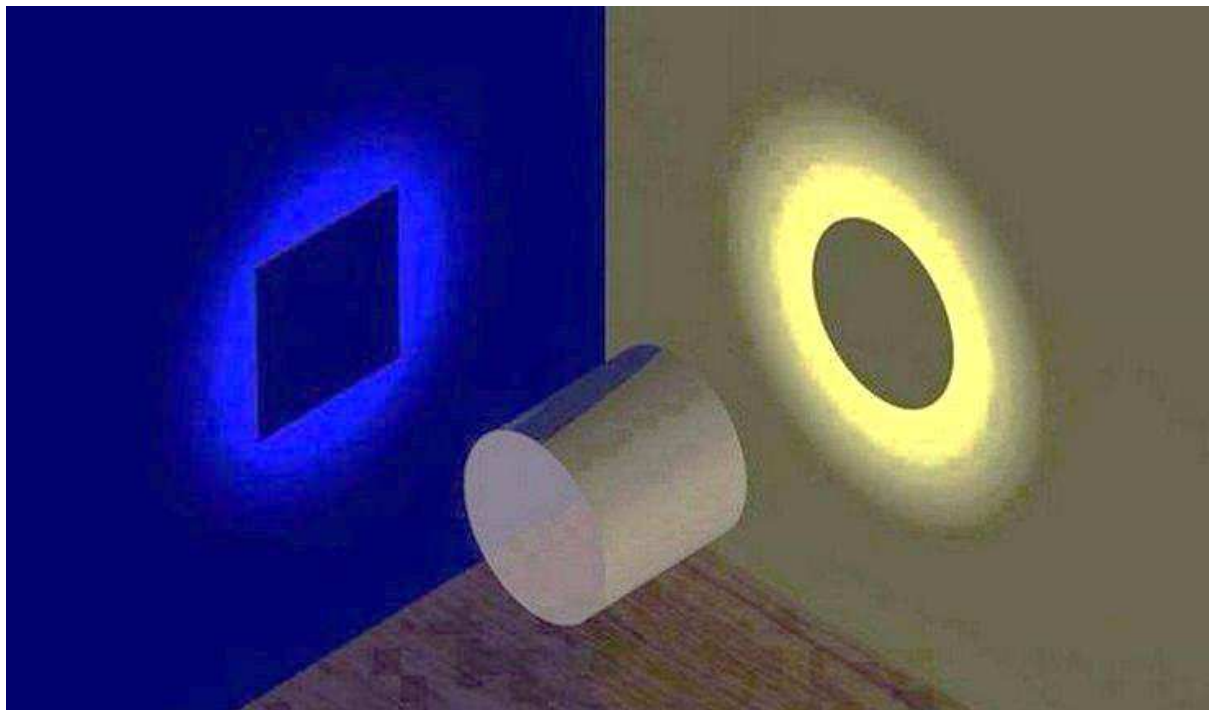
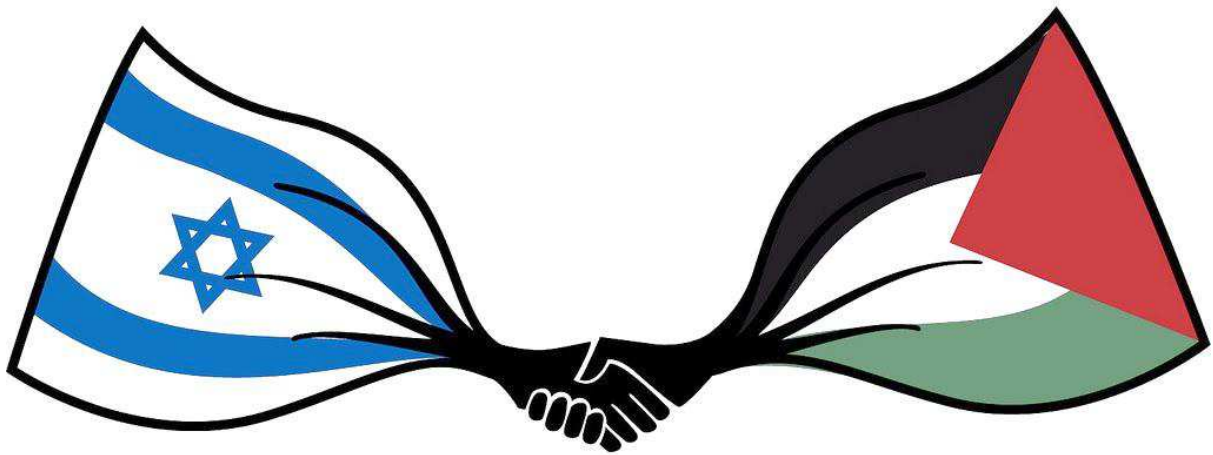


YLJC Judaism 101

**INDEPENDENCE
DAY OR DISASTER?
DIFFERENT
NARRATIVES TO
1948**

Study pack



PROLOGUE

WHAT IS A NARRATIVE?

A king offered a prize of great treasure to any blind man who could identify a given animal by touch alone. Six blind men took up the challenge, so they were led to the animal, and set about feeling it.

“It’s a snake!” declared one.

“No, it’s not an animal at all, it’s a fan!” cried a second.

“This is just a tree with a thick trunk,” said the third.

“Is it a wall?” asked the fourth.

“This feels just like a rope,” announced the fifth.

“Why did you tell us this was a living thing? It’s merely a spear,” complained the sixth.

The king chuckled to himself: none of the blind men had won his treasure. They had all been standing in front of an elephant: the trunk, ears, legs, side, tail and tusks. It is impossible to recognise an elephant by examining a single part of it.

Indian folktale

SOME GROUND RULES

- Listening without verbal or non-verbal interruption
- Nobody here is trying to offend anybody else
- Reacting to disagreeable or shocking ideas with other ideas, not with anger or harsh words
- Recalling that every human being, racial group, national group and religious group is entitled to dignity and a home

SOME TERMINOLOGY

- Yom haAtzma’ut
- Nakba Day
- Israel
- The State of Israel
- Zionism
- A Jewish state
- Palestine
- Palestinians

TWO PEOPLES, ONE LAND

ISRAEL, 1947

On Saturday morning, they said, the General Assembly would convene at a place called Lake Success and there they would determine our fate. “Who is for life and who for destruction,” said Mr Abramski. And Mrs Tosia Krochmal fetched the extension cord from the sewing machine in her husband’s dolls’ hospital to enable the Lembergs to bring their heavy black radio receiver outside and set it up on the table on the balcony. (It was the only radio in Amos Street, if not in the whole neighbourhood.)

They would put it on at full volume, and we would all assemble in the Lembergs’ apartment, in the yard, in the street, on the balcony of the apartment upstairs and on the balcony opposite, and so the whole street would be able to hear the live broadcast, and learn the verdict and what the future held for us (“if indeed there is a future after this Saturday”).

But on Saturday morning it turned out that the fateful meeting due to take place that afternoon at Lake Success would start here only in the evening, because of the time difference between New York and Jerusalem. The vote, they worked out, would be taken when it was very late in Jerusalem, close to midnight, an hour when this child ought to be long since tucked in bed, because we have to get up for school in the morning. Mother said: “We’ll sit outside by the fence and listen to the broadcast from the Lembergs’ balcony, and if the result is positive, we’ll wake you up even if it’s midnight and tell you. We promise.”

After midnight, toward the end of the vote, I woke up. My bed was underneath the window that looked out on the street, so all I had to do was kneel and peer through the slats of the shutters. I shivered. Like a frightening dream, crowds of shadows stood massed together silently by the yellow light of the street lamp, in our yard, in the neighbouring yards, on balconies, in the roadway, like a vast assembly of ghosts.

Hundreds of people not uttering a sound.

Not a word was heard, not a cough or a footstep. No mosquito hummed. Only the deep, rough voice of the American presenter blaring from the radio, which was set at full volume and made the night air tremble, or it may have been the voice of the president of the Assembly, the Brazilian Oswaldo Aranha. One after another he read out the names of the last countries on the list, in English alphabetical order, followed immediately by the reply of their representative. United Kingdom: abstains. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: yes. United States: yes. Uruguay: yes. Venezuela: yes. Yemen: no. Yugoslavia: abstains.

At that the voice suddenly stopped, and an otherworldly silence descended and froze the scene, a terrified, panic-stricken silence, a silence of hundreds of people holding their breath, such as I have never heard in my life either before or after that night. Then the thick, slightly hoarse voice came back, shaking the air as it summed up with a rough dryness brimming with excitement: 33 for. 13 against. 10 abstentions and one country absent from the vote. The resolution is approved.

A cataclysmic shout, a shout that could shift rocks, that could freeze your blood, as though all the dead who had ever died here and all those still to die had received a brief window to shout. Roars of joy and a medley of hoarse cries and, “The Jewish People Lives!” and somebody trying to sing Hatikvah and women shrieking and clapping and *Here in the Land Our Fathers Loved*.

I jumped into my trousers but didn’t bother with a shirt or sweater and shot out our door, and some neighbour or stranger picked me up so I wouldn’t be trampled underfoot, and I was passed from hand to hand until I landed on my father’s shoulders near our front gate. My father and mother were standing there hugging, and my very cultured, polite father was standing there shouting at the top of his voice, not words or wordplay or Zionist slogans, not even cries of joy, but one long naked shout like before words were invented.

Sheikh Jarrah, Katamon, Bakaa, and Talbieh must have heard us that night wrapped in a silence that might have resembled the terrified silence that lay upon the Jewish neighbourhoods before the result was announced. There, there were no celebrations tonight. They must have heard the sounds of rejoicing from the Jewish streets, they may have stood at their windows to watch the few joyful fireworks that injured the dark sky, pursing their lips in silence.

Amos Oz

PALESTINE, 1947

My childhood was in a village called Lifta, I'll never forget it. My house was beautiful; it was made of white stone, with red roses on the stairs. I can't forget playing underneath the roses. When we were children we would collect the white flowers and give them to our teachers. I remember that we preferred to walk to school so we could look at the trees and the souk. Before the war we were living in peace, dreaming of the best possible future.

We were living peacefully, until right before the war, suddenly the attitude of some of the Jewish people changed. People got scared after the Deir Yassin massacre [where Zionist paramilitary groups attacked a Palestinian village near Jerusalem]. They wanted to frighten us, they had a microphone and went around saying that if we wouldn't leave we would be killed like in Deir Yassin. They scared us so much that we left.

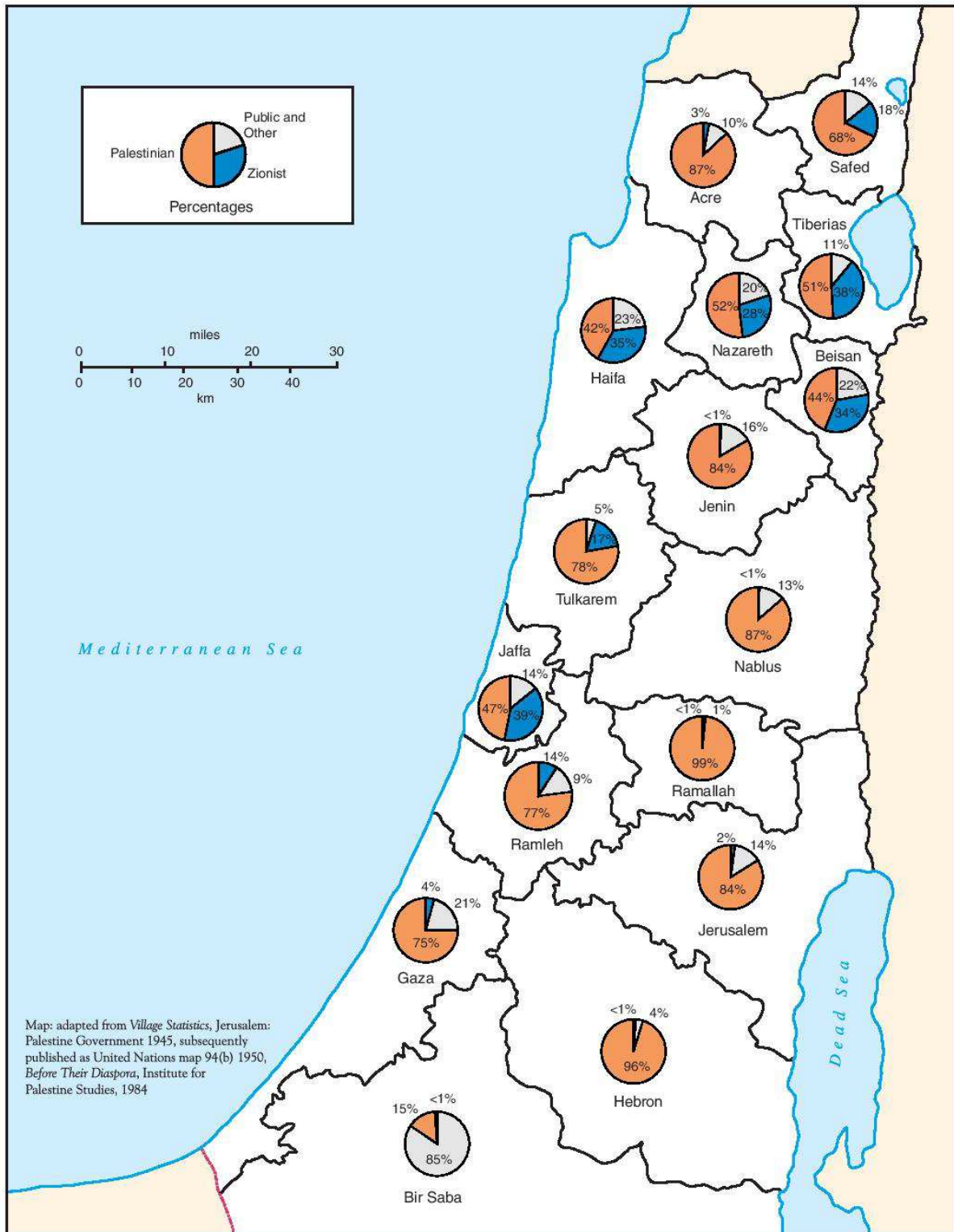
We had to go through the valley, walking until we reached Ramallah. When the war started we began moving our furniture to a safer place. The Jaffa road was still open then. But then things got worse, the man who moved our furniture got killed on the road. He was our neighbour.

We had a piano at home, they say the Palestinians were not civilised, but we had a piano. As a child I went to music school. We took the piano with us, together with some light furniture and some clothes. We couldn't bring our toys or books, it made me sad. But we took the piano. When they started threatening us with Deir Yassin we just fled. We could not take the rest with us. I wonder what happened to our things. We have the piano until now: it's with my niece.

Aida Najjar

Background information: of all the towns and villages depopulated by Palestinians in 1947-48, Lifta is the only one which has not been either repopulated or demolished. Instead, its buildings stand empty and overgrown as a nature reserve/ historical site.

LAND OWNERSHIP, 1945



WHERE FROM HERE?

CONFLICT NARRATIVES

A historical narrative is not necessarily intended to describe the past in objective terms but to describe it in such a way as is needed for the continued survival of the society in light of its conflict with the other side. The historical narrative, although based on real events to a certain extent, is biased, selective, and distorted for the purposes of addressing the society's needs in the present. The narrative tends to emphasise certain facts and ignore others.

The narrative is a social and national structuring of the conflict, and it combines four basic perspectives in the context of peace and justice:

1. Justifying the objectives of the conflict – including its causes, its conduct, and its lack of resolution – as well as emphasising the absolute importance of these objectives, the essentiality of their realisation, and the danger of not realising them, while denying the objectives of the other side and presenting them as unjust and immoral;
2. Presenting a self-image as a victim of the rival's objectives and conduct while emphasising the injustice, suffering, and loss caused by the conflict;
3. Shedding all responsibility for creation of the injustice and attributing it to the other side; and
4. Conditioning resolution of the conflict on the remedying of the injustice, suffering, and loss, including a demand for admission of guilt, assumption of responsibility, apology, and appropriate compensation for the consequences of the injustice.

Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov