

MOISHE AND MOHAMMED

By Phillip W. Weiss

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Synopsis of

MOISHE AND MOHAMMED

It is the year 2003. Moishe is an Israeli Jew, Mohammed a Palestinian Arab. In a free-wheeling, no-holds-barred discussion, sparks fly as both men hurl charges and countercharges at each other, each blaming the other side for causing the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although both men offer frank and compelling arguments, neither is willing to make concessions. Can their political differences ever be resolved? Can the chasm that separates them ever be bridged? Does peace have a chance? Or is their debate a mere smoke-screen that conceals deeper, more painful and profoundly more troubling personal resentments that form a web of mutual hate?

This play is a work of fiction, but contains dramatic references to actual organizations, nations and historical events. The characters contained in this material are completely fictional. Any resemblance to any locations, organizations, persons, or characters, real or fictional, living or deceased, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

This play contains content not suitable for minors.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOISHE – an Israeli Jew

MOHAMMED – a Palestinian Arab

**THE BABOON – a person, male or female, who chides, derides and
mocks Moishe and Mohammed**

This is a One-act play

**THE SCENE: A room furnished with a table,
two chairs and a mattress**

THE TIME: 2003

THE PLACE: Anywhere in the world.

TIME: *The year 2003. Israeli forces have just conducted a series of incursions into the West Bank, a region occupied by Israel but considered Palestinian territory.*

SCENE: *Two men are sitting on chairs opposite each other at a table. Both are facing the audience. No one else is on the stage. There are no other props. Both are reading a newspaper. Both are in their late sixties, medium height, slightly obese, and casually but neatly attired. Both are wearing shoes, button shirts, slacks, and sports jackets. The man sitting on the left side of the table is reading a Hebrew newspaper; the man sitting at the right is reading an Arabic newspaper.*

On the left side of the stage a PERSON lays on a mattress, apparently sleeping. Next to the mattress is a large shopping bag. The two men at the table apparently don't notice him or her.

MAN READING AN ARABIC NEWSPAPER

(Speaks with a slight Arabic accent. Places his newspaper on the table and looks directly at the other man.)

Hello, Moishe.

(MOISHE places his newspaper on the table and looks directly at the other man.)

MOISHE

(Speaks with a slight Yiddish accent)

Hello, Mohammed.

MOHAMMED

So what's new in the news?

MOISHE

Same old stuff. War, crime, sex, politics, sports, corruption. And what are you reading?

MOHAMMED

The same thing, except, of course, I'm reading about it in Arabic.

MOISHE

Obviously. I'm not ignorant.

MOHAMMED

I didn't say you were.

MOISHE

So why did you have to point out what was obvious to me?

MOHAMMED

Please, let's not fight.

MOISHE

You're saying you don't want to fight? An Arab who doesn't want to fight a Jew? Amazing.

MOHAMMED

You think that all Arabs want to fight?

MOISHE

From what I see on TV and read in the papers, it's hard for me to think otherwise.

MOHAMMED

Your attitude does not surprise me. The news is slanted and biased against Arabs. We Arabs are no more prone to violence than anyone else.

MOISHE

Really? I don't believe it.

MOHAMMED

Then you have closed your mind to the truth and have decided to believe all the lies. But what about the Israelis? Shooting innocent Palestinians and tearing down their homes.

MOISHE

They're just trying to defend themselves against Arab violence.

MOHAMMED

You mean they're trying to suppress legitimate Arab rage and anger.

MOISHE

I know where this discussion is heading.

MOHAMMED

That's right. It's heading right in that direction.

MOISHE

Which is about your favorite topic, or should I say obsession, trashing Israel.

MOHAMMED

I don't think that Israel is trash, and when you say Israel, you actually mean Palestine.

MOISHE

I actually mean Israel.

MOHAMMED

It's amazing how stubborn you people are.

MOISHE

And it's shocking how intolerant YOU people are. The state of Israel is a fact that you Arabs have to accept once and for all.

MOHAMMED

You mean accepting it on your terms.

MOISHE

No. Rather on the terms of the 1947 UN resolution which partitioned Palestine into two states.

MOHAMMED
(Sarcastically)

Oh, the partition.

MOISHE

That's right.

MOHAMMED

That 1947 UN vote was a travesty.

MOISHE

No it wasn't.

MOHAMMED

Yes it was. The voting was stacked against the Arabs who were forced to accept what amounted to a U.S. diktat under the guise of a UN resolution.

MOISHE

Not true. The UN vote was an act of justice that the Arabs obstinately refused to accept.

MOHAMMED

Justice perhaps for the Jews. Injustice for the Arabs.

MOISHE

After World War Two, something had to be done to help the Jews.

MOHAMMED

Granted. But why at the expense of the Arabs?

MOISHE

Nobody took anything from the Arabs.

MOHAMMED

You took our land.

MOISHE

We purchased the land.

MOHAMMED

We were forced to sell.

MOISHE

Nobody forced the Arabs to do anything.

MOHAMMED

Then why did so many Palestinians become refugees?

MOISHE

They chose to leave.

MOHAMMED

They had to leave. How could any Arab be expected to live in a Jewish state?

MOISHE

You managed to do it. You never left. In fact, legally, you are an Israeli.

MOHAMMED

I'm a Palestinian, not an Israeli.

MOISHE

No. You are an Israeli who happens to be Arab.

Suddenly, THE PERSON sleeping on the mattress jumps up. This PERSON is disheveled, irritable, indignant, with a scowl on his or her face, easily agitated. THE PERSON screams, points his finger at MOISHE and MOHAMMED)

THE PERSON

Cut the crap! I can't stand it any more!

MOISHE AND MOHAMMED

(Both look at THE PERSON. They are surprised. Recovering their composure, both ask, in unison)

Who the heck are you?

THE PERSON

I am The Baboon.

MOHAMMED

What kind of name is that?

THE BABOON

It's a name that perfectly describes who I am. When I hear phonies like you two guys talking political crap, I get all agitated and excited and start jumping up and down, making lots of noise just like a baboon. Your political posturing makes me sick and mad. All you're doing is using the mid-east crisis to listen to yourselves talk, not to solve problems. So cut the bullshit and get down to brass tacks. Now, what's griping both of you guys? *(pause)* Come on Mohammed, tell Moishe the real reason why you're so pissed off at him.

MOHAMMED

I don't know what you're talking about.

THE BABOON

Sure you know. You just don't want to admit it.

MOHAMMED

No, I really don't know.

THE BABOON

Okay. Then let me refresh your memory. *(pause)* Remember what happened back in 1948 when Israel took over?

MOHAMMED
(*evasive*)

Kind of.

THE BABOON

Kind of, you say? How could you ever forget it? Moishe came marching onto your land and gave you ten minutes to leave. Remember that now?

MOISHE

Wait a minute! I never marched onto anyone's land.

THE BABOON
(*to MOISHE*)

What are you talking about? You Israelis came in liked gang busters and told every Palestinian you could find that they got to leave or else.

MOHAMMED

That's right. That's what happened.

(*To MOISHE*)

You had some nerve marching onto my land like that. You broke into my home and in front of my wife threatened to kill me if I didn't leave. My wife almost died. (*MOHAMMED starts weeping*)

MOISHE

That's not true.

THE BABOON

Not true, you say? Weren't you a soldier in the Israeli army in 1948?

MOISHE
(*defensive*)

I was, but it I never forced my way onto anyone's land.

MOHAMMED

(stops weeping, now angry, to MOISHE)

You're a damn no good liar. I remember it like it happened yesterday. Boy, you were like a storm trooper. You barged right into my home, terrorized my family and told me to get the hell out. Because of you my entire family had to flee and we had to leave behind everything except the clothes on our back. What a disaster. Who were you to do this to me and to my family? I want my home! We DEMAND the right to return to our homes. *(screams)* GET OFF MY LAND!!!

MOISHE

Look, I have no idea what you're talking about. You must be confusing me with someone else.

MOHAMMED

No confusion. I'm certain it was you. You had a whole company of soldiers with you; fifty of you against one unarmed Palestinian who never did you any harm. Why did you have to come after me? What did I ever do to you? *(screams)* GIVE ME BACK MY LAND!

THE BABOON

(to both MOISHE and MOHAMMED)

Now the both of you are talking, having some real down to earth communication. Don't you think so, Moishe?

MOISHE

I don't know what to think.

THE BABOON

Let me help you recollect. *(THE BABOON rummages through the paper shopping bag and pulls out a document and shows it to MOISHE)* This is your discharge paper from the Israeli army. According to this paper *(points to a place on the paper)* you served in the Israeli army from 1947 through 1971 and retired with the rank of major. Also, according to this document, in 1948 you were awarded a medal for valor during operations to clear out Palestinians in the Galilee.

MOHAMMED

(to MOISHE)

That's where I lived! You see, it was you who threw me off my land!

MOISHE

That paper doesn't prove anything.

MOHAMMED

(sarcastic)

And you received a medal of valor? For what? For fighting unarmed civilians like me and my family? Did my wife and children pose a threat to you?

MOISHE

Maybe not to me personally, but your people did.

MOHAMMED

Ah ha! So you admit that it WAS you who barged into my house.

MOISHE

I haven't admitted any such thing.

MOHAMMED

You have a lot of explaining to do, not just to me but to the entire world.

(THE BABOON returns to the mattress, lays down, silent. MOISHE and MOHAMMED resume their discussion, as if they were never interrupted.)

MOHAMMED

No. I was born in Palestine, which was then renamed Israel when I was a boy.

MOISHE

Same with me. Yet I'm an Israeli, not a Palestinian. So why can't you call yourself an Israeli too?

MOHAMMED

Because Palestine is our land, not yours, and you took it from us by force.

MOISHE

It was given to us by the United Nations.

MOHAMMED

By a vote that was stacked against the entire Arab world.

MOISHE

And before that, it was under British mandate.

MOHAMMED

The British merely were caretakers who should have relinquished control of Palestine to the Arabs.

MOISHE

Not so. In 1917, the British promised the Jews a homeland.

MOHAMMED

You're talking about the Balfour Declaration, aren't you?

MOISHE

That's right.

MOHAMMED

The Balfour Declaration was an outrage.

MOISHE

The Balfour Declaration was an act of justice.

MOHAMMED

The British had no right and no valid cause to promise the Jewish people anything.

MOISHE

They did have that right and they exercised that right.

MOHAMMED

What they did was just plain wrong. During World War One the Arabs and the British fought as allies, but apparently that meant nothing to them.

MOISHE

The only reason why you fought with the British was to overthrow the Ottoman Empire. Under those circumstances, you would have allied yourselves with anyone who was fighting the Turks.

MOHAMMED

That's right. But we fought to gain OUR freedom, not to establish the framework for the founding of a Jewish state. To me, the Balfour Declaration marks the start of our present difficulties.

MOISHE

Then what were the British expected to do?

MOHAMMED

Grant us independence.

MOISHE

But it wasn't your country.

MOHAMMED

But we were living there, in a region that was almost entirely Arab.

MOISHE

But Jews were living there too.

THE BABOON

(Jumps up from the mattress, gesticulating wildly, speaks to MOISHE and MOHAMMED)

Your political grandstanding is driving me crazy! Can't you guys level with each other? *(mimicking MOHAMMED)* Poor Mohammed, thrown off his land, sounding like some kind of bereaved victim!

MOHAMMED
(indignant)

Well I WAS a victim.

THE BABOON

That is first-class baloney. You were one nasty son of a gun.

MOHAMMED

What do you mean?

THE BABOON
(To MOISHE)

Well, tell him why!

MOISHE
(to MOHAMMED)

After I moved to your village you tried to kill me!

MOHAMMED
(defensive)

No way!

MOISHE

I had just arrived from Europe. My entire family was gone. I was the sole survivor. There was no one else. I was on my own and had nothing except the clothes on my back. I moved into that little hut that was right next to your farm, and the next thing I knew you were throwing rocks at me even though I had done nothing to you. Is that how you Arabs normally treat your neighbors?

MOHAMMED

That wasn't you, it was somebody else.

MOISHE

No, it was me that you were attacking. Anyway, after that kind of treatment I decided I had to join the Israeli army in order to defend myself. After the horrible way I was treated in Europe, there was no way that I was going to let anyone treat me that way again, not by you, not by anybody.

MOHAMMED

You were trespassing.

MOISHE

No, that little hut was mine. I had purchased it from the local kibbutz.

MOHAMMED

That local kibbutz had no right selling my land.

MOISHE

It wasn't your land, it was Israeli land that the kibbutz had purchased fair and square.

MOHAMMED

That's crap. The land was mine.

MOISHE

You don't know what you're talking about. The kibbutzim offered you a lot of money to sell and you refused.

MOHAMMED

I had a right to refuse.

MOISHE

But you didn't have a right to attack me.

MOHAMMED

I never attacked you.

MOISHE

I still have the scars from the rocks that you threw at me. You were a wild man, worse than the Nazis.

MOHAMMED

I was wild? Who invited you to come to Palestine?

MOISHE

The Israeli government.

MOHAMMED

You mean YOUR bogus government.

MOISHE

Listen, I'm not going to quibble with you. Maybe what I should do is kick your butt right now.

MOHAMMED

(incensed)

Well, come on and try.

THE BABOON

(gleeful)

Now we're talking! *(Returns to the mattress, lays down, again silent. MOISHE and MOHAMMED resume their conversation, as if they were never interrupted.)*

MOHAMMED

I know that. But the Jews were a small minority.

MOISHE

Who wanted to have their own country too.

MOHAMMED

Yes, in a place that was already inhabited by Arabs.

MOISHE

We keep talking in circles. The fact is that the British did promise the Jews their own homeland.

MOHAMMED

A gratuitous promise made in a cynical attempt to maintain Western domination over the Arabs.

MOISHE

No.

MOHAMMED

It's the truth. Given how the Arabs aided the British during World War One, can you honestly say that the Balfour Declaration was fair? That it was just?

MOISHE

Palestine had been the Jewish homeland too.

MOHAMMED

Two thousand years ago.

MOISHE

That's right! And although we were defeated and dispersed, we never disappeared as a people and we preserved our link with the past.

MOHAMMED

While at the same time conveniently disregarding the present.

MOISHE

What were we supposed to do? Forget our past?

MOHAMMED

Not to forget your past, but to take into consideration present circumstances.

MOISHE

Like how the Arabs refuse to co-exist with us.

MOHAMMED

Were we expected to passively welcome a massive influx of Westerners into lands settled for centuries by us?

MOISHE

It was our land before it was yours.

MOHAMMED

And your people lost it. So why should the Arabs have to give back something that was no longer yours? Especially when your loss was not our responsibility? The Arabs did not evict you from Palestine. It was the Romans. So if you have any complaints, take it up with them.

MOISHE

Ha, ha. Don't be so funny.

MOHAMMED

And don't you be so stupid.

MOISHE

And don't you be so nasty.

MOHAMMED

How am I being nasty? Because I disagree with you?

MOISHE

No. Because of your insensitivity to the needs of the Jewish people. We deserve a homeland too.

MOHAMMED

And you have your homeland, except it's at the expense of the Arabs who were dispossessed from their land.

MOISHE

That's not true. After World War One, Palestine became a British mandate, not an independent Arab state, and the British had the authority to create a Jewish homeland.

MOHAMMED

That is utter rubbish.

MOISHE

Nevertheless, those are the facts. So instead of fighting with the Jews, the Arabs should take their complaints to the British and the United Nations which ratified the founding of the Jewish state.

MOHAMMED

Once again, I repeat, the Jewish state was forced upon the Arabs, and the UN vote was a front for maintaining Western influence in the region. And the Jews were convenient pawns in achieving this goal.

MOISHE

Your argument is ridiculous. Israel was founded not to further the goals of Western imperialism or to oppress the Arabs but because it was the wish of the Jewish people to have their own independent state.

MOHAMMED

Don't be a fool. Did the Jews ever hold a plebiscite on this question?

MOISHE

Of course not. But the Zionist movement was deeply rooted in Jewish history and theology.

MOHAMMED

That's right, and that's why it was convenient for the Jews to become pawns in the struggle between the East and West.

MOISHE

That's not true. What you are saying is pure speculation.

MOHAMMED

Given Europe's history of anti-Semitism, it should be no surprise that the West would have been more than happy to promote the creation of a Jewish state outside of Europe.

MOISHE

That's garbage. The Jewish people themselves were responsible for the founding of the Jewish state. In fact, after World War Two, the British did everything they could to block Jewish immigration to Palestine.

MOHAMMED

But the fact is that the British still favored the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

THE BABOON

(jumps up)

What are you guys talking about NOW? The Jewish people, the British, Europe. Why can't you two guys talk TO each other?

MOISHE

(protesting)

We ARE talking to each other.

THE BABOON

No you're not. You're talking AT each other. All you're doing is hiding behind your words. Why don't you get down to brass tacks?

MOHAMMED

I thought that's what we were doing.

THE BABOON

You two guys are the biggest jerks in the world, and that's saying a lot, especially in a world where real intelligence is a rare, and often abused, commodity.

MOISHE

What are you talking about?

THE BABOON

(to MOHAMMED)

Tell him why you're so pissed off at him!

MOHAMMED

(defensive)

I don't want to go there.

THE BABOON
(taunting)

What's the matter? Too much of a wimp to tell the truth?

MOHAMMED

I'm not a wimp. It's just too painful.

THE BABOON

You're just an inflated windbag who blows out noise just to relieve himself.

MOHAMMED
(angry)

Okay! OKAY!!!

(to MOISHE)

You tried to bang my wife!

MOISHE
(amazed)

WHAT!?

MOHAMMED

After you barged into my house at the point of a gun, you grabbed my wife, ripped off her shawl and tried to rape her.

MOISHE
(outraged)

This is too much!

MOHAMMED

You tried to make her do all kinds of disgusting things that I can't even mention, all the time forcing me to watch. It was horrible.

MOISHE

You are hallucinating!

THE BABOON

(to MOISHE)

Hallucinating is he? Let's see what the record says.

(THE BABOON reaches into the shopping bag and pulls out an old newspaper clipping and reads)

Tel Aviv Times, January 23, 1949 and I quote. Photograph of Palestinian women being herded into a detention center by Israeli soldiers. *(Points to a photograph)*. Looks like you guys were very busy rounding up the ladies.

MOISHE

I don't know what either one of you are talking about. The detaining of the Palestinian women was a purely defensive measure and after screening they were quickly released. Some of the most fanatical terrorists were women.

(to Mohammed)

Regarding your wife, I never touched her!

MOHAMMED

You philandering bastard. You're not man enough to have a woman of your own so you had to try to screw another man's wife? I saw what I saw. It was you.

MOISHE

First, at the time I was married. Second, It wasn't me, I tell you. Indeed, during my service as an Israeli soldier I never abused women.

MOHAMMED

You treated us the same way the Nazis treated the Jews, except we refused to take it.

(THE BABOON, his face beaming with joy, returns to the mattress, lies down, again silent. MOISHE and MOHAMMED resume their original conversation as if they were never interrupted.)

MOISHE

Actually, they turned over the entire matter to the United Nations.

MOHAMMED

They did that because they could no longer impose their will on the Arabs, which was to accept the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

MOISHE

But what were the Jews supposed to do after World War Two?

MOHAMMED

That was a matter for the Jews and the countries of Europe to resolve.

MOISHE

And it was resolved through the founding of the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

Exactly my point. Israel was founded with the support of the West, which was more than happy to accommodate the needs of the Jewish people in order to maintain Western domination in the Middle East.

MOISHE

Your distorted ideas ignore the fact that the Jews alone fought for the creation of Israel.

MOHAMMED

But you're forgetting that you did so with the help of the United Nations, which endorsed your cause and denied us our right to self-determination. And what good did it do? Over fifty years later we're still fighting each other.

MOISHE

You mean the Jews are still defending themselves against the Arabs.

MOHAMMED

Don't put words in my mouth. My words are clear. The Jews and Arabs are at war. But don't you find that ironic? Two Semitic peoples fighting each other? Why should we be fighting? The Arabs never persecuted the Jews. In fact, even under the Ottoman Turks, the Jews were protected.

MOISHE

Then instead of opposing us, the Arabs should have welcomed us.

MOHAMMED

On what basis?

MOISHE

As friends, like King Faisal's son, Emir Faisal, advocated in 1919.

MOHAMMED

But you did not come as friends. The Jews came to Palestine as emissaries of the West. Our land was partitioned, two states were set up, and the Jews were filled with joy while the Arabs, denied control of their land, wept. Were we supposed to accept that?

MOISHE

The Jews needed a Jewish homeland.

MOHAMMED

Which was created without Arab consent. That was a gross injustice committed against the Arab people.

MOISHE

What about the injustices committed against the Jewish people?

MOHAMMED

Whose fault was that? Certainly not the Arabs.'

MOISHE

It was the long history of persecution against the Jews that made it urgent that the Jews have their own nation.

MOHAMMED

But it was persecution by the West, not by the Arabs.

MOISHE

And a bitter persecution it was, which made the creation of a Jewish state even more imperative.

MOHAMMED

But why was there such a rush to create a Jewish state after World War Two? The Nazis were defeated and the Jews were liberated. So what made the need for a Jewish state so urgent?

MOISHE

The events that took place during the war proved that the Jews could guarantee their survival as a people only through the creation of their own independent state.

MOHAMMED

And the only way you had to achieve that goal was by expropriating Arab land?

MOISHE

It wasn't Arab land.

MOHAMMED

Then whose land was it?

MOISHE

The land was under the control of the British, who then relinquished their mandate to the United Nations, which then voted to partition Palestine into two separate states.

MOHAMMED

Yes. But who lived there?

MOISHE

Jews and Arabs.

MOHAMMED

Yes. But the Jews were latecomers and constituted a small minority of the total population. We Arabs were already living there. And instead of wanting to arrive at some kind of agreement with us over the issue of control of the land, the Jews unilaterally decided that they would create a Jewish state.

MOISHE

That's right. We wanted to create a Jewish state. Would you have allowed us to live and thrive in a Palestinian state?

MOHAMMED

Absolutely.

MOISHE

No way. You hate us. That's why the Jews needed their own state. You did not want to co-exist with us.

MOHAMMED

We would have co-existed with the Jews, but the Jews wanted to create their own state at the expense of the Arabs. Under those circumstances, co-existence was not possible.

MOISHE

That's not fair. The Arab world comprises over 22 countries and over two hundred million people. Given the immensity of your countries and the size of your population, why can't the Arabs tolerate the idea of Jews having a nation of their own?

MOHAMMED

Because Palestine was supposed to be an Arab state, not a Jewish state, and if the Arab people accede to the West over the issue of Palestine, then the entire Arab world will be reduced to little more than a bunch of colonies to be mercilessly exploited by the West for commercial gain.

MOISHE

So you're afraid that if Israel is allowed to exist, then the West will eventually impose its control over the entire Arab world.

MOHAMMED

That's right. That will happen.

MOISHE

You're wrong. For much of your history, you never had control of your lands. For hundreds of years you were under the domination of the Ottoman Turks. Then after World War One, the French and British had control of the region. Now there are twenty-two independent Arab states. To believe that the Jews pose some kind of threat to you is ridiculous. We just want to live in peace.

MOHAMMED

That's easy for you to say. But the facts are that in Palestine we lived on the land, worked on the land, and comprised the vast majority of the inhabitants of the land. So it was an Arab land, which should have become an independent Palestinian state.

MOISHE

But the Arabs did get their own state.

MOHAMMED

Through a contrived partition, which was arbitrarily determined by the British without the consent of the Arabs.

MOISHE

But which was decided with the consent of the Jewish people.

MOHAMMED

Who were late arrivals and who had no legitimate claim to the land.

MOISHE

We did have a legitimate claim to the land. Why can't you accept that?

MOHAMMED

Because it's not true. We were there first. It was our land.

MOISHE

No way. It was under Turkish and then British control. In fact, almost every country in the world recognizes the state of Israel, including Egypt and Jordan.

MOHAMMED

That still does not mitigate the situation of the Palestinian Arabs, who have no country of their own.

MOISHE

Maybe if the Palestinian Arabs stopped tossing bombs at us, then maybe something could be worked out.

MOHAMMED

What can be worked out? We want our land back.

MOISHE

Do you accept the right of the Jewish people to have their own state?

MOHAMMED

We do, but not on our land.

MOISHE

(Screams)

It is not your land!

MOHAMMED

(Screams)

It is our land!

(- Pause -)

MOISHE

(Regaining his composure)

You must accept the reality of the existence of a Jewish state.

MOHAMMED

(Calmer, but still agitated)

Says you! Without the backing of the United States, Israel would cease to exist.

MOISHE

(Calm)

And if the Arabs would stop attacking the Jews, then maybe we could finally co-exist.

MOHAMMED

(Calm)

Why should the Arabs accept the presence of a Jewish state?

MOISHE

Because peace is better than war, which just produces suffering.

MOHAMMED

We want peace too.

MOISHE

Terrorism and fanaticism are not the way to achieve that goal.

MOHAMMED

The Arabs deplore terrorism too, but we understand how our young people can resort to such extreme measures.

MOISHE

Well, I sure don't understand it. Suicide bombings? Targeting innocent civilians. Trumpeting terrorists as heroes and martyrs? To me, it seems that most Arabs condone these terrorist acts. Who can forget the images of the Palestinians screaming with joy after the attack on the World Trade Center?

MOHAMMED

The Palestinians had nothing to do with that tragic event.

MOISHE

Their celebrating was on TV for the whole world to see.

MOHAMMED

But many other Arabs expressed their condolences for the losses suffered by the American people.

MOISHE

Yet many Arabs still call the U.S. the great satan and openly vow to drive the Jews into the sea.

MOHAMMED

And many Jews still refuse to recognize the right of the Palestinians to have their own independent state.

MOISHE

Untrue! Israel does not oppose the creation of a Palestinian state. But she doesn't want a Palestinian state that is intent on destroying the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

In 1993, Yassir Arafat said that the the P.L.O. recognized the right of Israel to exist.

MOISHE

Then why are Arab terrorists still attacking the state of Israel?

MOHAMMED

Because the Jews still occupy lands in Palestinian territory.

MOISHE

But we need to maintain settlements for our self-defense.

MOHAMMED

The Israelis still do not trust the Palestinians.

MOISHE

How can we, when your people keep preaching hatred and keep subjecting us to terrorist attacks?

MOHAMMED

If Israel were not so bullheaded, we would not have to resort to violence.

MOISHE

And if the Palestinians were not such two-faced frauds and so full of hatred, we would be better able to trust you and your words.

MOHAMMED

What more do the Jews want from us? We acknowledge that Israel has a right to exist.

MOISHE

So then let Israel exist in peace, and stop your attacks in us.

MOHAMMED

Then stop your occupation of the West Bank.

MOISHE

Then stop the suicide bombers.

MOHAMMED

You mean the martyrs for a free and independent Palestinian state.

MOISHE

How can you call those maniacs martyrs?

MOHAMMED

Yes, they are martyrs. They're soldiers who are willing to die for a cause.

MOISHE

Soldiers? No way! They're vicious murderers!

MOHAMMED

To us they are soldiers.

MOISHE

You condone their method?

MOHAMMED

What to some is considered terror is to others legitimate means of struggle.

MOISHE

Are you saying that blowing oneself up with the purpose of killing innocent civilians is justifiable?

MOHAMMED

Under certain circumstances, yes.

MOISHE

That's outrageous!

MOHAMMED

Why are you so outraged? During World War Two your American and British friends dropped millions of tons of bombs on Germany, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians.

MOISHE

Yes, that happened, but while the Germans were being bombed, they knew exactly who were bombing them, why they were being bombed, and in addition we were trying to stop a terrorist regime that had started the war and was committing genocide.

MOHAMMED

Are you suggesting that in World War Two the mass killing of civilians was acceptable while now it's not?

MOISHE

I'm not saying that at all. What I am saying is that Nazi Germany was a terrorist regime and a menace to world peace that had to be stopped at all costs, while Israel is a small country that wishes to live in peace with its neighbors.

MOHAMMED

Meanwhile Israel is employing the same tactics against the Palestinian Arabs.

MOISHE

You mean we're indiscriminately targeting innocent civilians?

MOHAMMED

That's right. It happened in Lebanon and it happens every time the Israelis conduct an incursion into Palestinian camps.

MOISHE

What you are referring to are our self-defense operations to root out and arrest terrorists.

MOHAMMED

You mean self-OFFENSE operations designed to terrorize the Palestinian people and keep the Palestinians down.

MOISHE

Not so. We're just trying to defend ourselves. Israel has a right to secure borders.

MOHAMMED

And the Palestinian people have a right to have their own state, but Israel continues to block our national aspirations. Even the United States favors the creation of a Palestinian state.

MOISHE

But the U. S. insists on a Palestinian state whose leadership acknowledges once and for all that Israel has a right to exist and renounces the use of terror.

MOHAMMED

What are you talking about? Israel has to withdraw from Palestinian lands.

MOISHE

We'll withdraw only when the Palestinian leadership is committed to peace.

MOHAMMED

It is this Israeli stubbornness that is causing the conflict to continue.

MOISHE

That is garbage. The conflict is continuing because the Palestinian leadership still wants to destroy the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

And Israel still wants to oppress the Palestinian people.

MOISHE

And the Palestinian people still want to destroy the Jews.

MOHAMMED

No we don't. We have no argument with the Jews who are our Semitic brothers. Our argument is with your government that refuses to abide by agreements allowing for the creation of a Palestinian state.

MOISHE

In Oslo, Israel offered to withdraw from 97 percent of the West Bank and to relinquish control of the Gaza strip. The response of the Palestinian leadership was to leave the negotiating table and renew the fighting.

MOHAMMED

Israel was intent on continuing a policy that was unacceptable to the Palestinian people, so there was nothing more to negotiate.

MOISHE

Before the 1967 war, the Palestinians occupied the West Bank. Why didn't the Palestinians found a state then?

MOHAMMED

Because we were still fighting to regain control of our entire country.

MOISHE

By that you mean the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

That is correct. The state forced upon the entire Arab world in 1948.

MOISHE

And after four wars and countless acts of terrorism, you still haven't given up the fight.

MOHAMMED

That is right.

MOISHE

Given this ongoing hostility toward Israel, why should Israelis now believe that the Arabs have given up their wish to destroy the state of Israel?

MOHAMMED

We haven't. But maybe we will if Israel demonstrates a change in attitude, such as acknowledging the legitimacy of our grievances.

MOISHE

Yes, you have grievances, but we have grievances too. You Palestinians claim that you are victims, but it is the Jews who have been the victims, of discrimination, of hatred, of bigotry, of genocide, and we will not let that happen again.

THE BABOON

(jumps up again, screams)

AHHHH!!!! I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!!!! The verbal puke coming from both of you geniuses is almost too much to bear.

(to MOISHE)

You tried to jump Mohammed's wife, but what did Mohammed do to you?

MOISHE

(Flustered)

I repeat I never did that with his wife.

MOHAMMED

Like heck you didn't, you lying bastard. You're nothing but a marauder. Hey, if you want, I'll get you a tasty fresh bagel with a nice hot hole. Maybe that will do you.

THE BABOON

That's telling him, Mohammed, but you're not exactly mister goody-two-shoes either, are you?

MOHAMMED

What do you mean?

THE BABOON

What I mean is a certain incident in 1947 that involved you two guys.

MOHAMMED

I don't know what you're talking about.

MOISHE

(excited)

But I do! I remember.

THE BABOON

That's right, Moische, the old memory bank is paying some interest.

MOISHE
(recollecting)

In 1947 I had just arrived in Israel and one night was walking home after work on the kibbutz when three men attacked me and beat me and robbed me, and then ran away. It was awful. They were speaking Arabic and laughing like the whole thing was one big joke.

MOHAMMED
What did that have to do with me?

MOISHE
Everything. You were the guy who mugged me.

MOHAMMED
(indignant)
I did no such thing.

MOISHE
Oh yes, it was you. Same voice.

MOHAMMED
That's ridiculous.

MOISHE
I'm certain it was you.

MOHAMMED
I don't care how certain you are, it wasn't me.

MOISHE
You lying piece of filth. It was you. Back then there was a whole rash of break-ins and muggings occurring, all involving a gang of Arabs who were preying on newly-arrived Jews, and you were a member of that gang.

MOHAMMED

Maybe I was, but that doesn't mean I as the one who attacked you.

MOISHE

So there was more than one gang?

MOHAMMED

Maybe there was.

MOISHE

Who targeted Jews, like the Nazis did in Europe?

MOHAMMED

You people had no business moving in.

MOISHE

That means I deserved to be beaten up? I was to blame for my own victimization?

MOHAMMED

Those are your words, not mine.

MOISHE

Don't be coy with me, you stupid s----head. I ought to shove my fist down your throat right now. How would you like that?

MOHAMMED

(laughs)

Tough talk coming from a twirp like you.

THE BABOON

(to MOHAMMED)

That's telling him, Mohammed

MOISHE

You mean the twirp who you imagine did your wife?

(MOHAMMED raises his arm and makes his hand into a fist)

THE BABOON

(to MOISHE)

Touché, Moishe.

(THE BABOON lays down on the mattress, again silent. MOISHE and MOHAMMED resume their original conversation as if they were never interrupted.)

MOHAMMED

But you are now treating us the same way that you've been treated. That is wrong. The Palestinian people never mistreated the Jewish people.

MOISHE

But if you could mistreat us, you would. The Palestinians don't want to co-exist with the Jews. You want to destroy the Jewish state and drive the Jews out of the region. Your hatred of us is boundless.

MOHAMMED

We did not start this fight. We did not ask the Jews to come to Palestine. We did not ask the British to partition our land. We did not ask the United Nations to vote into existence the State of Israel. We did not ask Israel to occupy the West Bank.

MOISHE

And the Jews did not ask to be systematically murdered. And the Jews did not asked to expelled from their own country two thousand years ago. And the Jews did not ask to be the target for every bigot, crackpot and religious fanatic with an axe to grind.

MOHAMMED

And the Palestinians did not ask the Jews to take over Arab land.

MOISHE

Arab land? No! Israeli land! Jewish land!

MOHAMMED

We're back to square one. The talking is just a waste of time.

MOISHE

So you think that negotiations are useless?

MOHAMMED

Not useless, just fruitless, because Israel will not negotiate in good faith.

MOISHE

Won't negotiate in good faith? What do you expect from us when we are repeatedly attacked by suicide bombers? Is that supposed to encourage us to negotiate? It seems that it's your side that does want to negotiate.

MOHAMMED

We do want to negotiate. We talked in Washington. We talked in Oslo. We've brought our case to the United Nations. We have appealed to the world for justice. And what has been the result? Nothing. Israel is still blocking the creation of an independent Palestinian state. For a while, we thought there was a chance of arriving at an agreement with Rabin, but when Rabin was assassinated, we really began losing hope.

MOISHE

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin was a tragedy.

MOHAMMED

But it was more than a tragedy. It called into question Israel's willingness to abide by the terms of the Camp David accord in which both the P.L.O. and Israel accepted each other's right to exist.

MOISHE

We were, and still are, committed to abiding by the terms of the Camp David accord. However, we question the willingness of the Palestinians to do the same.

MOHAMMED

You have no grounds for feeling that way .

MOISHE

Yes, we do. Look what happened after Israel gave up control of Gaza and the West Bank! Instead of peace, Israel became a target for terror attacks, while the P.L.O. did nothing to stop it.

MOHAMMED

That was because Israel refused to give up control of the land. We conceded that Israel has a right to exist. What more do you want?

MOISHE

Assurances that the Palestinians will stop attacking the Israeli people.

MOHAMMED

We gave you those assurances, but apparently you do not believe us, which causes us to question whether Israel really wants to negotiate in good faith.

MOISHE

Your assurances are a step in the right direction, but the open hostility of the P.L.O. and other Palestinian organizations toward Israel causes us to question whether you want to negotiate in good faith.

MOHAMMED

What do we have to gain by negotiating in bad faith?

MOISHE

Time to build up your forces to attack Israel again.

MOHAMMED

So you believe that while we're talking, we're preparing to fight?

MOISHE

That's right! You're fighting us now, aren't you?

MOHAMMED

Yes we are, because we're trying to enforce the terms of an agreement that you are refusing to abide by. And besides, if you don't trust us, then what's the point of negotiating in the first place?

MOISHE

To achieve peace. But we're at a disadvantage. Israel is a small country surrounded by many Arab countries. So we have to be extra careful, especially concerning your real intentions, and we don't want to make concessions that could bring about our own destruction.

MOHAMMED

If anyone is at a disadvantage in this conflict, it's the Palestinians. Not only do the Israelis have the unqualified support of the United States, they have their own government, their own military and have the power to enter our homes at any time.

MOISHE

That's right, within the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

Even in the West Bank?

MOISHE

Even in the West Bank.

MOHAMMED

That is Palestinian territory.

MOISHE

There is no Palestinian state. So how can there be Palestinian territory?

MOHAMMED

Do not taunt me. You know that the West Bank is under Palestinian control.

MOISHE

No, that is not the case. Palestinians live in that region and have been granted a certain degree of local autonomy, but that entire region is under Israeli control.

MOHAMMED

It is that kind of arrogance that provokes us to commit desperate acts.

MOISHE

The more you try to fight us, the worse you make it for yourselves. Furthermore, I'm not being arrogant, I'm just telling you the truth, that you do not want to accept.

MOHAMMED

Then the struggle must continue.

MOISHE

Struggle for what?

MOHAMMED

For our liberation.

MOISHE

But the more you keep fighting us, the worse you make it for your own people.

MOHAMMED

We're not making things worse for our people. Israel is to blame, with your brutal incursions into our homes. Maybe if you stopped these incursions and returned to the bargaining table, then you could gain the peace and security that you say you want.

MOISHE

We cannot negotiate with terrorists, and we have to respond when we are attacked.

MOHAMMED

But you are being attacked because the Israelis will not leave the area that they said they would leave.

MOISHE

And that's because the Palestinians still hate us, and so we have to maintain a presence amongst you as a defensive measure, to prevent the possibility of further attacks.

MOHAMMED

The Palestinian people are willing to live in peaceful co-existence with a Jewish state, but is the Jewish state willing to treat us with the respect that we deserve?

MOISHE

We respect the Palestinians. The main obstacle to peace is not Israel's attitude toward the Palestinian people. Rather, it is your continued hostility toward us.

MOHAMMED

Hostility towards you? In 1993, after the Camp David accord, Palestinians gave flowers to Israeli soldiers and shouted shalom. We were happy and jubilant and we wanted to share our joy with the Israeli people.

MOISHE

That attitude certainly has changed. Now you're sending suicide bombers and screaming for our blood.

MOHAMMED

Because you continue to ignore and disparage our legitimate demands.

MOISHE

So that gives you cause to resort to acts of terror?

MOHAMMED

We tried negotiations and they failed. So what do expect us to do? We fight with the means available to us.

MOISHE

Which includes suicide bombers.

MOHAMMED

If need be.

MOISHE

It is a tactic that will not succeed.

MOHAMMED

It's already succeeding. You don't know when or where the next attack will occur.

MOISHE

You're wrong. We will search out and punish all who protect or support these maniacs.

MOHAMMED

Such talk is pure exaggeration. No matter how harshly you may retaliate, you will never prevent us from attacking.

MOISHE

Once again, the Jews are under attack.

MOHAMMED

Wait a minute. We're the victims, not you.

MOISHE

No. We're the victims. Your attacking us is just the latest episode in the never-ending assault against the Jewish people, and the latest attempt to fulfill the Nazi quest to eradicate the Jews from the face of the earth. It's because of the hatred shown to us from people like you that we had to establish our own country.

MOHAMMED

That's why the Palestinians need their own country too.

MOISHE

What are you saying? That the Palestinian people have been the victims of genocide?

MOHAMMED

It seems like it's heading in that direction. Like the Jews in Europe, Palestinians have been forced to live in ghettos, and like the Jews in Europe, we are being systematically oppressed, humiliated and disenfranchised.

MOISHE

The comparison is false. In Europe, the Jews were a tiny defenseless minority while in the Middle East the Palestinian people are part of a larger Arab world in which the Jews are again a tiny minority.

MOHAMMED

But meanwhile you have your own country while we don't.

MOISHE

And meanwhile you want to destroy us, and because of that, you have only yourselves to blame for your present circumstances.

MOHAMMED

No, that is not so. We don't have our own country because Israel has repeatedly blocked our attempts to form a nation.

MOISHE

With good reason.

MOHAMMED

What's the reason?

MOISHE

Because you are more interested in trying to destroy us than in having your own country.

MOHAMMED

We would build our own country if you'd let us.

MOISHE

Yes, you would, but at Israel's expense.

MOHAMMED

We can co-exist.

MOISHE

That's wonderful that you say that, but your words are not consistent with your actions. So how can we believe you?

MOHAMMED

We have repeatedly gone to the bargaining table.

MOISHE

What does that prove?

MOHAMMED

If we really didn't want peace, then we would not have wasted our time talking with you at the bargaining table.

MOISHE

Every time we start negotiating, invariably we are subjected to terrorist attacks, which cause us to doubt your sincerity in wanting to negotiate in good faith. To us, it seems that you use the negotiating process merely to buy time while preparing to attack us again.

MOHAMMED

We want to resolve our differences peacefully, but Israel's lack of good faith that has caused the talks to fail.

MOISHE

I disagree. We want to settle our differences too, but not while we're being threatened with terrorist attacks. How can we talk when you keep attacking us?

MOHAMMED

The same way we want to talk while you're launching rockets at us and refusing to withdraw from the West Bank.

MOISHE

But we're forced to defend ourselves because the Palestinian authorities have proven, time and again, that they are either unable or unwilling to stop terrorist groups from attacking us. So, what are we supposed to do?

MOHAMMED

Work with us, not against us, to stop these terrorists.

MOISHE

But it seems that you are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

MOHAMMED

Are you suggesting that every Palestinian is a terrorist?

MOISHE

No, I am not saying that. But I will say that most Palestinians seem to support or at least condone what the terrorists want to accomplish, which is to sabotage the peace process and eradicate of the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

We want to co-exist with the state of Israel. It is Israel that does not want to co-exist with us.

MOISHE

Then why are we fighting?

MOHAMMED

Because Israel refuses to make compromises in order to achieve a lasting peace.

MOISHE

That is nonsense. We have repeatedly offered to withdraw from Palestinian areas, but every time we do so, the terrorist attacks become worse.

MOHAMMED

But most Palestinian people desire peace.

MOISHE

That is hard to believe, given the open hatred your people demonstrate towards us.

MOHAMMED

We don't hate you. We just want our own country.

MOISHE

Meanwhile, your people burn our flag, vilify the Jews, vow revenge, and publicly demand that Israel be destroyed.

MOHAMMED

Part of that is your fault. You forced us from our land and caused us to become refugees. So how do expect us to feel?

MOISHE

Nobody told you to leave. You left on your own.

MOHAMMED

How could we have stayed when you took our land and deprived us of our country?

MOISHE

We took the land that you abandoned and we developed it. We didn't deprive you of anything. You deprived yourselves.

MOHAMMED

Not so. The moment that Israel declared its independence, the Palestinians became a disenfranchised people.

MOISHE

But Israel now exists. So, what do want from us?

MOHAMMED

Stop blocking us from creating our own state.

MOISHE

Not while you want to create your own state at Israel's expense.

MOHAMMED

But Israel was founded at our expense.

MOISHE

Israel was founded because it was the only way for the Jewish people to guarantee their survival.

MOHAMMED

No. Israel was founded because the British sold out to the Jews who became willing pawns in the struggle for control of the holy land and the entire region with its huge oil reserves.

MOISHE

No! Not true! It had nothing to do with the British. The Jews were destined to return to the land of Israel, to the land of where they had once been kings and which had been promised to them in the Bible.

MOHAMMED

Meanwhile, two thousand years ago, the Jews were evicted by the Romans and years later we took possession of the land. So where are we supposed to go now? Just disappear, because the Jews insist that the land is now theirs?

MOISHE

Let me remind you again that in 1948 the United Nations approved the creation of the state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

That UN vote was opposed by the entire Arab world.

MOISHE

You defied the will of the world.

MOHAMMED

First of all, at that time most of the world was not even represented at the UN, so the vote represented the will of only a small proportion of the world's population. China was not represented, most of Africa was not represented and much of southeastern Asia was not represented. So the vote really was not valid.

MOISHE

The vote was valid. Every member nation participated in the vote, including the entire Arab bloc.

MOHAMMED

We had no choice but to oppose that vote.

MOISHE

You did have a choice. You could have cooperated.

MOHAMMED

That's easy for you to say. We were the ones who were disenfranchised.

MOISHE

You're objections were hogwash.

MOHAMMED

Our objections were right. First, no one had the right to take away our land. And second, the wishes of the Arab people were completely ignored, as if we counted for nothing.

MOISHE

The matter was debated. Your views were heard, and it was decided that the Jews could return to the land of their origin from which they had been forced to flee.

MOHAMMED

But that happened over two thousand years ago.

MOISHE

So what? The Jews were destined to return to the land.

MOHAMMED

What do you mean destined?

MOISHE

It was inevitable that the Jews would return to their historical homeland.

MOHAMMED

Which would have never happened without the backing of the West.

MOISHE

No. The Jews made it happen.

MOHAMMED

With the help of the United States, who led the way.

MOISHE

We fought our own fight and won. The United States did not come to our aid.

MOHAMMED

No way. With the backing of the United States, you took our land by force, and here we are today, still arguing about it.

MOISHE

The Jews want to co-exist with your people.

MOHAMMED

And my people want justice.

THE BABOON

(Jumps up. Agitated. Gesticulating wildly. Mimicking MOHAMMED)

My people want justice! My people want justice! What a fucking imbecile you are. You couldn't care less about justice for your people. All you want is personal revenge.

MOHAMMED

(to THE BABOON)

That's not true. As a member of the PLO legislative council I represent an entire constituency.

THE BABOON

(mocking)

What the hell is the PLO legislative council? Is that like the US House of Representatives? We're supposed to believe that you actually represent other people? Ha!

MOISHE

You're nothing but a hack politician. How much you make in bribes?

MOHAMMED

(to MOISHE)

You're an idiot.

MOISHE

And you're a sniveling liar.

(Both men glare at each other while THE BABOON looks on approvingly, with a big smile on his face.)

THE BABOON

Gentleman I believe that you two are finally engaging in honest and direct communication. How refreshing.

MOHAMMED

I'm glad you were mugged and beaten back in 1947. You deserved it.

MOISHE

Said just like the deluded fool that you are.

MOHAMMED

I'm not the fool. Do you think I forgot what you tried to do to my daughter?

MOISHE

What do you mean?

MOHAMMED

When you busted into my house not only did you molest my wife, you also went after my eleven year old daughter.

THE BABOON

(gloating)

Now this is getting good!

MOISHE

(to MOHAMMED)

That is a bunch of crap! Now I know you're sick.

MOHAMMED

(bitter)

You can deny it all you want, but it's true. Years later my daughter told me all about it. She said it was you.

MOISHE

She's wrong!

MOHAMMED

Are you calling my daughter a liar?

MOISHE

(angry)

Yes, I AM calling your daughter a liar!

MOHAMMED

Women don't lie about things like this.

MOISHE

You people will lie about anything if it suits your purposes. For all I know it was you who molested your own daughter.

MOHAMMED

(screams)

You unmitigated bastard! You scum of the earth! How dare you say such a thing?

MOISHE

Because it's true. I heard that you people engage in all kind of unusual sexual practices.

MOHAMMED

You racist pig. You running dog.

MOISHE

Here we go again. More name calling.

(MOISHE and MOHAMMED wave fists into each other's face.)

THE BABOON

Yes, more name calling. Defenses now down; fists now up; pretense being superseded by the glaring light of open confrontation. Isn't it refreshing? Isn't it wonderful?

(THE BABOON lays down on the mattress, again silent. MOISHE and MOHAMMED resume their original discussion as if they were never interrupted.)

MOISHE

And my people want peace.

MOHAMMED

And my people want to be respected.

MOISHE

And my people want security.

MOHAMMED

We will gladly recognize the state of Israel, but Israel has to recognize our rights too.

MOISHE

We do recognize your rights. In Israel your rights are fully recognized and protected.

MOHAMMED

But that's avoiding the issue. The Arabs are a minority in our own land.

MOISHE

It's not your land anymore.

MOHAMMED

That's because we were forced to pay the price for Europe's callous mistreatment of the Jews.

MOISHE

You still do not accept the reality and finality of the situation.

MOHAMMED

Why should we accept something that was forced upon us?

MOISHE

After World War Two ...

MOHAMMED

World War Two, World War Two. What did World War Two have to do with us? We didn't start World War Two. The Arabs had absolutely nothing to do with what happened to the Jews in Europe. So what do you want from us?

MOISHE

But the war did happen, and because of the war it was imperative that the Jewish people have their own state.

MOHAMMED

So you got your own state, while the Palestinians are still denied a state of their own.

MOISHE

You could have your own state too when you agree that Israel can have secure and recognizable borders.

MOHAMMED

Why shouldn't we agree with that?

MOISHE

Then why are we arguing?

MOHAMMED

Because Israel refuses to accept that there must be a Palestinian state too.

MOISHE

And the PLO refuses to let Israel live in peace.

MOHAMMED

And Israel refuses to treat the Palestinian people with respect.

MOISHE

And the Palestinians want to destroy us.

MOHAMMED

Simply not true. In fact, Israel wants to destroy us.

MOISHE

No way. It is you who want to destroy us.

MOHAMMED

We're the victims of Israeli aggression.

MOISHE

And we're the victims of your aggression. That's why we have to maintain a military presence, to defend ourselves against you.

MOHAMMED

The United Nations has repeatedly called for the creation of a Palestinian state with secure and recognizable borders. Israel is obligated to abide by these resolutions.

MOISHE

And the Arabs were obligated to accept the UN resolution that ratified the creation of the state of Israel. But instead of accepting the vote, what happened was that as soon as Israel declared its independence, we were attacked by five Arab countries.

MOHAMMED

The creation of the state of Israel was an intolerable affront to every Arab in the region.

MOISHE

We offered the olive branch of peace and you threw it back right into our face. So what were we suppose to conclude from that?

MOHAMMED

That the Arab people were angry, but Israel and her Western allies would not budge.

MOISHE

So you converted the region into a battleground.

MOHAMMED

No. Israel did that.

MOISHE

All we did was declare our independence. You were the ones that started the fighting.

MOHAMMED

And you were the ones who provoked us.

MOISHE

And you were the ones who refused to negotiate.

MOHAMMED

And you were the ones who refused to compromise.

MOISHE

And you were the ones who wouldn't let us live in peace.

MOHAMMED

And you were the ones who took our land and made us refugees.

MOISHE

And you were the ones who vowed to destroy us.

MOHAMMED

Destroy you? In 1956 Israel invaded Egypt, in 1967 grabbed the West Bank and Gaza, and in 1982 invaded Lebanon. So who was trying to destroy whom?

MOISHE

We were defending ourselves.

MOHAMMED

You mean you were trying to crush us.

MOISHE

You're the ones who are trying to crush us.

MOHAMMED

Then why are we in refugee camps?

MOISHE

Because you're too busy fighting us instead of opting for peace.

MOHAMMED

Leave the West Bank and Gaza and then maybe we'll stop fighting.

MOISHE

We'll leave when we have assurances that your new state will not attack Israel.

MOHAMMED

Why would we want to attack Israel?

MOISHE

Because the PLO still wants to "liberate" the entire state of Israel.

MOHAMMED

That is no longer our goal.

MOISHE

And we're supposed to believe that?

MOHAMMED

Yes.

MOISHE

Despite your repeated vows to destroy Israel?

MOHAMMED

Yes.

MOISHE

What evidence can you offer as proof that you no longer want to destroy Israel?

MOHAMMED

The 2000 Camp David accord.

MOISHE

That meeting was a farce, a cynical ploy on the part of the PLO to consolidate its position in the West Bank while at the same time demanding the right of return to the country it wants to destroy.

MOHAMMED

Not destroy, liberate.

MOISHE

No, destroy. It is common knowledge that the PLO wants to destroy Israel.

MOHAMMED

Not true. We want peace.

MOISHE

You have a strange way of showing it. In fact, while you continue talking about establishing a Palestinian state, you continue your vicious policy of terror against the Israeli people.

MOHAMMED

What policy of terror? The PLO categorically deplores all acts of terrorism.

MOISHE

That is complete garbage. The terrorists are based in your territory, they have links to your organization, and instead of prosecuting them you treat them as martyrs. So don't tell me that you now deplore terrorism.

MOHAMMED

Well, that's what I'm telling you.

MOISHE

But you haven't acted on your words. So we've had to go after these so-called martyrs ourselves. Why can't you stop treating these maniacs as martyrs?

MOHAMMED

We are doing what we can to suppress terrorism.

MOISHE

If that's true, then you're doing a very poor job of it, and if this the best the P.L.O. can do, then I have to wonder how much real authority the P.L.O. actually has.

MOHAMMED

The current president of the provisional Palestinian government, Yassir Arafat, is in full control of the situation

MOISHE

Then why can't he root out the terrorists who are under his jurisdiction? Or maybe he just does not want to root them out.

MOHAMMED

What are you talking about? He can do the job.

MOISHE

But if he can't do the job, then some other Palestinian leader will have to do it, or Israel will do it.

MOHAMMED

We can police ourselves.

MOISHE

Then prove it by stopping your children from throwing stones at our soldiers.

MOHAMMED

Impossible.

MOISHE

Why?

MOHAMMED

Because the presence of the Israelis is provoking them.

MOISHE

We're to blame for your children attacking us with stones?

MOHAMMED

Of course!

MOISHE

That is utter nonsense. You're just using your children to attack us.

MOHAMMED

No, we don't.

MOISHE

No, it's you who is doing the inciting. And if you think that we will tolerate being attacked by your children, you better think again.

MOHAMMED

Do you mean that you will hurt our children?

MOISHE

No. I mean we will retaliate against those who incite their own children to commit acts of violence, meaning people like you.

MOHAMMED

Meaning me? You're out of your mind!

MOISHE

No, you're out of YOUR mind! In fact, you're the problem!

MOHAMMED

(Pointing at MOISHE, screams)

Oh yeah!? YOU'RE the problem!

MOISHE

(Pointing at MOHAMMED, screams)

No! YOU'RE the problem! You're inciting your children to attack us!

MOHAMMED

(Still pointing, screams)

Wrong! Our children simply want the Israelis to leave!

MOISHE

(Still pointing, screams)

And who's telling them that the Israelis should leave?

MOHAMMED

(Stops pointing, stops screaming)

The Israelis, through their own punitive actions.

MOISHE

(Stops pointing, stops screaming)

No, it's people like you who are teaching your children to hate us. And that doesn't do you or your cause any good.

MOHAMMED

Israel has given them cause to hate.

MOISHE

No! We want to live in peace, with all our neighbors.

MOHAMMED

Then all you have to do is leave those areas that are under Palestinian jurisdiction.

MOISHE

We were in the process of doing that. But instead of leading to peace, it's produced more fighting.

MOHAMMED

(Screams)

With Israel being the perpetrator!

MOISHE

(Screams)

And the Palestinians being the instigators!

MOHAMMED

(Screams)

And the Israelis being vicious!

MOISHE

(Screams)

And the Palestinians being fanatical!

(Stops screaming)

Besides, why would Israel want to continue fighting?

MOHAMMED

(Stops screaming)

Because Israel wants to push every Palestinian out of the West Bank and Gaza and establish a greater Israeli state.

MOISHE

Pure fantasy. We accept the eventuality of a Palestinian state and we are prepared to live with that state in peaceful coexistence, provided that this is a mutual goal.

MOHAMMED

We feel the same way.

MOISHE

Then prove it by stopping your attacks on us! And stop using your own children as suicide bombers!

MOHAMMED

And stop using the Israeli army to make war on the Palestinian people.

MOISHE

And stop spreading vicious, slanderous lies that Israeli soldiers have massacred civilians.

MOHAMMED

That's what the Israelis did, during their incursion in 2002.

MOISHE

That is an unmitigated lie. In that operation, the Israeli army went after and destroyed terrorist networks that were operating with complete impunity from within your territory.

MOHAMMED

Let's get down to brass tacks. The facts are that Israel is in violation of UN resolution 242 which calls for Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and General Assembly Resolution 3236 which says that the Palestinians have the right to return to their homes and property from which they had been uprooted. When will Israel comply with these resolutions?

MOISHE

When the Palestinians are ready to accept General Assembly Resolution 181, which the Arabs flagrantly ignored when they attacked Israel in 1948. We wanted to live in peace and establish our state in accordance with the UN resolution, but instead you chose war. So don't start telling me about UN resolutions.

MOHAMMED

And what about dismantling the hundreds of Jewish settlements that the Israelis built after they occupied the rest of Palestine in 1967?

MOISHE

What about the settlements?

MOHAMMED

According to UN resolution 242, Israel is required to withdraw its armed forces from the areas it occupied in the 1967 war. Instead, there are now hundreds of Jewish settlements in the occupied areas. That's not right.

MOISHE

We wouldn't have gone into the West Bank in the first place if Nasser hadn't ordered the UN peacekeepers out of the Sinai.

MOHAMMED

What did that have to do with the West Bank?

MOISHE

It was obvious that Nasser wanted to start a war. Therefore, we had to reinforce and expand our defensive perimeter, which meant going into the West Bank.

MOHAMMED

No, you just wanted to grab more land, and complete the process started in 1948, when you wound up evicting half of the Palestinians.

MOISHE

In 1948 the Arabs attacked us! What did you expect us to do? Not defend ourselves?

THE BABOON

(Jumps up from the mattress, again excited and agitated.)

A Jew talking about defending himself? Isn't it a little too late for that kind of talk? How come they didn't defend themselves in 1935 when the Nazis disenfranchised them? What kind of people would have taken that kind of treatment?

MOISHE

What are you saying? That the Jews let themselves be victimized?

THE BABOON

That's right, stupid, that's exactly what I'm saying and that's why your pal Mohammed has absolutely no respect for you.

MOHAMMED

(to THE BABOON)

I can talk for myself.

THE BABOON

(laughs, sarcastic)

Okay, maestro, you're the boss.

MOHAMMED

(to MOISHE)

You Jews are so deluded, trying to gain the sympathy of the world, a world that has always rejected you, a world that looked the other way while your people were being gassed and thrown into ovens.

MOISHE

But I survived and now you have to deal with me.

MOHAMMED

I'll deal with you! I'll kick your ass back to Europe.

MOISHE

You've hurt me enough already. Can't you ever stop fighting me?

MOHAMMED

You started this.

MOISHE

No. You attacked me first, and then you and your filthy gang then went after my family.

MOHAMMED

I told you that I had nothing to do with that.

MOISHE

More lies. More crap from you. Why can't you admit that it was you? For once why can't you be honest?

THE BABOON

(to MOISHE and MOHAMMED)

Now THAT is the question.

MOHAMMED

I am being honest. You just don't believe me!

MOISHE

(sarcastic)

Yeah, like I can believe you!

MOHAMMED

Believe what you want, creep.

MOISHE

I'm a creep? Then what does that make you?

MOHAMMED

Certainly not a creep.

MOISHE

Oh yeah? Well what about child-molester?

MOHAMMED

WHAT!?

MOISHE

After your gang left me on the street for dead you went to my home and beat up on my ten year old son.

MOHAMMED

That's a flat-out lie!

MOISHE

Not a lie, the truth. The description of the perpetrator my son gave to the police bore a striking resemblance to YOU.

MOHAMMED

(angry)

I AM NOT A CHILD-MOLESTER!

MOISHE

(angry)

Tell that to your PLO pals. And also

(suddenly, livid with rage)

STAY THE HELL AWAY FROM MY FAMILY!!!! DO YOU HEAR ME!!!!

MOHAMMED

(screams)

I'VE DONE NOTHING TO YOUR FAMILY!!! YOU'VE ALWAYS HATED ME!!!

MOISHE
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU HATE ME!!!!

THE BABOON
(laughing with glee)

Yes!!!! This is the kind of talk I've been waiting for!!! Direct, to the point. Honest. Isn't it wonderful?

(The BABOON lays down on the mattress, again silent. MOISHE and MOHAMMED resume their original discussion as if never interrupted.)

MOHAMMED
We just wanted the Jews to leave.

MOISHE
Listen! We're there and we are staying. Israel will not be dismantled. You will not force us to leave. Moreover, by attacking us in 1948, the Arabs acted in defiance of the UN resolution that partitioned Palestine into two separate states.

MOHAMMED
A partition which meant being forced to leave our homes.

MOISHE
But which also gave the Arabs the choice of living in peace.

MOHAMMED
How could anyone have expected the Arabs to accept such a bogus arrangement?

MOISHE
You made your choice, which was war.

MOHAMMED
The UN did what it pleased. And the Arabs had to do what they had to do.

MOISHE

Which was to attack Israel.

MOHAMMED

We attacked Israel because you people would not leave our land.

MOISHE

So you want UN resolutions 242 and 3236 to be enforced, while 181 should be ignored? Is that what you're saying?

MOHAMMED

We have the right of return.

MOISHE

So while Palestinians are vowing to destroy Israel, we're supposed to let them back into Israel?

MOHAMMED

And we're supposed to accept Israeli oppression?

MOISHE

What oppression? We're defending ourselves against your so-called intifadah.

MOHAMMED

And we declared intifadah because Israel still wants to dominate instead of conciliate.

MOISHE

You have rebuffed all our attempts to negotiate a settlement.

MOHAMMED

We reached an agreement in 1993, but Israel violated the agreement.

MOISHE

How can we agree to anything when we are being attacked by suicide bombers?

MOHAMMED

And how can we agree to stop our struggle when Israel continues to maintain Jewish settlements on Palestinian land?

MOISHE

Let me tell you something. Israel will not buckle under to terror or be intimidated into making concessions.

MOHAMMED

But world opinion demands that Israel withdraw from our land.

MOISHE

We'll withdraw, but only when our security is irrefutably guaranteed, and right now we are under attack, so we are not withdrawing.

MOHAMMED

Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza continues to hinder any chance of a permanent peace.

MOISHE

And Palestinian terror continues to undermine any chance of conciliation.

MOHAMMED

Palestinian terror? What about Israeli terror? And Israel's repressive measures.

MOISHE

Like in 1948 when five Arab countries attacked Israel on its first day of independence? Who was trying to repress whom?

MOHAMMED

That's ancient history. Let's talk about now.

MOISHE

What about now? Has your attitude changed? Are you now willing to live in peaceful co-existence with the state of Israel?

MOHAMMED

Of course we are.

MOISHE

But can we believe you?

MOHAMMED

Yes, you can believe us.

MOISHE

We can't afford to be wrong.

MOHAMMED

And we don't want to be refugees forever.

MOISHE

And we don't want to be in a permanent state of war.

MOHAMMED

And we want peace too.

MOISHE

But we will not succumb to terror.

MOHAMMED

We have already renounced the use of terror.

MOISHE

Yet Israel still continues to be attacked by terrorists.

MOHAMMED

We are trying to deal with that problem.

MOISHE

A mere platitude. The fact is that there are many in the Arab world who still wish Israel's destruction.

MOHAMMED

The Palestinian people just want to live in peace. We simply want justice.

MOISHE

At the point of a gun.

MOHAMMED

You're the ones with the guns.

MOISHE

Thank goodness for that! For the first time in two thousand years the Jews can defend themselves.

MOHAMMED

You're in charge right now, but that can change.

MOISHE

Is that a threat?

MOHAMMED

The crusaders conquered Palestine a thousand years ago, but a hundred years later they were defeated.

MOISHE

So are you saying that it's just a matter of time before Israel is defeated?

MOHAMMED

Look, all I'm saying is that things change. How they change or why they change is a whole other matter.

MOISHE

We don't know what the future will bring. But what is certain is that right now Israel exists and will take whatever measures it deems necessary to insure its survival.

MOHAMMED

Those are threatening words.

MOISHE

But it's the truth, and as a sovereign state Israel has the absolute right to defend itself and insure that its borders are secure.

MOHAMMED

And the Palestinian people have the right to have their own independent state too.

MOISHE

That is still subject to negotiation.

MOHAMMED

But how much longer do we have to wait?

MOISHE

Until Israel's security can be guaranteed.

MOHAMMED

How can your security be guaranteed? Nobody's security can be guaranteed.

MOISHE

Then we have a problem.

MOHAMMED

The Palestinian people have the right to self-determination. Why do we have to depend on you to decide our fate?

MOISHE

Because right now we control the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

MOHAMMED

And we want you to leave those areas.

MOISHE

Jewish settlers have been living there for years already. It would cause them great hardship if they had to leave.

MOHAMMED

The Israelis had no right to build those settlements in the first place.

MOISHE

We can live anywhere we want. Israel is not a ghetto, and until otherwise decided, Jewish people are fully entitled to reside in those areas.

MOHAMMED

But the Israelis have no right to be there. You took those lands by force.

MOISHE

We took control of those lands during a war that Israel was forced to fight in order to better ensure our security.

MOHAMMED

But you were supposed to withdraw from those areas. Instead, you took advantage of our weakness to consolidate your hold on our land, and now you won't leave.

MOISHE

When Egypt agreed to recognize the state of Israel, we withdrew from the Sinai.

MOHAMMED

If you withdrew from the Sinai, why can't you withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza too?

MOISHE

Because unlike the Egyptian government, the PLO does not want peace.

MOHAMMED

But we want peace!! You just don't believe us.

MOISHE

That's right. We don't believe you. If you Palestinians had your way, you would invade Israel, overpower the Jewish people and convert Israel into a Moslem state.

MOHAMMED

We can't do that.

MOISHE

That's right, you can't. But we know that the entire Arab world would be overjoyed to see Israel cease to exist.

MOHAMMED

The United States and Great Britain would not let that happen.

MOISHE

Does the Arab world want to start another war to dismantle the state of Israel?

MOHAMMED

I can't speak for the entire Arab world. All I know is that Israel illegally occupies land and is subjugating people over whom it has no legal authority.

MOISHE

And all I know is that Israel has a right to exist, and will do what it has to do to ensure its survival.

MOHAMMED

And all I know is that Israel needs to leave the Gaza Strip and West Bank, now!

MOISHE

When you're ready to renounce terrorism, then maybe we'll consider leaving. Just like we did in the Sinai after Egypt decided that peace was better than war.

MOHAMMED

What do you mean maybe consider leaving?

MOISHE

Judea and Samaria are part of Israel. We may not want to leave those regions. And there are a lot of Israelis living there.

MOHAMMED

But it's also home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

MOISHE

Who are under Israeli protection.

MOHAMMED

You mean Israeli occupation.

MOISHE

We know that you want your own state, but so far there is no evidence that an independent Palestinian state would be friendly to Israel.

MOHAMMED

It is Israel that does not wish to be friends with us.

MOISHE

Moreover, it's hard for us to be friends with people who are constantly preaching hatred of us. In addition, we're not sure about the kind of government you will have.

MOHAMMED

It will be democratically elected.

MOISHE

There's no guarantee of that.

MOHAMMED

I'm telling you that we're going to have a democratically elected government.

MOISHE

And I'm telling you that I find that hard to believe.

MOHAMMED

Why?

MOISHE

First, there isn't one Arab country that's a democracy and second, your present leadership is anything but democratically elected.

MOHAMMED

Not true. The P.L.O. government is democratically elected in accordance with our constitution.

MOISHE

Your PLO government is a fraud. It speaks for no one except the PLO, which still calls for armed struggle to eradicate the state of Israel. If the Palestinian people had truly free elections, I am certain that the P.L.O. would be voted out of office.

MOHAMMED

The PLO represents the Palestinian people. It is recognized as such by the United Nations.

MOISHE

The PLO represents itself. Like any other terrorist organization, you maintain power through intimidation, by labeling anyone who wants to make peace with Israel a traitor.

MOHAMMED

You are wrong. The P.L.O. is a democratically elected representative body, and is not a terrorist organization. We are not gangsters.

MOISHE

That's a big pill to swallow. As far as I am concerned, the PLO is a mere public relations façade designed to project an image of respectability while Palestinians plot to destroy the state of Israel. And the proof of this can be found in the PLO charter which declares the Balfour Declaration null and void, and which denies the connection of the Jews to the Holy Land.

MOHAMMED

The Balfour Declaration should be declared null and void. It's an outrage against all Arab people.

MOISHE

The Balfour Declaration did not deny anyone the right to self-determination. All it called for was the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. And both the League of Nations and the United Nations endorsed this plan.

MOHAMMED

Fine. Then withdraw from Gaza and the West Bank and let the Palestinian people have their own state.

MOISHE

Not while the PLO is in power and not while there are groups among the Palestinian people who advocate violence.

MOHAMMED

Why are you so afraid of the Palestinian people? Israel has all the power.

MOISHE

We're not afraid of the Palestinian people. But we are concerned about an organization that claims to represent the Palestinian people and which compares Zionists to Fascists and Nazis.

MOHAMMED

Your tactics are practically the same.

MOISHE

Now I know you're insane. Let me tell you something. The Jews are the most oppressed people in history. The Jews were victims of Nazi racism and persecution. The Jews were herded into ghettos and concentration camps while the rest of the world stood by and watched. And all this happened because the Jews were defenseless, otherwise the Nazis would not have dared to do what they did. There is no way that the Jewish people will ever let themselves be victims again. And if you think that Israeli methods are harsh, well, the Jewish people learned their lessons from the experts in state sponsored terrorism. And I shudder to think what would happen to the Jews if Israel is obliterated.

MOHAMMED

Nothing would happen to the Jewish people. We respect the Jewish people and the Jewish religion, which we acknowledge as a revealed religion.

MOISHE

Then what is your problem?

MOHAMMED

That Israel continues to treat the Palestinian people the same way the Jewish people were treated by the Nazis.

MOISHE

You have no idea what you're talking about. Is Israel committing genocide? Does Israel want to conquer the world? Is the Israeli government a dictatorship?

MOHAMMED

I know that the Jewish people suffered terribly under the Nazis. Nevertheless, just like the Nazis, Israel is using brute force to repress an entire people.

MOISHE

Brute force to repress an entire people? What!?

MOHAMMED

That's right! You're destroying our homes, denying us opportunity for employment, restricting our freedom of movement, and limiting our water supply, brutal measures which are intended to keep us down and maintain your illegal occupation.

MOISHE

Don't blame Israel. Blame the PLO. If you had a leadership that was committed to making peace with Israel, then maybe the situation would be different. As it is now, the Israeli people have no choice but to defend themselves.

MOHAMMED

And the Palestinian people have no choice but to continue their struggle for independence.

MOISHE

And Israel has no choice but to continue its struggle to ensure its survival.

(Both men silently glare at each other and then resume reading their newspapers. THE BABOON gets up from the mattress and smiles as the curtain falls.)

The End.

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