

Conflict-Related Neuropsychiatric Disorders and Trauma Burden in Populations Exposed to Prolonged Armed Violence: A Global Mental Health Perspective

Dr. Amina El-Sayed^{1*}

Prof. Lukas Weber²

¹ University of Buenos Aires, Department of Community Mental Health and Trauma Studies, Buenos Aires, Argentina

² University of Helsinki, Institute of Global Psychiatry and Neuropsychology, Helsinki, Finland

Unlike other geopolitical regions, God has clearly expressed His stance on the politics and destiny of the Middle East, particularly regarding the land of Israel, also known as the Holy Land. The problem in the Middle East, particularly the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, can only find a solution when a human-made peace plan aligns with God's peace plan as indicated in the Bible.

This paper is dedicated to uncovering what God has revealed about the nation of Israel in its restored state. It aims to explore what the Bible says about the restored Israel's relationships with the nations around it, including Palestinians. The central thesis of this paper is that any peace plan proposed to resolve the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only succeed to the extent that it recognizes, and respects God's peace parameters as outlined in the Bible. Failure to do so will inevitably lead to the failure of any peace proposal from the outset.

1. Peace Plan Alternatives

Many people today express sympathy for the Palestinians and believe that a two-state solution (TSS) is the path to achieving their political, economic, and social justice.

Currently, various peace plans, including those proposed by secular Zionists, the USA, regional countries, and international organizations, as well as the support of the Palestinian Authority, advocate for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Most Palestinians embrace the idea of a two-state solution, hoping that it will lead to the resolution of their problems by establishing their own national state.

However, there are other Palestinians, such as extremist nationalist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad,

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

who prefer a one-state solution (OSS), one that would replace Israel with an Islamic Palestinian state encompassing the entire Holy Land. Both proposed solutions by Palestinians, whether it's a two-state solution where Israeli Jews and Palestinians each have their own sovereign state or a one-state solution dominated by an Islamic-Arab identity, have a common major flaw: they are inconsistent with the will of God.

Nevertheless, many Israelis, Palestinians, a significant number of Western countries, and several international organizations reject the idea of a one-state solution for various reasons:

1. **International Law:** The first reason is firmly rooted in the principles of international law related to armed conflict. Israel is bound by international law to return territories acquired through conflict, and it is widely advocated that Israel must revert to its pre-1967 borders. This would allow Palestinians the right to exercise self-determination and establish their own contiguous sovereign state, encompassing the West Bank and Gaza.

2. **Historical and Political Reasons:** Jews, for historical and existential reasons, believe they deserve their own state where they constitute the majority. This is the imperative of preserving the Jewish character and Zionist mission of the state of Israel, which many Israeli and Diaspora Jews, particularly those from liberal and leftist perspectives, support. They maintain that since Israel was founded as a refuge for Jews, it should always maintain a Jewish majority. Holding onto Palestinian territories could lead to demographic shifts that would ultimately render Jews a minority, with Arabs becoming the majority. Israel cannot remain a Jewish and a democratic state while holding a vast Palestinian population with curtailed political and social rights.

3. **Cultural and Ideological Differences:** The third reason for rejecting OSS is rooted in the recognition of historical trauma and profound cultural differences. Many acknowledge the deep-seated wounds inflicted by both Jews and Arabs upon each other, leading them to doubt the feasibility and wisdom of an OSS. Forcing Jews and Arabs to coexist within a single state is seen as an invitation to perpetual ethnic strife. Additionally, the profound psychological differences and contrasting political orientations make a binational state appear unviable.

However, considering biblical guidance, I contest the arguments mentioned above:

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

- **Territorial Extent:** According to the Bible, Israel's territory is determined by divine guidance rather than international law.
- **Identity in a One-State Solution:** Contrary to the concerns of many Israeli Jews about accepting a one-state solution, it is possible to establish the Jewishness of the one-state without solely relying on numerical superiority. There are constitutional arrangements that can ensure the desired identity of the one-state.
- **Overcoming Differences:** There is no inherent principle that dictates two culturally and historically different groups cannot overcome their animosity and live together in peace. There is scriptural precedence for Jews and Palestinians coexisting and cooperating.

This paper aims to explore the divine perspective on resolving the Israel-Palestinian conflict concerning land and statehood. It investigates the fundamental parameters established by the Bible for a restored Israel and how Jews can coexist with "others" both within and beyond their state's borders. The paper also offers recommendations on how Israel can achieve peace and justice within its borders.

2. The Bible on Peace and Justice

God's Social Justice and Peace Parameters

First and foremost, the Bible confers property rights to the Jewish people in the presently highly contested areas, often referred to as "the Occupied Territories" (see Genesis 15:15-23; Joshua 13-19). According to biblical accounts, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, commonly known as the "Occupied Territories" today, are situated within Israel's ancient heritage. Consequently, these lands are expected to naturally revert to Israel during its restoration, as indicated in passages such as Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 34:13-16, Micah 7:14-16, Obadiah 17-21, and Zephaniah 2:4-9.

As a result, any human-made peace plan that overlooks or contradicts God's declared will concerning the territorial boundaries of restored Israel is destined to meet failure. Surrounding nations are divinely advised to honor Israel's land and its place in the region, or they will face the consequences. Israel itself is obligated to adhere to God's Word regarding any peace agreements it enters into with Palestinians, neighboring Arab nations, or the international community.

"This is what the LORD says: "As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands, and I will uproot the people of Judah from among them. But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to their own inheritance and their own country. And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives'--even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal--then they will be established among my people. But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the LORD." (Jer. 12: 14-17)

Second, the Bible promises an elevated position to Palestinians in a one-state solution. However, the OSS is preconditioned on the purging of Palestinians from the venom of hating the Jew.

"Ashkelon will see it and fear; Gaza will writhe in agony, and Ekron too, for her hope will wither. Gaza will lose her king and Ashkelon will be deserted. a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of Philistia. And I will remove their blood from their mouth, and their detestable things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, and be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite." (Zechariah 9: 5-8)

Hence, for Palestinians, some cleansing precedes their elevation in the OSS which Israel leads. Likely, as the prophet intimates there can follow an "assimilation" of the Palestinians into the Jewish social and political fabric later on. The Palestinian will become an integral part of the Israeli political system.

3. What Needs to be Done and Why?

What steps must Israel take to gain the support and trust of the Palestinian population, which, according to God's Israel-Palestinian peace plan, will make up a significant part of its demographic?

God's directive to Israel and the Jewish people is to maintain a just and equitable society. They are commanded to demonstrate mercy and fairness, extending these principles to include the poor and strangers (as outlined in Deuteronomy 24:14, 16; 25:13-16; Isaiah 10:1-2). God's expectation for His covenant people is that they apply the same laws to both native citizens and foreign residents. Israel is instructed by God to exhibit compassion and justice towards those in need, including the "Others" who live among them.

"You are to have the same standard of law for the foreign resident and the native; for I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 24:22)

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

"He executes justice for the orphan and the widows, loves the foreigner, and gives them food and clothing. You are to love the foreigner, because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt." (Deut. 10:18) [also see Deut. 16:11; 18-20; 25:13-16; 26:13]

Jews are instructed to apply an even-handed standard of justice to all, as God requires them to be impartial when administering justice (refer to Leviticus 19:35-36; Proverbs 20:10, 20:23, 21:22).

Throughout history, God has passed judgment on Israel when it violated the fundamental rights of non-Jewish residents of the land. An instance of this is found during King David's reign when God imposed a severe drought upon Israel as punishment for King Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites, a non-Jewish indigenous population with whom Joshua had previously signed a peace agreement (see 2 Samuel 21). God also judged King David for his involvement in the killing of Uriah, a Hittite, who was a loyal soldier in David's army (see 2 Samuel 12).

In the present day, Israel should follow the example set by their forefathers, including Abraham, Joshua, and King David, in dealing with Palestinians fairly and justly. For instance, when Abraham was offered a burial cave at no cost, he insisted on paying the appropriate amount (as seen in Genesis 23). Even though he knew God had promised him the land of Canaan, Abraham did not approach the indigenous people with a sense of entitlement. He acted with humility and did not exploit God's promises or engage in unfair dealings. Instead, he conducted himself with justice and fairness (see Genesis 13:7-11; 15:17-24).

King David also demonstrated fairness in his treatment of the property rights of indigenous people. When God ordered King David to build an altar on Mount Moriah, the land where the altar was to be constructed belonged to Araunah, a Jebusite, one of the indigenous peoples of Canaan. Although Araunah offered the land to King David for free, David insisted on paying the full price (as described in 2 Samuel 24:18-24 and 1 Chronicles 21:22).

King David refrained from abusing his power to amass wealth, never resorted to robbing his subjects, and did not use religion as a pretext to seize property from his people, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. He consistently pursued justice and righteousness (refer to 1 Chronicles 18:14 and Jeremiah 22:15-16).

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

For any peace plan or coexistence agreement between Jews and Palestinians to succeed, it must take into account the parameters established by God, some of which have been elucidated here. Israel must exercise caution to avoid displacing or marginalizing Palestinians.

The following measures are suggested as basic guidelines to foster greater understanding and cooperation between Jews and Palestinians. These suggestions are made in the hope of facilitating a just settlement that can resolve their longstanding conflict.

i) Civic Engagement

Both sides must take essential steps to initiate and encourage direct interactions between their communities to build positive relationships. Just as hatred and conflict are created by humans, so too are understanding and peace. Building peace requires courage and effort.

Ideally, the Israeli government should facilitate the beginning of civil society initiatives and engage individuals with goodwill to initiate the process of bridging the divide between the two communities. This process may start on a small scale but can evolve into a widespread social movement. These person-to-person meetings could involve sharing personal stories and perspectives, seeking forgiveness, showing empathy, and discussing shared visions for a better future.

The stronger the bonds of friendship become between the two peoples, the fewer opportunities will arise for hardliners to spread hate and incite violence.

ii) Goodwill Outreach

Israel, for valid reasons, has succeeded in the armed struggle for control of the land. However, it has yet to win the battle for the hearts and minds of Arab/Palestinians. Israeli Jews should now make every effort to extend humanitarian and goodwill gestures to their Arab/Palestinian neighbors, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable segments of the Arab/Palestinian communities.

Israeli Jews possess the resources, including funds, human capital, and technology, to contribute to the betterment of the lives of Arab/Palestinians. These humanitarian and social outreach programs may encompass providing accessible medical services in Israeli hospitals, offering scholarships to bright Palestinian students in prestigious Israeli universities, creating job opportunities for outstanding Palestinian graduates within Israeli-owned companies, and offering funding to Arab/Palestinian

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

entrepreneurs. Israel should also be open to discussing the possibilities of Palestinian Diaspora members (who do not pose a threat to national security) visiting their homeland and even returning permanently.

iii) Justice

The principles of the rule of law and a fair system of justice should prevail. The country's court systems, including both Israeli and Arab courts, must operate impartially for both communities. The life, liberty, and property of Arab Palestinians must be treated with the same respect as that of Israeli Jews. Full citizenship rights must be observed and protected for both communities without any ambiguity.

"Do not have two differing weights in your bag--one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house--one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. For the LORD your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly." (Deuteronomy 25:13-16)

"Differing weights and unequal measures—both are detestable to the LORD." (Proverbs 20:10)

For further insight, refer to Proverbs 20:23 and 11:1 to understand God's abhorrence of unequal scales. These scriptures collectively emphasize God's mandate for Israel to uphold a system of fairness, one that ensures that laws and rules are applied uniformly to all individuals, irrespective of national origin or economic status.

Given that property rights, particularly land ownership, have been a significant component of justice in Israel, it's valuable to pay heed to what the prophet Ezekiel has to say about the land issue in the restored state of Israel:

"You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners who dwell among you and who have children. You are to treat them as native-born Israelites; along with you, they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe the foreigner dwells, you are to assign his inheritance there, declares the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 47:21-23)

If we acknowledge that the term "foreigner/stranger/alien" pertains to non-Jewish residents of the land, it becomes evident that, in the contemporary political context of Israel, this term predominantly applies to

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

Palestinians. Therefore, what God is urging Israel to do is to grant Palestinians the same land rights as it does to Jews. But why is this essential? It's because a just system that operates fairly for all individuals promotes a shared sense of nationhood. Only when people believe that all their rights are respected, and their dignity is acknowledged, can they become peaceful and productive citizens. In contrast, where rights are violated and a person's identity is demeaned, animosity, hatred, and violence are likely to prevail.

Hence, God's message regarding the necessity of implementing an impartial system of justice for all carries a singular implication: fairness is a fundamental component of righteousness, from which stems domestic peace and a sustainable future (see Micah 6:8).

iv) Education

The future is in the hands of the youth.

It is imperative to initiate the education of both Jewish and Arab children, teaching them to embrace each other as fellow citizens of the Holy Land. Policymakers and civic leaders from both communities should collaborate on developing a school curriculum that promotes mutual understanding, empathy, and a shared sense of purpose among the younger generation. Weekend and summer camps where Jewish and Arab-Palestinian children interact closely can nurture enduring relationships between the two communities that may extend for generations.

v). Empowerment

Israeli Jews should take gradual steps to enable Arab Palestinians to advance in various sectors, including the civil service, academia, mass media, and civil society. The state should actively promote the public recognition of Palestinians who excel in their respective fields. This action is crucial in alleviating the fears of Palestinians that they will always be marginalized and relegated to second-class citizenship.

vi) Diplomatic Initiative

Given the state of conflict with groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and the resulting suffering of Gazans due to the naval blockade, Israel should explore innovative solutions for the Gaza issue.

Leveraging its positive relationships with Egypt and wealthy Gulf Arab states, Israel can undertake a bold

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

diplomatic initiative to lift the naval blockade on Gaza. One approach could involve forming a consortium of four nations, operating under the auspices of the UN and the EU, to assume full control of Gaza and administer it as a trusteeship for at least the next ten years. The responsibilities of the trusteeship authorities could include dismantling the arsenals and bunkers of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, establishing civil administration, maintaining law and order, fostering civil society development, promoting a market economy, cooperating with Israel on economic and security matters, and facilitating access for Gazans to the West Bank and the rest of the world.

vii). **Democratic and Jewish**

Incorporating creative strategies is essential to ensure representation of Arab Palestinians within both the government and society, within both formal and informal governance structures. Taking affirmative steps to enhance the rights and political opportunities of Palestinians will facilitate their integration into the socio-economic fabric of the envisioned one-state, housing two diverse communities.

If this vision is responsibly and pragmatically pursued, Israel can attain the elusive objective of establishing a political system that encompasses both Jews and Arabs/Palestinians, one that is inclusive, democratic, and maintains its Jewish identity. However, a pertinent question arises: How can such an inclusive state preserve its Jewish identity, especially considering the likelihood of a near-majority Arab-Palestinian population?

The argument for the one-state solution is grounded in two fundamental premises. First, it is assumed that the one-state solution begins as a confederation, with the existing state of Israel, its institutions, and symbols continuing to play a prominent role. Pragmatic considerations dictate this approach.

The second premise is based on the assumption that the paramount concern for Arabs/Palestinians is not to compete for the identity of the state they will share with Israeli Jews, but rather to secure recognition and rights in the realms of politics, law, economics, and society. It is strongly assumed that Arabs/Palestinians would accept the idea that the state maintains its Jewish/Israel identity in name, orientation, and character. This recognition could be official. In return, Arabs/Palestinians would reciprocate in kind as the state of Israel embarks on a path of liberalization and democratization in its dealings with Arabs/Palestinians, who currently constitute a significant portion of the population under

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

Israeli jurisdiction. This cooperation would be founded on a shared understanding of history and goodwill.

4. King David as a Model

The biblical account of King David provides a valuable template for the possibility of Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews fostering a harmonious relationship. King David, a fervent Jewish nationalist, successfully united the 12 tribes into an effective Jewish state, demonstrating not only his prowess as a military leader but also his diplomatic acumen.

Despite early conflicts with the Philistines during his reign, King David later cultivated a close relationship with them. He entrusted a group of Philistines with a position of honor and trust within his army. This selected bodyguard or elite force, known as the Cherethites and Pelethites, were, in modern terms, akin to Palestinians. It was this Palestinian contingent that displayed unwavering loyalty to the King when he faced an overthrow attempt led by his own son, the rebel Absalom.

"All his servants marched past him—all the Cherethites and Pelethites, and six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath. The king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland. You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us when I do not know where I am going? Go back, and take your people with you. May the LORD show you kindness and faithfulness." But Ittai replied to the king, "As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be." (2 Sam 15: 18-21)

Moreover, David also had other Palestinians in his army and administration (see, for example, 1 Sam. 26:6; 2 Sam. 23: 24-39; 1 Chr. 27: 30-31). For instance, Uriah (the husband of Bathsheba) was a Hittite, and Uriah's devotion to the God of Israel and the nation was peerless.

5. The Bible and the East Bank

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

Many Israel-Palestinian peace initiatives disregard the divine directives concerning the restored Israel and the East Bank. The initial Promised Land encompasses territories on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, which were allocated to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh as their inheritance (refer to Numbers 32, Joshua 13:15-23, and Jeremiah 30:3). This original inheritance also encompasses Gilead and Bashan, renowned pasturelands situated on the eastern side of the Jordan River, which are integral parts of Israel's original and restored heritage (as stated in Jeremiah 50:19 and Micah 7:14).

"But I will bring Israel back to their own pasture, and they will graze on Carmel and Bashan; their appetite will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead." (Jeremiah 50:19)

"O LORD, protect your people with your shepherd's staff; lead your flock, your special possession. Though they live alone in a thicket on the heights of Mount Carmel, let them graze in the fertile pastures of Bashan and Gilead as they did long ago." (Micah 7:14)

Presently, the territories of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh are part of the Kingdom of Jordan and primarily inhabited by Palestinians. Therefore, God's prophetic statements regarding the East Bank, specifically Bashan and Gilead, carry several significant implications.

First, God's plan for the restoration of Jews to Gilead and Bashan could suggest the potential for a confederation or federation arrangement between the state of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan. Such an arrangement would facilitate the establishment of Jewish settlements in their ancient lands.

Second, it implies that God's plan may bring all Palestinians, including those in Gaza, the West Bank, and the East Bank, under a single political entity. Upon the realization of the right of return for Palestinians in the Diaspora, there would be ample room for their resettlement. Israelis settling on the East Bank could contribute to improved relationships between Jews and Arabs.

Third, even though it envisions an inclusive one-state with both Jews and Palestinians, the state would maintain its Jewish legal identity in accordance with God's promises. Within this commonwealth, Palestinians would enjoy full citizenship recognition and rights, exercising significant political and social influence. However, this elevation is contingent on the condition set by the prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah, requiring Palestinians to recognize Jews and the state of Israel as legitimate entities in the Holy Land.

Metal Ions in Life Sciences

Fourth, the perspective suggests a departure from the stance of some right-wing Israelis who advocate for the removal of Palestinians from the West Bank to the East Bank (Jordan). Instead, it proposes that they should prepare for re-settlement in Gilead and Bashan, as indicated in Jeremiah 50:19 and Micah 7:14. This, in turn, hints at the possibility of uniting the Arab-Palestinian population on both sides of the Jordan River, thereby recreating the original boundaries of the Palestine British Mandate and redefining the true extent of the Holy Land. (For further historical context, refer to 1 Chronicles 26:30-32, illustrating how David administered both sides of the Jordan River.)

6. Peace in the Broader Middle East

God has His peace plan for the broader Middle East region. The significance of this plan cannot be overstated, given the regional implications of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. God's promise is remarkable – to usher in peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Despite their history of multiple conflicts and the fact that many Arab countries still view Israel as an adversary, God's Word anticipates a radical change in the relationship Israel and Arab nations. This divine vision is eloquently conveyed through the words of the Prophet Isaiah:

"In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance." (Isaiah 19: 23-25)

According to God's divine plan, a moderate Arab state, exemplified by Egypt, and a more radical Arab state, symbolized by Syria, will develop positive relationships with Israel. Together, this trio will constitute an axis of blessing for the world, ushering in an era of peace in the Middle East by reconciling forces that have been a source of turmoil in the region for an extended period.

Iran, a non-Arab regional power, plays a pivotal role in the region's security dynamics. Since 1979, Iran has been a vocal advocate against Israel, openly calling for its destruction as a sovereign state. In God's Word, Iran's future is foretold using ancient names such as Elam, Medes, and Persia, and God promises to establish His sovereignty over Elam. Iranians will embrace the God of Israel.

