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Interpersonal Forgiveness: An Approach to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract

Finding peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict has been a daunting and, thus far, impossible task for the past 75 years. Many countries have attempted to negotiate and mediate peace between the two conflict groups, including the United States, Norway, and most Arab nations. With each of these failed attempts, Israelis and Palestinians sank deeper into violence and destruction, believing that retributive justice was the only solution to this conflict. This paper addresses the possibility of a different, non-violent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict – forgiveness. Forgiveness offers Israelis and Palestinians a path to peace, co-existence, and reconciliation through personal relationships that the conflict has shaped; and allows those affected by the conflict the space to acknowledge their situation and move forward peacefully. By analyzing three personal relationships between Israelis and Palestinians, I will demonstrate that interpersonal forgiveness is the most productive solution to the conflict. I will also stress that forgiveness must be had authentically by all those touched by the conflict such that each Israeli and Palestinian has the opportunity to find peace, co-existence, and reconciliation. Further, this paper provides a means of achieving interpersonal forgiveness by embracing the conditions of forgiveness – understanding, compromise, and recognition.

Introduction

  In the wake of World War II, as the international community was healing from the violence and loss of the last several years, Jews united in the Holy Land and began to build their nation.[1] Motivated by Jewish scripture, Zionism, and anti-Semitic rhetoric, the Jewish Diaspora convinced several international powers that the answer to the Jewish Question was a sovereign state in Palestine.[2] Thus, on May 14, 1948, the People's Assembly, a temporary governing body in Palestine, announced the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. Within days, nations around the world recognized Israel as a legitimate state; and within a year, Israel was a member of the United Nations. May 14 was a momentous day for people across the world. Not only did millions of displaced Jews now have a nation-state, but millions of Palestinians now lacked one. Since 1948, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict has been at the center of almost every Middle Eastern life, influencing politics, international alliances, and personal relationships. This marked the beginning of a separation, of an us-and-them rhetoric, and of a tremendous battle for the land where Israel now stands. A great history has occurred on this land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, a history filled with death, conquest, and failed compromises. Yet, there is no happy end to this history so long as the current path is followed. It is nearly impossible to achieve peace, coexistence, and reconciliation without giving thought to the power of forgiveness. For these reasons, I will demonstrate that by authentically embracing the

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[1] The Holy Land is a reference to the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, which, in the Bible/Torah, is the land of God's people, the Israelites. The Holy Land, Palestine, and Israel are all titles representing the same region during different time periods.
[2] The Jewish Question was a term coined by Karl Marx. The Jewish Question (or the Jewish Problem) seeks to find the proper status for Jews as a minority in many countries. Theodor Herzl's solution to the Jewish Question was establish a Jewish homeland, thereby ridding countries of Jewish minorities. The Question took on greater meaning after millions of Jews had been displaced because of the Holocaust.

conditions of interpersonal forgiveness, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict could reach peace, coexistence, and reconciliation. There is no hope for a two-state solution or a single secular state solution without first forging a relationship of repentance and forgiveness for the transgressions committed by both parties – Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. To demonstrate the value of forgiveness, we need to understand Israel's religious history and the meaning of authentic forgiveness, which will allow us to thoroughly explore how forgiveness can be used in relationships forged by Israelis and Palestinians.

A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Tensions between Zionist Jews and Palestinian Arabs had been brewing for decades leading up to the establishment of Israel. Throughout the 19th century, several events took place that contributed to the eruption of the conflict in 1948. The most important event was the rise of Zionism and the subsequent surge of Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Zionism originated as a religious concept inspired by scripture that spoke of a Jewish homeland. The homeland, Israel, is named throughout the Torah as the land that God gave to His people, the Jews. After several expulsions from the land and with the evolution of the empire and nation-state, the people of God – the Jews – eventually disseminated across the globe. The dissemination of Jews created a pattern of Jewish minorities and, thus, anti-Semitism became a common occurrence in most European countries. However, the land of Israel was idealized in the Torah, and the promise of return was never forgotten. After centuries of exile, Zionism eventually galvanized Jews to fulfill that promise. By using scripture such as,

"'I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities

and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens

and eat their fruit. I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,' says the Lord your God."[3]

Zionists began inspiring nationalistic ideas and movements. In 1897, Theodore Herzl published *The Jewish State*, in which he revived the Zionist notion of creating a Jewish national home in the region of Palestine.[4] Herzl's dedication to Zionism came after a wave of anti-Semitic attacks in Europe, during which he was publishing articles concerning "The Jewish Question." His articles implored Jews around the world to unite within the Diaspora and demand a sovereign state as a home for the Jews. A Jewish homeland, after all, was the ultimate goal of Zionism.

The Zionist narrative was incredibly attractive to the Jews, having been exposed to anti-Semitism for decades; however, the narrative presented several issues for those currently living in Palestine. Before the 1880s, the majority of Palestinian inhabitants were Muslim Arabs. Minorities included Jews and Christians; however, the Muslim Arabs were considered the natives of the land. The Arabs of Palestine were an agrarian people struggling to establish their own sovereignty. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Middle Eastern territories were distributed between the French and the British. Living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for centuries – and now under the control of the British – the Arabs were inspired to create their own government and become a member of the international community. As a result, the Arabs in Palestine begin experiencing a nationalistic movement of their own. However, they were quickly interrupted by a surge of hundreds of thousands of immigrants inspired by Zionism.

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[3] Amos (9:14).
[4] Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat* (Leipzig and Vienna: Verlags-Buchhandlung, February 1896).

When Jewish immigration to Palestine began in the 1880s, Palestinians experienced a growth in their agricultural and real estate economy. With the large numbers of incoming Jews, Palestinians were able to sell their land and provide them with jobs on plantations and farms. The relationship was not always harmonious; however, it was far from violent.[5] Jews and Palestinians, at this time, were successfully coexisting; however, nationalistic differences soon led to tension and small fights between Jews and Palestinians. After a few years of minor clashes and outbreaks, the actual violence started in 1936 with the Great Revolt.[6] The tension was ignited when a "large shipment of arms and ammunition destined for the Zionist community" was discovered on the coast of Jaffa.[7] Around the same time, Islamic preacher 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam was preparing for "guerilla war against the British and the Zionist;" when the shooting broke out, the popular leader was killed.[8] Other underlying factors, such as the "economic peripheralization and the growing impoverishment of the indigenous population and the increasing size and intrusiveness of the Zionist community," had just as much influence in the cause of the Great Revolt.[9] During this three-year rebellion, Palestinians were determined to end British Mandate rule and Jewish immigration. On the other hand, the Zionists were fighting to maintain their presence in Palestine and keep the dream of Zion alive within the Jewish Diaspora.

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[5] Land sales were typically to the Jewish National Fund. Quickly they would learn that this Fund was established to withhold land from Palestinians– and increase land acquisition – and distribute it among immigrating Jews.
[6] See Timeline.
[7] James Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 103.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

While many factors contributed to the outbreak of violence in 1936, they can all be traced back to the conflict over the land. On the one hand, the Palestinians believed they were the native inhabitants of their ancestral land. On the other hand, Jews believed it was their divine right to settle in Israel. This difference in understanding is the root of the conflict that we know today.

In 1947, after the violence of the Great Revolt and World War II, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine decided it would be best to partition Palestine into two separate states – Palestine for the Arabs and Israel for the Jews. This decision became known as UN Resolution 181, or the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine.[10] Displeased by the result of the UN Partition Plan, Palestinian Arabs and Zionist Jews immediately broke into civil war.[11] The fighting continued into 1948 and was made worse when the British Mandate in Palestine ended on May 14, 1948. On the eve of May 14, the People's Administration signed the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, establishing Israel as a state and asking for recognition from other sovereign nations and the United Nations.[12] Now on their own, the two nationalistic ideologies battled for the Holy Land. The battle continues to this day and has prevailed despite numerous attempts at finding peace. After 73 years of fighting, the conflict has claimed "upwards of 150,000 lives."[13] Through this paper, I seek to offer forgiveness as a means of closure for those who have experienced loss, pain, and suffering at the hands of the conflict.

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[10] O. Aranha. *Future Government of Palestine – GA Debate, vote on Resolution 181.* Verbatim Record. From United Nations, *The Question of Palestine,* 29 November 1947. https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-189596/.
[11] Fighting between the Jews and Palestinians settled during World War II. Jews were occupied working to provide aid to the ally forces; and Palestinian economy was booming because Western industries were focused on the war effort.
[12] "Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel." *The Avalon Project.* avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/israel.asp.
[13] Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict,* 1.

As I will demonstrate, forgiveness can serve as a valuable tool capable of establishing peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Forgiveness: Psychological, Interpersonal, and Authentic

Forgiveness is not a new subject to the realm of international peace and conflict studies, nor is it new to religious studies. Forgiveness is a broad topic that has found itself essential to a variety of different disciplines. Because it is so versatile, it also has many definitions, each meant to serve the purpose of the broader discipline. There are many layers to understanding forgiveness as an approach to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. First and foremost, we need to acknowledge that forgiveness will be defined psychologically to frame forgiveness as an inclusive solution to the conflict. [14] Secondly, we will be applying the psychological definition of forgiveness to interpersonal forgiveness, which I will demonstrate is the most effective form of forgiveness in a case as severe as the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Finally, interpersonal forgiveness must be authentic. Authenticity is the most challenging aspect of forgiveness because it requires deep internal reflection and a change of attitude toward one's transgressor. Each of these layers serves an invaluable purpose in accomplishing forgiveness. The psychological definition, as we will see, provides us with a goal that can be accomplished. Interpersonal forgiveness tells us who should accomplish this goal. Authentic forgiveness provides us with intricate details on why and how we should give or receive forgiveness. By assessing each of these layers, we will be able to apply authentic, interpersonal forgiveness to three relationships that have the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict has formed.

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[14] It is also important to note that Jewish and Islamic tradition each have their own definition and method of forgiveness that is specific to their religion and culture. I do not wish to undermine these definitions and traditions, rather, I aim to find the most universal and applicable version of forgiveness. Doing so, I believe, will result in the best possible outcome for all parties.

With this brief introduction to the mode of forgiveness used in this study of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, I would like to explain why I chose a psychological definition of forgiveness and what psychological forgiveness means. In terms of relatability, I needed to choose a definition inclusive of Jewish culture and Islamic culture, meaning that I could not use one of the definitions provided by either tradition. The psychological definition provided a broad understanding of forgiveness that allows Jews and Muslims to use their respective traditions. Thus, Jews and Muslims would be able to accomplish forgiveness by their own means.

The psychological definition that we will be using for this paper is found in Dr. Robert D. Enright's "Examining Group Forgiveness: Conceptual and Empirical Issues," which states that forgiveness involves acknowledging that one has been wronged and a "willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her."[15] I must note that this definition applies only to forgiveness; that is, it only applies to the transgressed forgiving the transgressor. However, because of the severity of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, forgiveness can only be expected after repentance, apology, or confession is given to the transgressed by the transgressor.[16] Therefore, it is essential to recognize that I will be using Enright's definition of forgiveness with the modification that forgiveness can only be achieved after repentance, apology, or confession has been given. This definition was chosen not only because of its applicability to Enright's study but because it is the definition approved and accepted cross-culturally. The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) is an

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[15] Robert D. Enright, "Examining Group Forgiveness: Conceptual and Empirical Issues," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 22, no. 2 (May 2016): 154.
[16] This point will be discussed in more detail when I introduce the question of whether or not some transgressions are unforgiveable.

instrument used in psychological studies to measure a particular subject's forgiveness index (an individual or a group).[17] Established by Dr. Robert D. Enright in 2000, the EFI found that the above definition of forgiveness is accepted by a range of different nations and cultures, demonstrating that this definition of forgiveness transcends culture and religion.[18] Furthermore, the purpose of choosing a psychological definition of forgiveness lies in the applicability and relatability that the definition provides. Because Enright and others have used this definition for a series of studies across cultures, I can safely apply it to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.[19]

      Now that we have a thorough understanding of why I chose the definition, we can look at the meaning of interpersonal forgiveness. Interpersonal forgiveness means that forgiveness is given by one person and accepted by another person. In other words, interpersonal forgiveness only requires the transgressed (victim) and the transgressor (perpetrator). In terms of the definition of forgiveness, interpersonal forgiveness is one person's release of resentment, negative judgment, and indifference towards a person who has personally apologized for the transgression and asked for forgiveness.[20] I must acknowledge that group forgiveness is also a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, however, it presents many avoidable issues that the interpersonal approach avoids. [21] According to Enright, group forgiveness is an expansion of interpersonal forgiveness.[22] This is because forgiveness must be given and accepted by

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[17] "Enright Forgiveness Inventory," International Forgiveness Institute, accessed September 28, 2020, https://www.mindgarden.com/95-enright-forgiveness-inventory.

[18] Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Israel, Korea, Taiwan, and the United States, have all approved of this definition.

[19] International Forgiveness Institute, "Enright Forgiveness Inventory."

[20] See note 9.

[21] Group Forgiveness in this paper is meant to be an inclusive term. Meaning that it will serve as the universal term for other types of forgiveness that apply to a group: national, organizational, etc.

[22] Enright, "Examining Group Forgiveness," 154.

representatives of a group. Therefore, there is an element of interpersonal forgiveness in all instances of group forgiveness. However, the quality of forgiveness is lacking because not every individual is offering forgiveness or accepting forgiveness.

As mentioned above, the authenticity of forgiveness is two-fold; it provides us with a "why" and "how." Metaphorically speaking, authenticity allows us to find a cure to the problem, as opposed to a "band-aid" solution – a solution that seeks to find a quick fix to move forward as soon as possible. Historically, there are several examples of "band-aid" solutions, all of which we will discuss. These include political negotiations, international agreements, and peace accords between Israelis, Palestinians, and other Arab nations. "Band-aid" solutions have continued to fail because they lack the ability to mend relationships. In the past, we have seen a cyclic pattern of violence, negotiations, and unfulfilled promises. Authentic forgiveness is a necessary step in the peace process because it allows people to resolve internal conflicts rather than resort to violence. By breaking the pattern, Israelis and Palestinians could negotiate without the need for reparations, and promises could be fulfilled because there would be no underlying resentment. In turn, this makes room for peace to grow and for a solution to be reached.

Knowing why authentic forgiveness is necessary, we can discuss how to achieve it. Forgiveness is a complex concept discussed differently between religions; that is, each religion has its method or means of achieving forgiveness. I propose that Israelis and Palestinians will be able to reach forgiveness by following their respective tradition's method of forgiveness. By doing so, authentic forgiveness will be achieved because it allows Israelis and Palestinians to resolve internal personal disputes.

The concept of forgiveness in Judaism is analyzed at length in the *Mishneh Torah.*[23] The Mishneh Torah is a compilation of 14 books that assess Jewish religious law written by Maimonides in the early 12th century. Each of the 14 books is further divided into chapters on topics such as Knowledge, Love, Holiness, and Judgements. The first book, "Sefer Madda," or the Book of Knowledge, comprises five chapters, the last of which is called Teshuvah, or repentance. Within this chapter, Maimonides embarks on detailing how Jewish law requires its followers to repent and seek forgiveness. For the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, we are most interested in how the Teshuvah addressed "man to man" forgiveness. It states the following, "It is very praiseworthy for a person who repents to confess in public and to make his sins known to others, revealing the transgressions he committed against his colleagues... Anyone who, out of pride, conceals his sins and does not reveal them will not achieve complete repentance."[24] Following this standard, Israelis who are guilty of committing a crime or a sin, by tradition, should vocalize their sin publically for all to hear. Doing so would clear the transgressor of sin and put them in a position to be forgiven.

The Teshuvah also includes details on how a Jew should grant forgiveness according to Jewish law: "When the person who wronged him asks for forgiveness, he should forgive him with a complete heart and a willing spirit. Even if he aggravated and wronged him severely, he should not seek revenge or bear a grudge."[25] Under these circumstances, the transgressed must be approached, publically or privately, by the transgressor seeking forgiveness for the wrong they committed. In return, the transgressed, when emotionally ready, should vocalize the forgiveness to the transgressor and release feelings of revenge or a grudge. On the other hand,

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[23] Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah,* (1470).
[24] Teshuvah (2:5)
[25] Teshuvah (2:10)

the Teshuvah says the following of those who neglect forgiveness, "the person who refuses to grant forgiveness is the one considered as the sinner."[26] In other words, if the transgressor has approached the transgressed, and the transgressor has repented, refusing to grant the transgressor forgiveness becomes a sin placed on the transgressed.

While this is a sampling of Teshuvah, it is clear that specific steps can be taken to achieve forgiveness. For Jews living in Israel and having been impacted by the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Teshuvah provides a framework for them to follow in the hope of finding coexistence with their Palestinian neighbors. After all, Teshuvah also notes that "Israel will only be redeemed through Teshuvah."[27]

Islamic traditions have a different approach to forgiveness; however, the concept remains the same. The Qur'an and the Sunnah both provide a framework for Muslims to follow when they are in the position to offer or receive forgiveness. Recall how Jewish tradition emphasizes public repentance to be forgiven; Islamic traditions teach a different approach. The Qur'an contains the following, "All the people of my Ummah would get pardon for their sins except those who publicize them."[28] According to Islamic traditions, publicizing a sin or sharing a sin with someone other than the transgressed – the victim of the sin – is a sin. The logic being that one should not burden another with one's sins.

Further, the Qur'an and the Sunnah vehemently relate the acting of forgiving and seeking forgiveness to one's relationship with Allah. Therefore, as a follower of Islam, it should be a priority to remain in good standing with Allah, "... if you pardon, overlook, and forgive [the

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[26] Teshuvah (2:9)
[27] Teshuvah (7:5).
[28] Sahih Muslim 2990.

transgressor's] faults, then Allah is truly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."[29] Almost all Islamic

scripture concludes with a phrase detailing the acceptance or approval of Allah. For example,

"And hasten towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the

earth, prepared for those mindful (of Allah). (They are) those who donate in prosperity and

adversity, control their anger and pardon others. And Allah loves the good-doers."[30] In this

sense, forgiveness is an incredibly religious concept grounded in one's relationship to Allah.

While not as passionate about the relationship that forgiveness has to God, Jewish traditions

introduce many of their forgiveness guidelines through excerpts of God's forgiveness.

Therefore, as a Jew or a Muslim, it becomes impossible to forgive without giving thought to

one's religious identity. That being said, it is just as important to recognize the religious

identity of the person with whom you are engaging. As we discovered, Jewish traditions and

Muslim traditions have different methods of expressing repentance – publicly or privately –

therefore, authentic forgiveness requires people to be aware of the person's religious traditions

with whom they forgive or seek forgiveness. When we analyze Israeli-Palestinian relationships

later on, we will be focusing on these three layers of forgiveness -- psychological,

interpersonal, and authentic – and assessing how well they achieve forgiveness.

Before doing so, I will also provide simple definitions and explanations of peace,

coexistence, and reconciliation. These three terms, though reasonably similar, each represent

something distinctly important. Peace refers to harmony and the ability to live together without

fear of war or attack by the other.[31] Coexistence also emphasizes the ability to live together, yet,

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[29] Surah At-Taghabun, 64:14.
[30] Surah Ali-'Imran, 3:133-134.
[31] In some cases, peace may suggest justice. While justice is valuable and important when it comes to moving forward with one's enemy, it is counter-productive for the purposes of this paper. As the conflict has evolved both sides have argued that they are finding peace through

it goes further than indifference toward the other, as peace might suggest. Coexistence means acknowledgment of the other's role in their shared community. Lastly, reconciliation goes beyond coexistence, striving for a productive relationship between the transgressor and the transgressed. Reconciliation is the ability to forge a partnership or friendship as someone who has been harmed by the person that committed the harm. Peace, coexistence, and reconciliation are not easily achievable tasks; however, they are made more accessible through forgiveness.

Finally, I find it necessary to state how I am related to forgiveness in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. I am merely a curious scholar of religious studies interested in exploring the process and application of forgiveness in reality, specifically in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. I do not identify with any of the groups mentioned in this piece: Jewish, Israeli, Arab, Palestinian, or Muslim, nor do I wish to push my arguments and conclusions onto those that identify with them. As an outsider studying an emotional and personal subject, I am responsible for voices identifying with these groups to support my arguments and conclusions. In other words, I will not propose an individual experience or argument without first finding supportive evidence from an individual or group who are personally affected by the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Therefore, I aim to synthesize and promote the conversations, studies, and voices that have already contributed to the study of forgiveness or the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict to support my overall argument.

Background: What can we learn from the past?

The path to peace, co-existence, and reconciliation has been trekked unsuccessfully for decades throughout the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The United Nations attempted to pacify

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retributive justice which in turn fuels a cycle of finding justice through violence and responding to that violence with more violence, meanwhile both sides believing they are serving justice.

Israelis and Palestinians with UN Resolution 194,[32] UN Resolution 242,[33] and UN Resolution

3414[34] but, because the United Nations lacks the foundation to enforce these resolutions, each of

them failed. In 1978, representatives from the United States, Israel, and Egypt met at Camp

David to find a lasting solution in the Middle East.[35] They signed the Camp David Accords

enforcing UN Resolution 242, granting full autonomy of Palestine, and requiring Israeli forces'

withdrawal from the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The Accords, however,

were dismissed by the United Nations and deemed invalid because they neglected to include the

Palestinian representatives. Resolve was attempted again in 1993 when Norway agreed to

facilitate a negotiation between Israel and Palestine from which the Oslo Accords were signed.[36]

This long and arduous process resulted in a peace plan that legitimated the Camp David Accords

of 1978. With the Camp David Accords of 1978 now legitimate through the Oslo Accords,

Israeli and Palestinian leaders met once more at Camp David with United States President Bill

Clinton to discuss a peace plan. The 2000 Camp David Summit ultimately failed as Israeli prime

minister Ehud Barak refused to enforce UN Resolution 242, and the Palestinian Authority

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[32] United Nations Resolution 194 addresses the issue of Palestinian Refugees, displaced because of the Arab-Israeli War. The Resolution declares that they be given the right to return and be welcomed by their neighbors. "Resolutions,"
https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0.
[33] United Nations Resolution 242 was adopted following the Six-Day War. It called on Arab states to recognize Israeli borders and agree to halt acts of forces. In return, Israel would withdraw from territories it gained and occupied following the Six-Day War. "Resolutions,"
https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0.
[34] United Nations Resolution 3414 was drafted and adopted in support and to enforce UN Resolution 242. This resolution took measures against Israel, enforcing economic sanction and an arms embargo until Israel withdrew from the territories it began occupying in the wake of the Six-Day War. "Resolutions," https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0.
[35] Daniela Huber, "Forty Years of Camp David, Forty Years without Peace," *Instituto Affari Internazionali*, (2018): 2.
[36] Huber, "Forty Years of Camp David, Forty Years without Peace, Daniela Huber," 6.

chairman refused to waiver on UN Resolution 242.[37] This stalemate took center stage at the 2000 Camp David Summit but, when no solution was reached on the last day of negations, each party went home empty-handed.

The negotiations and discussions mentioned above all share a commonality; they fail to acknowledge the importance of understanding, compromise, and recognition. First, the Israelis and Palestinians failed to understand the other's desire for the land of Old Palestine. Second, they each failed to accept compromises on behalf of the other. Lastly, Israel failed to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization as a valid government body, while Palestine refused to recognize Israel as a state. While the lack of understanding, compromise, and recognition has a much deeper meaning to the Israelis and the Palestinians, these failures were avoidable. Peace, coexistence, and reconciliation could have been achieved with each of these attempts – the UN Resolutions, the Camp David Accords of 1978, the Oslo Accords, and the 2000 Camp David Summit – if only the Israelis and the Palestinians had welcomed the conditions of forgiveness and reconciliation. With our thorough understanding of interpersonal forgiveness and an introduction to the conflict, we can begin to assess the opportunities that the Israelis and Palestinians have had for embracing these conditions within the conflict.

Understanding, compromise, and recognition – hereafter, referred to as the conditions – are conditions that I have extracted from a different traumatic event, one comparable to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, that being the South African Apartheid. Over the course of the 20th century, South Africa's government implemented several harsh and discriminatory laws that thoroughly segregated the white and black populations. Through segregation, the government

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[37] This debate was particularly over the territory of East Jerusalem which, by UN Resolution 242, was within Palestinian borders. Huber, 4.

found it easy to enact further initiatives creating unequal living and working conditions and

restricting black South Africans from accessing fundamental human rights. Through the efforts

of President F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela, the Apartheid ended in 1994 after nearly a

century, and South Africans were given a chance to rebuild together.

While recovering from the decades-long Apartheid grounded in racial injustice against

South Africa's Black population, a man named Desmond Tutu saw a great opportunity for

forgiveness. Following the liberation from "one of the world's most vicious political systems,"

South Africa experienced a "relatively peaceful transition from repression to freedom."[38] Though

unique, South Africa offers a fantastic blueprint for peace, coexistence, and reconciliation after a

seemingly unforgivable conflict by embracing the conditions of forgiveness and establishing a

body whose purpose is to promote peace, coexistence, and reconciliation: The Truth and

Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC was founded by Tutu, who thought that the

Commission was a "way of hope, that even the worst perpetrator remained a child of God with

the capacity to change."[39] Tutu found that letting victims tell their stories "poured a balm of

acknowledgment on the wounds, giving voice to hurt, rehabilitating the dignity of those who for

so long were anonymous, faceless victims."[40] Perhaps even more shocking was the recognition

of the perpetrators who "are given a chance to come to terms with what they did, make full

disclosure and obtain amnesty in an example of restorative justice, more about healing than

punishment, more about forgiveness and reconciliation than retribution and revenge."[41] This

avenue for peace, paved by Desmond Tutu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,

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[38] Desmond Tutu, "The Struggle for Social Justice in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Peace Research* 37, no. 1 (May 2005): 109.
[39] Tutu, "The Struggle for Social Justice in Post-Apartheid South Africa," 110.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

provides an extensive example of how forgiveness offers resolve in the wake of an incredible

conflict. That being said, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee is not perfect or absolute.

There still are struggles, conflicts, and dissenters; however, the important takeaway is that the

committee offered a tangible and probable means of moving towards peace beyond the

Apartheid. The trauma was not forgotten and continues to exist in living memory; those affected,

though, now have a method of finding forgiveness if they wish. In no way do I wish to suggest

that Israelis and Palestinians follow in the precise footsteps of South Africa, merely that they

remain open to embracing the conditions of forgiveness. This example of forgiveness after

trauma represents that peace, coexistence, and reconciliation are possible even in the most

fraught circumstances. This is the hope that I, and others, have for the future of Israeli and

Palestinian relations; that through forgiveness, these groups will find a way to accomplish peace,

coexistence, and reconciliation.[42]

Opportunities of Interpersonal Forgiveness

By flipping through the history of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, we are presented with

many instances in which forgiveness could have been exchanged. The most notable are the UN

Resolutions, the Camp David Accords, the Oslo Accords, and the Camp David Summit;

however, we have already discussed why those attempts failed.[43] There are many personal and

intimate interactions, though, that have demonstrated the capacity to embrace the conditions for

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[42] Sandy Tolan, *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 191. Dalia often notes that she hopes Israelis and Palestinians can find peace. Peter Beinart has also written an essay pleading for peace in Israel-Palestine. Peter Beinart, "Yavne: A Jewish Case for Equality in Israel-Palestine." *Jewish Currents*, (8 July 2020), jewishcurrents.org/yavne-a-jewish-case-for-equality-in-israel-palestine/.
[43] See pages 7-8.

interpersonal forgiveness. Specifically, we will be looking at three relatively unknown relationships in the grand picture of the conflict that represent the possibility of peace.

The first example is a friendship documented by Sandy Tolan in his book, The Lemon Tree. Dalia Eshkenazi, a Jewish Israeli, and Bashir Khairi, a Muslim Palestinian, represent two very different halves to the same story. At the age of 6, Bashir was exiled from his home in the months following the British Mandate's end amid the fighting in the 1947-1948 war. His family, along with the rest of Ramla, were pushed across the land, eventually finding themselves in Gaza. On the other hand, Dalia was 11 months old when she arrived in Israel in 1948 after her family left Bulgaria following WWII, with the hope of settling in a Jewish homeland. Dalia's family, the Eshkenazi's, found themselves in the quaint town of Ramla, which they quickly called home, and settled in a house that was built and lived in by the Khairi family. After nineteen years, when Bashir was 25, he and his two cousins returned for the first time to Ramla. Not knowing what to expect, the three men decided to visit their childhood homes and see what had become of their town. This was the start of Bashir and Dalia's tumultuous lifelong friendship.

In the memoir, Tolan narrates the decades following Dalia and Bashir's meeting in 1967, detailing numerous conversations between Dalia and Bashir. These conversations were often tense and filled with emotion and disagreement, but it was always settled that they would meet again. In one of these conversations, towards the end of the memoir, Dalia expresses her concern over the general cycle of "pain, retaliation, pain, retaliation," and the fact that the home in Ramla "has two peoples, two families, and two histories."[44] She remembers expressing to Bashir, "how does one acknowledge the collective wound? The heart wants to move toward the healing of that

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[44] Tolan, *The Lemon Tree,* 190.

wound."[45] At this point in the conflict, the Six-Day War was coming to a close, and Palestinians were feeling the pains of loss and destruction. There was an estimated total of 20,800 lives lost in the war, 20,000 of which were Arab.[46] The broader Arab community also lost control of Old Jerusalem, Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank to Israel.[47] Israelis, on the other hand, were still grappling with the historical memory of their prosecution in Europe.[48] At this moment, we see a desire for peace by acknowledging that there has been pain and destruction felt by both Palestinians and Israelis, which Dalia wishes to overcome. However, Bashir does not share her desire for healing and peace. As a Palestinian fighter, he believes in retributive justice and the Palestinian right of return. The right of return is a long-held Palestinian notion that first-generation Palestinians and their descendants have the inherent right to return to the land they were exiled at the start of the conflict. Bashir often references the right to return when discussing his motivation for continuing to fight the Israelis.

The difference in opinion between Dalia and Bashir can be attributed to their dichotomy of historical memory versus living memory (respectively) and how this affects their reaction to a plea for peace. Dalia, not having a current experience of pain, destruction, and exile, is having an easier time considering peace, coexistence, and reconciliation. Bashir, on the other hand, is actively living through pain, destruction, and exile, and as a result, is struggling to understand how peace could be a viable solution. Bashir's thinking, however, is what has caused nearly 75

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[45] Ibid.

[46] "Six Day War," History.com, accessed December 10, 2020, www.history.com/topics/middle-east/six-day-war.

[47] Ibid.

[48] The purpose of mentioning the Holocaust at this moment is to present a dichotomy of historical memory versus living memory and how this affects one's reaction to a plea for peace. As we see, Dalia, not having currently experienced pain, destruction, and exile, has a different approach to the conflict than Bashir, who is actively living through pain, destruction, and exile.

years of unrest, war, and death. In other words, those who share Bashir's belief in retributive justice – Palestinian and Israeli – are those who have continued the violence of the conflict.

Throughout *The Lemon Tree*, Dalia embodies the need for understanding, recognition, and compromise and believes that personal dialogue is the key to transformation. The personal relationships and interactions between Israelis and Palestinians are necessary for embracing the conditions for forgiveness. Those that share Bashir's desire for justice – both Palestinians and Israelis – have stood in the way of those embracing forgiveness and trying to find peace for all those touched by the conflict. The Israelis share a similar motivation expressed in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel as "impelled by historic and traditional attachment" to the "birthplace of the Jewish people."[49] Because of the influence of these "rights" to the land of Israel, Israelis and Palestinians have yet to see peace, co-existence, and reconciliation. In fact, Dalia mentions the hindrance of the national and international agenda in the conflict by noting that "if national interest comes before our common humanity, then there is no hope for redemption, there is no hope for healing, there is no hope for transformation, there is no hope for anything!"[50]

The relationship between Dalia and Bashir contains many elements of forgiveness that were introduced in our discussion of the layers of forgiveness. First, Dalia demonstrates a clear desire for forgiveness as defined by the psychological definition. Her willingness to extend "common humanity" to the Palestinians is representative of her desire for forgiveness. Additionally, the relationship perfectly embodies the interpersonal aspect of forgiveness. While Dalia and Bashir may not agree on all accounts, they have exquisitely displayed an openness to

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[49] "Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel."
[50] Tolan, 176.

conversation and dialogue across boundaries. Authentic forgiveness, as we know, is the most challenging layer to accomplish and is also where Dalia and Bashir are lacking. Dalia, while expressing her desire for peace outwardly, has failed to offer an apology for the "sins" of her people. Bashir also fails to apologize for his own "sins," and instead of seeking peace with the Jews, he pursues retribution. Despite their lack of authentic forgiveness, Dalia and Bashir have demonstrated the productivity and possibility of dialogue and conversation between Israelis and Palestinians.

The following relationship looks at an experience that the Pro-Palestinian American reporter Hunter Stuart had in his stay in Jerusalem. Stuart was on a year-long research tour in Jerusalem when a group of young Palestinian boys nearly attacked him. Soon after Stuart moved to Jerusalem, the "Stabbing Intifada" began – a series of Palestinian-organized terrorist attacks on Jewish Israelis. Stuart remembers feeling hostility towards the Israelis instead of sympathy, thinking, "Stop occupying the West Bank, stop blockading Gaza, and Palestinians will stop killing you!"[51] Upon arrival in Silwan, a neighborhood of Jerusalem, a young Palestinian shouted at Stuart, "Yehud!", "Jew!" to which the boy's friends responded by joining in the shout and running towards Stuart.[52] Terrified, Stuart yelled in return, "Ana mish yehud!", "I am not Jewish!"[53] The group of boys backed off, and all ended well; however, Stuart began to feel a shift in attitude now that the violence had become personal. Worrying about his and his wife's safety had caused him to question "how forgiving he had been towards the Palestinians."[54] In essence, before this experience, he failed to recognize that both groups were guilty of

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[51] Hunter Stuart, "How a Pro-Palestinian American Reporter Changed His Views on Israel and the Conflict," *Jerusalem Post* (Feb 2017).
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

transgressions. Stuart realized that the liberal narrative he had grown up with and lived was not representative of reality.[55]

A few months after his encounter with the Palestinian boys, Stuart wrote an article for a local paper that detailed a Palestinian attack on an Israeli bus in a Jerusalem neighborhood. The angle he took was sympathetic to the Palestinian attacker, and the article drew from interviews with the attacker's family. The attacker, a man in his early 20's who was described as a bright young entrepreneur who had been pushed too far by "the humiliations of the occupation," killed a friend of Stuart's first host family in Jerusalem.[56] Stuart later learned that the friend who was killed was also an American from New England, taught English to Israeli and Palestinian children, and "never missed a peace rally."[57] As these attacks became increasingly more personal for Stuart, he felt his sympathy for the Palestinians begin to disappear and was introduced to a new reality of the conflict.

Throughout his stay in Jerusalem, Stuart was able to gain multiple perspectives of the conflict from both Israelis and Palestinians. In his article, it seems that among the Israelis he was able to converse with, there is unanimous agreement that they would be able and willing to live peacefully with the Palestinians. On the other hand, there was also a near-unanimous agreement from Palestinians that they wanted their land back, free of the Israelis. Stuart struggled to defend this position, especially with his newfound attitude toward the entire conflict, though he recognizes that he is still an outsider and therefore has an unreliable opinion. Despite his position

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[55] Stuart notes that the liberal narrative is that of privileged white folk discriminating and attacking under-privileged Arabs. In other words, the liberal narrative is that of white oppressor and colored victim.

[56] Stuart, "Pro-Palestinian American Reporter."

[57] Ibid.

as an outsider, Stuart still has several points that fall in line with the conditions of interpersonal forgiveness. In particular, Stuart urges for recognition and understanding:

"To me, however morally complicated the creation of Israel may have been, however many innocent Palestinians were killed and displaced from their homes in 1948 and again in 1967, Israel is now a fact, accepted by almost every government in the world. But the ongoing desire of Palestinians to wipe Israel off the map is unproductive and backward-looking and the West must be very careful not to encourage it."[58]

Here, Stuart speaks to the Palestinians and their failure to understand the Israeli attachment to the land, their failure to recognize Israel as a sovereign nation, and finally, compromise for peace, coexistence, and reconciliation. In response, Israel is responsible for understanding the Palestinians attachment to the land, recognizing an independent Palestinian government, and, of course, compromising for peace, coexistence, and reconciliation.

Stuart's experience and conversations with Israelis and Palestinians demonstrate what needs to be done personally to make room for embracing these conditions for interpersonal forgiveness. Further, his interactions with Israelis and Palestinians show the importance of why this forgiveness must be interpersonal. Recall Enright's definition, particularly the notion of releasing negative feelings of hostility towards the aggressor. Had the young boys in Silwan embraced the conditions for interpersonal forgiveness, they would not have presumed Stuart was a Jew and would not have attacked him. In forgiving and refusing to be violent, these young boys would have kept another family, another group, from feeling hostile and finding justice in more violence. This is the ultimate goal; that both Israelis and Palestinians embrace the conditions of

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[58] Ibid.

interpersonal forgiveness such that they create a space where peace, coexistence, and reconciliation can be reached.

Stuart's story serves as a prime example of why forgiveness must be interpersonal and authentic. As an outsider, it is easy to say that Israelis and Palestinians should establish peace and forgive each other. However, lacking emotional and religious connections to the land does not allow the outsider to experience Israelis and Palestinians' mental and emotional trauma. Therefore, forgiveness to us – outsiders – is not interpersonal, meaning it is not up to us to give forgiveness or ask for forgiveness. Through his conversations with Israelis and Palestinians, Stuart has demonstrated that the role of the outsider is to assist in the act of forgiveness. That is, we can help elevate the voices of the traumatized and express that forgiveness is a possible means of finding peace.

The third relationship is quite different from Dalia and Bashir's friendship and that of Stuart and his attackers. This relationship is between parents, both Israeli and Palestinian, who have lost a child or family member to the conflict's violence. The Parents' Circle is "peace, reconciliation, and support of 500 Israeli and Palestinians who have lost loved ones in the conflict."[59] Founded in 1995 by Yitzhak Frankenthal and Roni Hirshenzon, the Parents' Circle is a grassroots organization advocating for reconciliation and peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The group holds many lectures, learning sessions, and workshops for those wanting to help achieve this goal and for those who want to learn more about the process of reconciliation. Each member has a different story and a different background, yet, they all share a hope for a peaceful solution and an end to violence. One member, a Palestinian woman named Nadwa

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[59] "Israeli, Palestinian Parents Share Their Painful Stories Of Loss," NPR, September 13, 2014, www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/09/13/346854919/israeli-palestinian-parents-share-their-painful-stories-of-loss.

Sarandah, joined the group after her sister Naila was stabbed to death in Jerusalem. Nadwa and Naila had gotten in a disagreement with some Jewish Israelis, and in the following days, Naila was attacked in what Nadwa believes was a contract kill.[60] In his article, "A Club of Heartbroken Activists," Robert Hirschfield writes,

"Ms. Sarandah's bitterness toward the Israelis grew worse after her sister's death. It softened only after a visit from Yitzhak Frankenthal, the orthodox Jewish founder of the Parents' Circle who apologized to her for Naila's murder and for the cruelties of the occupation."[61]

Through his apology, Frankenthal demonstrated his commitment to authentic forgiveness and peace and allowed Nadwa the opportunity to embrace the conditions for forgiveness. Though the death of Naila was not his fault, Frankenthal openly repented to Nadwa for the transgressions of his people. In return, Nadwa recognized his authenticity and forgave him, therefore fulfilling the process of forgiveness. Nadwa recalls, "I thought if an orthodox Jew, and Israeli, can reach out to a Palestinian, then maybe there is hope."[62] The relationship between Yitzhak and Nadwa perfectly executes each layer of forgiveness. By following the framework of their respective tradition's path to forgiveness, Yitzhak and Nadwa were able to share a personal connection and reach the goal of abandoning "resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior... while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love."[63]

Nadwa's story is only one of the thousands filled with suffering and pain. However, with this pain comes an overwhelming desire for peace. The Parents' Circle seeks to reach the individual and make an impact unique to each person with whom they talk and interact. They are

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[60] Robert Hirschfield, "A Club of Heartbroken Activists," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 1, 2005, pp. 14–14.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] See 16.

essentially teaching individual people how to embrace the conditions for interpersonal forgiveness. More so, they are trying to forge a relationship with people outside of their framework. In other words, the organization is eager to meet and converse with those that think differently than them. Robi Damelin, an Israeli mother who lost her son to the conflict in 2001, expresses that, "you can't [have a] dialogue with only people that you like. So, we have to listen and include" those with whom we disagree.[64] This notion is an incredible appeal to understanding both sides of the conflict in order for disagreeing individuals to recognize the each other's connection to the land.

The Parents' Circle is an astonishing example of how peace can be achieved between Israelis and Palestinians. Following this discussion, it seems clear that the citizens and people of Israel and Palestine are determined to reach peace and end the cycle of violence. More so, these Israeli and Palestinians have accomplished more peace than the leaders and politicians of the conflicting countries. The productivity exhibited by the Parents' Circle leads me to argue that the path to forgiveness will be paved by the common people of Israel and Palestine. As their respective politicians and international organizations continue to have failed negotiations and futile peace talks, the people of Israel and Palestine will be building peace from the ground up.

The previous three examples have each demonstrated a willingness to embrace the conditions of interpersonal forgiveness and begin the journey to peace as partners and not enemies. Decades of fighting and years of war have ensured that this conflict has touched every Israeli and Palestinian, creating the perfect foundation for grassroots-led forgiveness. It is now in the people's hands to find peace, coexistence, and reconciliation for themselves.[65] After her own

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[64] NPR, "Israeli, Palestinian Parents."
[65] Ibid.

tragic experience, Nadwa has realized that "peace is too important to be left to the politicians. It is something ordinary people must work toward among themselves."[66]

Alternatives to Forgiveness

Arguing that forgiveness could be had between every individual – Israeli and Palestinian – that has been impacted by this conflict is a daunting task and not one that I take lightly. As an outsider, it is wrong to assume that every Israeli and Palestinian would be willing to apologize or forgive. The task is seemingly impossible when we consider the number of people that have been impacted by the conflict; however, at this time, I would like to look back at the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. Desmond Tutu did not need every South African impacted by the Apartheid to exchange apology and forgiveness; he merely needed people to be open to the idea of this exchange. In that case, not every Israeli and Palestinian has to exchange apology and forgiveness immediately; Dalia, Stuart, the Parents' Circle, and I just ask that Israelis and Palestinians be open to the idea of this exchange. As I have mentioned in the examples, the relationships people form with one another have the room and the opportunity to embrace understanding, compromise, and recognition. The process of forgiveness is not a quick one. It will take time, years, and, possibly decades if the Truth and Reconciliation Committee has taught us anything. There will even be those who are never able to forgive, those who have been affected too profoundly, who have been hurt by a person they consider unforgivable.

Those who are unable to forgive or have not considered the option of forgiveness are often in favor of retributive justice. Retributive justice "refers to the repair of justice through unilateral imposition of punishment;" and is often handled through violent or damaging means.[67]

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[66] Hirschfield, "Heartbroken Activists," 4.
[67] Michael Wenzel, Tyler G. Okimoto, Norman T. Feather, and Michael J. Platow, "Retributive and Restorative Justice," *Law and Human Behavior,* 32, no. 5, (Oct 2008): 375.

Retributive justice is typically sought after when a person or group believes that a "social norm-and-rule [has been] infringed" and must be corrected or acknowledged such that a balance is restored.[68] Bashir Khairi, in *The Lemon Tree,* serves as the perfect example for someone exacting retributive justice. From the time he was six years old, Bashir's world was filled with consistent violations of "norms-and-rules." As a child in primary school, he remembers learning about the Nakba or the Catastrophe, which he lived through in 1948.[69] He also recalls reciting lines of a song each day at the start of class,

<blockquote>

"Palestine is our country,

Our aim is to return

Death does not frighten us, Palestine is ours,

We shall never forget her.

Another homeland we shall never accept!

Our Palestine, witness, O God and History

We promise to shed our blood for you!"[70]

</blockquote>

By promising to "shed blood," whether literally or metaphorically, Bashir was learning that justice and retribution were the only paths towards the right of return. From a young age, he was convinced that the Israelis deserved to pay for their actions, and Palestine needed to see a balancing of justice. How does one learn peace when all they have been taught is retribution? How do we break out of the cycle of "pain and retaliation" when the aggressor keeps feeding one's desire to retaliate?[71]

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[68] Agnes Heller, "On Retributive Justice," *Dialectical Anthropology,* 12, no. 2, (1987): 205.
[69] Tolan, 100.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Tolan, 190.

The desire for retributive justice is common among Israelis and Palestinians, so much so that organizations have been founded on the basis of finding it. In 1987, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin had grown weary of the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) peaceful approach to finding a solution with Israel.[72] He and a group of other PLO members decided to break off from the organization and found their own organization. This group became known as the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, whose main goal was to restore the entire Islamic state of Palestine, thus granting every exiled Palestinian the right of return. The group is staunchly anti-Israeli, refusing to recognize the state and believed that Jews were "conspiring to rule the world."[73] Under this doctrine, Hamas made it their responsibility to find justice when the Israelis attacked Palestinians. They claimed responsibility for car bombings, suicide bombings, and attacks on Israeli civilians. At the peak of Hamas aggression, Israel claimed that Hamas was the aggressor and the reason that peace had not yet been achieved.[74]

Retributive justice is often a label of Palestinian motivation; however, Israelis are also guilty of seeking justice through retribution. Since 2005, Israeli forces have devastated Palestinian refugee camps and infrastructure, killing an estimated 2,400 Palestinian civilians, compared to the 26 Israeli civilians who have died at the hands of Palestinians. The wars continue to demonstrate Israeli dominance in the region, in turn strengthening the Palestinian fight for the right of return.

Remembering Why Forgiveness Matters

The relationship between Israelis and Palestinians is slowly worsening, and the hope for finding peace seems to be slipping into the horizon. As we approach a century of occupation, the

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[72] Tolan, 194.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Tolan, 270.

international community appears to be at a standstill, not knowing what other avenues to pursue to accomplish peace in Israel. The most recent developments in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict have solidified Israel's intention of occupying all of Old Palestine, particularly in the West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has proposed to annex at least 30% of the land in the West Bank to Israel.[75] In this new reality, a majority of Palestinians have outgrown the hope for a right of return and are now focused on securing a single-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians share equal rights.[76] Jewish author and activist Peter Beinart agrees with and supports these Palestinian voices. In his recent essay, *Yavne: A Jewish case for Equality in Israel-Palestine,* he wrote, "It is time for liberal Zionists to abandon the goal of Jewish-Palestinian separation and embrace the goal of Jewish-Palestinian equality... It is time to envision a Jewish home that is a Palestinian home, too."[77] Without a plan for another solution in which Israelis and Palestinians can live in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean peacefully, Palestinians are seemingly left to the mercy of the Israeli government and citizens, most of whom "regularly tell pollsters that Palestinians should be encouraged or forced to leave the country."[78]

As demonstrated in this paper, Israelis and Palestinians have demonstrated through their relationships, conversations, and open dialogue that interpersonal forgiveness can be authentic and can achieve peace. Finding a solution is no longer in the hands of the international community; they have had plenty of opportunities to establish peace but have continued to fail. The prospect of peace, coexistence, and reconciliation now lies in the hands of the people.

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[75] Beinart, "Yavne."
[76] A poll conducted by Khalil Shikaki found that at least 50% of Palestinians are embracing a single state solution. Beinart, "Yavne."
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

Finding peace through forgiveness is going to be a grassroots initiative that is inspired by the mutual pain, loss, and suffering that has been felt by Israelis and Palestinians.

Moving forward, my hope is that forgiveness will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live in harmony with one another. As we know, this is not an easy task to accomplish; however, there are several scenarios in which this could occur. Following the framework of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Israelis and Palestinians could create a commission of their own. In the case of a two-state solution, a Palestinian Commission and an Israeli Commission could be formed with the shared goal of establishing prosperous relations between the common people to the neighboring countries. By using dialogue and creating an environment that is free of judgment and welcoming of everyone, an Israeli Commission and a Palestinian Commission could embark on the journey towards peace. Even in a single-state solution, two delegations could be created under one commission with the goal of using forgiveness and dialogue to establish a national community of coexistence and tolerance. The Parents' Circle is in such a position to do so. As an organization with both Israeli and Palestinian representation, they have the ability to build a bridge between the two groups. Long term, the Commission could have a goal of reaching every Israeli and Palestinian that has been impacted by the conflict.

Whatever path Israelis and Palestinians take, my hope is that they use forgiveness as their guide toward discovering a future together. Forgiveness creates an opportunity for all people to have a clean state; recall our definition, forgiveness is a "willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her."[79] On a national scale, the impact of forgiveness can be awesome. Yet on a personal level,

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[79] See 16.

forgiveness is a chance to move forward without the weight of the past, and for that reason, it is worth pursuing.

I acknowledge that each person has been impacted by the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict differently, and because of that, they will find peace on their own time and in their own way. Each of the people we met in this paper has demonstrated that beautifully. What they have also demonstrated, though, is that even after tremendous loss, incredible suffering, and unimaginable trauma, people find it in themselves to embrace one another. People find that they have more in common than not. People understand that they are not the only ones hurting, and they recognize one another's pain. Moreover, through this understanding and recognition, they are able to find compromise in their differences and embrace forgiveness.

Timeline of Events

The following timeline is composed of events that are integral to the understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Not all of the events below have been mentioned in my thesis, however, I found it important to include them now for the readers that would like to reference the timeline as they read, or for those wishing to have a greater comprehension of events, motivations, and actors of the conflict. Most of the dates and descriptions can be credited to James Gelvin.

1516 Ottomans incorporate Palestine into their emerging empire.

1882-1903 First Aliyah, wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, 35,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

1894-1906 The Dreyfus Affair; A French military commander wrongly accused Alfred Dreyfus of spying for the Germans. The parade that followed his conviction became deeply anti-Semitic when the crowd began chanting "Death to the Jew." The Dreyfus Affair inspired many of Theodore Herzl's Zionist writings and intentions.

1896 Theodore Herzl publishes the Jewish State and introduces Zionism as a nationalistic ideology.

1897 World Zionist Organization formed.

1901 Jewish National Fund established to coordinate Zionist land purchases in Palestine.

1904-14 Second Aliyah, 40,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

1909 Founding of Tel Aviv as a Jewish suburb in Jaffa.

1914-18 World War I, end of the Ottoman Empire.

1917 Balfour Declaration issued stating the British support of establishing a Jewish homeland.

1919-23 Third Aliyah, 40,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

1920 First Palestine Congress, Arab Executive founded, first large-scale Zionist-Palestinian clashes. San Remo Conference internationally recognizes British control in Palestine under the British Mandate.

1921 United States applies quotas to European immigrants for the first time, forcing European immigrants to look elsewhere or stay in their country.

1924-28 Fourth Aliyah, 82,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine, however, before this period ended, 23,000 of these immigrants left Israel.

1929 Jewish Agency organized, "Wailing Wall" riots.

1929-39 Fifth Aliyah, 200,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine.

1936-39 The Great Revolt, founding of Arab Higher Committee.

1937 British government issued to Peel Commission report proposing the division of Palestine between Zionists and Palestinians.

1939 British government issues the White Paper rescinding call for partition and restricting Jewish immigration and land purchases in Palestine.

1939-45 World War II.

1942 World Zionist organization issues "Biltmore Program" calling for the immediate establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in all of Palestine.

1947 Britain submits Palestine question to the United Nations, United Nations votes for partition of Palestine (UN Resolution 181), civil war breaks out in Palestine between Jewish and Palestinian communities.

1948 British Mandate ends; State of Israel is proclaimed through the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel; Arab states invade Palestine starting the War of 1948; Israel admitted to the United Nations.

1948-49 First Arab-Israeli War (The War of 1948); 750,000 of 1.2 million Palestinians exiled from their homes; Egypt occupies Gaza Strip, Transjordan annexes the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem, Israel gains Western Jerusalem.

1949 Ralph Bunche mediates armistice agreements between Israel and Arab states.

1956 Suez War and "Tripartite Aggression," Israel, Britain, and France invade Egypt after Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal.

1964 Palestine Liberation Organization founded (PLO).

1966 Israel lifts martial law restrictions on Arab citizens.

1967 Six-Day War; United Nations adopts Resolution 242; Israel occupies Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights, Eastern Jerusalem, and Sinai Peninsula; Israelis beginning moving into occupied territories, violating the laws of the Geneva Convention.

1969 Yasir Arafat assumes leadership of PLO.

1973 October War; United Nations reaffirms Resolution 242 in Resolution 338.

1974 Arab states recognize PLO as the legitimate representative institution of Palestinians; PLO calls for establishment of a Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

1978 Camp David negotiations between Israel and Egypt.

1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty.

1982 Israel invades Lebanon; Phalange militiamen massacre Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila.

1987 Outbreak of intifada in occupied Gaza and West Bank; Hamas founded.

1988 Yasir Arafat agrees to United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338 as basis for negotiations with Israel.

1993 Oslo Accord established framework for future negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis.

1994 Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho area begins; Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty.

1995 Oslo 2 signed.

1996 Palestinian Authority elected. Benjamin Netanyahu assumes power in Israel as Prime Minister (until 1999 and is reelected in 2009) and pledges to halt concessions with the Palestinians.

2000 "All or nothing at all" summit help at Camp David; outbreak of second intifada.

2001 Al-Qaeda attacks United States.

2002 The Arab Peace Initiative takes place in Beirut, Lebanon. Israelis begin construction of separation barrier.

2005 Israel removes settlements form Gaza.

2006 Hamas wins majority of seats in PA parliament; war pits Israel against Hizbullah in Lebanon and Palestinians in Gaza.

2007 Hamas seizes control of Gaza Strip, formally dividing the Palestinian national movement.

2010-12 The Arab Spring.

2012 Palestine recognized as "non-member observer state" by UN General Assembly.

2013 Direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians resume for the first time since their breakdown in 2010.

2014 Hamas and Fatah agree to form a unity government for Palestine; Israel begins Operation Protective Edge against Hamas.

2015 Netanyahu declares that he is against a two-state solution with Palestine; Vatican recognizes State of Palestine.

2016 The United States promises $38 Billion over a ten-year period to Israel for military assistance; United States abstains on United Nations resolution condemning Israeli settlements in occupied territories.

2017 Hamas announces it will accept an interim Palestinian State and an Israeli State.

2018 The Knesset passes a law declaring Israel a Jewish state with Hebrew as the national language and an undivided Jerusalem as the capital.

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