt the Israelis? The Palestinians?
  - c. Will the fence save lives? Help or hinder the peace process?
2. What do you all think about the essay on the psychology of the Israelis and Palestinians?
  - a. Do you agree or disagree?
  - b. Do the Israelis and Palestinians really rely on each other to that extent? Does this “co-dependency” exist? What other ways might we ‘explain’ the conflict? (Material interests such as land and water, religious fanaticism?)
  - c. Is Dr. Grosbard’s response, in terms of revamping the peace process, valid?
3. What cultural barriers are present between the Israelis and Palestinians (i.e. religion, traditions, language, etc.)?
4. Is it possible to maintain cultural differences while overcoming them as obstacles?

5. If physical, psychological, and cultural barriers added to emotional intensity of the conflict, how could they be used to water it down?

### **Looking toward the Future: Peace initiatives**

**00:70-00:75**

The PL states: As we have looked at the past and present of the Middle East conflict, we must now turn to the future.

Within each individual group, the GL discusses the two peace initiatives: the Geneva Accord and the Statement of Principles. The GL mentions that both peace initiatives were created by both Israeli and Palestinian civilians, **not** the government leaders. The documents are attached to this program.

### **Discussion IV**

**00:75-00:90**

1. What do you think about these peace initiatives?
2. How does reading these/learning about them make you feel?
3. Do either or both of the initiatives appear to be impartial, or do they have a bias toward the Palestinians or the Israelis? Can an agreement be biased towards both sides, giving each what they most need?
4. Do you feel able to "judge" these proposals?
5. Are there certain components of the initiatives with which you strongly agree? Disagree? Is the very fact of agreement the most important thing for you (i.e., "so long as they both agree..."), or are there "red lines" that you would personally be upset about being crossed (for example, if Israel gave up Jerusalem entirely, or agreed to change the language to English)?
6. What does it mean that both Israelis and Palestinians wrote them? Is it significant that they are all civilians, not government leaders?
7. These initiatives have had a great impact on people in Israel. What would people of goodwill (in Israel or Jewish communities in North America) need to do in order for them to have a continuing impact in the future?
8. The Geneva accord was presented to the leadership of the North American Reform Movement at the North American headquarters in New York City in December 2003. A participant asked Yossi Beilin, member of Israel's Knesset and co-author of the Accord, "We largely agree with and support the direction here. What can we do to support your efforts?" He answered: We need your support as a source of legitimacy; you can speak with your politicians"

*[GL: You can offer these options and invite more. This could be a separate activity in and of itself, by splitting into small groups with the following printed on paper for each group in a 'self-guided discussion' format, or just a 5-10 minute 'closure' to this discussion]*

- a. What do you think the Reform Movement (URJ) can and should do? (GLs may offer the following answers)
  - i. Nothing. (why not?)
  - ii. Out of love for Israel, we should educate about the Geneva Accord and recommend people support it.
  - iii. We should vote on officially supporting the Accord and make a lot of media noise about this.
  - iv. We should support the Israeli Reform Movement establishing its own political party in order to advance agenda's likes this. Zionism as about the Jewish People holding and using power to control our own fate; we in the Reform Movement need to do what we can.
  - v. Something else (explain)
  
- b. What do you think you as an **individual or group of Reform Jews** should do? (GLs may offer the following answers)
  - i. Nothing. This is just politics and I am not concerned with it.
  - ii. Keep informed (e.g., learn more at [www.heskem.org.il/index\\_en.asp](http://www.heskem.org.il/index_en.asp) reading (in English) the Israeli News at least once a week
  - iii. Speak with three people about the Geneva Peace Plan
  - iv. Do a letter-writing campaign to politicians in North America and Israel
  - v. Other (explain)

**Wrap-up**

**00:90-00:95**

The PL and GLs should hand out the resource page to all of the PPs. (The resource page is attached to this program.) PL recaps Looking at the Past, Looking at the Present, and Looking toward the Future.

*Albert Einstein said, "Peace cannot be achieved through violence, it can only be attained through understanding."*

**Story Time (Read to Participants by PL)**

*When I was young, my family moved to a new house in a new neighborhood. After some time, I began to feel quite comfortable in my new house. I spent most of my time with my family so I really did not get to know any of my neighbors.*

*One day, my mother entered into the house from our backyard. She appeared very angry. She told me that while the next-door neighbors were trimming their tree branches, one branch fell into our backyard, directly on top of my mother's cherished garden and crushed her favorite flowers. She then, still frustrated, returned outside and proceeded to throw the branch back over the fence into our neighbor's yard.*

*Later that day, my neighbors went into their backyard and discovered that their neighbors (my mother), when throwing the branch over the fence, had destroyed their lawnmower. The branch landed directly on top of the lawnmower's motor. Furious that their neighbors ruined their lawnmower, my neighbors decided they were going to move their garbage cans toward our driveway to obstruct our ability to obtain our mail from the mailbox.*

*That evening, when my parents saw our neighbors' garbage cans in front of our house and its obstruction to our mailbox, they were increasingly infuriated. "Why do the neighbors think they can do this to us?" they questioned. To prove to the neighbors that they were not going to accept these acts, my parents threw the garbage on my neighbors' front lawn.*

*After the events that took place that day, my parents and my neighbors stopped talking to each other. They would not acknowledge each other's presence on the street or at our neighborhood barbeques.*

*It is now thirty years later, my parents moved into an apartment nearby, and I still live in that same house, now with my husband. My neighbors moved out a few years ago, but their son currently lives in their house.*

*Their son and I do not speak. My husband frequently questions me about the reason I do not communicate with my neighbor. I respond that I am not quite sure, but something happened in my youth that divided the two families; the two families have not talked since. This lack of communication is simply engrained in the two households. I have come to accept it...*

**Summary: "Israel on the Couch: The Psychology of the Peace Process"**

*This is a summary of a talk given by Ofer Grosbard in March, 2003 to the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC. Ofer Grosbard, a clinical psychologist from Israel and Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, is also author of Israel on the Couch: the Psychology of the Peace Process, (SUNY Press, 2003). Dr. Grosbard's talk in no way represents the positions or perspective of the Reform Jewish Movement. We offer the following argument in order to generate discussion, rather than to advocate on behalf of his - arguably controversial - position.*

*Israel has become dependent upon the Palestinians for peace, in that it is dependent upon the process of negotiations and must take into account what the Palestinians demand and want.*

Co-dependence is a dynamic that fuels the conflict. Israel provides Palestinians with electricity, phone, and other services, preventing the Palestinians from developing these services themselves. Palestinians are emotionally dependent on Israel as an authority figure. Although they have fought hard for a state, Palestinians have not declared independence from Israel (similar to a child who will not leave home) nor have they taken responsibility for their lives. Israel does not want the Palestinians to separate emotionally from them; Palestinians hold back because they are not prepared to deal with the responsibility that comes with independence.

Both parties fail to focus on their internal dynamics. To restart the peace process, both parties must encourage separation and respond to suicide bombers and other aggression with compassion by giving Palestinians something to live for. Gradually, responsibility for basic services should be transferred to the Palestinians to encourage them to invest inwards and force Israel to relinquish control over Palestinians and focus on its own problems instead.

*A fuller summary can be found at <http://www.mideasti.org/articles/doc16.html>*

## **Background Information for the Program Leaders and Group Leaders**

Information can also be used throughout the program in discussion.)

### The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in a Nutshell

<http://www.mideastweb.org/history.htm>

#### Divisive History

History's legacy created divisive issues between Palestinians and Israelis. Judea, home of the Jews in ancient times, was conquered by the Romans and renamed Palestine. Palestine was later conquered and inhabited by Arabs for over a thousand years. The Zionist movement arose to restore the Jews to Israel, largely ignoring the existing Arab population. Following the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Palestine was granted to Britain as a League of Nations mandate to build a national home for the Jewish people. The Arabs resented the Jews coming in to take their land. Led by Grand Mufti Haj Amin El-Husseini, they rioted repeatedly and later revolted, creating a history of enmity between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. Britain stopped Jewish immigration to Palestine. Following the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews were killed by the Nazis, pressure on Britain increased to allow Jewish immigration to Palestine. In 1947, the UN partitioned the land into Arab and Jewish states. The Arabs did not accept the partition and war broke out. The Jews won a decisive victory, expanded their state and created several hundred thousand Palestinian refugees. The Arab states refused to recognize Israel or make peace with it. Wars broke out in 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982, and there were many terror raids and Israeli reprisals. Each side believes different versions of the same history. Each side views the conflict as wholly the fault of the other and expects an apology.

#### Occupation, Land & Settlements

Israel has occupied the West bank and Gaza Strip (about 2,200 square miles) since the 1967 6-day war, and has built settlements with a population of about 220,000, mostly in the West Bank. Palestinians demand withdrawal from all of the land conquered in the 1967 and evacuation of the settlements. Israel continued to expand settlements throughout the peace process that began in 1993 and continues to do so today. In the final status negotiations at Camp David and Taba, Israel offered to turn over large percentages of land in the West Bank and Gaza, but the areas were to be separated by narrow corridors of Israeli control.

## Palestinian State

Originally formed to regain all of Palestine for the Palestinian Arabs, the Palestine Liberation Organization signaled that it would accept a two state solution in 1988. The Oslo accords were supposed to have led to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, but continued Israeli settlement and Palestinian violence and incitement degenerated into open conflict in September 2000.

Mainstream Palestinians demand a state in the West Bank and Gaza. Right wing Israelis are opposed to creating a state, because, they claim, it would be a base for terror groups. In final status negotiations, the Israeli government agreed to a demilitarized Palestinian state with limited control over its borders and resources - a "state minus." The Palestinians have won a commitment for a state from the UN, and from US President Bush. The Road Map peace plan is intended to result in a Palestinian state. The Oslo Accords and the Road Map are opposed by Palestinian extremist groups like Hamas and by Zionist extremists.

## Refugees

About 726,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled their homes in 1948 in the war that followed the creation of Israel, and additional Palestinians fled in 1967. There are now about 4 million Palestinian refugees. Many of them live in crowded refugee camps in poor conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Palestinians demand that these refugees should have the right to return to their homes in Israel under UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Israelis note that an almost equal number of Jews fled Arab lands to Israel in 1948. Israelis oppose return of the refugees because that would create an Arab Palestinian majority and would put an end to Israel as a Jewish state. Most Palestinian groups, including the Fateh, agree, and openly proclaim that resolution of the refugee issue would mean the end of Israel.

## Palestinian Terror

Almost all Palestinian groups were founded with the declared aim of destroying Israel by violence, and had a history of terrorist activities. Only the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) has renounced this aim officially. In 1993, the PLO signed the Oslo Declaration of Principles, renouncing violence and agreeing to honor UN SC Resolution 242, which implicitly recognizes the right of Israel to exist. In return, Israel allowed the PLO to enter the West Bank and Gaza strip, and Palestinians gained autonomous control of most of the population of these areas. Extremist Palestinian groups who objected to the agreements began a campaign of ambushes and suicide bombings against Israel. The Palestine National Authority claimed they could not control the dissident groups. Final status negotiations faltered in September 2000. Ariel Sharon visited the Temple mount, which includes the Al-Aqsa Muslim holy site, on September 28. This ignited violent riots, that were met with lethal force by the IDF. The violence became generalized

"resistance," called "the intifada," and involving large sectors of the population as well as the Palestine National Authority itself, and the Palestinian police force set up by the Oslo agreements. Polls indicate that about half the Palestinians believe that the aim of the intifada is to destroy Israel. Since September 28, 2000, Palestinians have killed over 800 Israelis in terror and suicide attacks. Israelis have killed over 2000 Palestinians in "defense" operations and reprisals, including many civilians. The intifada destroyed the belief of many Israelis in the possibility of peace, and destroyed the credibility of Yasser Arafat and the PLO as peace partners. Israeli retaliation and repression further embittered the Palestinians.

### Israeli Repression

Israel responded to Palestinian violence at the beginning of the Oslo process by limiting the flow of Palestinian workers to Israel to prevent infiltration of terrorists, and by strict checks at border checkpoints. The border closing drastically reduced the Palestinian standard of living. Palestinians who did come to work were often subjected to humiliating searches and very long waits at checkpoints. Following terror attacks at the checkpoints, nervous IDF (Israel Defense Forces - the Israeli Army) soldiers sometimes were too quick to open fire on suspicious vehicles, killing innocent civilians. Checkpoints around Jerusalem made it difficult for Palestinians to get to work in Jerusalem and to travel between Palestinian towns.

After September 2000, Israeli reprisals for Palestinian terror raids became increasingly severe, including assassinations of wanted terrorists that Palestinians refused to arrest. Following a series of deadly suicide bombings in March of 2002, Israel launched operation Defensive Wall in the West Bank and has since reoccupied most of the territories ceded to the Palestinians in the West Bank. The IDF set up additional checkpoints and has kept towns under virtual siege with extended periods of curfew, disrupting work, education and daily life. Ditches surround towns, preventing people from leaving. A "security barrier" being built inside the West Bank cuts off Palestinians from their lands and from other towns, and destroys olive groves and other property. It may surround Palestinian enclaves, creating a virtual ghetto. The IDF has killed about 2,000 Palestinians, demolished houses and uprooted olive groves.

In addition to measures taken to ensure security, Israeli extremist settlers have harassed Palestinians, destroyed property, uprooted olive trees and have killed several Palestinians in doubtful circumstances. The perpetrators are rarely identified and almost never prosecuted.

### Israeli Security

The area of Israel within its pre-1967 armistice borders is slightly less than 8,000 square miles. The distance from Tel Aviv to the green line border of Israel (West Bank) is about 10 miles. Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and other Israeli cities are within artillery range of any Palestinian state. Israel therefore insists on guarantees that a Palestinian state would be demilitarized. The West Bank has enormous strategic importance to any country wishing

to invade Israel. Israel therefore insists on guarantees that the Palestinian state would not allow a foreign army to enter its borders, and has insisted on bases within the West Bank.

### Water

The land has always had a scarcity of water. High population density and standard of living was made possible by the Israel National Water Carrier which pumps water from the Sea of Galilee. In one day it delivers the volume of water used in all of 1948, but it is not enough. The aquifers that supply Israel's central area lie in the West Bank. The Jordan river flows through territory that would be part of Palestine. Both sides need water for survival and development and want to ensure an adequate water supply from the limited resources available. Israel has reserved for its own use a large percentage of the water in West Bank aquifers.

### Jerusalem

Jerusalem was to have been internationalized under the UN Partition plan. Both sides have claims on the eastern part of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the ancient capital of Judea and site of the Jewish holy temple, of which only the West Wall remains (right). It is also the site of the Al-Aqsa mosque (left) - the third holiest site in Islam. Jewish and Arab neighborhoods are closely interwoven and would be difficult to separate.

## Ancient and Modern History of the Middle East

History, and different perceptions of history, are perhaps the most important factors in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Accounts of history, interpreting history in different ways, are used to justify claims and to negate claims, to vilify the enemy and to glorify "our own" side. Dozens of accounts have been written. Most of the accounts on the Web are intended to convince rather than to inform.

This very brief account is intended as a balanced overview and introduction to Palestinian and Israeli history, and the history of the conflict. It is unlikely that anyone has written or will write an "objective" and definitive summary that would be accepted by everyone, but it is hoped that this document will provide a fair introduction.

### Ancient/Biblical History of the Middle East

(library.thinkquest.org/3526/facts/timeline.html)

- c. 4000-2000 BC** - Kingdoms in Egypt, Sumer, and Babylonia
- New Kingdom in Egypt, Kingdoms in Phoenicia and Assyria. The first thoughts on monotheism (the belief in one god) emerge. - **c. 1000 BC**
- 500-400 BC** - The Persian empire (present day Iran) conquers all of the Middle East.
- Alexander the Great of Macedonia defeats the Persians and claims the Middle East. - **334 BC**
- c. 200-300 BC** - The Romans gain control over all of the Middle East except for Persia.
- Life of Mohammed. Mohammed founds the religion of Islam, and leads the beginning of an Arab-Islamic empire that will soon hold sway over the entire Middle East. - **570-632 AD**
- 661-750** - The Umayyad Dynasty gains control over the Arab-Islamic empire and greatly expands its territories. The empire spreads westward throughout North Africa, north into Spain, and eastward to the borders of

India and China.

The Abassid Dynasty, the second major one of the Arab-Islamic empire, gains control and moves the capital to Baghdad. The Middle East enjoys a prosperous period of advances in science and technology.

- **759-1258**

**10th Century**

The decline in the control of the Abassids over their far-reaching empire allows the Seljuks, a Turkish people, to gain control over much of Asia Minor and the Persian Empire to break free.

Tales of the riches of the Middle East and a desire to reclaim the Holy Land for Christianity inspire European kingdoms to proclaim a series of crusades against the Muslim empires of the Middle East. Though the crusades were to have some success in holding territory in the Holy Land, their longest lasting effects were in Europe, where people were exposed to many new ideas.

- **11-13th century**

**13th centuries**

Mongol invasions in the Middle East devastate Iraq and Iran and end what remains of the Arab-Islamic Empire.

The Ottoman empire gains control over Constantinople and renames Istanbul. Earlier Turkish success grew into the Ottoman Empire which will continue to expand until it controls nearly all of the Middle East except for Iran.

- **1453**

**19th century**

The Muslim empires of the Middle East decline in power. The Ottoman Empire loses territory and influence to Russia and Austria

Muhammed Ali westernizes Egypt, asserting some independence from the Ottoman Empire.

- **1805-1848**

**1914-1918**

The Ottoman Empire sides with Germany during World War I. The resulting loss causes the empire to be broken up. Much of its territory is divided between France and Britain, but modern day Turkey successfully defends itself against Greek invasion.

The Sykes-Picot agreement between France and Britain secretly promises to divide Ottoman holdings in the Middle East between the nations. - **1916**

The McMahon Correspondences between Sir Hanry McMahon, British High Commissioner of Cairo, and the Sherif Hussein of Mecca apparently promise Arab independence in large portions of the Middle East, including Palestine, which is today Israel.  
**July 1915-March 1916**

### Recent/Modern Israeli-Palestinian History

(<http://www.mideastweb.org/history.htm>)

- Nov 2, 1917 British issued the Balfour Declaration, viewed by Jews and Arabs as promising a “National Home” for the Jews in Palestine.
- 1936-1939 Arab Revolt led by Haj Amin Al-Husseini. Over 5,000 Arabs were killed according to some sources, mostly by British. Several hundred Jews were killed by Arabs. Hussein fled to Iraq and then to Nazi Germany.
- May 15, 1948 Israel War of Independence (1948 War). Declaration of Israel as the Jewish State; British leave Palestine; Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia declared war on Israel. Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian invasion began.
- April 3, 1949 Armistice - Israel and Arab states agree to armistice. Israel gained about 50% more territory than was originally allotted to it by the UN Partition Plan. The war created over 780,000 Palestinian refugees who fled or were evicted from Jewish held areas. Gaza fell under the jurisdiction of Egypt. The West Bank of the Jordan was occupied by Jordan and later annexed, consistent with secret agreements made with the Zionist leadership prior to the initiation of hostilities.
- Oct. 29, 1956 Suez Campaign. In retaliation for a series of escalating border raids as well as the closure of the straits of Tiran and Suez canal to Israeli shipping, and to prevent Egyptian use of newly acquired Soviet arms in a war, Israel invades the Sinai peninsula and occupies it for several months, with French and British collaboration. Israel withdraws after a UN peace keeping force is placed in Sinai, and US guarantees right of passage for Israeli shipping through the Straits of Tiran.
- May, PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) founded with the aim of destroying

- 1964 Israel. The Palestinian National Charter (1968) officially called for liquidation of Israel.
- May, 1967 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser closes the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and dismisses UN peacekeeping force. Negotiations with US to reopen the Straits of Tiran fail.
- June 5-11, 1967 6-day war. Israel destroys the Egyptian air force on the ground, conquers and occupies Sinai and Gaza, then conquers the West Bank from Jordan, and Golan Heights from Syria. UN resolution 242 called for Israeli withdrawal, establishment of peace
- Oct. 6, 1973 Yom Kippur War (October War). In a surprise attack on the Jewish day of atonement, Egypt retook the Suez canal and a narrow zone on the other side. Syria reconquered the Golan Heights. Following massive US and Soviet resupplying of the sides, Israel succeeded in pushing back the Syrians and threatening Damascus. Ariel Sharon crossed the Suez Canal and cut off the Egyptian Third Army.
- March 26, 1979 Peace treaty signed between Egypt and Israel.
- June 6, 1982 Massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon to fight PLO. UN Security Council Resolution 509 demands that Israel withdraw all its military forces forthwith, but Israel advances rapidly to Beirut, surrounding the capital by 13 Jun. Israeli cabinet is split on the sudden expansion of the war, beyond the 40 KM limit originally declared by Sharon.
- Sept. 13, 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles - Israel and PLO agree to mutual recognition, Yasser Arafat and PLO will be allowed to return to Gaza. PLO and Palestinian leadership renounce violence and use of terrorism, and agree to revise the PLO charter to remove chapters referring to destruction of Israel. Over the next years, Israel withdraws from a small area (Area A) that is given to Palestinian sovereignty, a larger area (Area B) is given to Palestinian civil control only, while a third area of the West Bank and Gaza strip remains under total Israeli control. Israel did not dismantle any settlements, and the number of settlers and new settlements increased considerably. Palestinian groups did not remove their charter goals of destroying Israel; the PNA continued to finance, organize and encourage terror activities.
- Sept. 28, 2000 Palestinians initiated riots after Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount, which is also the location of the Haram as Sharif holy to Muslims. Violence was apparently encouraged by Fatah Tanzim, as admitted by Marwan Barghouhi. Violence escalated rapidly from rock throwing to machine gun and mortar fire, suicide bombings and lethal road ambushes, including some incidents instigated by settlers against Palestinians. Israelis killed 15 Israeli Arabs in riots in September/October 2000, and over 2,000

Palestinians in retaliatory raids thereafter. Palestinians kill over 700 Israelis. Violence continues for over a year [to present - March 2003].

Sept. 11, 2001 Terror attacks on World Trade Center in NYC and the Pentagon carried out by fanatic Islamic Al-Qaiada group headed by Osama Bin Laden initiate US war on terror. Israel and Palestinians agree to a cease fire, but it is not implemented.

March- April 2002 Israel conducts operation Defensive Wall in the West Bank, following a large number of Palestinian suicide attacks on civilian targets. Saudi peace initiative adopted at Beirut summit.

## Statement of Principles

*(Signed by Ami Ayalon (Israeli) & Sari Nusseibeh (Palestinian) on July 27, 2003 and presented in person to the Leadership of the Refom Movement in NYC, December 2003)*

*1. **Two states for two peoples:** Both sides will declare that Palestine is the only state of the Palestinian people and Israel is the only state of the Jewish people.*

*2. **Borders:** Permanent borders between the two states will be agreed upon on the basis of the June 4, 1967 lines, UN resolutions, and the Arab peace initiative (known as the Saudi initiative).*

*Border modifications will be based on an equitable and agreed-upon territorial exchange (1:1) in accordance with the vital needs of both sides, including security, territorial contiguity, and demographic considerations.*

*· The Palestinian State will have a connection between its two geographic areas, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.*

*· After establishment of the agreed borders, no settlers will remain in the Palestinian State.*

*3. **Jerusalem:** Jerusalem will be an open city, the capital of two states. Freedom of religion and full access to holy sites will be guaranteed to all.*

*· Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem will come under Palestinian sovereignty, Jewish neighborhoods under Israeli sovereignty.*

*· Neither side will exercise sovereignty over the holy places. The State of Palestine will be designated Guardian of al-Haram al-Sharif for the benefit of Muslims. Israel will be the Guardian of the Western Wall for the benefit of the Jewish people. The status quo on Christian holy site will be maintained. No excavation will take place in or underneath the holy sites without mutual consent.*

*4. **Right of return:** Recognizing the suffering and the plight of the Palestinian refugees, the international community, Israel, and the Palestinian State will initiate and contribute to an international fund to compensate them.*

*· Palestinian refugees will return only to the State of Palestine; Jews will return only to the State of Israel.*

*· The international community will offer to compensate toward bettering the lot of those refugees willing to remain in their present country of residence, or who wish to immigrate to third-party countries.*

*5. The Palestinian State will be demilitarized and the international community will guarantee its security and independence.*

*6. End of conflict: Upon the full implementation of these principles, all claims on both sides and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will end.*

### ***The Geneva Accord: Unofficial Peace Initiative***

*(<http://www.peacenow.org/nia/briefs/geneva.html>)*

*During the second week of October, word began to spread about a new Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal. The plan, known as the “Geneva Accord” (reflecting reported Swiss support for efforts to conclude the proposal) is the culmination of more than 2 and ½ years of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation and negotiation undertaken by high-profile Israelis and Palestinians, acting as individuals, not as representatives of any government.*

#### **Key Issues and Positions**

##### **End of Conflict**

*The Geneva Accord will replace and supplant all UN resolutions, including those dealing with refugees, as well as other previous agreements.*

##### **Recognition of Israel & Palestine**

*The Palestinians will recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people. Israel will recognize the state of Palestine, which will be demilitarized, with oversight by an international force, and with border crossings supervised by an international (non-Israeli) force. Israel and Palestine will immediately engage in full diplomatic relations.*

##### **Demilitarization, Security & Fighting Terror**

*No armed forces, except those approved in the Accord, will be permitted to exist in Palestine. Palestine will be a demilitarized state with a strong security force, with mutually agreed-upon restrictions on the arms that it may acquire. No private body, except for the Palestinian security forces, will be able to purchase, own or carry weapons, except as provided for under law.*

*Both sides will reject and condemn terrorism and violence in all their forms. Both sides will avoid acts or policies that would incite or create conditions that encourage terrorism on either side.*

*Both sides recognize that mutual understanding and cooperation over security will constitute a significant amount of their bilateral relations. Palestine and Israel will base their security relations on cooperation, mutual trust, good neighborliness, and protection of mutual interests. Palestine and Israel will be obligated to (1) recognize the other's right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, without threat of acts of war, terrorism, or violence; (2) refrain from threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of the other, and settle all differences through peaceful means; (3) avoid joining, cooperating with or supporting any coalition, organization, or pact with a military character whose overall goals include violence or any other hostile objective against the other; (4) prevent the organization, encouragement, or formation of unauthorized forces or militias, including mercenaries and other military elements within the territories of both sides.*

*Both sides are obligated to undertake ongoing military cooperation under which a security committee will be formed and will meet on a monthly basis.*

*There will be an amnesty for Palestinian prisoners and detainees being held for offenses committed prior to the signing of the Accord.*

### **Territory, Borders, and Settlements**

*The 1967 border will be the border between the State of Israel and Palestine, with agreed on adjustments and 1:1 territorial exchanges. Most of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, will be handed over to the Palestinians as Israel secures defense arrangements along the Jordan River. Certain large settlements will be left inside the Palestinians state, including Ariel, Efrat, Kiryat Arba, Ofra, Elon Moreh, Bet El, Eli and Har Homa. All of the Gaza Strip, including the Qatif Bloc of settlements, will be handed over to the Palestinians. More than 50% of settlers will be annexed to Israel.*

*In exchange for parts of the West Bank that Israel will keep, including a strip of land required to expand the territorial defenses of Ben Gurion Airport (the Latrun area), the Etzion Block, and settlements on the outskirts of Jerusalem, (including Maale Adumim and Givat Zeev) Israel will transfer parts of the western Negev adjacent to Gaza (not including Halutza) to the Palestinians, including some fields belonging to Israeli communities.*

*Israel will control the entire airspace, including the airspace over the state of Palestine.*

### **Refugees & the Right of Return**

*The Palestinian right of return is not mentioned in the Accord, and Israel does not recognize responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem.*

*Refugees will be given the choice whether to (1) move to the new Palestinian state (unlimited numbers), (2) move to Israeli areas that will be swapped into the Palestinian state (unlimited numbers); (3) remain in the countries where they currently reside (numbers based on the sovereign decision of the host countries); (4) move to a third country (numbers based on the sovereign decision of the potential host countries); or (5) move to Israel (numbers based on the sovereign decision of Israel). Israel will view the decision to accept refugees into Israel as the same as any other third country offering to accept refugees, and will determine the number of refugees to accept based on the average numbers accepted by other third countries.*

*Refugees will be entitled to compensation for their refugee status and loss of property. An international commission and international fund will be established to deal with implementation of these residence options and compensation.*

*Refugee status of individual Palestinians will be terminated once a permanent residence option has been realized, providing a permanent and complete resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem.*

### **Jerusalem and its environs**

*Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem will become part of the Palestinian state, while Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, including the Jerusalem-area settlements of Givat Ze'ev, Ma'aleh Adumim, and the original historically Jewish area of Gush Etzion, will be part of Israel.*

### **Jerusalem's Old City & "Holy Basin"**

*The Temple Mount will fall under Palestinian sovereignty, but security will be in the hands of a permanent international supervisory body. The Mount will be open to people of all faiths, with the international body ensuring freedom of access to the site. Neither Jewish prayer nor archeological digs (by any party) will be permitted on the site.*

*The Western Wall (or "Wailing Wall") and the Jewish Quarter will remain under Jewish sovereignty and the "Holy Basin" will be under international supervision. The Tower of David will come under Palestinian sovereignty, but Israeli administration.*

*The Muslim, Christian, and Armenian Quarters will come under Palestinian control. Special arrangements will be made regarding the Armenian Quarter for Israeli citizens. No borders will be erected within the Old City and free passage will be guaranteed.*

*The Palestinians will have sovereignty over Damascus Gate, Herod's Gate, and Lions Gate, and Palestinians will enter and exit the Old City through these gates. Israel will have sovereignty over Zion Gate and Dung Gate, and Israelis will enter and exit the*

*Old City through these gates. Jaffa Gate will come under Palestinian sovereignty but with international supervision and with special arrangements guaranteeing Israeli passage to and from the Western Wall.*

*UN: Geneva Accord consistent to Road Map to Peace  
Thursday, 6 November 2003, 10:14 pm  
Press Release: United Nations*

*“Geneva Accord on Middle East consistent with Road Map to peace” - Annan*

*United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today welcomed the "Geneva Accord" drafted by prominent Israelis and Palestinians and giving detailed steps to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

*"Such private initiatives, while not a substitute for official diplomatic negotiations between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, deserve praise and encouragement as courageous attempts to break the stalemate on both sides and to generate the popular support needed for peace in the Middle East," said a statement issued by a spokesman for Mr. Annan.*

*The Accord was consistent and compatible with the Road Map to peace drawn up and supported by the diplomatic Quartet - the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and the Russian Federation, it added.*

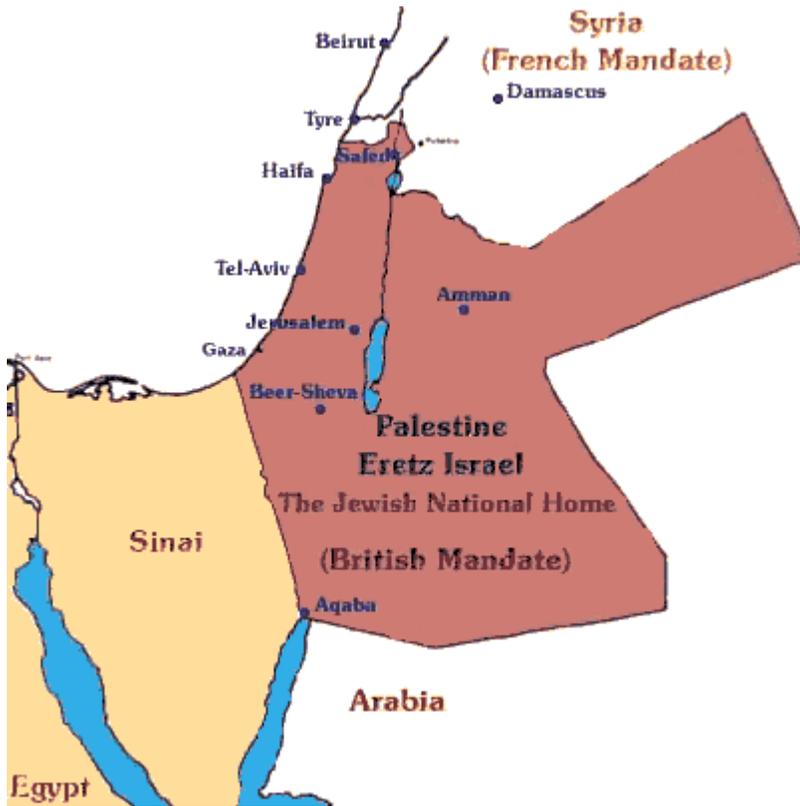
*"It is now of paramount importance that the parties start implementing the Road Map provisions without delay," the statement said.*

*The Geneva Accord, which urges cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians on many levels, was spearheaded by Yossi Beilin, an architect of the Oslo accords, on the Israeli side and former minister Yasser Abed Rabbo for the Palestinians.*

*Last Tuesday Mr. Annan met retired Israeli Admiral Ami Ayalon and the president of Al-Quds University, Sari Nusseibeh, of the "People's Voice Initiative," another unofficial Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.*

*According to the People's Voice web site, some 104,000 Israelis and 60,000 Palestinians have signed up as supporters of the plan, which calls for a two-State solution, as well as an end to the Palestinian right of return to lands within the state of Israel.*

**MAPS**



British Mandate (1920-1946)



UN Partition Plan (1947)



Armistice Agreement (1947)



Cease Fire Lines of the Six Day War  
1967



- Area A: Full Palestinian civil and military control
- Area B: Full Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian military control
- Area C: Full Israeli civil and military control

The Oslo Agreements  
1996

\*\* Addition maps can be found at <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/maps/index.html>