



Study Guide

Topic 3: Conflict

Created in Partnership with the Shalom Hartman Institute



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Introduction

Text and Map Study

Texts: Balfour Declaration; Peel Commission Report; UN Partition Plan; Oslo Accords

Maps: British Mandate; Peel Commission Plan; UN Partition Plan; Israel today

Reflections

The Sticking Points

Common Ground

1 John 4:18; Genesis Rabbah 76:2

Moving Forward

Introduction

Both the Jewish and the Palestinian people have roots that sink deep in the land with which they share their names, each tracing their heritage to a time even before the Romans called it Palestine. So as nationalist movements swept across Europe and its many colonies in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Palestinian Arabs aspired to national sovereignty in the same place as the Jewish people yearned to re-establish their national home. Neither had been sovereign there for centuries, yet both knew it to be “home.” The conflict that resulted was unavoidable in some ways; it was cruelly manipulated by the world’s great powers in other ways. Not yet at an end, the conflict has wounded and scarred both peoples. What sparks of possibility still burn with hope, and how do Jews and Christians speak to such a conflict?

Text and Map Study

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict of today has a long history, though it is not a “millennia-long religious conflict” as some are inclined to say. Throughout the twentieth century, various international powers have addressed the conflict of Jewish and Palestinian Arab nationalisms. These included the British government, which administered the territory of Palestine under a League of Nations mandate from 1920 to 1948, the United Nations, and an *ad hoc* international coalition of countries (Oslo). The four documents here reflect the successive approaches to resolving the dual claims across the century. The maps included in the unit illustrate the boundaries and spheres of influence referred to in several of the documents and at the present time.

 As you read these documents, consider what common theme or themes emerge.

Texts

The Balfour Declaration (1917) **Foreign Office [London]** **November 2, 1917**

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,
Arthur James Balfour

The Peel Commission Report (1937) – excerpt

...There can be no question of fusion or assimilation between Jewish and Arab cultures. The National Home cannot be half national...

The only solution of the problem put forward by the Arab Higher Committee* was the immediate establishment of an independent Arab Government, which would deal with the 400,000 Jews now in Palestine as it thought fit. To that it is replied that belief in British good faith would not be strengthened anywhere in the world if the National Home were now surrendered to Arab rule.

The Jewish Agency* and the Va'ad Leumi* asserted that the problem would be solved if the Mandate were firmly applied in full accordance with Jewish claims: thus there should be no new restriction on immigration nor anything to prevent the Jewish population becoming in course of time a majority in Palestine. To that it is replied that such a policy could only be maintained by force and that neither British public opinion nor that of World Jewry is likely to commit itself to the recurrent use of force unless it is convinced that there is no other means by which justice can be done...

The problem cannot be solved by giving either the Arabs or the Jews all they want. The answer to the question which of them in the end will govern Palestine must be Neither. No fair-minded statesman can think it right either that 400,000 Jews, whose entry into Palestine has been facilitated by the British Government and approved by the League of Nations, should be handed over to Arab rule, or that, if the Jews should become a majority, a million Arabs should be handed over to their rule. But while neither race can fairly rule all Palestine, each race might justly rule part of it.

The idea of Partition has doubtless been thought of before as a solution of the problem, but it has probably been discarded as being impracticable. The difficulties are certainly very great, but when they are closely examined they do not seem so insuperable as the difficulties inherent in the continuance of the Mandate or in any other alternative arrangement. Partition offers a chance of ultimate peace. No other plan does.

- * **Arab Higher Committee:** The central political organ of Arabs in British Mandatory Palestine.
- * **Jewish Agency:** The official representative of the Jewish community and world Jewry to the League of Nations, the Jewish Agency was responsible for the internal affairs of Jews in British Mandatory Palestine, especially concerned with Jewish immigration to the land.
- * **Va'ad Leumi:** Hebrew for the (Jewish) National Council, this organization was responsible for Jewish communal affairs from 1920-1948, especially with regard to education, welfare, and health care, though there was also a political department, which dealt with relations with Arabs and the British government.

United Nations Partition Plan (1947) – excerpt

Part I. Future Constitution and Government of Palestine

A. TERMINATION OF MANDATE, PARTITION, AND INDEPENDENCE

1. The Mandate for Palestine shall terminate as soon as possible but in any case not later than 1 August 1948.
2. The armed forces of the mandatory Power shall be progressively withdrawn from Palestine, the withdrawal to be completed as soon as possible but in any case not later than 1 August 1948.
3. The mandatory Power shall advise the Commission, as far in advance as possible, of its intention to terminate the mandate and to evacuate each area. The mandatory Power shall use its best endeavours to ensure that an area situated in the territory of the Jewish State, including a seaport and hinterland adequate to provide facilities for a substantial immigration, shall be evacuated at the earliest possible date and in any event not later than 1 February 1948.
4. Independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem, set forth in Part III of this Plan, shall come into existence in Palestine two months after the evacuation of the armed forces of the mandatory Power has been completed but in any case not later than 1 October 1948. The boundaries of the Arab State, the Jewish State, and the City of Jerusalem shall be as described in Parts II and III below.
5. The period between the adoption by the General Assembly of its recommendation on the question of Palestine and the establishment of the independence of the Arab and Jewish States shall be a transitional period.

Oslo Accords (1993) – excerpt

Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements:

The Government of the State of Israel and the PLO team (in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to the Middle East Peace Conference) (the “Palestinian Delegation”), representing the Palestinian people, agree that it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognise their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process. Accordingly, the two sides agree to the following principles:

Article I

Aim of negotiations:

The aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process is, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council (the “Council”), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

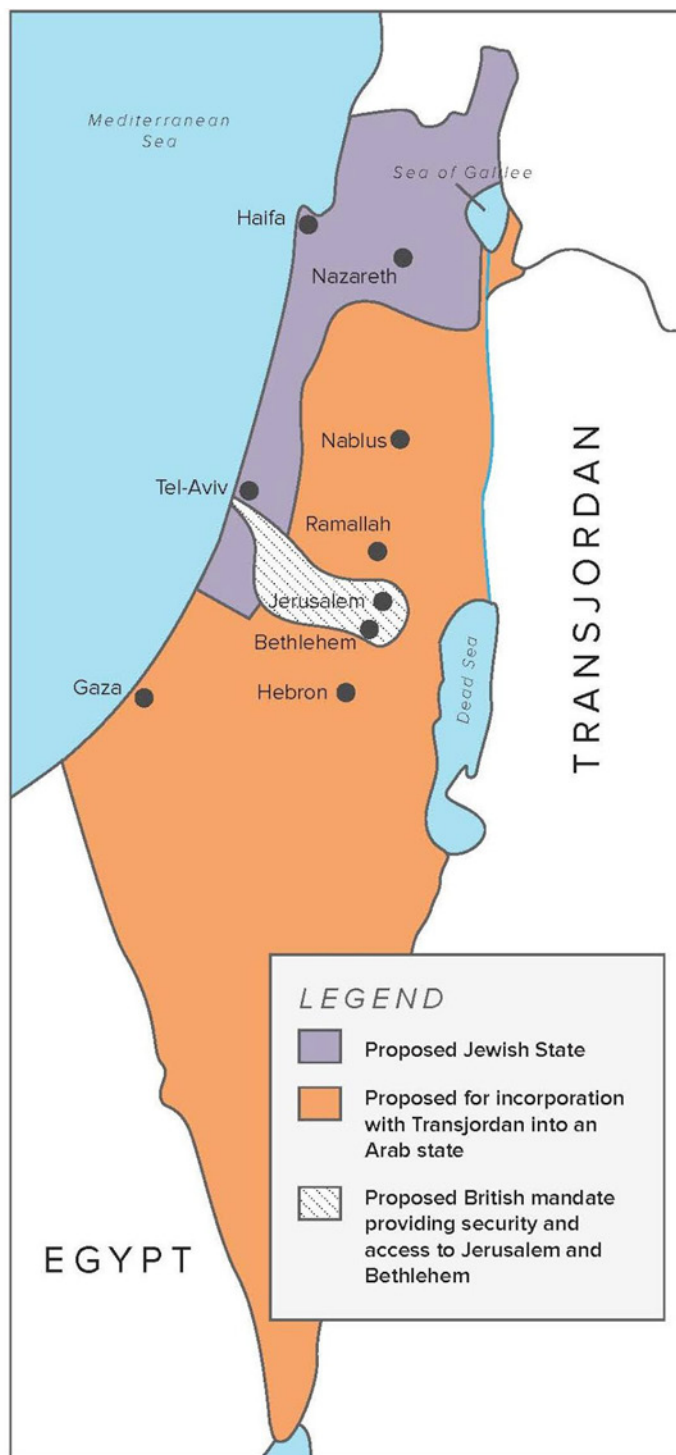
- * **Resolution 242:** After the end of the 1967 Six Day War, the UN Security Council unanimously agreed that Israel should withdraw forces from areas occupied in the recent conflict, and that every state in the area should respect the territorial integrity of every other state and refrain from threats or acts of violence.
- * **Resolution 338:** This UN resolution called for a cease-fire to end the Yom Kippur War of 1973, as well as a return to territorial positions before the war, and negotiations towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Maps

British Mandate (1920-1948)



Peel Commission Recommendations (1937)



UN Partition Plan (1947)



Israel Today



Reflections

- ✚ The four documents you have read come from the British government (1917 and 1937), the United Nations (1947), and an international team facilitating Israeli and Palestinian negotiations (1993). Across the twentieth century and a wide range of participants, what has emerged consistently as the workable approach to resolving the persistent conflict? What reasons are given for this approach?

The Sticking Points

Sadly, the various efforts at developing a resolution have not yet succeeded. Those who care about the conflict are familiar with many instances in which the efforts have failed, causing immeasurable harm.

- ✚ Discuss together the reasons that Jews and Palestinians give for why there are not yet two states. (The verb here is “discuss”; it is not agree, convince, or solve.)

Common Ground

What emerges from the litany of suffering and failures is deeply felt pain and moral indignation. Over time, these cultivate in both people a set of fears that has driven their interaction into channels that are often even more deeply hurtful.

Fear often constricts one’s worldview and limits options for engagement with a situation. (Even physiologically, senses are narrowed and focused by the changes in the body that accompany fear.) Reactions of fear are addressed in the two texts listed below, one from the New Testament and one from rabbinic midrash.

- ✚ What dimensions of fear do they highlight for consideration?
- ✚ How do they help us to move beyond the stark reality of fear to more constructive thinking?

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

Genesis Rabbah 76:2




Then Jacob was greatly afraid and he was distressed (Genesis 32:8). Rabbi Judah son of Rabbi Ilai said: Are not fear and distress identical? The [reason for the redundancy], rather, is that he was *afraid* lest he should be slain, and *was distressed* lest he should slay.

- ✚ What fears underlie the ongoing conflict? How do you hear them expressed in the language and policies of Israel, the Palestinians, and those who support them? How do you hear them echoed in your own communities?
- ✚ How would the perspectives opened up in the two texts help you to respond to these?

Additional reading:

<http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2014-07/not-choosing-sides>

Moving Forward

-  What other resources from your Jewish and Christian values do you bring to address issues of profound fear?
-  How can those resources help you and your communities address the fears and indignation that you feel in regard to the conflict?
-  What might you do together, as Interfaith Partners for Peace and as leaders in your congregations and communities, to mitigate the fears of Israelis and Palestinians, so that they might be freed up to take the serious risks that will be necessary to achieve a mutually workable resolution?

Evaluation

Interfaith Partners for Peace Study Guide Topic 3: Conflict

Please respond to this form via **SurveyMonkey®** at the following URL: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6CQ8BFN>.
You may also send replies via email at: info@interfaithpartnersforpeace.org.

1. What principal insights do you take away from this study session?
2. What was the most difficult thing for you to deal with in this study?
3. What additional texts or other resources did you turn to as helpful in this study?
4. How much did each of the following components contribute to your learning?

	<u>Very much</u>			<u>Hardly at all</u>		
Text studies:						
Biblical and midrashic texts	6	5	4	3	2	1
Political documents	6	5	4	3	2	1
Map Study	6	5	4	3	2	1
Questions for discussion of texts and maps	6	5	4	3	2	1
Questions for reflection	6	5	4	3	2	1
“What came up between us”	6	5	4	3	2	1

5. What other feedback do you have?



Co-Chairs:

Rabbi Leonard Gordon

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For further information, please visit:

www.interfaithpartnersforpeace.org

www.shalomhartman.org