ISRAEL AND PALESTINE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND AN ANALYSIS FROM THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE PATHS TO PEACE

Wilson Garcia Pereira Junior[1], Marta Helena Szadkoski[2], Noeli Kuhl Svoboda Bretanha[3], Carla Pinna Guimarães Svoboda[4], Walfrido Kühl Svoboda[5], Elessandra Fabiana Monteiro dos Santos[6] and Aroldo da Silva Tavares[7]

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to explore the relationship between the historical conflicts described from the biblical period to the contemporary conflicts between Israel and Palestine. From the biblical narrative, the study examines how these stories influence the perceptions and identities of the peoples involved. The conflicts between Israel and Palestine are one of the most complex and protracted issues in contemporary history, with deep roots shrouded in historical, religious, and cultural narratives. Understanding these conflicts through different lenses can provide a more complete understanding and inform approaches to peace. For the development of this study, a multidisciplinary approach was used that combines literary, historical and theological analysis.

Keywords: Israel and Palestine. Historical Context. Biblical Perspective. Paths to Peace.

[1] Master of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering
State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE)
Email: garciaguibor@gmail.com
LATTES: http://lattes.cnpq.br/1746884421002322
[2] Doctorate student in Contemporary Integration of Latin America (PPG-ICAL)
E-mail: m.h.szadkoski@gmail.com
LATTES: http://lattes.cnpq.br/1034361124671052
[3] Master of Laws
International University - Lisbon/Portugal (Revalidated by UFRN)
E-mail: noeli0310@gmail.com
LATTES: http://lattes.cnpq.br/7606044301256305
[4] Free Theologian
Love Church Ministry
E-mail: carlapg.svoboda@gmail.com
LATTES: http://lattes.cnpq.br/5358219735123970
[5] Dr. in Animal Science
Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA)
E-mail: wsvoboda.lux@gmail.com
LATTES: http://lattes.cnpq.br/3896390855555030
[6] Master's student at the Graduate Program in Society, Culture and Borders
State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE)
Email: elessandrafmsantos@gmail.com
LATTES: https://lattes.cnpq.br/6845017120528953
[7] Master in Society, Culture and Borders
State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE)
E-mail: professoraroldotavares@gmail.com
LATTES: http://lattes.cnpq.br/6627759232681237

INTRODUCTION

The conflicts between Israel and Palestine represent one of the most complex and persistent in contemporary geopolitics. Involving issues of territory, national identity, human rights and religion, this conflict has profound implications for regional and global stability. For many, the roots of this confrontation are not only political or territorial, but also historical and religious, going back to ancestral narratives that still resonate in the collective identities of the peoples involved (MARTINELLI, 2023).

The Bible[8], which comprises the Old Testament, common to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the New Testament, of the Christian tradition, common to Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Evangelicals, Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals, is an important book to understand the historical roots of these conflicts. In the book of Genesis, the stories of Abraham and his sons, Ishmael and Isaac, are told, the starting point for the divergences and rivalries of the peoples of Israel and Palestine.

The Qur'an[9], inspired by Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, teaches that Ishmael was the son of the same promise (Sura 19:54; compare Sura 37:83-109 with Genesis 22:1-19), which is why Muslims believe that God's covenant promises with Abraham were made to the descendants of Ishmael, not Isaac. Thus Muslims claim these covenant promises, i.e., possession of Palestinian land.

Ishmael is considered an ancestor of the Arab peoples, and Isaac, an ancestor of the Israelites, both represent not only historical figures, but also powerful symbols in religious and cultural narratives. God's promise to Abraham to make him the father of many nations manifests itself in complex and often conflicting ways in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. This contradiction has generated conflicts between Muslims and ethnic Jews, being the cause of war and terror in the Middle East.

This article seeks to explore how biblical narratives influence contemporary perceptions and attitudes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By analyzing the Holy Scriptures, one seeks in the historical evolution of Abraham's descendants a deeper understanding of the symbolic and historical roots of this conflict. By utilizing the references of the Bible under these historical connections, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, highlighting the importance of an approach that integrates historical, religious, and cultural perspectives in the pursuit of lasting peace.

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[8] Holy Bible, King James Version. 2nd ed. (2015).
[9] Noble Quran (NASR Helmi, Trans.). 2nd Ed. (2004).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE PEOPLES OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

To understand the historical context, it is necessary to go back to about 1850 B.C., when Teran's son, Abram, received a call from God. Teran and his family had left Ur of the Chaldeans (a region that is now the territory of Iraq) for Canaan, but when they arrived in Haran, an important city in western Asia, they settled there. Today it is a city in Turkey, called Harran.

Then the Lord said to Abram: "Go out from your country, from among your relatives and from your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1-2).

Abram departed, as the Lord had commanded him, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all that belonged to them; and set out for the land of Canaan. He crossed the land to the place of the Oak Moreh in Shechem, a place inhabited by the Canaanites. And God appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." Abram built an altar to the Lord in this place, for the Lord had appeared to him there. Continuing their journey, they set out toward the hills east of Bethel, where they set up camp, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There, too, Abram built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. Leaving then towards the Negev (a desert that occupies about 60% of the territory of Israel). At that time, the land went through a period of famine, and Abram left for Egypt to survive during this period.

After spending some time in Egypt, Abram returns to the Negev with his wife, his nephew Lot, and everything he owned. From Negev he went to Bethel, going from place to place, until he came to a place between Bethel and Ai, where he had already stayed at another time.

Because of the large flock and possessions they had, Abram and Lot could no longer live in the same area. Thus, Abram proposed that each one go in a different direction. Lot chose the Jordan Valley and set out eastward. Abram stayed in the land of Canaan. The Lord said to Abram, "From where you are, look north, south, east, and west; all the land that you are seeing I will give to you and to your descendants forever. (...) Go this land from one side to the other, because I will give it to you" (Genesis 13:14-17).

At this, Abram moved to Hebron, near the oaks of Mamre, where he built an altar in dedication to the Lord. Currently the land of Hebron is located in the south of the West Bank, Palestinian territory occupied by Israel.

At that time there was a war between the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Belah (also called Zoar) who fought against Chedorlaomer, king of Elam; Tidal,

king of Goim; Amraphel, king of Babylon, and Arioch, king of Elasar; that is, four kings against five. The victorious invaders plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and set out for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the supplies. They also captured Lot, Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom, and all that he had.

From that moment on, Abraham and his descendants began to consider the land of Canaan as their definitive home, a space promised by God and destined for future generations. This bond with the land not only established a national identity for Abraham's descendants but also grounded their traditions and beliefs, perpetuating the heritage that would span centuries. Thus, the relationship between the people and the land would become their Hebrew history and culture, symbolizing the faith, promise, and continuity of the chosen people over time.

HISTORY OF ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

Biblically, Abraham is considered the patriarch of both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. He received God's promise that he would be the father of many nations. Ishmael is Abraham's first son, born to his Egyptian maidservant, Hagar, due to Sarah's barrenness (Genesis 16).

Isaac is the son of Abraham and Sarah, born miraculously when Sarah was already old. Isaac is the son of promise, through whom God would continue His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 21:1-3). God also made a promise concerning Ishmael, stating that he would father a great nation (Genesis 17:20).

The conflict between Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 21:8-21), and Sarah's concern for Isaac's inheritance, led Abraham to expel Hagar and Ishmael. God cared for Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness and reiterated his promise to make Ishmael a great nation (Genesis 21:8-21).

DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM

Ishmael had twelve sons, and they dwelt in the region extending from Havilah to Shur, in eastern Egypt, toward Assur (Genesis 25:12-18). Their villages and camps were named after Nebaioth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massah, Hadad, Temah, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. And they lived in hostility against all their brothers.

Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, had twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 35:23-26).

Although the Bible does not chronicle many direct conflicts between Israelites and Ishmaelites, the hostility between descendants of Isaac and Ishmael is often seen as a metaphor for the subsequent conflicts between their descendants. Historically, conflicts in the Middle East between Jews (descendants of Isaac) and Arabs (descendants of Ishmael) have deep and complex roots, including religious, territorial, and political factors, and to understand the current conflict a little better, it is important to understand the historical context during the period before World War I.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE REGION OF ISRAEL AT THE END OF THE TURKISH-OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE BRITISH MANDATE

To understand the contemporary conflicts between Israel and Palestine, it is essential to analyze the historical context of the region, especially during the last years of the Turkish-Ottoman Empire and the transition to the British Mandate. This chapter explores the political, social, and economic dynamics of Ottoman Palestine, the world panorama at the time, the emerging conflicts, and the demographic changes that occurred in the region.

EMERGENCE AND EXPANSION OF THE TURKISH-OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Turkish-Ottoman Empire emerged at the end of the thirteenth century, founded by Osman I, leader of a small Turkic tribe in the Anatolian region (NAGM, 2013). The empire expanded rapidly, reaching its zenith in the 16th century under the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. Ottoman rule spanned three continents, encompassing vast regions of Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa. At its peak, the empire included territories that are now part of Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Palestine, among others.

The Ottoman Empire is known for several notable leaders and significant cultural and architectural achievements (SOUZA, 2022):

1. Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566): Considered one of the greatest Ottoman sultans, he expanded the empire to its greatest size, reformed the legal system (known as Kanun), and sponsored major architectural projects, including the Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul.

2. Mehmed II the Conqueror (1451-1481): Responsible for the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, he turned it into the Ottoman capital, renaming it

Istanbul. This achievement marked the end of the Byzantine Empire and the beginning of a new era of Ottoman expansion.

3. Selim I (1512-1520): Significantly expanded the empire southwards, including Egypt and the Hejaz, increasing Ottoman control over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Ottoman rule over the region of Palestine began in 1517, when Selim I conquered territory from the Mamluks. For the next four centuries, Palestine was administered as part of the Ottoman Empire, with relative stability despite some revolts and internal conflicts.

The region was divided into several Sanjaks (districts), being commanded by governors appointed by the sultan. The timar system (granting land in exchange for military service) was implemented, encouraging loyalty to the Ottoman state. The population of Palestine, under Ottoman rule, was ethnically and religiously diverse, composed mostly of Sunni Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Armenian Christians, Jews, and other minorities (BRICHS, 2007).

The empire practiced a policy of relative religious tolerance, known as the *millet* system, which allowed each religious community some autonomy in civil and religious affairs. The cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jaffa, and Gaza flourished as commercial and religious centers. Infrastructure projects, such as the construction of roads and the restoration of sacred sites, were undertaken by the Ottomans (BRICHS, 2007).

For much of the Ottoman period, Jews and Arabs coexisted relatively peacefully in Palestine. Jews lived mainly in urban communities, such as Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron, and Tiberias, where they engaged in trade, craftsmanship, and religious study. However, Jewish immigration increased significantly in the late nineteenth century, fueled by the Zionist movement and persecutions in Europe, which began to create tensions with the local Arab population (ZUCCHI, 2012).

Several events and political changes in the late Ottoman period planted the seeds for the current Israeli-Palestinian conflicts:

a. Nationalist Movements: The emergence of Arab and Jewish nationalist movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began to challenge Ottoman authority and create sharper ethnic and religious divisions. Arab nationalism sought independence from Ottoman rule and then colonial powers, while the Zionist movement aimed at the creation of a Jewish state.

b. Balfour Declaration (1917): British support for the creation of a "Jewish national home in Palestine," was an important milestone that exacerbated tensions between Jews and Arabs. The Arabs saw the declaration as a betrayal of British promises of Arab independence in exchange for their support in World War I.

c. Jewish Immigration: Jewish immigration increased dramatically in the late Ottoman period and during the British Mandate, altering the demographics of Palestine and leading to conflicts over land and resources.

WORLD PANORAMA

World War I (1914-1918) was a period of great turmoil and change for the inhabitants of Palestine. During the war, the Ottoman Empire allied with the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria) against the Allied Powers (the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and later the United States). For the population of Palestine, the war brought destruction, disorder and hunger, as well as significant political and social changes (AMORIM, 2003).

Palestine suffered severely from the war, facing food shortages due to the British naval blockade and the redirection of resources to the Ottoman war effort. Typhus and cholera epidemics also devastated the local population. With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Palestine came to be administered by the United Kingdom, as stipulated by the *Sykes-Picot Agreement* of 1916, which divided the Middle East between the French and the British. The British Mandate was formalized by the League of Nations in 1920, under the Treaty of *Sèvres*, and later the Treaty of *Lausanne* in 1923. This replacement of Ottoman rule by the British Mandate brought profound political changes (GARIBIAN, 2021).

The war devastated the local economy. Agriculture, the main economic activity, was severely impacted by the destruction of land and infrastructure. Under the British Mandate, there was an effort to modernize the economy, including the construction of railroads and the improvement of roads, but these benefits were often perceived as favoring the Jewish community.

The arrival of British administrators and Jewish immigration resulted in an increase in Western influence on local culture. New educational institutions and legal systems were established, based on British models. This led to a culture clash between traditional Ottoman methods and new Western influences.

The Balfour Declaration and intensified Jewish immigration generated resentment among the Muslim Arab and Christian population, who felt threatened by the possibility of losing their land and cultural identity. The British administration has tried to balance these tensions, but its policies have often exacerbated divisions (ZUCCHI, 2012; AMORIM, 2003)element.

Still at the end of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, the emergence of Arab and Jewish nationalist movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began to challenge imperial authority and create sharper ethnic and religious divisions. Arab nationalism sought independence from Ottoman rule and later colonial powers; while the Zionist movement aimed at the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine (NAGM, 2013).

The British took a pragmatic approach to consolidating their rule in Palestine, trying to balance their conflicting promises to Jews and Arabs, while implementing colonial policies that consolidated their control. Palestine was divided into several administrative sub-regions, each with its own British administrators. The British tried to maintain order and control the population through a centralized administration, but the lack of local political representation added to the frustration among the inhabitants.

The British administration facilitated Jewish immigration, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, by increasing the Jewish population in Palestine. This led to the purchase of land by Jews, often resulting in the eviction of Arab farmers. The British introduced economic and infrastructural reforms, such as the construction of roads, railways, and irrigation systems. However, these policies, often seen as benefiting Jews more than Arabs, have further increased economic inequalities (MEDEIROS, 2023).

Attempts at Arab resistance, such as the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, were brutally suppressed by the British. The repression increased the resentment and determination of Arabs to resist colonial rule and Jewish immigration.

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

The Zionist movement emerged in the late nineteenth century as a response to the growing anti-Semitism in Europe and the centuries-old desire of many Jews to return to the land of their ancestors, according to the biblical prophecies present in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, among others. Zionism was formally articulated by Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian journalist, in his book "*Der Judenstaat*" (The Jewish State),

published in 1896. Herzl argued that assimilation of Jews into Europe was impossible due to inherent anti-Semitism and that the solution to the "Jewish question" was the creation of an independent Jewish state. In 1897, the First Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland, where the World Zionist Organization was established, with the aim of promoting Jewish immigration to Palestine and the construction of a Jewish State (ARAUJO, 2021).

Jewish immigration to Palestine began to increase significantly after the first Aliyah (ascent), which took place between 1882 and 1903, driven mainly by Jews from Russia and Romania, who were fleeing persecution. These early immigrants established new farming communities, known as "*moshavot*," and attempted to revive the Hebrew language, which had been used primarily as a liturgical language until then.

The second Aliyah, from 1904 to 1914, brought in even greater numbers of Jews after a series of violent attacks, often organized and supported by local authorities, directed against Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and Imperial Russia, known as "*pogroms*" (ARAUJO, 2021).

These new immigrants were largely young socialists and idealists, who founded *kibbutzim* (collective farming communities) and who ended up playing a crucial role in shaping the political and social institutions that later became the basis of the future State of Israel.

The period of the British Mandate saw a dramatic increase in Jewish immigration. The third and fourth Aliyah occurred between 1919 and 1929, with many Jews fleeing the consequences of World War I and the Russian Revolution. Immigrants of this era were often more economically prepared, bringing capital and skills that contributed to the economic development of the region.

In the 1930s, the rise of Nazism in Germany and the increasing persecutions of Jews throughout Europe led to an increasing increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine, known as the fifth Aliyah. Despite the British restrictions imposed on immigration, thousands of Jews managed to enter Palestine, often illegally, seeking refuge from the atrocities unfolding in Europe (ARAUJO, 2021).

This growing influx of Jews rapidly changed the demographics of Palestine, increasing the Jewish population. Jewish immigration and land acquisition eventually exacerbate tensions between the Jewish and Arab population, leading to violent conflicts and uprisings.

The demographic and social tensions created by these changes were deepened by British policy, which attempted to balance both its promises to the Jewish community and its promises of independence made to the Arabs during World War I. The result was a growing cycle of violence and resentment between the increasingly polarized Jewish and Arab communities, culminating in uprisings and conflicts that set the stage for the events that would lead to the creation of the State of Israel and the protracted Palestinian-Israeli conflict (ARAUJO, 2021).

HYPERMOBILITY: BETWEEN MIGRATIONS AND DIASPORAS

The opposition between nomads and sedentaries is found in the Bible, in the battle between the brothers Cain, the farmer, and Abel, the shepherd. Cain kills his brother when he realizes that God has approved of Abel's offering. His punishment was not being able to settle in any land, becoming a nomad. This is how Cain's punishment is described: "you will be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth" (BIBLE, Genesis, 4, 12).

The dichotomy between nomadic and settled populations may be at the root of violent conflicts between the two groups, and part of this confrontation is the issue of sharing and control of land between peoples who are territorially mobile (GILBERT, 2007).

Currently, the international media has reported the Muslim population movement towards Europe as a migration crisis. It approaches this phenomenon as a merely demographic issue, motivated by several factors, such as: economic, political, labor, resulting from catastrophes or natural causes.

Historically, it is possible to see that the nature of the Semitic people, which involves Muslims and ethnic Jews, is dynamically and physically circulating, whether in the homeland or on the planet. Traditionally, Muslims are nomads and Jews, culturally, make diasporas.

The main difference between nomadism and diasporas is that, historically, nomads have constantly moved from one place to another, while in diaspora dispersal occurs in an entire population from one area to other regions. Nomads do not have a fixed residence and live wandering through different territories, adapting to seasonal cycles and geographical conditions, using nature's resources until they are exhausted.

In the Diaspora, there is the displacement, usually forced or encouraged, of population masses from a given area to other distinct host areas, implying the dispersion of any nation or ethnic group around the world. This term is used to refer to the dispersion of

the Hebrew people in the ancient world, starting with the exile in Babylon in the sixth century B.C. and, especially, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In modern times, it implies not only the dispersion of the population but also its result, that is, the sum of the members of a community dispersed over several countries.

Thus, such Semitic territorial mobility, before being a phenomenon of conventional migration, which allows accommodation in the face of seasonal difficulties or ills, consists of an ancestral survival strategy that can reach systemic and, perhaps, planetary geopolitical proportions and purpose.

If from 1930 onwards the Jewish diaspora from Europe to the United States and Palestine took place, today, the Muslim population is recurrently "migrating" to Europe. In both cases, the difficulty of connecting the population with the host societies is observed, with an attempt to impose cultures, languages, customs and traditions on the locals. This can have several consequences, such as social and political challenges, influence on the local economy, and xenophobia.

The lifestyle of populations that present hypermobility, resulting from deterritorialization, can come into conflict as a result of territoriality practices, especially when urban sedentary lifestyle becomes an essential characteristic of the State and the Law, both nationally and internationally. The clash between lifestyles can have consequences for human security due to the possibility of violent conflicts between the two groups over land and resources (GILBERT, 2016). Thus, the existence of demographic hypermobility can constitute a resistance or even threat to the modern State and its territorial fixation (D'ANDREA, 2007; SALDANHA, 2017).

In general, Muslim mobility has challenged the ordering of host states in providing structure and way of life, based on attachment to the territory and adherence to the local culture. These populations, as a rule, are fertile, are in peripheral conditions and are not acculturated; either nationally, with the societies that host them, or internationally, with the system of States itself.

Thus, because these migratory groups have an exponentially greater growth than the local population, remaining identity-connected and engaged with their origins, including issues involving dispersion and religious fundamentalism as a lifestyle, they may present resistance to compose and comply with agreements in a perennial way, even being exposed to the command and enticement of radical groups for the love of their cause.

THE BIBLICAL ORIGINS OF THE PERSIAN PEOPLE AND THE FORMATION OF MODERN IRAN

The biblical account of the origins of the nations after the Flood can be found in chapter 10 of the book of Genesis, known as the "Table of Nations." In this chapter, Noah's descendants are divided into three major branches: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. According to biblical tradition, the Persian peoples, like the Medes, are descendants of Japheth, more specifically of his son Madai. Verse 2 of Genesis 10 states, "The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras" (Genesis 10:2).

Madai is traditionally identified as the ancestor of the Medes, a people who inhabited the region of Media, north of present-day Iran. The Medes, along with the Persians, formed the core of the Medo-Persian Empire, which emerged as one of the great powers of the ancient world. This lineage connects the origin of the Persian people to a heritage that dates back to the first chapters of biblical history, suggesting an ancestral connection with the Indo-European peoples (MOURA, 2023).

According to Rabbi Rony Gurwicz (2025), the Persians are descendants of Tiras, one of the sons of Japheth mentioned in the Table of Nations (Genesis 10:2). Gurwicz argues that the connection between Tiras and the Persians is corroborated by ancient Jewish sources, such as the Talmud and the writings of the first-century historian Flavius Josephus[10] , which identify Tiras as the ancestor of the "Tyrossians" or "Tyrians," a group associated with peoples located east of the Mediterranean, who later moved into Persian territory. In addition, etymological studies suggest that the name "Tiras" may be related to the term "Tyr", which is found in place names in the region of ancient Persia.

Josephus' work Antiquities of the Jews reinforces this connection by stating that the Persians descended from Tiras, as he identifies Tiras as the founder of the tribes that later gave rise to the Medes and the Persians. While most scholars identify Madai as the direct ancestor of the Medes and Persians, Gurwicz's interpretation presents an alternative line based on Jewish traditions and linguistic analyses, suggesting that the Persians may have a dual heritage, both Madai and Tiras, reflecting the complex ethnic and cultural formation of the region over the centuries.

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[10] Flávio Josephus, História dos Hebrews, Trans. Vicente Pedroso, 4th ed. (São Paulo: CPAD, 2004).

THE RISE OF THE PERSIANS AND THE CONQUEST OF BABYLON

The Persian people began to gain prominence in history from the sixth century B.C., under the leadership of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus, considered one of the greatest leaders of the ancient world, unified the Persian tribes and established the Achaemenid Empire, which stretched from Anatolia in the west to the Indus Valley in the east. His policy of religious tolerance and efficient administration were crucial factors in consolidating Persian domination over a vast territory (POZZER, 2022).

Cyrus' most significant achievement was the taking of Babylon in 539 B.C. (Daniel 5 and Isaiah 45), an event that had a profound impact not only on Persian history but also on the history of the Hebrew people. The Bible mentions the fall of Babylon in Isaiah 45 and the book of Daniel, noting that Cyrus allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. This act secured Cyrus a prominent place in Jewish tradition, being referred to as "the anointed one" (Isaiah 45:1), a rare and significant title in biblical tradition (POZZER, 2022).

With the conquest of Babylon, the Persian Empire not only expanded its territory, but also consolidated its power as a multicultural and multireligious empire, which respected the beliefs and traditions of the conquered peoples. This nuanced approach helped the Persian Empire maintain stability and prosperity in its vast lands for nearly two centuries.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSIAN IDENTITY

After the fall of the Achaemenid Empire to Alexander the Great in 330 BC, Persian identity continued to develop under the rule of various dynasties, such as the Parthians and the Sassanids. During the Sassanid Period (224-651 AD), Zoroastrianism became the official religion of the empire, promoting a strong link between political power and religion (SOARES, 2009).

The Zoroastrian vision of a dualistic world, where the struggle between good and evil was central, profoundly influenced Persian culture and politics. Zoroastrianism shaped Persian identity and laid the foundation for the theocratic government structure, where the king was seen as a divine representative. This link between politics and religion became an enduring aspect of Persian society, which was later reflected in the adoption of Islam as the official state religion after the Arab conquest in the seventh century.

THE FORMATION OF MODERN IRAN AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THEOCRACY

The Arab invasion in 651 AD marked the end of the Sassanid Empire and the beginning of a new era for the Persian people. The adoption of Islam profoundly transformed the social and political structure of the region. However, despite converting to Islam, the Persians retained many elements of their pre-Islamic culture, which set Iran apart from other Islamic nations. The emergence of dynasties such as the Safavids in the sixteenth century, which established Shiism as the official state religion, was a fundamental milestone in the formation of modern Iranian identity (POZZER, 2022).

Iran's current theocracy has its roots in a complex historical process, where religion and politics have been intertwined for more than a thousand years. The 1979 Islamic Revolution, led by Ayatollah *Ruhollah Khomeini*, consolidated the modern Iranian theocracy by overthrowing the monarchy of Shah *Mohammad Reza Pahlavi* and instituting a regime based on Shia religious leadership. Iran's theocratic model of government is unique in the Muslim world in that it combines elements of democracy, such as parliamentary and presidential elections, with the supremacy of religious authority, exercised by the Supreme Leader.

FROM BABYLON TO MODERN IRAN: THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST ON THE PRESENT

The theocratic structure of present-day Iran can be seen as a continuation of a historical pattern that dates back to ancient Persian civilizations. The combination of political and religious power, present since the Achaemenid period and reinforced by Zoroastrianism during Sassanid rule, shaped Persian identity and social organization for centuries. With the arrival of Islam and the subsequent adoption of Shi'ism as the official religion, Iran established a system where the legitimacy of the government depends on religious authority (SOARES, 2009).

Thus, the historical development of Iran, from its biblical origins as descendants of Madai, to its current theocratic configuration, shows how a people can preserve core aspects of its identity over millennia while adapting to religious and political changes. The long tradition of merging political and religious power has allowed Iran to consolidate itself as one of the few theocratic states in the world, whose origins, in part, reflect the glorious past of the Persian Empire and the enduring influence of its ancient beliefs and social practices (POZZER, 2022).

The history of the Persian people, from their biblical roots to the development of the current Iranian state, has been marked by transformations that combine cultural, religious, and political elements. The rise and fall of empires, the introduction of Islam, and the Islamic Revolution of 1979 were milestones that shaped Iran as we know it today. This historical continuity explains, in part, the resilience of the Iranian theocratic regime and its ability to adapt in a complex geopolitical landscape, making Iran a true heir to the traditions and power struggles that date back to biblical times.

IRAN'S ROLE IN THE-ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT AFTER THE 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran underwent a radical political and ideological transformation, which redefined its international relations and its posture in the Middle East. Under the leadership of Ayatollah *Ruhollah Khomeini*, Iran adopted a theocratic regime based on Shia Islam, breaking with the West and establishing an aggressively anti-Israel and anti-Western foreign policy (Roberto & Visentini, 2015).

Since then, Iran has become one of the main sponsors of different militant groups and organizations that oppose Israel's existence, playing a central role in the Israel-Palestine conflict and the geopolitical dynamics of the region.

THE CREATION OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In 1947, the United Nations (UN) began a debate on the Palestinian question, culminating in the approval of Resolution No. 181, of November 29 of the same year. This resolution proposed the division of Palestine into two states: one for the Jews, who represented 700,000 people and would have access to 53% of the territory, and another for the Palestinian Arabs, with a population of 1.4 million, who would get 47%. The resolution, however, was widely rejected by neighboring Arab states, which opposed any plan that benefited a minority.

On May 14, 1948, Israel proclaimed its independence. This act immediately triggered the war, coinciding with the end of the British mandate in the region. The Arab countries attacked Israel on three different fronts, seeking to prevent the consolidation of the new state. This initial conflict, known as the Israeli War of Independence, resulted in territorial losses for Palestinian Arabs, as well as the creation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, which became a central issue in the conflict. The creation of the State

of Israel and subsequent wars, including the Suez War in 1956, the Six-Day War in 1967, and the *Yom Kippur* War in 1973, intensified tensions not only with the Palestinians but also with Arab countries, especially Iran.

The impact of these events has perpetuated cycles of violence and hostility, solidifying the narrative of a struggle for self-determination among Palestinians. In this scenario, Iran, especially after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, emerged as a major sponsor of groups that oppose Israel's existence. Thus, the creation of the State of Israel became a central point of contention in the Middle East, shaping the geopolitical dynamics and interethnic relations that persist to this day.

THE EMERGENCE OF IRANIAN HOSTILITY TOWARDS ISRAEL

The Islamic Revolution turned Iranian foreign policy into a vehicle for disseminating its revolutionary principles, such as defending Shiite Islam and opposing regimes deemed oppressive and corrupt. Before 1979, during the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Iran had good relations with Israel. However, Khomeini's rise to power marked a total break with the State of Israel, which was denounced as a "Zionist regime" oppressive of the Palestinians (Roberto & Visentini, 2015).

From then on, Iran began to firmly oppose Israel's presence in the Middle East, considering it an ideological enemy. This position has become one of the pillars of Iranian foreign policy, with the country starting to financially and militarily support organizations that fight against Israel, such as *Hamas* (Palestine), *Holthuis* (Yemen) and *Hezbollah* (Lebanon). Iran's support for these groups includes providing weapons, training fighters, and funding for their operations.

IRANIAN SPONSORSHIP OF *HAMAS* AND *HEZBOLLAH*

Iran's tactical and financial support for anti-Israel militant groups, such as *Hamas* and *Hezbollah*, has turned it into the main fomenting mechanism of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The relationship between Iran and *Hezbollah* began to consolidate in the 1980s, during the civil war in Lebanon. Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite militant and political group, was founded with the support of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and has since become one of Iran's main military tools to project its influence in the Middle East and confront Israel. With Iranian military and financial support, *Hezbollah* has built up a strong military presence in southern Lebanon, carrying out frequent attacks against Israel and

engaging in direct military confrontations, such as the Lebanon War in 2006 (Roberto & Visentini, 2015).

Similarly, Iran has expanded its military support for *Hamas*, the Sunni Islamist group that rules the Gaza Strip. Despite sectarian differences (Shiite and Sunni), Iran sees Hamas as a strategic ally in the fight against Israel and in support of the Palestinian cause. That sponsorship includes financing, arms supply and, more recently, logistical support for missile development and other military capabilities. Support for *Hamas* has made Iran an unbalanced actor in the dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict, contributing to the escalation of tensions and the continuation of the conflict.

Such organizations have been called terrorist groups by the international media, since, motivated by religious fundamentalism or political ideologies, they engage in violent acts and attacks on property (public and private) as a form of intimidation to achieve their objectives. Such groups are not restricted to their country of origin, but have members and branches in other territories, expanding their scale of action.

The escalation of conflicts in the Middle East demonstrates that the destructive potential of such groups has increased, proportionally to their access to more technologically sophisticated and lethal equipment and war material, greatly afflicting the civilian population in the territory where they occur.

IRAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINE CONFLICT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In recent years, Iran has openly influenced the Israel-Palestine conflict, using its economic and military control over terrorist groups to challenge Israel's presence and actions in the region. The country sees support for the Palestinian cause as a way to legitimize its regime, both internally and throughout the Muslim world. In addition to providing resources to allied groups, Iran promotes aggressive rhetoric against Israel, often referring to the Jewish state as the "Little Satan"; a "cancer" that must be eradicated (COELHO, 2016).

Iran also becomes indirectly involved in the conflict, supporting Syria, an important strategic ally in the region. Military support to the regime of *Bashar al-Assad* during the Syrian Civil War allowed Iran to maintain a permanent military presence in Syria, close to the border with Israel. This presence, together with the reinforcement of Hezbollah's

capacities in southern Lebanon, constitutes a direct threat to Israel and expands the potential fronts of conflict (COELHO, 2016).

IRAN'S STRATEGY: EXPANDING REGIONAL INFLUENCE AND CONFRONTING ISRAEL

Iran's strategy for confronting Israel is based on expanding its regional influence and establishing a "land bridge" stretching from Iran, through Iraq and Syria, to Lebanon. The goal is to create a strategic corridor that allows Iran to transfer weapons and resources to *Hezbollah* and other allied terrorist groups more easily. This strategy was facilitated by the disintegration of governments in Iraq and Syria during the civil wars, allowing Iran to increase its military presence and establish a network of Shia militias throughout the region (Roberto & Visentini, 2015; COELHO, 2016).

Iranian involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict, clearly on a religious basis, has direct consequences for regional stability and the prolongation of hostilities. By supporting groups such as *Hamas* and *Hezbollah*, Iran becomes the great agent of perpetuation of the conflict, making it difficult to reach a negotiated solution. In addition, his anti-Israel stance fuels tensions between the country and other Middle Eastern nations that have moved closer to Israel in recent years, such as the United Arab Emirates and *Bahrain*, which have normalized their relations with the Jewish state through the Abraham Accords.

PATHS TO PEACE: THE CREATION OF THE PALESTINIAN STATE AND THE SEARCH FOR REGIONAL STABILITY

The search for lasting peace in the Israel-Palestine conflict is a complex challenge, which involves historical, political, territorial and especially religious aspects. While the roots of this conflict run deep and the parties involved hold divergent perspectives on key issues, many international experts and observers agree that the creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, alongside a secure state of Israel, represents the most promising solution for achieving peace and stability in the region.

THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE AND THE STRENGTHENING OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

The creation of an independent Palestinian state, with defined borders and governed by the Palestinian Authority, is considered one of the central premises for the establishment

of peace. An internationally recognized Palestinian state with full rights and duties would help meet the Palestinian people's aspirations for self-determination, while giving Israel security guarantees and a more reliable negotiating partner. Such a state must include a sovereign and legitimate government capable of controlling its territory, enforcing its laws, and actively countering the presence and influence of extremist and terrorist groups.

Strengthening the Palestinian Authority as a legitimate government and recognized in the future as a state is crucial to this process. This involves efforts to improve its institutional and economic capabilities, ensuring that it is able to provide essential public services, promote economic development, and ensure the safety of its population. A strengthened Palestinian government would be better able to stop the advance of radical and terrorist groups, such as *Hamas, ISIS, Islamic Jihad*, among others, which often take advantage of the power vacuum and the absence of infrastructure to garner popular support.

In addition to internal strengthening, peace in the region depends on a coordinated and robust response by the international community against the financing and tactical military support of terrorist groups operating in the Middle East, even in isolated actions. Terrorism and violence are major obstacles to peace, and their roots are often found in the existence of financing networks that ensure the continuation of the violent activities of these organizations.

In this context, it is necessary to establish tougher and more comprehensive sanctions for individuals, groups and governments that directly or indirectly finance and/or support terrorist activities. These sanctions must be applied effectively and in a coordinated manner, ensuring that those responsible for supporting terrorism suffer the consequences of their actions, regardless of their geographic location or political status. Creating a stricter international monitoring system, with the coordinated support of organizations such as the UN and Interpol, can help identify and dismantle funding networks, disrupting the flow of resources that fuels conflicts in the region.

The application of these sanctions should also include harsher penalties for those who directly participate in terrorist activities, as well as for those who facilitate the recruitment and logistics of radical groups. With more effective measures to contain terrorism, the Palestinian Authority and other governments in the region would be better able to promote peace and security in their territories, weakening extremist narratives and strengthening the foundations for a lasting agreement.

Another path to peace involves the continuation and expansion of agreements to normalize relations between Israel and Arab and Muslim countries, along the lines of the Abraham Accords, signed in 2020. These agreements marked a turning point in Israel's relations with countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, opening doors for economic, cultural, and security cooperation.

The expansion of these agreements to other countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, can contribute to the creation of a regional environment that is more conducive to dialogue and cooperation. With more countries recognizing Israel and Palestine, by establishing diplomatic and trade relations, pressure is growing for these countries to resume negotiations in search of a political solution to the conflict.

The Abraham Accords also demonstrated that dialogue is possible, even between countries that have historically maintained hostile relations with Israel. The economic and technological cooperation that emerged from these agreements can serve as an example and incentive for other nations, including Palestine itself, to consider the diplomatic route as a more advantageous path to achieve their goals.

COEXISTENCE AND SECULAR ECUMENICITY

Even if timidly, coexistence in new times, new contexts and different subjects and cultures are only intertwined in the dialogue of the actors who build and sustain the oikoumene (common home) from new paradigms that permeate, inclusively, religious pluralism and the necessary social insertion of dialogue that are translated, theologically, as secular ecumenicity[11] .

These practices that involve secular ecumenicity differ from traditional ethics because they have a strong attraction for the defense of human dignity, for attention to the rights that represent the real interests of the most vulnerable layers of the population where ills and/or conflicts occur.

In relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict, cultural exchange projects, educational initiatives, and social development programs can help reduce perceptions of hostility and build a popular base of support for peace. Nonviolent communication, education for peace,

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[11] Secular ecumenism is a current of the ecumenical movement represented by those who, in the face of the impasse and the slowness of the various institutions in achieving unity, understand that only the application of the inductive method – which starts from the concrete history in which one is inserted and from the incarnation as a central theme – can carry forward the ecumenical task. Secular ecumenical thought and action must be centered in the secular world, in the service of the human being, placing itself in the search for justice, peace, ecology in overcoming poverty and conflicts wherever they are occurring.

and respect for human rights must be prioritized on both sides, ensuring that future generations grow up with a more optimistic view of the possibilities of peaceful coexistence.

In practical terms, international cooperation can involve funding NGOs that promote coexistence, including peace initiatives in school curricula, and conducting media campaigns that emphasize the benefits of peace for both societies.

CONCLUSION

Peacebuilding in the Middle East depends not only on political agreements, but also on governmental, institutional, and secular efforts to promote coexistence and mutual understanding between the Israeli and Palestinian populations.

We found that the problematization generated with the political creation of territorialities should rather be seen as a resource and not as a barrier to the production of identity and meaning. The different and sometimes divergent worldviews and lifestyles between Israelis and Palestinians can and should be used to contest and reflect on the silencing and physical, psychological and symbolic violence that are present both in the processes of state formation and in the processes of globalization, which are economically and politically unequal.

The road to peace between Israel and Palestine is long and challenging, but possible. The creation of a Palestinian state governed by a sovereign and strengthened Palestinian Authority, the application of stricter sanctions against the financing of terrorism, and the promotion of regional peace agreements are key steps towards achieving an environment of security and stability. While the resolution of this conflict depends on concessions and compromises on both sides, the support and involvement of the international community is essential to promote and facilitate dialogue, as well as to create the means to ensure that the agreements are respected.

Peace cannot be achieved through violence, but rather through negotiations, dialogues, and actions that promote the well-being and security of all parties involved. The strengthening of Palestinian institutions, the creation of regional cooperation mechanisms and the promotion of a Culture of Peace and mutual respect are essential elements for building a more stable and prosperous future for Israelis and Palestinians, contributing to a more stable, secure and integrated region.

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