

THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

An introduction

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The Israelis (Jews) and the Palestinians (Arabs) have been in conflict for centuries and especially from the early 1900s. But there have been conflicts between Jews and Palestinians during Old Testament times, throughout history and the times of the Ottoman Empire hence the continuing Arab-Israeli problem.

It appears that the two nations do not recognise each other; there are problems with border disputes, water rights and who owns Jerusalem. There are disputes as to what are Israeli settlements, the refugee problem and freedom of movement for the Palestinians.

I need to state my position. I am not anti-Israel or anti-Palestinian. I want to be fair and not be judgmental.

It is said that 82% of Palestinians are Muslim Arabs and countries like Syria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan are mainly Muslim Arabs but the percentage for Iraq appears to be lower.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has resulted in violence in which the international community had become involved particularly America who have this grandiose attitude that they lead the world and are the world's policemen.

The conflict has affected tourism and the economy of both nations and there are serious security risks and human rights are being violated.

As we shall see, efforts have been made to make two separate states, one for the Jews and one for the Palestinians next door. The creation of the State of Israel came about in 1948 which may have been largely influenced by the Holocaust and its unforgivable atrocities. Later, both the Jews and the Arabs agreed to a two state solution which both sides said would resolve the conflict. The majority of both sides accepted that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to be the best locations for the Palestinians but, in later years, disagreements arose.

There have been deep divisions between each side and also within each side. Fighting has broken out by the respective armies, terrorists and individuals from both sides. In the early days, most casualties were restricted to the military.

From about 2003, the Palestinian cause has been hampered by two major factions— the Fatah, the dominant traditional party and the Hamas party and this has resulted in a split between the Palestinians causing fighting from within their own ranks with civilian casualties in what resembled a civil war.

The Palestinian National Authority held the Gaza Strip but the Hamas party took it over. Peace talks were held to unite the Fatah and Hamas parties and they took place in Maryland, USA! It was hoped that a solution would be reached within a year.

In September 2010, negotiations began between Israelis and Palestinians to establish what territory belonged to which side.

But to backtrack.

Not only the Bible, but other Jewish writings, tells of Abraham the Hebrew who was married to Sarah who could not conceive. She panicked that she could not produce an heir and told Abraham to be

intimate with her servant girl Hagar which he did. The Egyptian gave birth to a son, Ishmael, who became the father of the Arabs and, to this day, Muslims respect Hagar.

After the birth of Ishmael, relationships between Sarah and Hagar became fraught. Sarah had a son Isaac with Abraham. When the boys grew up it is reported that Ishmael mocked Isaac.

It has been said, although it may be simplistic, that had Sarah not encouraged Abraham to go in to Hagar there would never have been the Arab-Israeli troubles.

We read that God loved both Hagar and her son and had mercy upon them and made of them a great nation. We also read that God loved the children of Israel and gave them the Promised Land.

In this, we recognise that God was fair.

The Jews originally had one kingdom called Israel, the capital of which was Samaria, which kingdom divided into two, the second being called Judah with Jerusalem as its capital.

In 721 BC, the Assyrians attacked Israel and took the people into captivity.

In 597 BC, the Babylonians attacked Judah and besieged Jerusalem and the people were taken into captivity.

Israel and Judah ceased to be kingdoms and nations in the accepted sense of that definition.

It is important to note here these invasions were partly a punishment from God because of the sins of the peoples of Israel and Judah. It was not just these other nations expanding their respective territories.

The persecution of the Jews began in about the second and third century AD when the clergy blamed them for killing Jesus. Since that time, the persecution of the Jews has been a regular feature across the world and in many different locations. In the Middle Ages, there were repeated massacres of Jews including those in England. All Jews in England were banished in 1396 and the same thing happened in parts of Europe. The Jews were blamed for the Black Death and made to be scapegoats. Jews in India were persecuted by the Hindus and Hitler murdered six million of them in the 1930s and 1940s.

From 1700 years until 1948, Jews have been expelled 80 times from countries in Europe and 71 times from other countries.

Martin Luther, a Christian reformer, hated the Jews and advocated violence towards them which is contrary to Biblical teaching. He wrote that all that Jews do is eat peaches and fart!

The reasons for the hatred of the Jews may be because it was said that they had wealth and power but that was not always the case. In Russia, there were dirt poor but, elsewhere they were prudent with money and the consequent envy of others. They were hated because they were 'the chosen people of God', because they killed Jesus and because they were inferior and different.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was a letter from the UK's Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Rothschild a leader of the British Jewish Community stating that His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people (The Jews had no homeland or country of their own but lived in many parts of the world as citizens of other countries and nations).

But before this declaration, Arabs and Jews were living together in Palestine and therefore it was wrong to call Palestine Jewish or Arabic. It was both.

There was some opposition to this declaration but many accepted it as common sense. After the formation of the State of Israel in 1948 the Palestinians and the Jews agreed to a two state system which both sides said would eliminate any further conflict.

This is an important fact.

In the 1950s the first major fighting began when the Palestinians invaded Israel.

In 1964, Yassar Arafat founded the Palestine Liberation Movement who took over the Gaza Strip which had fallen into the hands of Egypt and Jordan took control of this area on behalf of the PLM.

The Six Day War of 1967 was not the Israelis going to war against the Arabs. It was Israel that was attacked and had to defend itself. Israel fought for survival and, as in the 1950s, Arabs were the aggressors.

Israel was not destroyed but victorious and the Arabs, mainly Egyptians, were discredited.

It was Soviet Russia that told Egypt that the Israelis were massing troops on the Syrian border, which was not true, and that encouraged President Nasser to wage war with Israel. The Soviet warning was deliberate misinformation.

This highlights the problem of international involvement. America supports the Jews and Soviet Russia supports the Arabs.

Another problem is the so-called international law about the spoils of war rightfully belonging to the victors. This notion has been the case throughout history. It is an old adage that the winners of a war enjoy the property of the losers. Those who start a war and lose usually face disastrous consequences and punishment.

It will be said that those who started the hostilities should be punished and it has also been said that the military victories of Israel in these defensive wars gave them a moral right to set its borders as to prevent further harm and conflict.

I do not agree with the principal of to the victor always belongs the spoils. In Joshua 7, the commander of Israel went to war against the city of Ai who were the aggressors and Joshua lost the battle and it was revealed that one man, Achan, had taken property that was not his and which was called the accursed thing. It was a secret sin that involved the whole community. It is akin to the adage that one rotten apple in a barrel can affect every other apple.

In recent times, Israel has put up barrier walls between them and the Palestinians presumably to help protect themselves from being attacked and the international community have agreed that Israel has to be on guard all the time. Neighbouring countries have said that they want to wipe Israel out.

Others believe that the actions of the Israelis is to encourage Palestinians to emigrate.

Many have said that Arabs, being Muslims, hate the Jews but it works both ways. Golda Meir (1896-1978), the fourth Prime Minister of Israel, said some dreadful and spiteful things about the Arabs.

There is also evidence that Jews are encroaching on Palestine land and stealing it for their own purposes.

At the time of rewriting this article in March 2012, it was originally written several years ago, there are conflicts in many Muslim Arab countries in North Africa, the Middle East, Yemen and Saudi

Arabia and they seem to be conflicts between various Arab tribes coupled to a lesser degree with the hatred of the West and their support for the Jews.

I do not wish to take sides and have confined myself to established historic facts.

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