Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi and Zeina M. Barakat

Israelis and Palestinians: Contested Narratives

INTRODUCTION

This article aims at confronting the Israeli and Palestinian constitutive clash of national historical narratives and their significance in shaping identities of "self" and "other" in the conflict and in constructing obstacles to conflict resolution. It looks into the historic junctions of decision making and appraises processes that left their imprint on collective memory and perceptions. Some of the major themes and histories are analyzed and explained within their own historical context in order to deconstruct demonized images. It addresses the questions: What is 'narrative'? Why does the Palestinian narrative conflict and contrast sharply with the Israeli narrative? Why do Israelis and Palestinians object to the national interpretation of the other? Is there a solution to their conflicting claims and is this solution attainable peacefully, and without force and violence? How can we overcome the narrative barrier to conflict resolution and move from a past and present conflictual relationship to a future cooperative relationship?

The article also examines the most controversial central issues of the 1948 episode such as: The 'Arab Invading Armies' narrative, the 'Palestinian Exodus' narrative, and the conflicting narratives on Jerusalem. The emphasis on the 1948 episode is meant to bring about deeper awareness of the events that have played a role in shaping individual and collective consciousness. It is hoped that the mutual exposure to each other's narrative insights and perspectives will serve the purpose of further educating us about our own narrative as well as the narrative of the other.

ON NARRATIVES

The issue of narratives raises multifaceted and perplexing questions: What constitutes a "narrative"? Can narratives be useful? What do we want to disseminate through the use of narratives? For whom do we want to disseminate, and for what purpose? Do various national narratives need to conform in structure, content, and detail? What is the role of narrative in shaping the culture and history of a people in conflict?

Our assumption is that learning the personal narrative of the other helps to make us more understanding, and that therefore, personal narratives help to humanize the face of the enemy. We learn from the personal narratives of others about our own narrative. The past decades have seen an explosion of interest in personal narratives. Stories of man and nation have come to be viewed as a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, memory, change, pain, and conflict.[1]

THE CONCEPT OF NARRATIVE

The word "narrative" comes from the Indo-European root "gna," meaning both "to tell" and "to know."[2] Narratives are an account of events or a series of events, real or invented. They are stories which, unlike most plays and poems, are characterized by the presence of a narrator[3] or a human agent who tells and transmits the story.[4] In his landmark essay on narrative, Roland Barthes asserts: "Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation."[5]

Narratives range from the shortest accounts of events, as in Julius Caesar's note to the Roman Senate on his victory in battle in 47 B.C.—*"Veni, vidi, vici"* (I came, I saw, I conquered)—to the longest historical or biographical works. They also include diaries, novels, epics, short stories, and long fictional forms, such as Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, and non-fiction such as Alex Haley's saga of an American family, *Roots*. The formal aspects of narratives include narrative situations, techniques, and modes, and the temporal and spatial organization of events and representation of characters.

The entry of the term "narrative" into the social science lexicon is fairly old, though its entry into and use in political science is new.[6] Cutting across many disciplines, narrative is becoming an integral part of various fields in the academy, including history, psychology, sociology, literature, religion,

politics, film, and theater. The concept is even penetrating into everyday conversations.

Narratives are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps one party to a conflict may have more than one narrative to tell for the same event, depending on the group within the community narrating the story. Narratives may be divided into different categories:

1. Individual versus collective narratives
2. National narratives (how we see ourselves) versus reflexive narratives (how we see others)
3. Soft narratives (historical) versus hard narratives (religious and political)
4. Mythical narratives versus factual narratives
5. Static narratives (peace) versus dynamic narratives (conflict)
6. Legitimate narratives versus illegitimate narratives

In a conflict, the narrative of one side is not necessarily identical to the narrative of the other side. Often, it is designed to support specific positions and views which, once endorsed by a critical mass of people, become national narratives.

Whenever conflict arises, narratives diverge and multiply. Their dual purpose is to demonize and delegitimize the other and to emphasize the rightness, authenticity, legitimacy, and justice of one's own claims. For instance, in the dispute over who "owns" Palestine, Israelis and Palestinians brandish arguments from history and religion going back to antiquity.

Bayan Nweihed al-Hou claims a long historical presence for the Palestinian national identity that goes back to the Canaanites.[7] Similarly, Israelis trace their history back more than 4,000 years, not only through historical records, but through stories related in the Bible and various other religious texts. Moreover, with time, the prevailing national narratives may change, evolve, or oscillate, particularly in crisis situations. While some national narratives may change dramatically over time, others remain fairly static, with only minor changes.

Narratives shape social knowledge. They are the product of rich experiences, creative imagination, and vivid memories. Memories contain social and personal narratives. We remember what we experience and what our leaders, parents, grandparents, and teachers tell us, and their images and stories are incorporated into our own memories. In *The Search for God at Harvard*, Ari Goldman relates the advice he received from his great-aunt Minnie. "'Remember,' she whispered in my ear at a family gathering shortly

before I left for Cambridge, 'you can study all the religions, but Judaism is the best.'"[8] Individuals from other religions are no doubt reminded by their grandmothers that of all religions in the world, theirs is the best.

HISTORY, MEMORY, NARRATIVE, AND IDENTITY

Carl Becker observed that "the kind of history that has most influence upon the life of the community and the course of events is the *history that common people carry around in their heads*" (italics added).[9] Mary Chamberlain, in her book, *Narratives of Exile and Return*, notes:

> What we remember and recall is not random, but conforms and relates to this social knowledge of the world. Memory and narrative are shaped by social categories, by language and priorities, by experience and tense, by choice and context. They are shaped also by imagination, by dreams and nightmares, hopes and fantasies which, however private they may feel, are molded by culture.[10]

Exposure to the same narrative for an extended period creates and shapes people's values, ideas, views, attitudes, actions, and positions so that they conform with the narrative more than with reality. Powerful narratives can mobilize the conscience of the nation, compelling governments to move in the direction of promoting narratives that depict rosy pictures and role models. One example is the story taught to young Americans about George Washington and the cherry tree in which George being portrayed as truthful confesses to his father that he cut down his favorite cherry tree, and not their slave. American historians agree that such a story was a fiction invented by a parson named Mason Locke Weems in a biography of Washington published shortly after his death.[11]

In *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Yael Zerubavel examines the construction of Israeli national tradition and the reshaping of Jewish memory. She concludes:

> The emergence of conflicting interpretations of the past reflects the vitality of memory in contemporary Israeli culture. The multiplicity of texts and the debates on the past indicate that contemporary Israeli culture has become more pluralistic and that Israelis display a greater readiness to examine critically the essence of their collective identity and multiple roots.[12]

So far, the past has persistently imposed itself on the present and on the efforts to shape the future. Religion has been integrated with politics. While the Palestinian narrative depicts the creation of Israel as the manifestation of imperialism and colonialism, the Israeli narrative depicts the creation of Israel as a modern form of national self-determination and the present manifestation of God's historic promise to the Jewish people.

Though the past does not totally recede from historical memory, narratives push elements of it to the fore. Through the narratives, the ghosts of the past continue to haunt the present, in statements like, "fifty years ago my family lived there." Narratives from the past continue to rekindle narratives of the present.

The two sides' historical descriptions of the conflict are loaded with diametrically different interpretations of past and future. In their article "Psychological Dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian Case," Nadim N. Rouhana and Daniel Bar Tal describe the protagonists' contrasting, incompatible versions of the conflict: "The narratives of the two communities are in total clash as to the root causes of the conflict, the meaning of the historical developments, and the role played by the ingroup and outgroup during the various stages of the conflict."[13]

Furthermore, terminology plays a major role in shaping perceptions of clashing narratives. Terminology has become basic for constructing the framework through which we view any situation, shaping our cognition and patterns of thinking. For instance, the term Palestine is in dispute. The Palestinians call the 1948 dispossession '*al-nakba, al-karithah,* [the calamity, the catastrophe, the disaster], in recognition of the national tragedy caused by their expulsion and flight from their Palestine homeland. Israelis, and even third-party scholars such as Bernard Reich, in his book *An Historical Encyclopedia of the Arab Israeli Conflict,*[14] call it the '1948 War', the 'War of Independence/Liberation'. Rouhana and Bar Tal depict how each narrative negates the other:

> According to the Palestinian narrative, the Jewish settlers occupied the land, and Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced. The Palestinian narrative views this influx as an invasion of foreigners who took over the country from Palestinians and in the process pushed out Palestinians, making them refugees in the neighboring countries. According to the Zionist narrative, the land was liberated and redeemed in a process of national revival. The Jews gathered their exiles in the land of their forefathers to establish their state, which was attacked by hostile, non-accepting Arabs at its birth. As an outcome of Arab aggression and defeat, the Palestinians became refugees.[15]

NARRATIVES AND PEACEMAKING

Why are we concerned with narratives? Our interest is derived from the strong linkage among the three variables: narratives, conflict, and peace. One cannot brush narratives aside. Narratives, to some extent, play an effective role in creating a conflict and perpetuating it, but also in creating the proper environment for reaching a resolution to the struggle. The way narratives are constructed, fashioned, and disseminated in society through socialization agents—the family, school, religious institutions, peers, and the media—and through the political elites produce stereotypical images instead of creating a climate conducive to peace. The conflict continues because the negative narratives continue. It is the premise of *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue* "that how the two sides understand—and misunderstand—their own and the other's history has a profound influence on their ability—and inability—to make peace."[16]

Both Israelis and Palestinians have maintained static narratives because what their historians and leaders tell them makes sense to them. Both peoples have a living memory of their own narratives, and it has become taboo to criticize the dominant narrative. Thus, public debate is not tolerated or accommodated. To protect against criticism, a critical Jew is described in the Israeli vernacular as a "self-hating Jew," while a critical Palestinian would be attacked by his or her community for "self-flagellation." In the absence of a common-sense approach to the issue of narratives, the emotional narrative dominates the content and thrust of the historical narrative, with the Jewish narrative being somewhat more homogenous and better articulated than the Palestinian.

Significantly, at times what is more important is not what is being narrated but, rather, what is not. Who is the other? What is his history, his culture, his tradition, his religion, his motivation? Why does he feel the way he feels? Here, the narrative deletes the other from the picture and denies his rights as if he had never existed, or as if he had just been dropped by parachute and has no legitimate history.

The construction of collective memory and narrative is very difficult to deconstruct. One of the biggest impediments in changing tracks from conflict to peace is the collective memory that stands as an obstacle to reconciliation and coexistence. Every new generation on both sides is raised to believe in and be strongly committed to the national narratives taught at home and in school, by the preacher and the political leader, even though many of those narratives may be just myths constructed by the older

generation. This new generation has no positive memory of experiencing living with the other.

Can narratives be evaluated? Narratives may be evaluated by comparing historic events as they actually unfolded with how they have been narrated by scholars who are not parties to the conflict. How can we deal with two inconsistent accounts of a historical narrative?

In answering this question, Sari Nusseibeh notes, "It stands to reason that only one of the two accounts is true, while the other is false, or that they are both false. Both cannot be true."[17] Nonetheless, he raises the question, "Is there one truth and only one possible account of it, or is there nothing out there but a set of (possibly inconsistent) different narratives, reflecting different perspectives or contexts?"[18]

Elizabeth Tonkin describes "truth" as an "elusive historical goal" that "can also lie in the intersection of narrator and discourse, where we have to see how accounts are authorised." She adds:

> The polysemy is significant, for the act of authoring is a claim to authority. How it is achieved varies generically and politically and culturally, as does the kind of truth claimed, expected or accepted. The historian who adjudges another only as an imperfect source of facts is probably using a different set of criteria from that other, but both sets derive from authorisations. There are, for instance, socio-political conditions determining the authority of the narrator, or which the narrator invokes as guarantees.[19]

Still, even when the authenticity of the narrator is indisputable and the narrative verified from different sources, one may still wonder about its absolute truth. Here, one is reminded of the following Jewish folktale:

> Cohen and Levi both approached the rabbi in an attempt to resolve a festering dispute between them. After Cohen relates to the rabbi his side of the story, the rabbi pronounces to him: "You are right." Following Levi's statement of the facts as he sees them, the rabbi declares to him: "You are right." Once the two have departed, the rabbi's wife turns to the rabbi and asks: "But rabbi, how can they both be right?" To this question, the rabbi responds: "You are also right."[20]

CONTESTED PALESTINIAN ISRAELI NARRATIVES

Israeli journalist Yossi Klein Halevi begins the introduction of his book, *At the Entrance of the Garden of Eden, A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* thus: "In early winter 1998, I set out to discover *my country, the Holy Land.*[21] [italics ours]. A Palestinian scholar embarking on reading this book would take issue with the word '*my*' preceding the word 'country' that describe Halevi's attachment to the Holy Land. This sense of belonging to the Holy Land by an Israeli clashes with the similar sense of belonging by a Palestinian,[22] and helps illuminate the crux of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and struggle.

Historically, the conflict began with the assertion: 'This land is mine', and ever since the struggle has focused on the question: 'To whom does this land belong?" How the question is constructed is in itself conflictual, i.e., "The land belongs to one and not the other!" This assumption gave rise to diametrically opposed conflicting national narratives that present the claims of one against the other.[23]

CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL NARRATIVES

The entry of the term 'narrative' into the political science lexicon is fairly recent. It implies that the story being told by one side is not identical to the story told by the other. Narratives are designed to support certain positions; once endorsed by a critical mass of people, they become national narratives. Whenever a conflict arises, narratives diverge and multiply. The sharper the conflict, the wider the narratives diverge, and the more the competing narratives clash. Moreover, with time the prevailing dominant national narratives may change, evolve, and fluctuate, particularly in crisis situations. While some narratives change over time, others usually remain static.

Past narratives rekindle future narratives. "Whoever controls the past controls the future; whoever controls the present, controls the past," wrote George Orwell in *1984*. Narratives are not mutually exclusive and one side may have more than one narrative making the resolution of the conflict more complex.

In his classic study of Western perceptions of the Orient, *Orientalism*, the late Palestinian-American intellectual Edward Said describes the life cycle of a mind-set in a graphic way. "Fictions," he observes, "have their own logic and their own dialectic of growth and decline. Learned texts, media representations, any supposedly authoritative body of knowledge have a

reinforcing tendency. Having gained a certain perspective from something they have heard or read," Said maintains, "audiences come to have particular expectations that in turn influence what is said or written henceforth."[24]

While Edward Said describes how 'fiction' turns into 'reality,' Walter Lippmann observes how 'perception' becomes 'reality.' He says we are all captives of the pictures in our heads. People make mistakes, he writes, "because an important part of human behavior is reaction to the pictures in their heads."[25]

Israeli commentator Meron Benvenisti, in his book *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land,* notes that national myths, made up of a mixture of real and legendary events, are "the building-blocks from which a society constructs its collective self-image" and once absorbed, "become truer than reality itself."[26]

However, it was the well-known scholar of the modern Arab world, Malcolm Kerr in his book, *America's Middle East Policy: Kissinger, Carter and the Future,* who identifies "two elements as constituting the conventional wisdom relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict:

1. The notion that Palestinian national claims are "artificially and mischievously inspired" and thus may be ignored.

2. The notion that the only real issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict is an unreasonable Arab refusal to accept Israel's existence—not, as Arabs contend, a real grievance against Israel arising from the Palestinians' displacement.[27]

The Israeli perception that the Palestinians have no rational basis for their hostility to Israel and no legitimate national claim to the land of Palestine is fundamental to the misconceptions surrounding this conflict. The Israeli assumption that the Palestinian position was "mischievously inspired" has constituted the frame of reference within which the conflict has been contained. The frame of reference defines and sets boundaries around thinking on Palestinian-Israeli issues. It is Israel-centered, approaching the conflict generally from an Israeli perspective and seldom recognizing the existence or the legitimacy of a Palestinian perspective. As Edward Said once wrote, "Palestinians long ago lost to Zionism the right even to have a history and a political identity."[28]

On the other side, the Palestinians consistently contest the Jews' inherent right to exist in Palestine and maintain that they as a native population with centuries of residence and title deeds to the land have their own exclusive claim to patrimony in Palestine.

THE DIVERGENT NARRATIVES OF 1948

No doubt, it is the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 episode that contrasts most sharply with the Israeli narrative.[29] The most serious dispute relates to the 1948 establishment of Israel, the simultaneous uprooting of the Palestinians, and the thwarting of their right to self-determination. Both blame each other regarding who is responsible for launching the hostilities that evolved into the 1948 war and who is guilty of resorting to violence and thus igniting the war. Neither would admit that perhaps both parties might be equally guilty in wanting to clash head-on in 1948. Though both traditions have much in common, yet each reflects a passionately partisan perspective that neither makes any effort to hide. While the birth of Israel in 1948 is widely understood, the destruction of Palestine that this birth required remains in the West somewhat dimly perceived.

From the start, both Israeli and Palestinian scholars, as well as others sympathetic to their perspective, have challenged the dominant narrative of what happened in 1948. Palestinian efforts benefited from the revisionist histories of 1948 published since the mid-1980s by such Israeli historians as Benny Morris, Tom Segev, Simcha Flapan, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappe.[30]

THE ARAB INVADING ARMIES NARRATIVE

In *From Haven to Conquest,* Palestinian Professor Walid Khalidi maintains that the Arab capitals had neither the will, nor the intention, nor the force to destroy the newly-born Jewish state.[31] The long-awaited Arab states' "invasion" of Palestine began on 15 May; it soon backfired with further disastrous territorial losses. Among the invading armies Transjordan had the largest; best trained, and most strategically placed Arab army of about 4,800 men, in addition to nearly 10,000 Arab troops (4,000 Iraqis, 3,000 Egyptians, 2,000 Syrians, and 1,000 Lebanese) under no unified command, to destroy more than 50,000 troops of the Haganah. Military experts confirm that this three-to-one ratio suggests that these troops were needed to defend the territory allocated to the Arabs rather than to invade the Jewish state. Even this responsibility they performed very poorly, since a significant part of the territory designated by UN Partition Resolution 181 for the Arab Palestinian state was wrested from the Jordanian Arab Legion, and the Egyptian and Syrian regular armies.

Moreover, the Arab armies at times undermined the Palestinian guerrillas. Avi Shlaim, in his 1988 book *Collusion Across the Jordan: King*

Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine, states that a senior intelligence officer in the Haganah obtained a tacit agreement from Fawzi al-Qawukji, commander of the Arab Liberation Army, to stay aloof from Haganah attacks on rival Palestinian guerrilla forces. That agreement facilitated the Haganah offensives against Jaffa and the Jerusalem corridor in April 1948.

THE PALESTINIAN EXODUS NARRATIVE

The dispossession and dispersal of the Palestinians in 1948 has always been and to a great extent remains "an unrecognizable episode," even for most informed scholars—unrecognizable in the sense not only that the dispossession has been forgotten but also that it is seldom recognized to be the ultimate cause of the conflict.[32]

In his article, *The Debate about 1948,* Israeli historian Avi Shlaim remarks that history is in a real sense the propaganda of the victors,[33] and because Israel won the contest for Palestine, Israel's version of that contest, of the rights and claims that underlay it, and of the justice of the outcome, has prevailed in most international discourse. For most Israelis, the Palestinians have never had a history, they have never had a just cause, and were responsible for all the tragedy that has been inflicted on them. The conventional wisdom holds that the conflict originated in 1948 not because Palestinians lost land, homes and national identity but because they hate Jews and do not want to coexist with them. That over 700,000 people were displaced from their homes and native land was blamed on others, particularly the Arab states.

Samuel Katz asserts: "The Arab refugees were not driven from Palestine by anyone. The vast majority left, whether of their own free will or at the orders or exhortations of their leaders, always with same reassurance—that their departure would help in the war against Israel."[34] The 1948 Palestinian exodus was used by Israel to demonstrate that the Palestinians' attachment to their land and homes was weak, that by clearing the way for Arab military forces to "drive the Jews out," the Palestinians showed that they were bent on Israel's destruction, and that in the final analysis Israel bears no responsibility for the Palestinians' displacement and homelessness.

Why did the Palestinians leave? One major example of fiction becoming actual history through the process of constant repetition is the widely believed though untrue story that Palestinian civilians left their homes in 1948 because the Arab governments and the Palestinian leadership broadcast

instructions over the radio that they leave in order to give Arab military forces a clear field to drive the Jews out of Palestine. In fact, no broadcast orders from any Arab or Palestinian authority were ever issued to the Palestinians to leave their homes.

The first major challenge to conventional wisdom about Israel's birth and Palestine's destruction came from the Irish journalist Erskine Childers, in his famous article that appeared in *The Spectator* on 12 May 1961,[35] which refuted the broadcasts myth. Childers asserted that he found no evidence of any broadcasts or blanket orders from Arab governments or Palestinian leaders calling on Palestinians to leave their homes. But his was a lonely voice in the wilderness.

Dan Kurzman in his book, *Genesis 1948: The First Arab-Israeli War*,[36] recounts the events of 1948 as seen by both Arabs and Israelis. He searched Israeli military archives and the British Broadcasting Corporation's radio monitoring files and found no record of either Arab military communications ordering a civilian evacuation or any broadcast radio instructions.

Palestinian scholar Nafez Nazzal in his book, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*,[37] relates the expulsion narrative from Palestinian perspective, asserting that the Palestinians were expelled from their homes. Confirming this, Elias Sanbar in *Palestine 1948: The Expulsion*,[38] perceives the eventual eviction of the Palestinians in 1948 as a logical consequence of the triumph of Zionism in Palestine. He asserts that for Zionism to achieve its goal, it had to take Palestinian land without the Palestinian people and thus fulfill Israel Zangwill's premise of 'a land without a people for a people without a land.'

However, it was in 1987 that three detailed accounts appeared that challenged cherished myths of the 1948 events: One was *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland* by the American scholar Michael Palumbo[39] who demonstrates the absurdity of the myth. Palumbo tells the story how the Zionist conquest of Palestine involved not only the occupation of the territory and the displacement of its people, but also widespread plunder and looting of the property of its Palestinian Arab inhabitants, not only their land, but also their shops, their homes and the possessions within, and the women's jewelry.

The second was *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* by Israeli sociologist Simha Flapan,[40] who concludes that Israel's contentions about Arab and Palestinian culpability for the refugees are simply a myth.

The third was *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, by Israeli historian Benny Morris who argues that the refugee problem "was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab."[41] He concludes that no Arab

authority issued "blanket instructions, by radio or otherwise, to Palestine's Arabs to flee," that Palestinian flight was induced to a great extent by a "general sense of collapse" that permeated Palestine, and that a "small but significant proportion" of the flight resulted from explicit expulsion orders issued by Jewish forces. Using declassified Israeli archival material, Morris discusses Operation Dani to take over Ramle and Lydda. He notes that when Allon asked: "what shall we do with the Arabs?" Ben-Gurion made a dismissive, energetic gesture with his hand and said: "Expel them [*garish otam*]."[42]

Palestinian scholars maintain that the massacre of Palestinian civilians at the village of Deir Yassin in which about 100 people were brutally murdered [at the time the figure was believed to be 240 or more] played a major role in the Palestinian exodus. Others give much weight to the devastating impact of the death of Palestinian leader Abdel Qader Al-Husayni on Palestinian society. [Palestinian historians maintain that Husayni died "as he led a successful counterattack at Castel," while Israeli historians maintain that "he was shot by a Jewish sentry as he approached Castel, which he apparently believed was already in Arab hands."] In our view, the horrors and ravages of war and the war psychology of fear are the principal causes of the Palestinian civilian population's search for safe haven.

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod notes in an article which appeared in *The Transformation of Palestine*:

> In the case of Palestine, had the world not been confronted with a familiar yet bizarre interpretation—that which attempts to demonstrate the culpability of Arab leadership in the removal of the Palestinians . . . as well as the individual responsibility of the Palestinians for being refugees—it would be sufficient to call the attention . . . to the fact that a bi-communal war occurred and that, as in all such wars, some people were dislocated as a result."[43]

CONFLICTING NARRATIVES OVER JERUSALEM

The conflict over Jerusalem has given birth to a number of conflicting narratives,[44] including the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, a Jewish narrative, a Muslim narrative, a Christian narrative, etc. This raises the question: how do all these narratives diverge from one another and why? The current conflict over Jerusalem is a classic case of two competing national narratives—the Jewish narrative that God promised the Jews the land of Israel and the Palestinian narrative that they have been settled on the land

since the Canaanites settled in Palestine—and the interpretation of these conflicting narratives has brought about the present conflict over the city.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the questions one may pose are: Will or can or should an authoritative narrative of the 1948 episode emerge that would be acceptable to both Israelis and Palestinians? Will that narrow the wide gap between the two sides? Which narrative should be taught in textbooks in both Palestinian and Israeli schools and universities?

Simha Flapan in the introduction to his book, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*, indicates that his principle purpose is to "debunk a number of Israeli myths, not as an academic exercise but as a contribution to a better understanding of the Palestinian problem." He adds:

> I am restricting myself to an analysis of Israeli policies and propaganda structures. I choose to do it this way not because I attribute to Israel sole responsibility for the failure to find a solution . . . the Palestinians, too, were active players in the drama that brought upon them the calamity of defeat and the loss of their homeland. But review of the contributing Arab myths, conceptions . . . must be done by an Arab . . . Certainly the ideal way to fulfill this undertaking would have been a joint project by an Israeli-Palestinian Historical Society. I hope this is not wishful thinking, and that someday such a common effort will produce a study free of the deficiencies and limitations of this one.

However, as the late Palestinian Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod maintains, even with the best of intentions, control of the data, and skilled analysis, it is doubtful that Palestinian and Israeli scholars - or third party scholars - can arrive at a consensus either on the facts or on their interpretation. The difficulties are not only those of national identity and perspective; nor are they of language and skills, or access. They are much more complex and relate simultaneously to values, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as the national and historical experiences of both people.

It is of considerable value to look back on the traumatic events of 1948 from both standpoints, that of the victor—the Israelis—as well that of the vanquished—the Palestinians.[45] Why? Because attempts to resolve the conflict will remain futile and doomed to failure as long as the way we look at the conflict is not understood or misunderstood.

The lesson we may learn from the 1948 episode is that the tactical and strategic inflexibility of both Palestinians and Israelis led to a catastrophic protracted confrontation, losing both peoples the opportunity for peace.

The first step of conflict resolution is for each party to understand and appreciate the narrative of the other. Thus the Palestinians need to understand the Jewish attachment to the Promised Land and the Israelis need to appreciate the Palestinian roots in the Holy Land. Though they may not agree to it, it is important for each to acknowledge and respect each other's narrative. Here, we need to link narratives to conflict resolution.

In his classic work, *Democracy in World Politics*, Lester Pearson concluded that humans were moving into "an age when different civilizations will have to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each other's history and ideals and art and culture, mutually enriching each other's lives. The alternative, in this overcrowded little world, is misunderstanding, tension, clash, and catastrophe."[46]

More than four decades later, Samuel Huntington affirmed in his highly controversial book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, "The futures of both peace and civilization depend upon understanding and cooperation among the political, spiritual, and intellectual leaders of the world's major civilizations."[47]

Notes

See dialogue discussion http://www.israelstudies.umd.edu/sharednarratives.html

1. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds., *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London, 2005).

2. Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 23 (1984): 1.

3. See Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London, 1990).

4. For a useful compilation of definitions of terms used in narrative theory, see Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, rev. ed. (Lincoln NE, 2003).

5. Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York, 1982), 251.

6. See Robert Scholes, Robert Kellogg, and James Phelan, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York, 2006).

7. Bayan Nweihed al-Hout, *Filastin: The Cause, the People, and the Civilization* (Beirut, 1991).

8. Ari Goldman, *The Search for God at Harvard* (New York, 1991), 5.

9. Carl Becker, "What Are Historical Facts?" in *Detachment and the Writing of History: Essays and Letters of Carl L. Becker*, ed. Phil Snyder (Ithaca, 1958), 61.

10. Mary Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (Piscataway, NJ, 2005), 10.

11. See Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, 1918).

12. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, 1995), 237.

13. Nadim N. Rouhana and Daniel Bar-Tal, "Psychological Dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian Case," *American Psychologist* 53. 7 (1998): 763.

14. Bernard Reich, ed., *An Historical Encyclopedia of the Arab Israeli Conflict* (Westport, CT, 1996).

15. Rouhana and Bar-Tal, "Psychological Dynamics," 763.

16. Paul Scham, Walid Salem, and Benjamin Pogrund, *Shared Histories: A Palestinian Israeli Dialogue* (Jerusalem, 2005), 1.

17. Sari Nusseibeh, "A Formula for Narrative Selection: Comments on 'Writing the Arab-Israeli Conflict,'" *Perspectives on Politics* 3.1 (2005): 89.

18. *Ibid.*, 91.

19. Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Past: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge, 1992), 8.

20. Mohammed S. Dajani, "Big Dream Small Hope," in *Educating Toward a Culture of Peace*, eds., Yaacov Iram, Hillel Wahrman, Zehavit Gross (Charlotte, N.C., 2006), 46.

21. Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance of the Garden of Eden, A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* (New York, 2001), 1.

22. PECDAR published a tourist guide *Palestine: The Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1999); while the Israeli Ministry of Tourism published a similar tourist pamphlet *Israel The Holy Land.*

23. See for instance Mitchell Bard, and Joel Himelfarb, *Myths and Facts: A Concise Record of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Washington, DC, 1992).

24. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 62.

25. Walter Lippmann, quoted in Clinton Rossiter and James Lare, eds., *The Essential Lippmann: A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy* (New York, 1963), 140–41.

26. Meron Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land* (Berkeley, 1995), 200.

27. Malcolm Kerr, *America's Middle East Policy: Kissinger, Carter and the Future* (Washington, DC, 1980), 8–9.

28. Edward Said, quoted in A. M. Lesch, "Review: Creating Facts: Israel, Palestinians and the West Bank, by Geoffrey Aronson," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18.1 (1988): 214–16.

29. See "Narratives of 1948," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 9.4 (2002).

30. Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947–1951* (London, 1994).

31. Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Washington, DC, 1987); *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876 –1948* (Washington, DC, 1991).

32. See Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran, eds., *The Palestinian Exodus, 1948–1998* (Ithaca, 1999).

33. Avi Shlaim, "The Debate About 1948," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27:3 (1995): 287–304 and later in *The Israel/Palestine Question: Rewriting Histories*, ed., Ilan Pappe (London, 1999). See also, Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York, 1988).

34. Samuel Katz, *Battle-Ground: Fact & Fantasy in Palestine* (New York, 1985), 13.

35. Erskine Childers, "The Other Exodus." *The Spectator,* 12 May 1961.

36. Dan Kurzman, *Genesis 1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (New York, 1970).

37. Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948* (Beirut, 1978).

38. Elias Sanbar, *Palestine 1948: The Expulsion* (Paris, 1984).

39. Michael Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland* (London, 1987).

40. Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York, 1987).

41. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge, 1987), 286.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston, IL, 1971); "Book Review.: The War of 1948: Disputed Perspectives and Outcomes, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18.2 (1989): 119–27.

44. See *Religious Narratives on Jerusalem and Their Role in Peace Building* (Jerusalem, 2009); *Jerusalem From the Lens of Wasatia* (Jerusalem, 2010); M. Al-Khateeb, *Al-Quds: The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions* (London, 1998).

45. Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi, "Palestinian Refugees," *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Parallel Discourses,* eds., Elizabeth Matthews, David Newman, Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi (London, 2011), 46.

46. Lester Pearson, *Democracy in World Politics* (Princeton, 1955), 83–84.

47. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London, 1997), 32.