

Session 3

COMPARISON OF PALESTINIANS AFTER THE NAKBA AND JEWS AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Chair: Jeff Helsing

ADEL MANNA': I will also start with a personal statement, like Yossi Gorny. He said that he arrived in the country in 1947. I was born in the country in 1947.

YOSEF GORNY: Then we arrived at the same time.

ADEL MANNA': Yes, on this planet, to this place at the same time, towards the end of 1947. And I would like to say that I am a graduate of the Israeli system, the Israeli educational system, both schools and universities, but I have taught in different places, Palestinian universities and at the Hebrew University. But since the Hebrew University was mentioned more than once, for me, as someone who knows the Hebrew University very well, it is not always a place of completely professional work, and particularly in the department that I graduated from, Middle Eastern History and Islam, not one Arab professor has ever taught there since the establishment of this Hebrew University. So try to think what it would be like in the United States or anywhere in the world, to have a department of Israel Studies and Middle Eastern History, say Yale, Princeton, Columbia or whatever, and there is not one Jew there, who might give different views and different narratives about 1948 or about other things related to Jewish history.

Perhaps for the first time, I'll say something about choosing subjects or choosing what you are studying. I did not go there to study the Ottoman history of Palestine because I wanted to do that. When I came to the Hebrew University and I wanted to do my MA, I spoke to one of the professors in the department and said I wanted to do my MA about al-Ard, an Arab movement in Israel. And he said forget about those Arab movements in Israel. And I said why. And he said no, no, that is not a good subject for you to deal with.

MOSHE MA'OZ: Was it me?

ADEL MANNA': It wasn't you. You know.

Anyway, after that conversation I understood that for a Palestinian student at the Hebrew University, he had better be far away from the current issues of Zionism and the Palestinians and Israel, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, and look for something historical par excellence. Actually, now I'm happy that I studied Ottoman history rather than modern history, but at that time I had to persuade myself to deal with that century, and that is what I did.

Now, I mentioned 1947 because I also want to say that for me the *Nakba* is also a personal thing, as for many Palestinian families. When I speak about the *Nakba* and the implications of the *Nakba* for the Palestinian people, I cannot forget that one of the reasons that I think I studied history is because of the stories of my parents, what happened to us in the Galilee.

In January 1949, the army came and put us on trucks and buses and expelled us to the West Bank, and as a one-year-old child I couldn't understand why. It says in the Declaration of Independence, and that is what I studied as a kid in school, that the Arabs are welcome to stay in Israel, and Israel is a democracy, and has equality, and they asked the Arabs to stay put in Israel. But then the army came and started kicking out Palestinians. And I lived as a refugee for two years in Lebanon.

And then my father "infiltrated", quote-unquote, back into the village in 1951, and that is how I am with you as an Israeli citizen, and not living with my uncle's family, who didn't come back from Lebanon. So for me this experience led me, later on, after finishing my PhD, also to interest myself in the issue of the *Nakba*. I am not going to repeat what I wrote in my paper, but rather I'll add things or focus on other issues.

The first thing that I want to say when we speak about symmetry and asymmetry between Palestinians and Israelis, is that even people like us sometimes forget that there is no symmetry in many ways. For instance, about the 1948 war, and until today, and maybe my Palestinian colleagues can correct me if I am wrong, but there is not one Arabic book, a good Arabic history of 1948. And there are dozens in Hebrew and in English.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You mean about the *Nakba*?

ADEL MANNA': Yes. I am speaking about Palestinian historians who would write the history of 1948 in Arabic. Not one book, until today. And you can say the same thing about many other important topics. Yes, maybe there is a narrative and maybe there are works here and there, but many times we still need a professional historian and other scholars to deal with sensitive issues and important issues in our history. So that is why our students, not only in our schools, but sometimes in the universities, don't find sources to support the Palestinian narrative and to tell the Palestinian story.

Now, a comment I'd like to make before I deal with the topic itself, is that this subject was perceived differently in different stages. So I mentioned here, for instance, the first three books written about Arabs, or trying to understand what is the meaning of the *Nakba*, what the *Nakba* is about, whether it is Constantine Zureik, Musa al-'Alami, or 'Aref al-'Aref. Those books are different one from the other. They have different interpretations and analysis of the *Nakba* and the meaning of the *Nakba*.

One of them, Constantine Zureik, Syrian in origin and clearly pan-Arab, was primarily interested in the Arab world, and not so much in the Palestinian case *per se*, and what happened to the Palestinians themselves. But he tried to understand what happened to the Arab world that brought the Arab world into this catastrophe and failure in 1948.

Musa al-'Alami was a Palestinian from a well-known Jerusalem family, who wrote about Palestine in his book, *Ibrat Falastin*, The Lesson of Palestine, but once again, today, to read such a book from an intellectual like Musa al-'Alami, it looks really poor.

It is not a good analysis or enough analysis. But that is the work that comes out of the period after the trauma of 1948. 'Aref al-'Aref's book about the *Nakba of Palestine* is more a documentary work, telling about the different places where the war took place and things like that, which is important as documentation, but it is not historical research.

DANNY RUBINSTEIN: But there are hundreds of memoirs chronicling what happened in every village.

ADEL MANNA': Yes, I do know about all those books. But once again, there is not one good historical work about the war of 1948, from all sources available up to today, and this work is still waiting for historians to do it.

There are different reasons for this. One of them is that, unlike Israel, the Arab world does not open its archives. Whether there are archives or not, it depends on which Arab country we are speaking about, but none of them is opening its archives. Also, there is not an atmosphere of critical enquiry in the Arab world to write about the catastrophe of 1948, and especially about the role of those Arab countries in that war.

So there are different reasons why Arabs and Palestinians until today keep far from this issue, and view it as a very thorny topic. And it took the Jews also a long time before they started to deal with the Holocaust. It is not the same, but this is a very painful and still open wound issue for the Palestinians, and I believe maybe this is one of the reasons why Palestinians are not writing professionally about 1948. They may write memoirs and they may write other things, but not a professional and critical historical work. In any case, this is the situation. And the Palestinians, when they wrote about the *Nakba* after 1948, in the beginning they focused on the clear-cut components of the *Nakba*, what the *Nakba* means for them. It means the loss of the home, the loss of their villages, the refugee issues and such. There are repercussions, the direct repercussions of the *Nakba*, including the loss of the land, which means the homeland. And they wanted to go back to that lost heaven, lost home, lost homeland, and to liberate it.

And what I tried to do in this paper is to rethink the issue of the *Nakba* 60 years later. What does this mean? In addition to the direct repercussions of the *Nakba* immediately after 1948, sometimes when I speak with Israeli colleagues, some of them talk about the Holocaust and its impact, which is clear-cut: six million people killed and what happened to them, to the different Jewish communities everywhere. And I say okay, six million, but 60 years of *Nakba* is a catastrophe which continues today.

The *Nakba* of the Palestinians has not ended. In contrast, the Holocaust is a historical event which was ended at some point. And many people were killed, and there was the establishment of Israel and other events, and the new generations have this as a memory, and there are a lot of implications. But for the Palestinians, their tragedy is that the Jewish problem was solved at their expense. The Jews established a state, and by establishing a Jewish state they started or they brought the *Nakba*, the catastrophe of the Palestinians, and the Palestinian people became like the "Jews of the Middle East". They are *stateless* and I think that this is the most important element today of the *Nakba*.

I meet Palestinians in the United States or elsewhere who are doing very well in their personal lives, in their family lives, like Jews in the 19th century. But I speak to

them, and they have this pain that we lost Palestine, that we are stateless people. We are living everywhere, we are not desired. We became undesired and marginalized from 1948 until 1967, and after 1967 until today. This situation of marginalized people, who are dispersed, who lived until 1948 on their homeland, we can discuss how did they leave, whether there was a national movement before that or there wasn't, in the 20th century or in the 19th century, whether 1834 is important or not important, we can discuss many issues. But the basic element is that their history, the Palestinian history, until the First World War, was similar to any other Arab society or people in the Middle East.

They lived in Bilad ash-Sham and they didn't call it Suriya Kubra, Greater Syria, in the 19th century. They called it Bilad ash-Sham, which was the name of the region of the so-called Greater Syria. And their history was part of the history of the region; their culture was part of the history of this culture. It is also true that the differences between city people in Beirut and Damascus and Jerusalem and Nablus were sometimes smaller than the differences between the people of Nablus and the villages just a few kilometers outside the city, and we can say the same about Damascus and the villages there and all the Bedouin who lived a few kilometers from there. But that is the historical process. This is the kind of history which happens elsewhere in different places, where a nationality and a national movement constructed a new identity and a new culture for the people.

But we can speculate that if the same events were happening and there was no Zionist movement after the First World War, and the French and the British were setting those borders between the different Arab countries according to their interests, then probably at the end of the day Palestine would be either part of a greater Arab country, which would be okay for the Palestinians and that is what they actually wanted immediately after the First World War, since the Arab movement until the war was a pan-Arab movement rather than territorial nationalist movements.

That is why the Palestinians, in their first conference, said yes, we want to be part of a greater Arab country probably with Faisal as the king, not because they didn't have their own national feelings, but because they thought that this was a better idea. They had in mind the unification of Germany and of Italy and all of those national movements, and felt it was better for the Arabs to be united and not only because of the Zionists. But the Zionist movement was one element in creating this idea, that the Arabs should be united and have one strong country rather than being divided into different entities.

Whether they would have been part of that Arab country, or an independent country, their history would be more or less the same as the history of the neighboring Arab societies or countries. The Palestinians, or at least some of their leaders, understood the meaning of the Zionist project. I wrote a short biography of Yusuf al-Khalidi, he was the mayor of Jerusalem and the first Palestinian member of the parliament in Istanbul, and he did many other things. And yet, he accepted the idea, and he wrote to Theodor Herzl in 1899 and he said, yes, this is the land of your father's people. But he also said, leave Palestine in peace, because there are facts on the ground and Palestine is not a vacant country, but Palestine has its own people, both Muslims and Christians, and those millions of Muslims and Christians will not agree to

you transforming it into a Jewish state. He understood the practical meaning of the Zionist project, though he was very liberal, and he accepted the idea that, historically speaking, once this had been the land of Israel.

And other leaders since that time understood the repercussions and the implications of transforming Palestine into a Jewish state, and perhaps there is a failure here of the Palestinian leadership in reading the map of the balance of power between themselves and the Arab world "and the other side".

The main implication of the *Nakba* is that the Palestinian people became a stateless people. Does that mean that if a Palestinian state will be established alongside of Israel on the borders more or less of June 1967, it will solve the problem, the whole problem? No. But that will be a beginning, at least, a good beginning for the solution of the *Nakba*, or the feelings of the Palestinians, of the victims, that they became the victims of the victims. That the Jews who were victims for many centuries, which is why they wanted a Jewish state, they brought about the Palestinian *Nakba* and transformed the Palestinian people into a stateless people.

I don't think that many Palestinians really mean what they say when they say that each one wants to go back to his village and his home, including the people of Lifta, near Jerusalem. Many of them are friends of mine in the area of French Hill. A short anecdote illustrates this. Professor Sari Hanafi once gave a lecture at a conference, and he spoke about his father who was from Haifa. And a Belgian journalist came to interview his father and asked him at the end, "Do you want to go back to Haifa if you are allowed?" And he said, "Yes, for sure". Afterwards Sari spoke with his father and asked, "Do you really want to go back to Haifa?" And he said "no". So Sari asked, "Why do you do that then", and he said "That is what I have to do with those journalists. So to you, son, now I tell you the truth."

That's why I do believe that a solution of two states is possible theoretically, though I am not sure about that in practice. But this is another issue, because this will be maybe a beginning of a national historical compromise, and also a solution for the different implications of the *Nakba*. The most important element of that is the transformation of the Palestinian people into a sovereign people, who live in their own state.

DALIA OFER: Since Adel started with a personal approach I will also say a few personal words. Anyone who is in my generation and experienced both the war of 1948, as I call it here, though in the class that Adel and I teach together at the Hebrew University I say the War of Independence, but Adel is angry with me about it. It was a war of independence for me.

ADEL MANNA': You can say it is the "War of Israelis", of Israeli independence.

DALIA OFER: But you are Israeli. We are citizens of the same place.

ADEL MANNA': I am a Palestinian-Israeli citizen. I am not Israeli, you know that.

DALIA OFER: I think we are both Israelis.

ADEL MANNA': But you know that I am not Israeli. When you speak of it, you mean Jewish Israel. We are only Palestinian-Israelis.

DALIA OFER: No, no. Okay, so we aren't talking about Israelis and Palestinians. But we are both Israelis.

ADEL MANNA': But you are a different Israeli than I am an Israeli.

DALIA OFER: Correct.

But to continue, the destruction of European Jewry, in a way, is the experience of my generation, not because I experienced it directly, neither I nor my family directly. My parents were in Palestine, as it was then, when I was born during the war years.

But their families, their extended families, most of them, over 90 percent of them, were murdered either by the Nazis or by the people in the places where they were living, and my early memories before the War of Independence, and during the war and the years after the war, were of the coming to Israel of relatives or people from the communities around the places where my parents came from, different parts of Europe, Latvia and Galicia, and they spent some time with us. They told their stories, and they were talking in a different language that we had never studied but learned to understand, because it was the secret language of our parents. Yiddish. Therefore we understood what they were talking about.

I also remember that as a young child, twice a day on Israeli radio, there were announcements by the Jewish Agency under the title of *Mador*, the section for the search of relatives in Europe, announcing names. We had to sit quietly. I didn't know how to write yet, but my older sister had to take a pencil and write the names if they resembled the extended family. It was my sister's responsibility to write since my mother could not write Hebrew so fast. This is one of my childhood memories. So I am sure that together with other factors it motivated me as an historian to be interested in working on this subject although I cannot say, unlike children of survivors, that the Holocaust was a personal experience for me.

So I would say we are all captured in the biographies and the histories of our communities. The communities that my parents told about, mostly my father, seemed always to carry something very romantic. Because living in Jerusalem 50 years ago and more, a city that was almost bare of trees and full of fields and rocks, to hear stories about snow and forests and orchards of apples and all these kinds of things, was quite legendary. These were the stories I remember of my parents' physical environment, of the places they left and came to live in Palestine. They were tied up with all kinds of legends told to me or which we read as children.

And I will share with you one more story to show you a kind of conflict one faces as a child in this respect. When I was in the seventh grade, we had to write free compositions, as it was called. It was a practice in the study of language. And I wrote the story of cousins of my father who came to the country, as I remembered the story that they told. They came a few years earlier. And a few days later my teacher called me to the teachers' room, which was quite a terrifying situation, and he held my composition in his hands and he said, "How dare you invent such things when people suffered so much. You are just a liar."

This is what I remember. I felt so insulted, and I tried to verify the story with my parents, if I really invented things or if these were really the stories of my cousins. I say all of this because it is important for me to understand what pulls me to this period of our history, which is not an easy topic to research. But it also demonstrates the fact that throughout the history of Israel there is a continuous dialogue between Israelis and the Holocaust.

Now, the dialogue is a multi-vocal dialogue, and the images and the results of this dialogue are multifaceted. There are many voices in this multifaceted dialogue, voices of people who never experienced the Holocaust, who were far away geographically and mentally from the world of Europe during the occupation, and those who were part of it. There are the voices of people of my own generation whose childhood memories are entangled with stories of the family, family that they never knew but they felt the emotions and sadness of their parents about them. And there are the voices of a younger generation who heard narratives of survivors in public ceremonies, in schools and other occasions. All were together in the country and shared and formed different parts and layers of collective memory.

Survivors express different experience and voices. Another layer in the vocal connection is the institutionalized memorial culture that was developed in Israel since the early 1950s, and the third is a layer of the younger generations who went through the educational system in Israel and absorbed bits and pieces until the late 1980s, of what was really the story of the Holocaust.

The story of the Holocaust until the late 1980s was transmitted through the rituals of the Memorial Day rather than through a consistent teaching and studying and learning the topics in high school or in any formal way. I never studied the Holocaust in high school and the reason is quite clear. Before research had been carried out you couldn't really have textbooks written. Textbooks always come later than historians who carry out the research, and there is no wonder that only in 1985 did the subject become obligatory in the Israeli school system.

So I will quote Shaul Friedman here, saying that the memory of the Holocaust is an unstructured memory in Israel. This would really reflect what I say, that different voices, the different images of different generations, created our memory of the Holocaust.

However, the dialogue goes on, and it goes on in literature, in the theater, in academia, in the school system, and this dialogue changes terminology, changes focuses, and the focuses are different each time. I will give you one example. In the late 1950s and 1960s, in the image of many Israelis, resistance to Nazi occupation was the main issue. But in the last 20 years, survival has been a major issue. The heroes of the past were the resisters. Now the heroes are the survivors. It could be a mother, it could be a rabbi, it could be a child who helped the family. And the definition of what was resistance during the Holocaust completely changed during the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s. There are a variety of reasons for this and I will not go into it.

So in this respect, when we are looking at the dialogue that is continuously taking place between the Israelis, their memories, their perceptions, their self-understanding, and the Holocaust, I would say that it is certainly a very important element in their identity.

It is crucial to add to this the Israeli-Arab and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Without looking at this political perspective, we are missing a very important point in the foundation, I would say, of how the collective memory of the Holocaust was formed in Israel.

To this part of this political aspect, again we have to add two different perspectives. One is certainly a political, manipulative perspective of politicians who

use the subject or, I would say, abuse the subject, in order to strengthen identification with certain politics or certain political means. On the other hand, it reflects real anxieties and real fears, not only of those who experienced the tragedy, but also of those who are identified in this way or another with the past.

And therefore, when we are looking at the waiting period before the Six Day War, when we read the papers, when we see how the organizations of survivors, of partisans and ghetto fighters and others, were endeavouring to recruit the psychological strength, or to exert political influence to get international support in order to overcome the fear and the threat that emerged before the war, I think that we can appreciate the genuine anxieties and fears of the people.

So there is a genuine level of very, very truthful and meaningful approaches that emerge from the angst kind of historical destruction, and of course there is also the other level of the manipulation. When political leaders make the comparison between Nazis and Hitler and Arafat it is certainly a manipulation. If, in the Israeli-Palestinian debate, in the internal political Israeli debate, one would say we are going back to the Auschwitz borders, this of course is a manipulation and abuse of the Holocaust...

MOSHE MA'OZ: Abba Eban.

DALIA OFER: Abba Eban - we have many.

So there is rhetoric, but there is not only rhetoric. So there is a manipulative part of it, but we should not take this as the only part of this important element in Israeli history. And I think that this anxiety was certainly an impediment to many efforts to come to some kind of a compromise.

But I know personally at least one person, who is unfortunately not with us anymore, Menachem Shelah, who was an historian who worked on Yugoslavia and Croatia. He was a child survivor from Yugoslavia and he described in his book what he felt as a soldier when he saw the refugees in the Jericho area running away, carrying their children. For him it was a personal flashback. So there is this element too, and if we look at literature, and if we look at the criticism after the Six Day War and after the Lebanese war in 1982, we can see how the same experience of the Holocaust is a caution to Israelis as perpetrators *vis-à-vis* Israelis as victims.

So we have these conflicting memories, conflicting fears, conflicting anxieties that are part of the Israeli experience. To this we should add also the experience of many families, of survivors who lost their sons or daughters during the Israeli wars. And again, in their life experience, these things are somehow woven together in a way that they are memories that you cannot really disentangle so easily from one another.

I would like to conclude and say that as educators and teachers, I think that what is important for us to do is, on the one hand, to open up the many faces and the many ways that the Holocaust is reflected in Israeli memory and culture. We have to find a way to bring up the fact that the Holocaust, as a Jewish experience, and the Holocaust as a universal experience, has meaning in the way that we understand ourselves, and this will enable us to bring back more sensitivity towards such issues of genocide and other kinds of issues that surround us, and I am not referring now to the Palestinians, but also to other genocides that are happening around us. And I think that this is something that is very important in understanding the Israeli state of mind, self-identity or self-understanding.

DANNY RUBINSTEIN: Well, I agree with Adel Manna' that the Palestinian *Nakba* continues. For me, personally and not only personally, it is not only history, it is a reality. I know it because I see it every day.

But I don't agree with Adel that there is no book about the *Nakba*, about 1948. I should note I wrote a book about the Palestinian refugees 15 or 16 years ago. There were so many sources. Yes, there is no archive, no Arabic archives, but when I tried to find a detail about something, or what happened in a village or in a certain place, or about the policy, there was no problem to go find it.

One example: I tried to find out what happened with Yusuf Haykal, the Mayor of Jaffa in 1948. He left Jaffa two or three weeks before the rest of the Palestinians left the city. I found at least 30 papers that tried to analyze what made him leave Jaffa and go to Jordan. Only about his case. And if you look for any other case you can find a lot. It is not for me, I know, because as I said, I am not a historian, but you can find some in literature, in poetry, in plays, in theatre, in art. It was written about so many times. And not only memoirs but also historical analysis. And so I don't see a problem here.

I want to add something to my last remark. There is a big question mark about one issue, why there is a problem about the archives. We still don't know why the Iraqis left Palestine in the middle of the war. We know that they left the Nablus area and northern Samaria at the end of the war, and without any reason. We know something about that from the British archives, but we don't know from the Iraqi sources what happened there, why they left that area, and that made, of course, a lot of problems with King Abdullah at that time.

ADEL MANNA': The Palestinians used to go to the Iraqi soldiers and say Jerusalem is here, and the Israelis are there, and why don't you defend us? The soldiers would say, *Maku awamer*, We have no orders to fight.

DANNY RUBINSTEIN: Well, I have to say, the reason I wrote my book about the Palestinian refugees, *The People of Nowhere: The Palestinian Vision of Home*, is because I was with my family in a place called Sapaf, a Palestinian village not far from Ein Kerem in Jerusalem, which is now a park. The park authority restored some of the buildings there. I went to this place about 20 years ago with my family, and there were many families there having picnics, Israeli Jewish families, and an Arab woman, a lady from the refugee camp came with her son from Kuwait to show him the village. It was a quite frequent episode.

And when she saw the way that they restored the village, she started to cry and to scream. They asked me why she was so upset about the restoration. And I understood later that there was some mistake, that the wall was this way, and when they restored it they put it a different way.

So I asked her why it was so important if the building was wrong. If she had been sophisticated, I would guess she would say it is not that you took my land and you took my village, you also deny the fact that I was here. Because if you had recognized what you had done to me, you would restore it the way that it used to be. But that you restored it in a different way, is a kind of denial of my existence.

For me it was very important not to deny it. To recognize it, to recognize what we created in the state of Israel, in many ways at the expense of the Palestinians. And we have to know it and we have to deal with it.

But for the Palestinians, there was a historical coincidence at that time. It was the beginning of the oil industry in the Arab world, in the Persian Gulf...

ADEL MANNA': It started much earlier.

DANNY RUBINSTEIN: Adel is right, it started in Iraq much earlier, but in Qatar and in the Gulf, in Kuwait, the big development was after the Second World War. And many, many Palestinians went at that time, many had the education or knowledge or capability to work in the oil industry. Of course, we always pay attention to those who stayed in the camps. And we are right, of course, because that is a big problem.

But there are many, many Palestinians for whom the *Nakba* provided an opportunity. And if you go to see their new neighborhoods they are all Palestinians who came after they were expelled from Kuwait or other places in the Gulf in 1991. But many of them became well off. It is a coincidence, and I don't see here any compensation, and I am not saying, "You see, the *Nakba* wasn't so bad, you are not so miserable." But it was a historical coincidence in which a lot of Palestinians, refugees, settled down in a good position.

MOSHE MA'OZ: Adel, I want to talk about the Hebrew University. I have to defend the university. First of all, this colleague of mine was wrong about not letting you work on your topic. But I still remember the approach. We were in the Department of History and at that time the idea was that you needed at least 50 years, though not 500 years, of perspective. And we had this professor, a great professor of Arabic studies, who said everything after Mohammed was journalism. Everything else was nothing. So it may have been good what he did for you.

Now, my personal experience, I did my BA and then I went to Oxford, and I had great luck to study with Albert Hourani, and that changed my perception. And I wanted to do something current, and he said no, because you might be emotionally involved. Why don't you do something with the 19th century, and I accepted. As simple as you. So this is one thing.

Now, another thing about the *Nakba*, there is no doubt that it was a very traumatic event, but my impression is that you, Adel, put all the blame on Israel.

ADEL MANNA': I do.

MOSHE MA'OZ: But it was more complex. The Palestinian leadership also left. That was a trauma of the war. Arab countries attacked.

Everybody here has mentioned some personal history. My personal history, I was in Tel Aviv. Arabs were sniping just over the ridge. The first wall before this wall now was put up in Tel Aviv. Also, the British left.

SAID ZEEDANI: What is your point?

MOSHE MA'OZ: That the *Nakba* is more complex. It is not one-sided. There were a number of factors working on the *Nakba* tragedy. Not only were Jews deporting Palestinians all the time. Many left because of the panic. But the question is not just who attacked first. It is more complex.

ADEL MANNA': But we are not dealing with the war itself; we are dealing with the implications of the *Nakba*, what happened to the Palestinian people. I said the Palestinian side made mistakes and I don't blame the Israeli side only. But I am dealing with implications and consequences rather than the war itself.

MOSHE MA'OZ: You're right, but the impression I got is that everything is the

fault of Israel. There is more to say about it. But as an historian I would teach about Jewish blame as well as other things.

SAID ZEEDANI: It is not clear. We should get it right on that. If Israelis, Jews, are not the direct cause, they are the indirect cause. This is what we want to hear. But if you want to question that, there is no point in discussing anything here.

MOSHE MA'OZ: Why not?

TAMAR HERMANN: I don't think we should get into this discussion here because it again hijacks the debate to Abu Dhabi or London. I mean should we debate the content of the two different narratives? No, that is your narrative and that is his narrative.

(Interruptions)

JEFF HELSING: Wait a minute, wait a minute. I don't think it was a debate about the content.

MOSHE MA'OZ: The impression that I got, and if I am wrong I withdraw it, is that the blame for the *Nakba* was put only on Israel.

ADEL MANNA': Mainly.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If the Jews weren't coming to Palestine and saying this is our country and we want to solve our problems in Palestine, then the Palestinians would not have any problem and they would be like any other Arab country. This is the basic issue. In order to have a Jewish state in Palestine you have to expel the Palestinians from there.

DALIA OFER: No.

MOSHE MA'OZ: Okay, okay. I am not sure about it. I mean today there is the whole demographic debate in Israel, what will happen in ten years, will they become a majority and then, it's said, either we have to disengage or we will have to transfer them.

AS'AD GHANEM: So what is the problem? There is historical evidence that shows that on 28 March 1948 Ben-Gurion and five other leaders took the decision that they are going to take measures to push the Palestinians out. It is documented by Israeli documents.

RONI STAUBER: No, no.

AS'AD GHANEM: Yes, yes.

RONI STAUBER: No. But this is totally different from the conclusion of Benny Morris. There was no decision in advance to expel the Arabs. He said it completely. They didn't even think about it. Benny Morris. Read the book.

(Interruptions)

MOSHE MA'OZ: But also Adel, don't forget the Zionists who accepted the 1947 partition plan. Now, speaking about 1948, I don't call it a war of independence because independence for us was from the British, who had already left.

RONI STAUBER: Independence of the Jewish people. Not from the British, it is independence of Jewish people.

MOSHE MA'OZ: Okay, this is my point of view.

MICHAEL ROSEN: I can't resist mentioning to Adel that I, too, felt the presentation was one-sided. For what I remember in this presentation he said in principle that Arabs made mistakes. But there were no details of what they were.

Maybe that wasn't the purpose of his presentation.

But of course, you are well aware of the famous whimsical thought that Palestinians never lose an opportunity to lose an opportunity. I wonder is there at any stage, in the early stage, if they had accepted a compromise, that they would have been neutralized? But this is not my field, so I apologize if I am not sensitive enough to what you are saying.

I am more interested in what I feel that Dalia needs to at least present a little more strongly, and that is the history of how Zionism has treated the people of the Holocaust, rather than the Holocaust. I am not a historian, so I can't be sure, but my sense of it is that for the first 20 years there was a sense of absolute contempt, you were like sheep led to the slaughter, in contrast to the new socialist Zionists, strong, blue-eyed, yellow-haired Europeans.

Why is this important? Because even today, my sense is, at least from the politicians, from the way they talk, they are not interested in the people of the Holocaust.

There was an article in Ha'aretz about a survivor who couldn't afford money for food. He wasn't seen as exceptional. There is a lack of a relation to the people of the Holocaust, which suggests that the Holocaust is being used for a political purpose, and if what you want - and beautifully expressed - is a greater sensitivity to the other, you might start with a sensitivity to the people who are dying out.

I think that one should look, really look at Yad Vashem, and if one analyzes their approach to the Righteous Gentiles, you would see the same clash of those who experienced the Holocaust and those Israelis who didn't, and we see the difference in how you relate to the Ukrainian head of the Union Church, a Ukrainian nationalist who saved many Jewish people. It's tremendously difficult for the Israeli who didn't experience the Holocaust to set aside his nationalism to try to evaluate who should be a Righteous Gentile. So the greatest sensitivity might start with the people of the Holocaust.

YASER ABU KHATER: We heard from Adel about the *Nakba*. But we did not hear about the *Nakba* in 1967.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That is not our topic.

YASER ABU KHATER: So that means you left your house for Lebanon in 1948. But I think the *Nakba* means the idea of the leaders of Israel, they needed people to leave the land, to go outside the country. They needed land not people.

When Adel raised the question of Hanafi, when his father said let me go back to Haifa, maybe the situation is good in Bethlehem, but if you ask the Palestinian who is living in Lebanon and Syria and Jordan, everybody wants to come back to Palestine. The majority of the Palestinians want to come back to Palestine.

ILAN TROEN: Maybe this is a comment to the organizers rather than to those who spoke.

There is something problematic, for me, at any rate, in the equivalency between the *Nakba* and the Holocaust. That is how it has been set up here. And I see differences. I think that these differences may be important to try to explain why it has been so difficult, after 60 years, to write the history of the *Nakba* because there is a whole lot of evidence that has to be talked about.

Adel, you raised the question of "if". What if, after the First World War,

something else had happened? If you ask the question "if" in terms of the tragedies of the *Nakba* and the Holocaust, you get to different kinds of statements. One is that the Jews are not responsible for the Holocaust. In terms of the *Nakba*, the Palestinians and the Arab world were in part responsible.

I mean they were responsible in the following way, in that they were unwilling to accept Jews as equals. The problem with 1948, the *Nakba*, and the War of Independence, whatever you want to call it, is that the Jews won. They did something that never should have happened. I don't think that the Arab world was prepared for the notion that the Jews would ever establish a sovereign state within the world of Islam, and within the Arab world. And that has nothing to do with the Holocaust.

In fact, very often I have the sense that the Holocaust was trotted out as a *de facto* justification for the creation of the state of Israel. One could make an argument about the Holocaust - not easily, but one can make an argument that without the Holocaust there still might have been a state of Israel. Who could have imagined that the Ottoman Empire would have fallen apart in the early 1900s?

There were all kinds of ifs that one could ask: Would they have been successful, would Zionist settlements and Jewish settlements have continued right through the Holocaust, when nearly one-third of Palestine had become Jewish? And if you compare the economy of Jewish Palestine with Arab Palestine - they were extremely, extraordinarily different worlds. There were very different trajectories with Jewish Palestine far surpassing the traditional Arab sector.

We don't have to make that analysis right now, but it is entirely possible that something could have emerged within Palestine that could have answered the needs of Jews, and not have harmed the interests of the Arabs. So the question becomes, why in the name of heaven, anybody's heaven, did the Arabs object to this? Since they were not rooted in a sense of history that was 1,300 or 1,400 years old, couldn't they have accommodated the possibilities of Jews being anything other than an enemy? Why were the Jews excluded from the possibility of that kind of recognition in one portion of this very large Arab world? And even within a very small portion of the land of Palestine?

It seems to me that that this is one of the issues that has to be brought into the story. A sense of victimhood may be accurate, but so is the sense of being a perpetrator.

March was another bloody month in the history of the 1948 war: on the 28th there was the report which was read by the Zionist leadership, the report of US Secretary of State George Marshall, who said the Jews won't survive. It was in the context of the end of March 1948 that *Plan Dalet* was created and not implemented, as most plans are very rarely implemented.

One does have to deal with this in terms of intentions, problems of culture, expectations, and the issue of responsibility, which are incredibly multifaceted. 1967, for example, is a wonderful case of this. Had the Jordanians not entered the war, and not shelled Jerusalem or the outskirts of Tel Aviv, then there wouldn't have been a war. Much of the tragedy that occurred after 1967 wouldn't be there.

Now is Israel the only country, the only party to the tragedy of 1967? I agree it has a very large part. But I can tell you that it's a very simplistic assessment of 1967

that it was only "they" who are responsible, and it is very misleading.

So that is a difficult moral calculus, and I can imagine the embarrassment and the difficulty of trying to put it down on paper when it changes. I don't know the history of the literature well enough about the notion of *Nakba*, but my impression is that *Nakba* really referred to the guilt of the Arab world in failing to destroy the nascent Jewish state as in Constantine Zureik's seminal work of 1948. In the 1990s a different meaning of *Nakba* became institutionalized, and it has increasingly been institutionalized within Palestinian society. This more recent version accuses Israelis as having the prime responsibility for the tragedy that took place. It has moved from a larger sphere, to become focused on the Jews and their movement from the local, "my village". That has been taken over and it has now been generalized and universalized into a kind of national dispute. In fact, the problem of the *Nakba* may be more acute today, in part because of the work of historians, than perhaps it was 60 or 50 or 40 years ago.

RONI STAUBER: I would like to relate to one phrase that Adel used. It is the "victims of the victim". This phrase is frequently being used by Palestinian writers, and also by anti-Zionists in Europe, and they also use the phrase that "the victims became perpetrators".

Now, if we are speaking about sharing or knowing the other narratives, I think you should take into consideration that for many Israelis, and many Israeli historians, the concept that the Jews are here only because they were victims is not acceptable. This is not the way that they see it.

YOSEF GORNY: Adel, I think you are right that the *Nakba* is not only the suffering, but also an insult for the Palestinian people in this situation. It is an everyday, everyday experience. But as for the other side, about the Holocaust, continuing what Dalia said, I think that the Holocaust is an everyday national experience, and I'll tell you why. Because those people who are called the Jewish nation or the Jewish people, they lost not only a territory but their whole culture. In the *Nakba*, thanks to God, the Arabs didn't lose a culture. There is no more East European Jewish culture, except for food that is not healthy with many calories and lots of cholesterol.

Now I am coming back to the symbols. The realistic symbols.

I think that the Palestinian state is realistic, first of all, and symbolic in compensation for the *Nakba*. As happened with the state of Israeli, for the Jews it was a compensation for the Holocaust. But a Palestinian state is an opposite option to the right of return.

I will tell you a story. I have a friend in Germany, a professor. He is a philosopher and originally from the Sudetenland, from which he was expelled after the war. He told me that he still feels the pain of longing for this country. As a response, I said to him, but don't forget that because you were expelled, you saved yourself 50 years under the Communist regime. His answer was: "Oh, I didn't think about that."

So from the historical point of view, transfer is not always a bad and cruel solution.

AS'AD GHANEM: Just in our case. In our case it is not only bad, but very, very bad. It is still bad.

ADEL MANNA': The Koran says: "I might hate something that may be for my own good." So maybe this is for our own good.

YOSEF GORNY: I knew I would not be popular for it.

SAID ZEEDANI: It is repugnant to listen to this kind of statement about transfer.

YOSEF GORNY: Let me finish the thought.

What is not accepted categorically, in our time, and I say it categorically, from any angle, political, ideological, etc., was accepted 60, 70, 80 years ago. It was not so terrible. I am looking at it historically. And historically, transfer then had some logic and had many positive results.

In the 1940s, the Labour Party in Britain, not ardent Zionists, in its election program, raised the idea of transfer by agreement and with compensation. The Zionists were shocked by this suggestion because of its possible political complications.

YITZHAK REITER: I have a short comment for Dalia. I think one way to understand the role of the Holocaust in the Israeli collective identity is how the Oriental Jews internalized the Holocaust.

DALIA OFER: I mentioned it.

WALID SALEM: I'd like to say I find myself in agreement with what Rabbi Rosen said, to speak about the people more than about the memory.

With regard to Adel, what I understood from what you said today, you told us two things. That there are no Palestinian studies about the *Nakba*, and that they are stateless after the *Nakba*. What happened to the Palestinians after this *Nakba*?

To Yossi, you said transfer might be, what was the word?

YOSEF GORNY: I said that in the past transfer had also positive results for the parties involved in national conflicts.

WALID SALEM: I think this is a typical response. The issue is what happened to the other side. Spacio-cide, as described by Sari Hanafi, led to suicide of society. So to the extent that spacio-cide continues, suicide continues. So it means that as long as the results of the transfer contin

ue, including the Palestinian refugee issues, the tragedy will continue. So please consider your statement with this.

RONI STAUBER: Walid, I think what Yossi meant to say was not that transfer is a good idea, but that the perceptions about deportation in 1948 were different from our perception today.

Think about the millions of Germans who were deported from Czechoslovakia, and brought to Germany and other countries, and they built their homes in Germany, and Germany society accepted them. He didn't say that this was a positive thing; he said that the perception in those years was different from the perception today.

PAUL SCHAM: On this point, I agree also that the perception at that time, if you look at what British and others said in the 1920s or 1930s, this is something that could be said without embarrassment. It is not a matter of saying it was a good solution or the solution was all right. But the climate of opinion was in so many ways different in the 1920s and 1930s from the current one. This is not in defense of it, but I think we should recognize the difference, especially since this is a conference about history.

WALID SALEM: That is fine. Nowadays it's opposite to the past. Now we recognize that issues of transfer are very problematic and it is a crime to evacuate people from their country. So this is what we perceive.

AS'AD GHANEM: What the Palestinians thought about it in 1948 was that it was

a *Nakba*, a catastrophe. We don't want the people in Tel Aviv to make decisions, whether it is positive or negative.

WALID SALEM: I want to add that the issue of a spacio-cide relates to the issue of the stateless situation. Palestinians in Lebanon were not given Lebanese citizenship. In regard to the Palestinian Jerusalemites, we were considered by Israel after 1967 as Jordanian citizens residing permanently in Israel, which means that on the one hand we are not Israeli but Jerusalem land is annexed to Israel, therefore our citizenship was separated from our land. On the other hand the Jordanians do not consider us to be Jordanians, they give us temporary passports that are given to non-Jordanians, therefore we are stateless. People in the West Bank before Oslo, they were something like Jordanian citizens in an area administered by Israel and after Oslo they became Palestinian Residents in an area that is under conflict. In regard to Gaza they were people with an unidentified nationality before Oslo and then they came to be considered as Palestinian Residents in a Palestinian Territory. So it is not spacio-cide only, but the absence of citizenship, and having different types of residency for Palestinians inside and outside Palestine.

YOSEF GORNY: But you don't accept that there are different historical situations, and it is the historical situations, the attitude towards the problems, that is different. We have a positive example in Europe: In Turkey there was a change of population, a million here and a million there. So it happened. None of the Turks now want to go back to Greece, and the Greek people don't want to come back to Turkey. What about the millions of Germans sent back to Germany from Czechoslovakia and Poland? At that time it was a cruel but positive solution for both sides.

AS'AD GHANEM: So what is the conclusion? Go back? What is the conclusion?

YOSEF GORNY: The conclusion is, yes, I see that most of the Palestinians cannot go back to this state. And it is very cruel to use – now already more than two generations – the Palestinian personal tragedies for political aims which will never be fulfilled.

AS'AD GHANEM: What do you think? That transfer is something positive?

BENJAMIN POGRUND: With regard to 1948, if you read the contemporaneous reports, it's possible to come to a better understanding of why there were refugees. There was a war, and local Arabs were attacking Jewish settlements, and people said let's get rid of them. In addition to which, there were decisions by Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Rabin and others to clear people out. Cruel, deliberate decisions. There were also times when Ben-Gurion didn't give that command, and that was a much more common situation than has often been made out.

But the fact is that it did happen. And as an Israeli today, who came on *aliyah*, I feel pain that I am the beneficiary of the wrong things that were done at the time. So what do I do? Try to unscramble it?

You talk about a one-state solution. Forget it. It's not going to happen. Not while there are Jews who want a Jewish state. But there's a question I want to ask.

What do we do, because we are talking about 12 million Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia, also Poles. In India and Pakistan, there was an exchange of millions. Plus Turkey and Greece in the 1920s. These are the facts of history and life. They are

hard. They are terrible for people, but in all these cases, people said, this is the way that it is, and they went on to brand-new lives.

I would like to hear some views on why it hasn't happened with Palestinians. Is this good? Does this say good things about Palestinians? About their determination? About holding on? About refusing to accept the reality of Israel? Because if they had accepted becoming Jordanians or Americans or Kuwaitis that would have been an acceptance of the fact of the existence of Israel. And up to now, Palestinians politically have not been prepared to accept that.

That is a question worth exploring. Why, 60 years later, do we still have a Palestinian refugee problem that is not going to disappear, and is going to go on festering because Israel will not accept a substantial number back? Only token numbers are being spoken of: about 10,000 to 20,000 a year for five years, which means perhaps a total of 50,000 to 100,000 people. But the refugee problem will not go away. And what are Palestinians going to do about it? Go on fighting for it? Leave people in the terrible conditions that they have in the Lebanese camps? Is that the answer that they are seeking? Or is it that there has to be a change?

In regard to manipulation about the Holocaust, we have seen it, and it is horrible. Mickey Rosen made a point about Israelis, that one of the factors is that we are *not* interested in the people of the Holocaust. I have a friend, born in Palestine, as it then was, who was in high school in 1945 and 1946, who told me about children who came from Europe, survivors from the camps. He said that that the locals treated them with contempt because they were the people who had gone like sheep into the slaughter. He said they called them "soaps". He remembers it vividly, and he looks back at it today and he is embarrassed and ashamed because they were despised because they hadn't fought back. This was the new Israeli, the new Israeli talking.

That to me is an element of the attitude towards the survivors of the Holocaust, but I worry that in Israel it goes even further. Because when I look at what is going on in Israel, I see the same manipulation and cynicism concerning victims of terror. You read that people are trading on it, making money out of it. There is a cynicism about it.

I worry whether there is something in the Israeli psyche, inside the society, that is wrong, and that if I am looking at that with regard to the attitudes of Israelis towards Jews, then there is an obvious carry-over to Palestinians. If you are contemptuous towards your own people, how much more are you going to be contemptuous towards the other.

That is one of the big problems that we've got. In South Africa, during apartheid, there was a phrase about black people, "non-persons". They didn't exist. You rob people of their humanity and when you do it doesn't matter what you do to them. And what worries me in Israel is that we have contempt for our own people, and Palestinians are non-persons, and they don't matter.

SAID ZEEDANI: You know, after the declarations and speeches, probably we need to calm down. We need to expect this kind of reaction on the part of many of our fellow Israeli Jews here when it comes to the refugee issue.

I join my voice to yours, and to many others, that we should avoid joining what are two separate issues. *Nakba* and Holocaust are two separate issues. Each is a national trauma, a national tragedy.

But it is evident that Palestinians are not responsible in any way for the Holocaust. That needs to be emphasized because we Palestinians have been reminded day and night, and sometimes we become convinced, that we are the authors of the Holocaust. When you talk about the Holocaust, then Palestinians and Arabs are potential anti-Semites. We should say Palestinians have nothing to do with the Holocaust. But when it comes to the *Nakba*, to say that Palestinians are in the main responsible...

ILAN TROEN: But in some ways you are responsible.

SAID ZEEDANI: But in one sense it is the Zionists that are responsible, and we must agree on it. I mean in one sense, it is Zionists who are the authors of the *Nakba*. Without the Zionist project to begin with, and without the Zionist project of having a state in this place, without Jews immigrating from Europe and establishing their own communities, and without this war that resulted from the departure of the British, the *Nakba* would not have happened. Our fate would be similar to the Syrians and Egyptians and Jordanians. It is the Zionist project in Palestine that is directly/indirectly responsible for the *Nakba* of the Palestinians.

That does not mean that Palestinians are not responsible. That does not mean that there was no failure of leadership. That does not mean that Arabs at that time were not to blame. We have to blame Palestinians, and the Arabs are to blame. And we made all of the possible mistakes, but still, Zionist Jews are the author of our *Nakba*.

Acknowledging that does not mean the return of the refugees and all that. But I mean that if you resist that, that shows something, that you are not really ready for conciliation from our perspective. If you do not acknowledge that responsibility for the refugee problems, then from the perspective of any Palestinian you are not ready for reconciliation.

Take into account that we not talking about the return of the refugees, we are talking about something else, the historical reconciliation. But of course, we are not saying that Israel is solely responsible for it. Nobody is saying that. The Arabs made all possible mistakes. Palestinian leadership also. But we say that the Jews are the perpetrators and the authors of the *Nakba*.

I think you are evading the problem of the refugees. You resist it. You resist even discussion about it, because even inside Israel, what we call the internally displaced, we are talking about 200,000 of them and more. The internally displaced inside Israel. Decades after celebrating your independence they are not being compensated. Nobody is addressing their problem.

Forget about the refugees in Lebanon. Your own internally displaced Palestinians. What have you done in terms of acknowledgment? What have you done in terms of compensation? What have you done?

If you want to be honest about it, if you want some compassion, if there is a minimum sympathy, there must be something about this section of the refugee problem.

MOSHE MA'OZ: I wrote a book about it. I agree with you. But historically Zionism is responsible. I agree with you.

DALIA OFER: More than historically. Even politically. I mean, come on. You can't ignore it.

SAID ZEEDANI: In terms of practice, in terms of politics, in terms of intentions, in

terms of actions on the ground, there is a large degree of responsibility. In terms of the panic that was spread in the area, add it to all of the other failures on the part of the Palestinians. People did not leave voluntarily. People did not leave because they listened to all sorts of mysterious radio broadcasts.

What I am saying, the question really is how to address this sort of issue, but not how to repress it or how to avoid it, or how to get somebody else to be responsible for it. We should take our responsibilities seriously and address this problem.

MOSHE MA'OZ: We should share the responsibility.

SAID ZEEDANI: We can share it 50/50, but what follows from that? That is the question.

DAVID HARMAN: Adel started off decrying the fact that there is no Arab literature, no Palestinian literature, no historical literature on the *Nakba*. A little while later Dalia said it wasn't until 1985 that the Holocaust entered the curriculum of Israeli schools. And from an educational dissemination point of view, it raises one very interesting point, and that is that in the school systems, which is where we try to pass on to the next generation the mythology of our own cultures, often all sides are always very, very slow to absorb these events. Especially when there are people who are alive who participated in or were directly affected by the event, who carry on that mythology.

We didn't include the Holocaust in the school curriculum in this country, not because there was a discussion or a debate on the Holocaust, but because that aspect of modern Jewish and Israeli ethos was being carried by people who were in the Holocaust, survived the Holocaust, and were directly affected by the Holocaust, and they then began to disappear from the scene by pure passage of time. Then somebody woke up and said, wait a minute, we have to do something to sustain that aspect of our mythology, and let's get it into the schools and into the curriculum.

In the case of the *Nakba*, as you pointed out, Adel, it is still going on decades later. So what you referred to was a one-time event which occurred in a certain point in time, but in effect it is still going on, therefore you can't really incorporate it into schools. This is something that if you look at other countries, you will find very good parallels to it in the United States. It was not until 1830 that the schools began teaching anything about the War of Independence, which began in 1776 and ended in 1783.

So there was a passage of almost 50 years before any kid learned anything about the War of Independence. Now, the Civil War, in parts of the United States, is still not in school curricula because of the tensions and the difficulties that still exist in the Southern states, and they will not incorporate it into the curriculum.

But there is, however, a fundamental difference between some of the things that are occurring between us, and between parallels elsewhere. And that is that it would have been, in the year 1800 or in the 1870s, unheard of for people representing or affected by different sides of a conflict to sit down around a table and discuss it. And if there is something that has occurred in this particular time, it is that there is openness and a readiness to discuss the issues, and they get very raw, as we saw. Because the whole situation is still very raw.

But this kind of discussion, occurring in a small room in Istanbul late on a Friday evening, is the kind of discussion which has, at least in the history of education, very, very few parallels, and it will no doubt affect the way in which the future will begin to

teach this period of time in our respective schools. There will be a lot more evenhandedness, I suspect, in that kind of presentation than has been in many others.

PAUL SCHAM: Several people brought up the incomparability of the *Nakba* and the Holocaust, and I think I was ultimately the culprit who originally suggested this. What it was supposed to be was a comparison of Palestinians after the *Nakba*, and the Jews after the Holocaust. And the idea was to compare and understand their effects on the two societies some 60 years later. Not to compare the events but to discuss how the two societies dealt with these traumas.

Both shattered the societies in different ways, and there was a reason they were different, and we were interested in seeing how, some 60 years later, the Jewish people and the Palestinian people responded to it.

I think that there is a certain acceptance here at least and in parts of Jewish society that there has been a cult of the Holocaust. I was having a very interesting discussion with Eshel about the role of the Holocaust in Jewish education. He estimates that, at this point, about 40 percent of Jewish history, as taught in Israeli schools, focuses on the Holocaust. And this is compared to 20 years earlier when we learned that there was nothing.

And at this point, what it is leading to is the perception that has been decried here, that the Holocaust led inexorably to the establishment of the state of Israel. I have been engaged in debates on this with people who believe that, without the Holocaust, there couldn't have been a state of Israel. Many of us are uncomfortable with that equation, not only when we listen to Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who sees Israel solely as mistaken compensation for a questioned Holocaust. But I wonder if in a sense that is a connection that is being emphasized too much in Israeli education as well.

TAMAR HERMANN: We have in Israel an organization called Those Who Remember, *Zochrot*. They visit the Arab villages that were demolished during the War of Independence, and try to make available to the Israeli public, by installing explanatory placards and names, all the information, all the facts about these villages and what happened to them during the war. It is only symbolic activity of course, but for the Israeli mainstream, it is a huge, huge, huge change in the ability to see things from the Palestinian perspective as well.

My second remark is just a concern of mine. I know that empirical studies in the Arab world, and also among the Palestinians, show that majorities deny the Holocaust and even more so in the magnitude that we are talking about. I am referring to grassroots awareness in the Arab world of the Holocaust, and of the numbers that were murdered. In fact, the Holocaust is actually widely perceived as a Jewish conspiracy dreamed up in order to justify the establishment of the State of Israel.

And I think that this deserves some thinking, about, how we have come to the point where the majority of people in Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon and among the Palestinians believe this.

ADEL MANNA': But the majority of the Egyptians don't know anything about the Palestinians.

TAMAR HERMANN: They see it as a Jewish plot. This calls for some self-reflection.

MOHAMMED DAJANI: I didn't believe the Holocaust was as bad as it was until I

visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington a few years ago. I never read any book about it though I did see a few movies. But Arabs are not much aware of its depth in Jewish memory.

TAMAR HERMANN: Why? How come?

MOHAMMED DAJANI: The Arab narrative is that either it did not occur on such a big scale and that there was much exaggeration in narrating the events to draw sympathy to the Zionist cause, or that many of the victims were not Jews, or that many atrocities took place during the Second World War and this was only one of them.

RONI STAUBER: It has to do with the perception that they believe that Israelis get their legitimacy to build their country because of the Holocaust. So if they deny the Holocaust or say that it was not so terrible, then they remove justification from the Jewish state. This is the main reason for the denial of the Holocaust, and this is the main reason for the distortion of the Holocaust.

JEFF HELSING: We'll now go back to our two main speakers to reply to the points that have been raised.

ADEL MANNA': I'll try to respond telegraphically to the many comments and questions raised here. I'll start by adding something to what Paul said about the legitimacy of putting the questions of the Holocaust and the *Nakba* together. That's not because I think they are the same, but rather because we think - I think - that the Holocaust and the *Nakba* are the most traumatic events in the history of the Jews and the Palestinians.

As such, those are very important elements in the perceptions of the Palestinians, in the perceptions of the Jews, in the sense of victimhood of the Jews and in the sense of the victimhood of the Palestinians. I do think that it is possible to put them together in this sense. Not to compare the events themselves and the results of the events themselves, but in this sense.

I think that Said elaborated very eloquently about the issue of the responsibility of Israel and Zionism towards the Palestinian *Nakba*. I don't want to add to what he said in this sense. However, I do want to add to what he said about the displaced Palestinians inside Israel. Those are people like the villagers of Baram that the army asked to move for 15 days in 1948, and they still have not been able to return, even though the High Court decided that they should be able to return to their village. And what are the Israelis doing? I have the feeling that most of the people in Israel who think of themselves as peaceniks, including people inside this room, do a lot of speaking about peace and equality, and they do nothing about it. Or do very little.

Israel is a democracy, you say. Okay. So if it is a democracy, there is a responsibility of the citizens also. In a country like Egypt or Syria, I can't blame the Egyptians or the Syrians for their dictator regime because they don't make a difference there.

However, I do blame the Israelis also for what is happening to the Palestinians from 1948 up to today, including the issue of the responsibility for the *Nakba*, towards the refugees, and whatever happened during the war itself. I do agree with Said again that we also can blame the Arab world and we can blame the Palestinian leadership for many mistakes, as I said earlier. However, I do want to add to what I said earlier about the awareness of the historical research about the war. Maybe this is one of the other

reasons that the Palestinians don't write about that war. In my estimation, a maximum of 10,000 to 20,000 Palestinians took part in that war, out of 1,300,000 Palestinians, which actually means that the Palestinians didn't fight in that war. This is something that most Palestinians will not face.

I am talking about the ethos that we have resisted the Zionists since 1880, and we continued during the British period, and then we continued in the war of 1948, and then we fight with the Palestine Liberation Organisation after that. This is the ethos. But as a historian, when you see who took part in this war of 1948, you'll find that the vast majority of the Palestinians did not take part.

So even if the Palestinian leadership is to blame, and the Arab world, but nonetheless most of the Palestinians were not responsible for that war and did not take part in it. Most of the peasants in the villages did not take part in that war. Nonetheless, that was the excuse for the Israeli side, the stronger side, to continue expelling those people from their lands in 1949, 1950, 1951, when there was no danger to Israel, and not to allow all the refugees, or any of the refugees, to come back to their home. And to demolish their houses.

So how should I understand the big gap between the things that Israel is saying and what it has been doing from 1948 until today, including the Israelis themselves, the citizens, not only the leadership. And I should add to that also the attitudes of the citizens of Israel in general. We read verbal declarations, from the independence declaration and others, that we want peace, we will all be equal, while the Arab minority inside Israel, particularly from 1948 to 1967, suffered some of the most atrocities of any minority in the world, under military occupation and things like that.

And what did the Israelis do about that? Do the Israelis take responsibility for what they did to their own citizens from 1948 up to today?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: We teach about it.

ADEL MANNA': Okay, so you teach.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is obliged that we teach it in the civil studies.

ADEL MANNA': Now, so if we go to other issues regarding the refugees, what I meant by the story of my friend and his father was to say that in similar instances, it is like Said Zeedani said earlier, that most of the Palestinian refugees want the Israelis to take responsibility for what happened to them and for what happened in 1948. That doesn't mean that they will go back or they will be given the right to go back to their homes.

What it means is that the problem is much less than what the Israelis are discussing when they discuss the refugee problem as the main problem. But how should I understand that all of the Zionists think that any Jew, or whoever became Jewish, has the right to return to Palestine, to Israel, after 2,000 years? While at the same time they say no, the Palestinians have to forget any right of return.

I am not talking about implementation, I am speaking about the right in itself. I mean there is a moral double standard of the Israelis when they deal with those issues. That is why it brings me again and again, as a Palestinian citizen of Israel who was educated in the Israeli system, who knows the history of the Jews, and who has had the whole experience of my life in Israel, to question again and again the honesty sometimes and the integrity of many Israelis, many colleagues of mine, what they say

and what they mean. What they do and what they say.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I have a small remark. I think we have to handle first the pain and then the anger that Adel has expressed. It is not historical fact, but it is historical fact.

JEFF HELSING: Thank you. Dalia.

DALIA OFER: About the economic situation of Holocaust survivors. I didn't see it myself, but there is a survey about the economic situation of Holocaust survivors. Generally, the economic situation of Holocaust survivors is very good. They are not on the margins of society, on the contrary.

And many years ago, in a book that I co-edited, there was a survey of the second generation survivors - they were much higher on the economic scale. They are not as high in education, the first generation, but they are much higher economically. Although we do have other cases, and you know, TV always depicts this kind of case.

Now, you commented about the general contempt among Jews towards Jews. Well, I don't know. I can't accept that generalization.

The attitude towards the other, and now I talk of Arabs, Palestinians, either in Israel as citizens or in the West Bank, this is a real problem, a very serious problem. And I think that we have a long way to go in our education in order to work through this issue. However, I must say that we should remember that for many years, and we are still in the situation, this was influenced by the conflict. So we can't ignore the conflict as a factor in this relationship. Not that I am trying to justify or ignore the situation. I think that we really have a long way to go, and I agree with a lot that Adel said about it. The issue of the internal refugees - this is really an outrageous situation.

And I must admit that I myself, except for what has been written about Baram, which was before the High Court a few times, I didn't know much about it except for Hillel Cohen's and David Grossman's books.

SAID ZEEDANI: How can you account for your lack of knowledge on this?

DALIA OFER: Well, I'll tell you, being in Israel, having four children, going to school, not coming from a family that could support my studies, being married from the age of 19, and I was really preoccupied with all the daily things, you know. And everybody is deciding where he would put his energies, and maybe it was a bad decision, but my decision was that I would put my political energies in the peace movement. So it might be looked at as if it is not sincere enough, or that it is only talking. There was a lot of talking around it, but there was a lot of effort in the evening to decide whether I or my husband will go to these talking things, such as *Shalom Achshav*, Peace Now, and it was really very difficult to calculate how to save the time. And life is not only this kind of discussion.

SAID ZEEDANI: No, but I raise the question really because if you take into account that in the case of our village, for instance, which was destroyed in 1948, it was not the rightists, it was *Mapam*.

DANNY RUBINSTEIN: Today we have the 200,000 internally displaced, but it was much less in 1948. I have next to me Abu Gosh, which was a small village, now not so small, but some of them, half of them, were refugees and they lost their villages, but they didn't complain. Now they are in good shape and they invested money and they built houses, and we didn't pay attention to them the way we pay attention to the

others. We fought - now I am just talking personally, I am not representing any peace camp in Israel - but we brought issues to the Military Governor for the Israeli Arabs. I think that we made achievements participating with the Arab struggle or the Arab campaigns, and I think we have some achievements.