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*My Wound Is Deeper, My Pain Is Greater:  
The Impact of Holocaust Memory and al-Nakba Memory on  
Israeli-Palestinian Tensions*

**ABSTRACT:** *This article argues that memory of the Holocaust and al-Nakba qualifies as historical trauma, encompassing not just the terror of the original events but all related violence that has continued up until the present day. On the basis of testimonies from private individuals, politicians, and scholars associated with the Israeli and Palestinian communities, the author demonstrates that Holocaust and al-Nakba memories are fueling Israeli-Palestinian tensions. Competing Israeli and Palestinian notions of victimization contribute to “apathetic” (i.e., uninterested, unresponsive, or insensible) attitudes in their respective social and educational environments.*

**KEYWORDS:** *modern history; Palestine; Israel; Holocaust; al-Nakba; memory; victimization; Israeli-Palestinian conflict; education; interviews*

*Introduction*

To say that the relationship between Israel and Palestine is volatile would be an understatement and, unsurprisingly, any discourse regarding these two nations often results in disagreement. One controversial issue involves memory, more specifically the traumatic memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba. The Greek term “Holocaust” translates to “burnt offering” and refers to the killing of approximately six million European Jews by the Nazis and their affiliates between 1941 and 1945—the Hebrew term “Shoah” which translates to “destruction” is also used. The Arabic term “al-Nakba” translates to “catastrophe” and refers to the exodus of over 700,000 Arab Palestinians who fled their homes as a result of the 1948 Palestine War. Even though the value of memory and remembrance cannot be denied—as George Santayana (1863-1952) once wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”<sup>1</sup>—is it possible that, when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, memory may be doing more harm than good? This article argues that memory of the Holocaust and al-Nakba has transcended its original role and now qualifies as historical trauma,<sup>2</sup> encompassing not just the terror of the original events but all related violence up until the present day. These memories are fueling Israeli-Palestinian tensions through the emotional and psychological ramifications of trauma. The competing Israeli and Palestinian notions of victimization contribute to “apathetic” (i.e.,

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<sup>1</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: Reason in Common Sense* (New York: Scribner’s, 1905), 284.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, historical trauma refers to experiences—including genocide, slavery, forced relocation, and destruction of cultural practices shared by communities—that can result in cumulative emotional and psychological wounds that are carried across generations. Historical trauma can lead to mental and physical illness, loss of familial or community ties, etc. Both the Holocaust, al-Nakba, and the on-going Israeli/Palestinian violence fall into this category.

uninterested, unresponsive, or insensible) attitudes in their respective social and educational environments.

To appreciate how memory plays a role in Israeli-Palestinian relations, one needs to gain a basic understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Prior to 1948 what is today known as Israel was part of Mandatory Palestine, a territory established in 1920 after World War I by the British Mandate for Palestine as part of the effort to divide the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> In Mandatory Palestine, two groups, Jews and Arabs, saw the territory as their respective homeland. In 1947, after the end of World War II, the United Nations adopted a partition plan to facilitate the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states, as well as an international regime for Jerusalem. While the partition plan was approved by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, it was not well received by the Arab population. Thus began a conflict that has comprised the 1948 Palestine War;<sup>4</sup> the Palestinian exodus known as al-Nakba; the establishment of the state of Israel; a series of disputes and wars over the status of Palestine; Palestinian statehood; and present-day tension. Undeniably, the rift between Israel and Palestine is wide and deep. What exacerbates the conflict is the trauma associated with memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba.

Given the conflict's immense historical, geographical, and political ramifications, individual voices tend to get lost in the cacophonous chaos of disagreement. For that reason, most sources utilized in this article attempt to bring the personal, human narrative to light and include interviews with individuals associated with the Israeli and Palestinian communities;<sup>5</sup> published testimonies by authors such as the Israeli politician Avraham Burg and Palestinian scholar Seraj Assi;<sup>6</sup> a *Haaretz* interview with MK<sup>7</sup> Alex Miller (Yisrael Beiteinu/"Israel Our Home" Party); and a lecture by Al-Quds University professor Mohammed Dajani Daoudi.<sup>8</sup> Each of these sources offers an individual voice regarding the issues at

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<sup>3</sup> Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 19.

<sup>4</sup> This war consisted of two primary violent conflicts: the civil war of 1947-1948 in Mandatory Palestine and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948.

<sup>5</sup> At the interviewees' requests, their names have been withheld and substituted by the following sigla: [P1]: elderly Palestinian male who emigrated from Israel and came to the U.S. in the 1960s; [P2]: P1's granddaughter; [P3]: son, in his late twenties, of a Palestinian refugee; [I1]: elderly Israeli female who emigrated from Israel and came to the U.S. in 1967; [I2]: granddaughter, in her mid-twenties, of a Holocaust survivor. The interviews/conversations took place in 2019. Interviews/conversations cited here were reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), HSR-19-20-471. [CC]: Cynthia Castaneda (author).

<sup>6</sup> Avraham Burg, *The Holocaust is Over: We Must Rise from Its Ashes* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 60; Seraj Assi, "Why My Father Made Me Forget Our Palestinian Catastrophe," *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2018, accessed May 24, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Member of the Knesset (i.e., Israel's Parliament).

<sup>8</sup> Alex Miller interviewed in Merav Michaeli, "Yisrael Beiteinu MK: Teaching the Nakba in Israel's Schools Is Incitement," *Haaretz*, March 24, 2011, accessed May 24, 2020; "Prof. Mohammed

hand. For example, my interviews with individuals associated with the Israeli and Palestinian communities feature these individuals' respective memories and perceptions of the Holocaust and al-Nakba, as well as their opinions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Avraham Burg's testimony details existing Israeli angst toward Arabs, while Seraj Assi recollects his family's decision to forget al-Nakba.

This article also addresses the impact of historical trauma, namely, Holocaust and al-Nakba memory, from scholarly perspectives in order to showcase the results of academic research alongside personal opinions and thereby hopefully balance the content. Texts that fall into this category include *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*,<sup>9</sup> a 2018 anthology edited by political theorist Bashir Bashir (Open University of Israel) and Holocaust scholar Amos Goldberg (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) that brings both Jewish and Arab scholars together as they discuss the role of memory and how the two events are interlinked. Similarly, the 2017 monograph *Enemies and Neighbors: Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917-2017* by Ian Black, a former journalist for the *Guardian* and currently affiliated with the London School of Economics, includes the voices of both Israeli and Palestinian residents while analyzing the conflict's overall history.<sup>10</sup> This article is divided into two segments: emotional and psychological ramifications of traumatic memory; and competing Israeli-Palestinian notions of victimization, including apathetic social and educational attitudes.

### *I. Traumatic Memory and Its Emotional and Psychological Ramifications*

As humans, we are molded by all our experiences and memories. Yet, despite all the joyful memories we may possess, it is often memories filled with trauma and pain that have a stronger impact. They go on to influence everything: our emotional outlook, attitude, likes and, more specifically, dislikes. These can then be passed down from generation to generation, allowing such emotions and dislikes to live on into the future. Emotionally, traumatic memories can be accumulated in such a way that they can become almost weaponized. Psychologically, memories can be construed purely from one's traumatic environment. Emotionally and psychologically, if the trauma of the memory is too severe, forgetting—rather than remembering—may seem like the wiser or healthier option. When a type of memory and or knowledge that is shared by a specific social, cultural, or familial group is passed down through generations it becomes a community's collective memory.<sup>11</sup> Even though collective memory can

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Dajani Daoudi," video file, 23:06, YouTube, July 19, 2017, Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue, accessed May 24, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, eds., *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 3 (introduction).

<sup>10</sup> Ian Black, *Enemies and Neighbors: Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917-2017* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017), 7.

<sup>11</sup> See Janet L. Jacobs, *Memorializing the Holocaust: Gender, Genocide, and Collective Memory* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), xv.

provide a sense of bonding and togetherness, which can be used as a tool for coping, there are exceptions. Education specialist Jeffrey Wilkinson argues that collective trauma, stemming from collective memory, can be accumulated and used as a catalyst for hate and anger.<sup>12</sup> One would assume that this hate and anger would then be directed against those who had caused the initial trauma suffered by the community—or against their descendants. For example, in the case of trauma stemming from the Holocaust the resulting hate and anger would then be directed against Nazi Germany or against Germany and Germans today. However, in some cases, this assumption is incorrect.

As suggested in Israeli politician Avraham Burg's 2008 work, *The Holocaust is Over: We Must Rise From Its Ashes*, some Israelis hold Germany blameless for their current problems. Burg recollects a heated conversation between himself and a group of Israeli students in which a student went on to exclaim, "The worst thing that happened to the Jews was the Arabs."<sup>13</sup> In the eyes of this student, the Arabs were the worst—not the Nazis, not Germany, but the Arabs. Burg argues that, as a hurt community, Israel has collected the anger and desire for revenge that stems from collective historical trauma and placed it on Palestine rather than Germany to, "allow [themselves] to live comfortably with the heirs of the German enemy."<sup>14</sup> Burg's assertion is supported by the fact that the angry student's parents both drive German cars (a Volkswagen and an Audi) and when asked whether he forgave the Germans, the student said, "Yes, they did nothing bad to me."<sup>15</sup> At this point, historical trauma comes into play. Even though this student was born long after the Holocaust, he was raised in a violent and angry environment with origins that can be traced back to the destruction brought on by the Holocaust. Based on the emotional and psychological impact of historical trauma, this student now displays a hateful mentality. As Burg notes, this mentality was not singular: prior to the exchange, other students in the hall had echoed similar opinions:

The children, like typical Israeli youngsters, argued heatedly in favor of deportations and transfer of the Palestinians. Revenge was an accepted philosophy for them and the killing of innocents a legitimate means of deterrence. Some of the more extreme speakers garnered the applause of their silent friends. The school principal, shaken, stood in front of them and spoke with a trembling voice: 'But you are not listening to what you are saying. This is how they spoke about us sixty and seventy years ago. This is what they did to us.' He admonished them, and they fell silent in awe, but it was apparent they disagreed with what he said.<sup>16</sup>

Granted, collective memory can also have benefits, as it provides people with a sense of community. But if there is hate it, too, will be reflected by the community,

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<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey J. Wilkinson, "Israel/Palestine Experience and Engagement: A Multidirectional Study of Collective Memory through an Analysis of Trauma, Identity, and Victim Beliefs" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2017), ii.

<sup>13</sup> Burg, *Holocaust is Over*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> Burg, *Holocaust is Over*, 79.

<sup>15</sup> Burg, *Holocaust is Over*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> Burg, *Holocaust is Over*, 79.

turning collective memory into collective hate. As members of the community are surrounded by traumatic memories and emerging negative opinions, they begin to store these memories and the related hate as well. As seen in the case of the young students, such memories and hate can span multiple generations.

To illustrate the concept of multi-generational hate through traumatic memory, we may consider a recent attack on a northern West Bank farm. On Wednesday, October 16, 2019, during the annual olive harvest, Palestinian farmers, alongside Israeli and foreign volunteers, were attacked by youth Israeli settlers with rocks and crowbars. Among those injured was eighty-year-old rabbi Moshe Yehudai who suffered a broken arm.<sup>17</sup> The volunteers were assisting Palestinian farmers due to a recent increase in attacks and frequent intimidation efforts brought on by settlers. Similarly, since 2015, Israel has faced a wave of attacks and violent incidents carried out by Palestinian youths.<sup>18</sup> On both sides, violent attacks have been carried out by teenagers and young adults, namely, people who did not suffer the trauma of the Holocaust or al-Nakba. Nevertheless, the memories that surround their communities and the respective hate they have inherited are shaping their attitudes, behavior, and violent actions.

Just as it can be connected to collective memory and multi-generational hate, trauma can also be linked to misconstrued memories and forgetfulness. According to Elizabeth Phelps, a neuroscience professor at Harvard University, our memories are – on average – only fifty percent accurate. Research shows that memories go through a process between the initial event and our brain converting it into a memory, and this process is referred to as consolidation. Similarly, when we try to remember, the memory goes through another process similar to consolidation. As a result, regardless of how certain we may be, our memories are alterable and vulnerable.<sup>19</sup> This fifty-percent accuracy is diminished even further when emotion and trauma enter the picture. Since al-Nakba occurred decades ago and was emotionally traumatic, one cannot be surprised if stories of what took place during the Palestinian exodus are “flawed” – and it should be emphasized here that the adjective “flawed” with regard to memories is used in this article without any value judgment but simply to denote imperfection and a lack of accuracy.

P1 is an elderly Palestinian male who emigrated from Israel and came to the U.S. in the 1960s. During his interview, P1 claimed that, when he was one year old, he and his mother fled during the Palestinian exodus and that he became an orphan after his mother was killed in the chaos. As a result, in his words, al-Nakba

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<sup>17</sup> Jacob Magid, “Settlers Accused of Beating Rabbi, 80, Who Was Aiding Palestinian Olive Harvest,” *The Times of Israel*, October 16, 2019, accessed May 24, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Wave of Terror 2015-2019,” updated February 29, 2020, accessed May 24, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> “My Mind’s Eye: Controlling Our Fears: An Interview with Elizabeth Phelps: Full Episode #4,” video file, 08:22, YouTube, February 9, 2017, Labocine (Labocine Scenes: Science as Cinema), accessed May 24, 2020.

has “forced”<sup>20</sup> him to hate the Jews. There are complications with his recollections, including the fact that these hateful emotions are based on the memories of a one-year old child.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, his granddaughter (P2) qualified his statements. According to her, P1’s mother was indeed forced to flee during al-Nakba but was not killed. His mother was pregnant with him at the time, and P1 was not born until after the initial al-Nakba events. Ultimately, his mother resettled in Israel.<sup>22</sup> P1 was not left orphaned at the age of one, nor did he himself flee from a burning village. Nevertheless, that is what he believes and remembers. As a result, his current hatred of Israel is based on a constructed traumatic memory. It would not be fair to discredit P1 as a liar. His granddaughter said that P1’s mother passed about seven years after she had fled Palestine. Therefore, P1 was orphaned at a young age and had to endure a violent environment for most of his childhood.

It is difficult to say how P1 acquired or constructed his flawed narrative. It is possible his memory is related to a traumatic post-al-Nakba childhood experience that he then connected to the better-known event: for example, he may have connected his mother’s untimely death to the fact that she had to flee years earlier. Additionally, given that he was orphaned at a young age, it is possible that he heard the story from peers and that, over time, it became his story. Whatever the case may be, his flawed memories are connected to the trauma he endured as a child. According to Australian legal scholar Juliet Brough Rogers

this, we might say, is precisely what trauma is. The characteristic of scenes of violence which produce trauma is that fantasy becomes reality; reality becomes fantasy. What is believed and believable is confused. Simply put, the boundary between one’s sense of reality and an external reality becomes uncertain.<sup>23</sup>

Another example of potentially flawed memories surfaced during my interview with I2, the granddaughter, in her mid-twenties, of a Holocaust survivor. After World War II, I2’s grandmother had first moved to Israel before eventually immigrating to the U.S. According to family stories,<sup>24</sup> while living in Israel, her grandmother witnessed violence, including the death of a cousin: “my mom did say that grandma had a cousin who was killed by a bomb while living in Israel. At least I think it was a cousin, or was it a friend?”<sup>25</sup> The key phrase in

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<sup>20</sup> P1, interview with Cynthia Castaneda (full transcription at the end of this article).

<sup>21</sup> Studies have shown that the brain’s hippocampus is not fully developed until about three and a half years old. Around then is when our earliest childhood memories would develop. See [Bill Briggs and Bill Briggs, “How far back can you remember? When earliest memories occur,”](#) NBC News, August 24, 2012, accessed May 24, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> P2, brief conversation with Cynthia Castaneda (full transcription at the end of this article).

<sup>23</sup> Juliet Brough Rogers, “Rethinking Remorse: The Problem of the Banality of Full Disclosure in Testimonies from South Africa,” in *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory*, ed. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (Toronto: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2016), 27-48, here 39.

<sup>24</sup> I2 never met her grandmother in person since the latter had passed before I2 was born.

<sup>25</sup> I2, interview with Cynthia Castaneda (full transcription at the end of this article).

this quote is “I think.” The memories passed on by I2’s grandmother to her family have now reached I2, but there is doubt and confusion associated with them. Unless I2 asks for clarification in future, the narrative she passes on will also contain doubt and confusion. Furthermore, these stories of “explosions and fires” affect I2’s opinion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: when I mentioned the violence that both Israel and Palestine are guilty of, her response was, “Is there proof of that?” This was followed by, “I am sure that both sides are guilty of violence [...] but I feel that Israel’s violence is more of a reaction than action.”<sup>26</sup> Interestingly enough, I2 had heard the term al-Nakba and had a fair understanding of the event. Nevertheless, based on the traumatic memories and stories she inherited, when it came to analyzing the current conflict, she took a clear stance, “the stories my grandmother passed down have made up my mind.”<sup>27</sup>

Can remembering become so painful that someone would purposely choose to let an event remain unmentioned and eventually forgotten? That is the dilemma Palestinian scholar Seraj Assi found himself in when he discovered that his Palestinian father intentionally avoided all references to al-Nakba, leaving Assi entirely in the dark. It was not until he was a twenty-year-old student at the Hebrew University that he heard the term al-Nakba for the first time. When Assi returned home to tell his father what he had learned, “He faltered, then advised me to get this *nakba* out of my system.”<sup>28</sup> Upon closer analysis, Assi discovered that his father and many men of his generation intentionally chose to leave the topic unspoken to hide from the truth and to protect their children from the pain:

Between 1948 and 1966, men like my father and grandfather were forced to live under a military regime imposed by Israel on its remaining Arab population. Their freedom of movement was controlled by Israeli permit requirements and curfews. They were restricted from seeing their fellow Palestinians and Arabs in neighboring countries like Jordan and Egypt, in the West Bank and Gaza, and even in other towns and villages inside Israel. Haunted by the fresh memory of loss and displacement, the first generation of Arabs in Israel was born into national limbo. Virtually overnight, they became strangers in their own homeland. To my father, the *nakba* never truly ended. But whether out of fear or brutal realism, he refused to bequeath it to his son. He believed that third-generation Arabs in Israel could survive only through ignorance of what had come before. This was his mantra.<sup>29</sup>

The reasoning employed by Assi’s father is comprehensible. With an event as catastrophic as al-Nakba, it is logical that parents would wish to protect their children from the harsh reality they had to endure. Research conducted by Anaheed Al-Hardan, a sociologist at the American University of Beirut, for his 2016 monograph *Palestinian’s Syria: Nakba Memories of Shattered Communities*, shows that there are distinct variations in how al-Nakba is perceived by first-, second-, and third-generation Palestinians. Since al-Nakba memories are passed

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<sup>26</sup> I2, interview with Cynthia Castaneda.

<sup>27</sup> I2, interview with Cynthia Castaneda.

<sup>28</sup> Assi, “Why My Father Made Me Forget.”

<sup>29</sup> I2, interview with Cynthia Castaneda.

down generations, how the Palestinian exodus is interpreted is based entirely on the respective parental guardians' preferences.<sup>30</sup> In Assi's case, his father felt that no mention of al-Nakba was best; thus, a history without al-Nakba became Assi's reality. Ignorance was not bliss but certainly less painful than the truth. The risk here is that ignorance can become denialism, something of which both Israelis and Palestinians are guilty.

According to political theorist Bashir Bashir and Holocaust scholar Amos Goldberg, many Israelis and Palestinians minimize the devastation suffered by their respective counterparts. In other words, there is a diminished Jewish perspective of al-Nakba and a diminished Palestinian perspective of the Holocaust. Many Israelis significantly downplay the devastation brought on by al-Nakba: some of them say that such an event is normal when new nations emerge, while others claim that al-Nakba is utter nonsense.<sup>31</sup> Yet, by the end of 1948, fifty percent of Palestinians had either fled or been uprooted; according to Jewish Studies professor Jacob Lassner (Northwestern University) and Israeli scholar S. Ilan Troen (Brandeis University), "[m]ore than 300 villages were abandoned, many plowed under never to be seen again."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, there are Palestinians who find it hard to acknowledge the pain suffered by Jews during the Holocaust: "Some prefer to ignore the issue, downplay its importance, or even deny the Holocaust entirely, dismissing it as the invention of a powerful Zionist propaganda machine."<sup>33</sup> Yet Holocaust survivor Miriam Weinfeld's recollection of the events are quite different: "Her mother died before her eyes. When the British soldiers finally arrived [for the liberation of Bergen-Belsen], wearing gas masks against the stench of the tens of thousands of corpses strewn around the barracks, Weinfeld's first thought was, 'Too bad they came so late.'"<sup>34</sup> For those who suffered during al-Nakba and the Holocaust to come across a person who negates their trauma and memories, what emotion – other than anger – might prevail?

Emotional and psychological ramifications are only some of the consequences stemming from the trauma of Holocaust and al-Nakba memory. As humans, we recognize the power of memory – a power that goes on to define who we become and what we believe. This power of memory can make a group of high school students passionately declare their hate of Arabs. This power of memory can make a Palestinian orphan construct a memory that may be flawed but that stems from the historical trauma he has endured and that, in his mind, justifies his hate for

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<sup>30</sup> Anaheed Al-Hardan, *Palestinian's in Syria: Nakba Memories of Shattered Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 156.

<sup>31</sup> Bashir and Goldberg, *Holocaust and the Nakba*, 2 (introduction).

<sup>32</sup> Jacob Lassner and S. Ilan Troen, *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World: Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2007), 106-107.

<sup>33</sup> Bashir and Goldberg, *Holocaust and the Nakba*, 3 (introduction).

<sup>34</sup> Referenced in Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (1991; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 153.



Israel. None of these phenomena are things of the past. Collective attitudes, hateful opinions, altered memories, and denialism are still prevalent. It is with this in mind that we now turn to the issue of competing notions of victimization.

## *II. Victimization and Apathetic Social and Educational Attitudes*

In a black and white conflict setting, one is the aggressor and the other is the victim. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is anything but black and white. Each nation sees itself as the sole victim and criticizes or disputes the other's claim. Israelis see themselves as victims of the Holocaust and as victims in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Palestinians see themselves as victims of al-Nakba and as victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The result is a competition over who is the victim and who is the *real* victim. In addition, attempts are made to denounce the other side's claim to victimhood, and there is a refusal to acknowledge or empathize with the other side's pain—both socially and educationally. What remains is a volatile and apathetic environment.

I1 is an elderly Israeli female who emigrated from Israel and came to the U.S. in 1967. During our interview, she revealed that her grandmother had perished during the Holocaust. When asked whether family and personal memories affected her views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I assumed she would mention her grandmother and her family as direct victims of the Holocaust. However, she replied that, since she had been born in 1949, she did not live during the Holocaust. Instead, she remembered the day her childhood friend was injured in a bomb attack along the Gaza strip: "I remember being very mad and sad. She was a good friend and didn't deserve to get hurt, but she did because of those Gaza bombs. Our people suffered enough during the Holocaust, and years later children still get hurt or killed."<sup>35</sup> While she had mentioned her grandmother as a Holocaust victim earlier in the interview and here, too, made a reference to the Holocaust, her childhood friend's injury appeared as her primary claim to victimhood, possibly because it was the only case of violence to which she was personally connected. When asked whether in the current conflict both Israel and Palestine were to blame for violence, she replied, "Yes, Israel has been aggressive, but we have been aggressive in defense of Arab attacks. We are just the victims."<sup>36</sup> Her response, although on the opposite side of the spectrum, is nearly identical to P1's: "Palestine is aggressive because Israel is aggressive. They began it. We need to protect her."<sup>37</sup> In their eyes, only the opposing side is to blame: both Israel's and Palestine's attacks are based entirely on defense, not aggression.

This brings us to the question of victim versus *real* victim. According to psychologists Andrew Pilecki and Phillip L. Hammack, the argument of "victim" versus "righteous victim" causes "competition over victimhood, which has

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<sup>35</sup> I1, interview with Cynthia Castaneda (full transcription at the end of this article).

<sup>36</sup> I1, interview with Cynthia Castaneda.

<sup>37</sup> P1, interview with Cynthia Castaneda.

deleterious effects on intergroup relations, particularly with respect to intergroup reconciliation in postconflict settings.”<sup>38</sup> Efforts to remedy the situation in Israel and Palestine border on the miraculous, given that they are a long way from being a post-conflict setting. As the interviews with I1 and P1 show, their respective memories of impactful events and the overall concept of historical trauma have left them in a state of denial.

Knowing that you or your people have suffered is painful. The pain intensifies when people do not acknowledge this because they are simply unaware of or uneducated about your pain. That is certainly the dilemma many Palestinians find themselves in with regard to al-Nakba. P3, the son, in his late twenties, of a Palestinian refugee, expressed frustration that al-Nakba is not a well-known event. He classified those involved as being “victims of an unknown truth,”<sup>39</sup> which could be translated into being victims of nothing. To test his claim, albeit in an informal fashion (i.e., the results have to be considered anecdotal evidence), an online survey was designed with five questions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: of the 108 responses received, 81.5 percent said they were not familiar with al-Nakba, while 100 percent were familiar with the Holocaust.<sup>40</sup> Even though this underscores P3’s claim, the lack of familiarity with al-Nakba may be explained by the fact that al-Nakba is not regularly taught in U.S. schools. According to California’s “History-Social Science Content Standards,” the Holocaust must be taught as part of sections 10.8 and 10.9, but the standards make no mention of al-Nakba.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, P3 may see al-Nakba, formally commemorated every May, as a day of victimhood but many Israelis see the same day in a much more positive manner. While Palestinians mourn this day as al-Nakba or “catastrophe,” Israelis celebrate it as Independence Day. The question then becomes, how should the day be taught? As a day of celebration or day of mourning?

Apathy also makes an appearance in Israeli and Palestinian education standards. Both nations follow skewed education standards that teach incomplete narratives regarding the respective other nation’s history. The primary victims in this case are Israeli and Palestinian students. Israeli scholar Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (University of Haifa) maintains that educational systems in Israel universally teach about Independence Day but disregard the Palestinian narrative: “Israeli education controlled the Holocaust memory to create an emotional and conceptual

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<sup>38</sup> Andrew Pilecki and Phillip L. Hammack, “‘Victims’ versus ‘Righteous Victims’: The Rhetorical Construction of Social Categories in Historical Dialogue among Israeli and Palestinian Youth,” *Political Psychology* 35, no. 6 (December 2014): 813-830, here 815.

<sup>39</sup> P3, interview with Cynthia Castaneda (full transcription at the end of this article).

<sup>40</sup> Online Survey Results (published at the end of this article). The survey was conducted in 2019. The survey and its results were reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), HSR-19-20-471.

<sup>41</sup> California Department of Education, “History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve,” May 18, 2000, accessed May 24, 2020.

inability to acknowledge Palestinian suffering as part of a collective identity, or the very existence of the Nakbah.”<sup>42</sup> Even Palestinian scholar Seraj Assi (whose father would not talk about al-Nakba), when he was young, believed Israel to be a divine land: “Indeed, I believed that Israel had existed in Palestine from time immemorial. I remember asking my history teacher, ‘From whom did Israel gain independence in 1948?’ He hummed, gazed out into the distance, and said nothing. I gathered from his silence that Israel was a biblical miracle.”<sup>43</sup>

The Palestinians’ approach is equally flawed and apathetic: they flip the argument by stating that they are the real victims of the Holocaust. According to Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “in the Palestinian system [...] the new trend insists on the universal implications of the Holocaust within a narrative where the ultimate victims of the Holocaust are the Palestinians who were victimized by the victims of the Holocaust, who made possible the Nakbah, and actually made the Nakbah the inevitable outcome of the Holocaust.”<sup>44</sup> Ergo, based on trauma from al-Nakba, which was brought on by Holocaust survivors, Palestinians consider themselves the real victims of the Holocaust. It would be one thing for Palestinians to refer to themselves as indirect victims of the Holocaust but to see themselves as the ultimate or sole victims of the Holocaust sets aside or even denies the pain, suffering, and loss of the Holocaust’s Jewish victims. The Palestinian notion of ultimate victimhood can be traced back to the question of Israel’s legitimacy. There is fear that if Palestinians acknowledge the Holocaust in its entirety they are diminishing their own suffering (by comparison) and naming Israel the rightful heir of the land.<sup>45</sup> However, there have been attempts by Palestinians to correct their fellow Palestinians’ flawed views of the Holocaust.

In 2014, Mohammed Dajani Daoudi, the member of a prominent Palestinian family and, at the time, a professor at Jerusalem’s Al-Quds University, made international headlines when he took his students to visit Auschwitz in hopes of bringing awareness to the matter.<sup>46</sup> This echoed his previous peace efforts, including advocating for pluralism, non-violence, and reconciliation. However, the reactions from the Palestinian community were swift, angry, and violent. Dajani was declared a traitor by members of the Palestinian community, received

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<sup>42</sup> Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “The Production of Self and the Destruction of Other’s Memory and Identity in Israeli/Palestinian Education on the Holocaust/Nakbah,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 20, no. 3 (2001): 255-266, here 262.

<sup>43</sup> Assi, “Why My Father Made Me Forget.” Admittedly, Assi’s lack of al-Nakba knowledge is primarily attributed to not having been taught by his own family. It cannot be blamed solely on the education system, but the fact that the teacher did not reply to Assi’s question — “From whom did Israel gain independence in 1948?” — displays an anti-al-Nakba academic in Israel’s schools.

<sup>44</sup> Gur-Ze’ev, “Production of Self and the Destruction of Other’s Memory and Identity,” 260.

<sup>45</sup> Yoram Meital and Paula M. Rayman, *Recognition as Key for Reconciliation: Israel, Palestine, and Beyond* (2017; Boston: Brill, 2018), 66.

<sup>46</sup> Tiffanie Wen, “Mohammed Dajani Daoudi: Journey to the Other,” Guernica, last modified April 15, 2015, accessed May 24, 2020.

death threats, and suffered extensive property damage.<sup>47</sup> Two months later, Dajani submitted his letter of resignation and, rather than reject it, Al-Quds University accepted it. This harsh and apathetic reaction directly correlates with the traumatizing memories of al-Nakba and the corresponding emotions. Dajani being denounced a “traitor,” with protests erupting on the Al-Quds University campus, demonstrates how close-minded members of the public can be. Rather than respect what European Jews had endured during the Holocaust, they angled the story so that it skipped over the death of six million Jews, focusing on how it affected them instead.

Dajani’s case was one of “education rejected” but there have also been cases of “education denied” (or at least “education compromised”). In 2011, Amendment No. 40 to the Budgets Foundations Law 5771-1985 passed the Knesset and became Israeli law. Nicknamed the “Nakba Law,” the English translation of the amendment states the following:

If the Minister of Finance sees that an entity has made an expenditure that, in essence, constitutes one of those specified below [...], he is entitled, with the authorization of the minister responsible for the budget item under which this entity is budgeted or supported, after hearing the entity, to reduce the sums earmarked to be transferred from the state budget to this entity under any law: (1) Rejecting the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state; (2) Incitement to racism, violence or terrorism; (3) Support for an armed struggle or act of terror by an enemy state or a terrorist organization against the State of Israel; (4) Commemorating Independence Day or the day of the establishment of the state as a day of mourning; (5) An act of vandalism or physical desecration that dishonors the state’s flag or symbol.<sup>48</sup>

When MK Alex Miller, a sponsor of the bill, was asked why he supported it, he claimed that it was meant to prevent the funding of incitement: “I view Independence Day as a state symbol, but from an early age, some citizens of Israel are taught to view this day as a day of mourning! So, either we want education for coexistence and peace, or we want pupils to be brainwashed and incited against [other] citizens of their state from an early age.”<sup>49</sup> What Miller and other supporters of the bill fail to comprehend is that this amendment jeopardizes Arab-Israeli culture and that, like Seraj Assi in his youth, future generations may be kept unaware of a significant part of Israeli and Palestinian history—to avoid incitement. Yet, for Palestinians, the amendment itself is incitement and cause for

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<sup>47</sup> “Prof. Mohammed Dajani Daoudi,” video file, 23:06, YouTube, July 19, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Although the above quote is from a site dedicated to Arab minority rights in Israel, it contains the full English translation of the amendment: Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, “Budget Foundations Law (Amendment No. 40) 5771-2011,” May 4, 2011, accessed May 24, 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Alex Miller interviewed in Michaeli, “Yisrael Beiteinu MK: Teaching the Nakba in Israel’s Schools Is Incitement.”

anger as it, in effect, declares their memories and trauma irrelevant.<sup>50</sup> Like the closed-minded critics of Dajani and their attitude toward teaching Palestinians about the Holocaust, the Knesset here took an equally apathetic approach toward teaching Israelis about al-Nakba, thereby fueling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The concern regarding Israel's and Palestine's flawed educational approaches to their respective historical trauma is shared by David G. Kibble, Samira Alayan and Daniel Bar-Tal. According to Kibble, a former British naval officer and teacher, Palestinian Authority primary school children are taught that "Israel was founded in 1948, 'when the Zionist gangs stole Palestine and expelled its people from their cities, their villages, their lands and their houses and established the state of Israel.'"<sup>51</sup> In reality, the establishment of Israel was the outcome of a United Nations partitions plan.<sup>52</sup> According to Samira Alayan, a researcher at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Palestinian high school textbooks give the Holocaust a wide berth: "Palestinian textbooks," Alayan claims, "do not [...] describe the Holocaust and the Nazi crimes against humanity before and during World War II. They only provide information on other events of the war and their implications, both for the Palestinian people and for the establishment of the State of Israel."<sup>53</sup> Conversely, Israeli academic Daniel Bar-Tal (Tel Aviv University) argues that, up until the 1990s, Israeli textbooks contained some positive imagery of the Arab culture but the majority of them used negative stereotypes: "The stories describing early Arab-Jewish relations during the pre-state period and after the establishment of the State of Israel are frequently of a violent nature. In all, the Arabs are portrayed as aggressors, leading to their delegitimization as a 'mob,' 'bloodthirsty,' 'murderers,' 'inhuman enemy,' or 'rioters'."<sup>54</sup> These skewed educational perspectives are unfortunate and, what is worse, dangerous. Their victims – if we want to continue the victimization discourse – are the students and thus, the next generations of Israelis and Palestinians who are taught contents that will fuel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but denied contents that might facilitate constructive social interaction and, ultimately, reconciliation.

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<sup>50</sup> There are parallels on the other side of the globe: U.S. westward expansion and the expulsion of Native Americans from their homelands is a subject that is still not taught as much as it should be and that, until the 1960s, was hardly taught at all in American schools, but it has become part of the required educational curriculum in the U.S., unlike al-Nakba in Israel.

<sup>51</sup> David G. Kibble, "A Plea for Improved Education about 'the Other' in Israel and Palestine," *The Curriculum Journal* 23, no. 4 (2012): 553-566, here 554.

<sup>52</sup> November 30, 1947, is regarded as the start of the Palestinian War and al-Nakba not only because it is the day the United Nations voted to partition Palestine, but it is also the day that armed Arabs ambushed a Jewish bus headed to Jerusalem, leading to Israeli retaliation and ultimately violence that has continued to this day. See Black, *Enemies and Neighbors*, 105.

<sup>53</sup> Samira Alayan, "The Holocaust in Palestinian Textbooks: Differences and Similarities in Israel and Palestine," *Comparative Education Review* 60, no. 1 (February 2016): 80-104, here 90.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, "The Arab Image in Hebrew School Textbooks," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 8, no. 2 (2001): 1-11, here 5.

It is not for anyone to determine whether the contradicting memories of the past – like those of May 1948 – should be those of joy or sorrow. Unless the desired outcome is a controlled chain of ignorance and hate, dual narratives must be taught as both contain truth. It is also not for anyone to say whether Israel or Palestine is the *rightful* victim. There is no denying the existence of traumatic memories that prove that *both* are victims in their own right. Rather than compete for *rightful* victimhood, sympathy and respect toward the other side's trauma should be the order of the day. Finally, it is not for anyone to engage in the business of quantifying pain, suffering, destruction, and death. Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians, all have their respective memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba, which qualify as historical trauma that encompasses not just the terror of the original events but all related violence that has continued up until the present day.

### *Conclusion*

When a conflict between nations is as volatile as that between Israel and Palestine, there is rarely just one trigger. Nevertheless, emotion is a powerful instigator of human action or reaction. If one is happy, the reaction may be laughter or smiles. If one is angry, hatred and negative thoughts take over, often leading to even worse reactions. Since memories of the Holocaust, of al-Nakba, and of current violence are traumatic, is it surprising that individual resentment lingers? Decades after P1 left Israel, his memories retain anger for the devastation he associates with Jews pushing him "out of our home." Memories, both constructed and real, have been fueling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Apathetic attitudes that disregard the victimhood of others in favor of one's own status as the "righteous victim" fuel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today. Flawed education standards in Israel and Palestine, by presenting skewed narratives of the past and by being taught to children in order to bring them to dislike either Israel or Palestine, may well continue to fuel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for generations to come.

For a television special, comedian Conan O'Brien traveled to Israel where he visited both Jerusalem and Palestinian refugee camps. His conversations with Israeli and Palestinian residents were contradictory, comparable to the contradictory nature of P1's and I1's recollections. O'Brien ended the episode with the following statement: "Negotiations at a government level are great but until people of different backgrounds can barbeque next to each other in the same park and their kids can kick the same soccer ball, you will not have peace at a molecular level."<sup>55</sup> O'Brien's statement proves the power of individual perspectives. Even if the Israeli and Palestinian governments miraculously come to an agreement tomorrow, individual resentment between their cultures will remain. Hate lingers in both Palestinian and Israeli memory and historical trauma. As acknowledged by the individuals interviewed for this article, traumatic memories are stronger than happy ones. It will therefore be up to each individual to decide when it is

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<sup>55</sup> Conan O'Brien, "Conan Without Borders: Israel," TBS, originally aired September 19, 2017.

time to acknowledge the others' trauma and begin attempts to heal together. This much is clear, though – and it echoes George Santayana's statement quoted at the beginning of this article: there will not be reconciliation without education and constructive social interaction.

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#### *Appendix: Online Survey Results*

Have you heard of the Holocaust?

108 responses: Yes (100%); No (0%)

Have you heard of al-Nakba?

108 responses: Yes (18.5%); No (81.5%)

Are you familiar with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

108 responses: Yes (71.3%); Somewhat (24.1%); No (4.6%)

Do you believe the media vilify one perspective of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more than the other?

108 responses: Yes (57.4%); Maybe (22.2%); Not sufficiently familiar (12%); No (8.4%)

If so, who? Not required to answer.

93 responses: Palestine (40.9%); Israel (34.4%); Unsure (24.7%)

#### *Interview with P1:*

*Elderly Palestinian male who emigrated from Israel and came to the U.S. in the 1960s*

CC: Are you familiar with the Holocaust? Are you familiar with al-Nakba?

P1: Yes, I know both, but I lived al-Nakba. My mother died.

CC: I'm very sorry to hear that. We can discuss it in a few moments. What value do you see in memory and remembering, or what does it mean to you?

P1: Memory reminds me of my past, it shows me good things and mistakes. I learn from my mistakes. If memory is happy or good, I use it to remind myself how to be happy. Not everything is bad.

CC: I agree, we all have memories, good and bad. Which do you think are stronger, painful memories or happy memories?

P1: Pain is stronger. It changes people. When I think of al-Nakba, I get angry and it's harder to forget pain over happiness. Painful memories made me stronger and determined.

CC: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has many factors to take into consideration, but do you think personal or family memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba play a role?

P1: I think of al-Nakba, and I remember. I fled with my mother when I was one, from burning villages. She was killed, and I was left an orphan. The Jews

- pushed us out of our home, killed my mother. They forced me to hate. Now they launch airstrikes and Palestinians die! We have to defend ourselves. It's not their fault.
- CC: One last question. There is proof of violence at the hands of both Israel and Palestine. Do you feel that, at one point, both nations are to blame for the conflict?
- P1: Palestine is aggressive because Israel is aggressive. They began it. We need to protect her.

*Brief Conversation with P2:*

*P1's granddaughter*

- CC: Question, he mentioned that he was orphaned at one, and his mom died, and he was alone? I don't mean to offend, but is that true? It is a lot to remember for a one-year-old.
- P2: Yeah, he has been saying that story since my mom was little but we're pretty sure it's not true. He wasn't born until after my great-grandma had fled and went to Tel-Aviv. Honestly, we don't know much but my great-grandma didn't die during the exodus. She died like seven years later or something. He was little, but not one. To be honest, what we know is based off of what my grandma said and what he has said but it's not much, and who knows if it's true.
- CC: Have you ever considered an Ancestry.com search?
- P2: Not really, doubt we will. It doesn't matter that much to me.

*Interview with P3:*

*Son, in his late twenties, of a Palestinian refugee*

- CC: Are you familiar with the Holocaust? Are you familiar with al-Nakba?
- P3: Yeah, I know about both.
- CC: What value do you see in memory and remembering, or what does it mean to you?
- P3: Wow, yeah, um. The sarcastic in me wants to say memory is our brain's way of torturing us with our mistakes and faults. But on a more positive side, if our life has been good, and mine has been, memory allows us to relive the good times. If I am upset over some ridiculous thing I'll think back to happier times, and hopefully I cheer up.
- CC: Well said. We all have memories, good and bad. In your opinion which can be stronger, painful memories or happy ones?
- P3: Honestly, Hell yeah! Painful memories are the worst, and if I think back to when my grandpa passed away it will take more than a few happy times to draw me back. Does that make sense?
- CC: No, yeah, definitely. Sadness in general tends to have a lot of power over us, whether it is in the moment or when we remember later. OK, so, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has many factors to take into consideration, but



- do you think personal or family memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba play a role?
- P3: My dad is from Israel, but our family is Palestinian, my grandparents were pushed out during Nakba and he was born in a refugee camp outside of Jerusalem. Shu'fat.
- CC: I'm sorry can you spell that real quick?
- P3: Yeah, it's S-H-U-F-A-T.
- CC: Awesome, thanks. OK, so your family is Palestinian, and your grandparents fled during al-Nakba? Any memories?
- P3: Yeah, I've been told a few but honestly my family doesn't talk about it. My dad lived in the camp until he was ten, and then they all moved here but, yeah, my grandparents lost their home, jobs. My grandfather's brother, I think, was killed in the mess, but no one talks about it, you know. Even my own family won't talk about it. You know, we are victims of an unknown truth, and it is annoying as hell, honestly. Everyone knows about the Holocaust, but no one seems to know that it led to problems for other people, you know.
- CC: One last question. There is proof of violence at the hands of both Israel and Palestine. Do you feel that, at one point, both nations are to blame for the conflict?
- P3: Yeah, I may be Palestinian but definitely both countries are to blame for all the fighting. No one is innocent at this point.

*Interview with I1:*

*Elderly Israeli female who emigrated from Israel and came to the U.S. in 1967*

- CC: Are you familiar with the Holocaust? Are you familiar with al-Nakba?
- I1: Yes, I know both. My grandmother died in the Holocaust, and I was born in Israel in 1949.
- CC: What value do you see in memory and remembering, or what does it mean to you?
- I1: Memory helps me keep my past alive and makes us strong and [memories] teach. What I saw and remember from my grandparents I now do as a grandmother. They keep us comfortable and safe, and we learn.
- CC: What about painful memories?
- I1: Pain is harder, we do not want to be angry or sad, but the memories are still there, and sometimes we need them.
- CC: We all have memories, good and bad. Do you think that painful memories are stronger than happy memories?
- I1: I always felt that it was easier to get angry than happy. I could be happy, and one thing happens, and now I'm angry. Then it would take more than one happy thing to make me not angry. Maybe, yes, painful memories are stronger than happy memories but sometimes the pain helps us grow and teach us. We learn from it. But we should try to find the happy too.

CC: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has many factors to take into consideration, but do you think personal or family memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba play a role?

I1: My grandmother was killed but I don't remember the Holocaust, I was born in 1949, but I grew up in Israel and remember fighting and smoke. When I was little, my friend Lea got hurt in a bomb attack a long time ago. I remember being very mad and sad. She was a good friend and didn't deserve to get hurt, but she did because of those Gaza bombs. Our people suffered enough during the Holocaust, and years later children still get hurt or killed. The suffering never ends.

CC: OK, one last question. There is proof of violence at the hands of both Israel and Palestine. Do you feel that, at one point, both nations are to blame for the conflict?

I1: Yes, Israel has been aggressive, but we have been aggressive in defense of Palestinian attacks. We are just the victims.

*Interview with I2:*

*Granddaughter, in her mid-twenties, of a Holocaust survivor*

CC: Are you familiar with the Holocaust? Are you familiar with al-Nakba?

I2: Well, yeah, the Holocaust, obviously. I am Jewish, and my grandma was a Holocaust survivor who moved to Israel after the war. I didn't know her, though. She died before I was born, 1986, I think. But, wait, I'm sorry, what was the other thing?

CC: al-Nakba.

I2: Isn't that when all the people were kicked out of Palestine or what was Palestine or something? Like decades ago.

CC: Yes, the 1948 Palestinian exodus.

I2: Yeah, that. I don't know more than that to be honest. Sorry.

CC: No, no, it's fine. I just asked to gauge others' knowledge of the two events. OK, moving on, what value do you see in memory and remembering, or what does it mean to you?

I2: I have a terrible memory, which sucks, but I think memories or stories that trigger memories help us grow as people. It helps us avoid the same mistakes, and hypothetically memories can help us mature, while valuing our past.

CC: In your opinion, which are stronger, painful memories or happy ones?

I2: It's not healthy but people tend to focus on the sad memories. We all have happy memories of course, but I feel that they are not fully appreciated or taken advantage of.

CC: Yes, it can feel easier to be sad or upset, rather than try to be cheerful. OK, so the main reason for this conversation, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The on-going tension has many factors to take into consideration, but do you

- think personal or familial memories of the Holocaust and al-Nakba play a role?
- I2: What do you mean?
- CC: Do you believe that personal memories or stories of the Holocaust or al-Nakba, passed on to later generations, impact their perspective? For example, the great-granddaughter of an al-Nakba survivor heard of the [Palestinian] exodus from a family narrative. Do you think it could affect her current opinion regarding Israel?
- I2: Well, I mean, yeah, if it is what she has heard and it caused problems for her family, I am pretty sure she wouldn't be happy.
- CC: Does your family have any stories of the Holocaust or your grandmother's time in Israel?
- I2: My grandmother rarely discussed the Holocaust, I mean, can you blame her? She lost her sister and mother. Although she died of a heart attack, my mom said she suffered from depression. Israel wasn't much better though. Apparently, grandma had a cousin who was killed by a bomb while living there. At least I think it was a cousin, or was it a friend?
- CC: Oh, so your grandmother moved to Israel with family members?
- I2: Honestly, I have no idea. It is the story I have heard. My grandmother used to talk about explosions and fires, and I wouldn't be surprised if that was one of the reasons she chose to move to the States. Doesn't exactly make for a happy home.
- CC: OK, last question. There is proof of violence at the hands of both Israel and Palestine. Do you feel, that at one point, both nations are to blame for the conflict?
- I2: Is there proof of that? That they are both being violent?
- CC: Yes, often when one side attacks, the other will retaliate and vice versa. Ultimately, there can be civilian casualties on both ends; both injuries and deaths, as you grandmother clearly witnessed during her time in Israel.
- I2: I am sure that both sides are guilty of violence but, if I'm being honest, I doubt Israel has instigated. I'm pretty sure if they are violent it is because they have to respond to Palestinian attacks and defend themselves. So, yes, they are both guilty of violence, but I feel that Israel's violence is more of a reaction than action. Does that make sense?
- CC: Yes, it does.
- I2: Don't get me wrong, I know Israel is being aggressive too. I don't look at the news often but once in a while I hear about Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli soldiers, and it is sad to think about but that's the way it is.
- CC: OK, well repeating an earlier question do you feel that memory plays a role in any of that?
- I2: Probably, but at this point it's just pure dislike and hate. I mean, from my perspective, I never lived in Israel, nor did my mom, but the stories my grandmother passed down have made up my mind.