

VOICES SPEAK TO US

ACT 1 – Idealism

Year is 1910. Lights on rear half of stage. A ship has arrived in Haifa harbor. ISRAEL MAN#1, ISRAEL MAN #3, and ISRAEL WOMAN #1 emerge from rear center stage and carry luggage. ISRAEL MAN #3 is slightly in front. They look around, entranced with the new surroundings.

Sound Effect #1 – Ship's Horn

ISRAELI MAN #1

It's Sunday, and our first day in Palestine. Soon after sunrise this morning we were on the deck of the steamer, swiftly advancing over the peaceful sea, due east, towards the land of the Bible. The horizon was dim; but presently the dimness took form, and a distant blue mountain wall appeared before us, extending far to the right and to the left. We knew that Palestine is a hilly country; but on the maps it is so small. Is it possible that its hills are really so high, and in such a solid range? The great rounded mass towards the north is Mount Ephraim, Gerizim and Ebal, and thence sloping away to Mount Carmel, which it was still too hazy to see. Jerusalem lies in the lower part of the range, a little towards the south; and from there the line rises gradually over the hill country of Judea to the mountains around Hebron, and thence falls rapidly towards the broad hills of the South-country about Beersheba. The whole land is before us.

ISRAELI MAN #3

We come to our Homeland in order to be planted in our natural soil from which we have been uprooted, to strike our roots deep into its life-giving substances, and to stretch out our branches in the sustaining and creating air and sunlight of the Homeland. Here, in Palestine, is the force attracting all the scattered cells of the people to unite into one living national organism.

ISRAEL WOMAN #1

What we need today is the building up of our national, physical force. For nearly nineteen hundred years we have been living on an idea. Our body has become starved and emaciated beyond recognition. Let our first care to-day be the re-establishment of our physical strength, the reconstruction of our national organism, so that in the future, where the respect due to us cannot be won by entreaty, it may be commanded, and where it cannot be commanded, it may be enforced.

ALL regard each other, embrace, shake hands and walk off stage.

Scene 2

Lights off and on. ISRAEL MAN#1 and ISRAEL WOMAN #1 on center left stage. Both look left to Palestinian side.,

PALESTINIAN MAN #1, PALESTINIAN MAN #, PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 and PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 enter from rear right stage.

Sound Effect #2 – Birds (Continue sporadically)

1

PALESTINIAN MAN #1 (cheerfully and pointing ahead)

2

On the edge of the Valley of the Camel, a little below the New Road, a huge azarole tree soars upwards, visible from our house on the hill above. The slopes of the valley are covered with olive trees wherever you look, but this wild azarole prides itself on its height, its spreading branches, and its towering grandeur. No one knows who had planted it; perhaps it had simply burst out from the earth between two big rocks, too long ago for anyone to remember. We always see it clearly from the road, because its upper branches rise up higher than the road's edge, and it sways with every breeze as if beckoning to us, deliberately and willfully inviting us. We have only to climb a rock or two and jump on to one of its branches, then carry on up into its dense network of branches and leaves, and fill our pockets with its sweet little yellow fruit.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 (walking around)

I see no reason why the Jews and the Arabs cannot work together in this great country. There is room for all, and up to the present time there have been no serious quarrels. At the beginning, what little dissension arose has smoothed out, and I believe it is the desire at least of the younger and vigorous and open minded group of Arabs to do everything they can to work amicably with the Jews. We must say that the Jews have brought considerable progress, and as they are mainly spending their own money in developing the country it would be wrong not to give them credit for efforts in trying to make a future and better Palestine.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

"Ala dal'una" is everyone's favorite song; and in autumn the valley is filled with the sound of it, as men, women, boys, and girls shake the trunks and the branches, beat them with their sticks and climb to the higher, more difficult branches on ladders, making the green olives fall, like pearls, on to the red earth. They move from tree to tree, picking up handfuls of fruit to fill their baskets and bags, and their songs and the tunes of the double reed and the flute moves on with them. Whatever the time of day, there is always someone, perhaps visible, perhaps not, sitting alone on a rock somewhere and playing the double reed or flute, pouring out a flood of tunes, which echoes through every part of the broad valley like the playing of a gentle breeze.

Both MEN move slightly back. ISRAEL WOMAN #1 moves to center stage PALESTINIAN WOMEN and ISRAELI MAN #1 move to center stage.

ISRAEL MAN #1

We have arrived in summer. It is very hot down here, two hundred meters below sea level. The air buzzes with mosquitoes and lays heavy and close behind the hills. The flat valley is like a hot plate, the heat pressed on it. Everything has burned brown. The river is a trickle. But when the rains come, it floods the land and when the waters withdraw they leave swamps and mud. For months on end we are cut off by mud.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1

3

Our children look forward to the yearly community festivities. In the spring, Moslem, Christian and Jew take part in the Moslem Pilgrimage to the tomb of the prophet Moses and watch with delight and excitement the dances of the Dervishes to chanting of heroic songs and banner waving. In the summer, Moslem, Christian and Jew flock to the Valley to take part in Jewish celebrations. .

ISRAELI MAN #1

A beautiful life, our social aim; closeness within the internal relations between member and member and honorable relations on the outside. A life of work and creativity – a life of culture is what we discuss and argue over many a night in the kibbutz yard. We formed the principles of the “beautiful way of life”: equality, liberty and democracy.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2

And in the Autumn Moslem, Christian and Jew alike picnic in the gardens around the tomb of the Holy Virgin Mary, near Gethsemane, where the Christian community spends a day and a night rejoicing. Ours is indeed a Holy City, a city of peace, love and brotherhood, where the stranger can find shelter, the pilgrim loving care and the faithful salvation.

ISRAELI WOMAN #1

Dawn rises when we begin to work. We number fourteen, with blistered hands and tan, bare and scratched legs. Strong faces, burning hearts. The whole air echoes our tunes, our talk and our laughter. The hoes go endlessly up and down. For a moment one may stop working and wipe the sweat from the forehead with the corner of a *kaffiyeh*, and throw a loving glance at the sea. So good. Blue, blue, blue wordlessly bearing greetings, healing the soul. Somewhere a sailboat floats over the water, and soon the tiny steamboat carrying passengers from Zemach to Tiberius will exhale its smoke upwards.

At noon we return to the farm, accompanied again by the sea, a blue eye peering at us through the dining hall window. The homeland’s blue eye.

ISRAELI MAN #1

We thought that to talk with the Biluim we would have to wait until sunset – we imagined a village like in Russia – hens pecking on the road, children shouting by the river, and not a soul in sight while the sun is high, and all the peasants are in the fields. But what is this? We are in a pretty street of neat brick houses with red tiled roofs; from one of them comes the tinkling of a piano. The street is full of people strolling up and down. We can’t believe our eyes. Let me ask.

Who are these? Biluim?

And who does the work? Arabs?

And what do the Jews do? They’re managers and supervisors?

This is a great shock to us. I say to myself: This isn’t what we’ve come for, and I can see that the others are disappointed as well.

Scene 3

4

Year is 1922. PALESTINIAN MAN #2, obviously bothered, moves to a podium at right rear stage and speaks to a group of people. Actors gather around podium. ISRAELI MAN #3 is slightly to left and rear. He is disturbed at what he hears. Other Israelis are at slightly right front of podium. They remain quiet. Palestinians stand in front of podium.,

Sound Effect #3 –a mob

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

(PAL MAN #2 raises hand to calm mob. Speaks when crowd is calmed.)

They have sold the country to its enemies because of their greed for money; but it is their homes they have sold. They could have been forgiven if they had been forced to do so by hunger, but God knows that they have never felt hunger or thirst. There is no need to abstain from food - in Palestine a leader would die without food. Let him abstain from selling land and keep a plot in which to lay his bones.

We noticed yesterday a large crowd of Jews carrying banners and overrunning the streets shouting words which hurt the feelings and wound the soul. They pretend with open voice that Palestine, which is the Holy Land of our Fathers and the graveyard of our ancestors, which has been inhabited by the Arabs for long ages who loved it and died in defending it, it is now a national home for them. These are words which displease the heavens. How do the Jews expect Palestine to be a national home when the Muslims and the Christians never asked that it should be a national home for those of them who are not inhabitants of Palestine? We Arabs, Muslim and Christian, have always sympathized profoundly with the persecuted Jews and their misfortunes in other countries as much as we sympathized with the persecuted Armenians and other weaker nations. We hoped for their deliverance and prosperity. But there is a wide difference between this sympathy and the acceptance of such a nation in our country, to be made by them a national home, ruling over us and

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 (CONTINUED)**5**

disposing of our affairs.... The Arabs occupied Spain over seven centuries, and having established themselves there they were scattered all over the globe. Is it now permitted to them to claim the country ruled by them in the past and their old native home, where they left traces of their civilization which still stir their imagination. This is the law of God — a country flourishes and faints, and one dynasty is built on another. Is it now permissible therefore to raise in the twentieth century the feeling of fanaticism and to excite the evil ambition which brought on the present War, destroyed the world, and loaded men with misfortunes which could not be supported even by mountains? We Muslims and Christians desire to live with our brothers, the Jews of Palestine in peace and happiness and with equal rights. Our privileges are theirs, and their duties are ours.

Podium is removed. All except ISRAELI MAN #3 and PALESTINIAN MAN #1 move offstage.

Scene 4

Year is 1929. The place is Hebron.

ISRAELI MAN #3

Even before I begin writing, my hand is already shaking, my head swims, and every limb is trembling. I am unable to get control of myself, because the cries are still ringing in my ears. It is one week today since we came back from the bitter tragedy. Each day I want to write to you, but when I sit down to write, all my limbs start to quiver and tears pour from my eyes, so I have to stop. Today for the first time I was able to pull myself together, with all my strength, with superhuman effort. I got up at dawn and sat down to write. I hadn't started yet, but even before I could begin, my pen was already soaked with tears. Although it seems that I am writing this letter with ink, you should know that it is not ink, but tears.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

I feel the pain of the troubles, whether they fall on Arabs or on the English or on the Jews. For that reason you will sometimes find me on the side of the Arabs, at others times on the side of the English, and still other times on the side of the Jews. And if there were animals who suffered from even a faint whiff of these troubles, I would sometimes be on the side of the animals.

ISRAELI MAN #3

Friday afternoon the situation worsened. We heard that on the street Arabs had already beaten several Jews with clubs. Next we heard that the Jewish stores had closed. The atmosphere was explosive. Everybody was afraid to go out into the street. We locked ourselves in our rooms. Things looked really bad. What should we do? No one could go out, and no one could come in, everybody was fearful. By now the local Jews too were saying that the situation was serious. Suddenly, just one hour before candle lighting, pandemonium broke loose.

ISRAELI MAN #3 (CONTINUED)**6**

Window panes were smashed on all sides. In our building, they broke every window and began throwing large stones inside. We hid ourselves. They were breaking windows in all the Jewish homes. Now we were in deathly fear. As we were blessing the Shabbes candles, we heard that in the Yeshiva one young man had been killed. It was bitter, the beginning of a slaughter.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

If I accept him, I'm a traitor to my government; and if I refuse him, I'm a traitor to my language....I told myself that he wasn't appealing simply to me for refuge, but to my whole people as represented in me. He was appealing to the literature expressed in my language before the coming of Islam and after it. He was appealing to that ancient Bedouin who sheltered a hyena fleeing from its pursuers and entering his tent. And I should add that he had bestowed a great honor on me by coming to me for refuge.

ISRAELI MAN #3

Just then, God, blessed be He, in His great mercy, sent us an Arab who lived in back of our house. He insisted that we come down from the doctor's apartment and enter his house through the back door. He took us to his cellar, a large room without windows to the outside. We all went in, while he, together with several Arab women, stood outside near the door. As for us, we felt that the danger was so great that we had no chance of coming out alive. Each one of us said his confession in anticipation of death. At any moment we could be slaughtered, for double-edged swords were already at our throats.

We had not even the slightest hope of remaining alive. We just begged that it should already be done and over. But God heard our prayers. Suddenly, the door opened, and the police walked in

ISRAELI MAN #3 moves off stage.

Year is 1936

Scene 5.

ISRAELI WOMAN #1

Here I will not hear the voice of the cuckoo.
 Here the tree will not wear a cape of snow.
 But it is here in the shade of these pines
 my whole childhood reawakens.

The chime of the needles: Once upon a time
 I called the snow-space homeland,
 and the green ice at the river's edge
 was the poem's grammar in a foreign place.
 Perhaps only migrating birds know
 suspended between earth and sky
 the heartache of two homelands.
 With you I was transplanted twice,
 with you, pine trees, I grew
 roots in two disparate landscapes.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1

When the hurricane swirled and spread its deluge of dark evil
 onto the good green land 'they' gloated.
 The western skies
 reverberated with joyous accounts:
 "The Tree has fallen !
 The great trunk is smashed! The hurricane leaves no life in the Tree!"
 Had the Tree really fallen?
 Never! Not with our red streams flowing forever, not while the wine of our thorn
 limbs fed the thirsty roots,
 Arab roots alive, tunneling deep, deep, into the land!
 When the Tree rises up, the branches
 shall flourish green and fresh in the sun
 the laughter of the Tree shall leaf
 beneath the sun
 and birds shall return
 Undoubtedly, the birds shall return.
 The birds shall return.

Year is 1947

Scene 6

ISRAELI WOMAN #2 and ISRAEL MAN #) move to left center stage.

ISRAEL WOMAN #2

After seventeen days at sea, a long ride from America, we reached Haifa but
 weren't permitted to disembark until 9:00 clock the next morning. There were
 about twenty-five of us going to Jerusalem so Egged provided us going to
 Jerusalem "special" at no extra cost to deliver us and our small personal baggage
 door-to-door; something the 79th Street Crosstown would never have done.

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ISRAEL MAN #2

My mother is here. We became separated before the war. I arrived from a
 displaced persons camp in Germany. The vessel approached the coastline at dawn,
 somewhere to the north of Mount Carmel. Shortly before dawn I slept for a while
 on top of the wheelhouse. I woke to see the dim outlines of a mountain towards
 the southeast. As the light increased and the sun rose, a cry ran over the ship. 'It's
 Eretz Israel.' We saw Mount Carmel ahead of us and the town of Haifa sleeping
 in the morning sun below us ... The refugees cheered and began to sing Hatikvah,
 the Jewish national anthem. People jumped for joy, kissed and hugged each other
 on the deck.

ISRAEL WOMAN #2

The Hebrew University held its official opening exercises yesterday morning.
 Donned my best duds and boarded the No. 9 bus to Mount Scopus, only to
 discover admission by ticket or not at all. Very solemn and formal these official
 occasions. I managed to get the ticket but the doors closed promptly at 10:30, with
 me still outside. Missed most of the President's speech which I am told was very
 political out on a limb for Arab-Jewish brotherhood. He was followed by the
 Rector, then everyone sang *Hatikvah* and shuffled out of the hall.

ISRAEL MAN #2

Brotherhood, a good word. On the boat I read the words of one our early Zionists,
 "In general we have made a crude psychological blunder in our relationship with a
 large, if assertive and passionate people. At a time when we are feeling the love
 of the homeland with all our might, the land of our forefathers, we are forgetting
 that the people who live there now also have a sensitive heart and a loving
 soul. The Arab, like any man, has a strong bond with his homeland. He will not
 abandon his country, will not wander far: he has many traditions which bind him
 to the soil of his homeland, the most dear to him being respect for the graves of
 his forefathers.. I can still hear the dirge of the Arab women on the day their
 families left their village of Ja'una, today Rosh Pina , to settle in Hawran, east of
 the Jordan. The men rode asses and the women walked behind them, bitterly
 weeping, and the valley was filled with their keening. From time to time they
 would stop to kiss the stones and the earth." I must remain aware of these words.
 I'm still too young to attend the University but some day I hope to join the
 Haganah. If the United Nations votes for our independence, that might be soon.

Both leave the stage.

**Scene 7 One month later. ISRAELI WOMAN #2 moves to left center stage.
 All other Israelis move around left stage.**

**Palestinian MAN #1 and PALESTINIAN MAN #2 move to right center stage.
 Sound Effect #5 - Cheering crowd.**

8

ISRAEL WOMAN #2

9

I walk in a semi-daze through the crowds of happy faces, through the deafening singing of "*David, Melech Yisrael, chai, chai vekayam,*" David, King of Israel, lives and is alive, past the British tanks and jeeps piled high with pyramids of flag-waving, cheering children. I dodge motorcycles, wagons, cars and trucks which are racing madly up and down King George V Street, missing each other miraculously, their running boards and headlights overflowing with layer upon layer of elated, happy people. I push my way past the crying, kissing, tumultuous crowds and the exultant shouts of "Mazal tov" and came back to the quiet of my room ... to try to share with you this never-to-be-forgotten night.

The light in my room was still on from last night. I had planned to go to sleep early since rumor had it that voting at the UN on the Partition Plan would probably be postponed for another day. But, at about 11:00 P.M. there was a knock on the door: "We're getting through to America. Come on down. The voting's tonight." Ten pajama-clad bodies crowded into a room with space enough for five and sat tensely around the battered radio for what seemed like hours while vain attempts were made to get clear reception from Lake Success. We got through just as the announcement of the majority vote was made: thirty-three in favor, thirteen against and ten abstentions.

PALESTINIAN MAN # 2

This sea is one of politics; if justice spreads high its low tide begins. Yes! He who has crossed the Jordan River is our cousin but he who comes from across the sea is suspicious.

As we inherited from our forefathers, so shall we keep it for our grandsons.
As no time was it your home, do not count on it being yours now.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

Often my Jewish friends ask when my family had settled in this country. I do not know precisely why they asked me this question but I suppose they had their reasons. I always answered that as far as I knew my paternal grand-father had been born in Jaffa. Once, however, one of my Jewish friends stubbornly asked where we were before then. Presumably he believed that – in keeping with Jewish thinking – this country was largely unpopulated before the Jewish settlement, and it was Jewish development which had lured Arabs from the surrounding countries. This question intrigued me and when I returned home I asked my father. He referred me to his uncle. My old uncle showed me the chart of the family genealogy. Apparently one of his grandfathers had methodically recorded the names of the family in the form of a family tree. From it I learned that I am the eighteenth generation in the country.

ALL move offstage**Scene 8****ISRAELI WOMAN #1 moves to left center stage.****PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 to right center stage. .****ISRAELI WOMAN #1**

10

We had an iron rule that one should never buy anything imported, anything foreign, if it was possible to buy a locally made equivalent. Still, when we went to Mr. Auster's grocery shop on the corner of Obadiah and Amos streets, we had to choose between kibbutz cheese, made by the Jewish cooperative Tnuva, and Arab cheese: did Arab cheese from the nearby village, Lifta, count as homemade or imported produce? Tricky. True, the Arab cheese was just a little cheaper. But if you bought Arab cheese, weren't you being a traitor to Zionism? Somewhere, in some kibbutz or moshav, in the Jezreel Valley or the hills of Galilee, an overworked pioneer girl was sitting, with tears in her eyes perhaps, packing this Hebrew cheese for us—how could we turn our backs on her and buy alien cheese? Did we have the heart? On the other hand, if we boycotted the produce of our Arab neighbors, we would be deepening and perpetuating the hatred between our two peoples. And we surely would be partly responsible for any blood that washed, heaven forbid. Surely the humble Arab fellah, a simple, honest tiller of the soil, whose soul was still undefiled by the miasma of town life, was nothing more or less than the dusky brother of the simple, noble-hearted muzhik in the stories of Tolstoy! Could we be so heartless as to turn our backs on his rustic cheese? Could we be so cruel as to punish him? What for? Because the deceitful British and the corrupt effendis had set him against us? No. this time we would definitely buy the cheese from the Arab village, which incidentally really did taste better than the Tnuva cheese, and cost a little less in the bargain.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2

Arab villages in the vicinity of the southern suburbs of Jerusalem -- Battir, Walajeh, Beit Safafa, Malha, Sharafat, Beit Jala, El-Khader -- provided us with fresh vegetables and fruit throughout the year. When I think of Battir I recall the peasant women with straight backs who stopped at our house in the early morning in summer carrying on their heads round, flat, dark-brown baskets heaped high with those purple, longish egg-plants of Battir, carefully arranged in tiers. The names of Walajeh and El-Khader bring back to my mind the sweet "jandaly" grape which was our favourite as children. From Beit Safafa a kindly, round-faced elderly woman brought us freshly-picked young marrows, cool and moist with dew, their yellow flowers still attached to them.

When I think of these Arab villages I cannot help but feel nostalgic for the way of life in Jerusalem prior to 1948. It was a personal, human relationship that connected us Jerusalemites with the villages surrounding the city. I remember vividly the early morning scene during the summer holiday when peasant women, proudly carrying their wares on their heads, would arrive at our house. Father would help them put down their heavy baskets and they would then sit down on the floor and, smiling up at us, invite my mother to pick her choice of fruit and vegetables at leisure.

- LIGHTS OUT

VOICES SPEAK TO US

ACT 2 – Conflict

Time 1948.

All ISRAELIS on left center stage. All PALESTINIANS at right center stage.

ISRAELI WOMAN #2 has joined the Haganah Medical Corps and ISRAEL

MAN #2 has joined the Haganah military. Lights come on left center stage.

ISRAELIS talk to ISRAELIS and PALESTINIANS talk to one another.

1

ISRAELI WOMAN #2

Jerusalem's face is sad today. It isn't easy to accept the fact of death, and even harder when you know personally many of those who died. But thirty- five boys is heartbreaking, all young wonderful people.

I can imagine that the death of Moshe Pearlstein from New York, my friend Marsha's brother, must have created a wave of shock. The American group here is very grieved. Moshe was a great guy. Oded was also among the dead. You remember I mentioned him before. He was one of the first Sabras to befriend me. In fact, when I first arrived he took me on an excursion to that very area and hiked me over those hills to visit the kibbutzim in Gush Etzion so I would learn to love the land as he did. Just before he left for this assignment he came to say "hello" and we talked at length as always arguing in earnest about... Oh hell, what's the difference now?

ISRAELI WOMAN #2 remains in position

Sound Effect #6 – War

Lights dim on left center stage and come on right center stage, where

PALESTINIAN MAN #1 stands.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

May 13, 1948, is a day that will remain forever engraved in my memory. Less than twenty four hours before the proclamation of the Israeli state, my family fled Jaffa for refuge in Gaza. We had been under siege: the Zionist forces controlled all the roads leading south, and the only escape left open to us was the sea. It was under a hail of shells fired from Jewish artillery set up in neighboring settlements, especially Tel Aviv, that I clambered onto a makeshift boat with my parents, my four brothers and sisters and relatives. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians started for exile that day, often under tragic conditions. I was overwhelmed at the sight of this huge mass of men, women, old people and children, struggling under the weight of suitcases or bundles, making their way painfully down to the wharves of Jaffa in a sinister tumult. Cries mingled with moaning and sobs, all punctuated by deafening explosions

The boat had scarcely lifted anchor when a woman started shrieking. One of her four children wasn't on board and she implored us to put back to port to look for him. Caught under the heavy fire, we couldn't turn back without risking the lives of the several hundred people, many of them children, crushed together in

PALESTINIAN MAN #1 (CONTINUED)

2

the small craft. She broke down into sobs. Some of us tried to calm her by saying that her son would surely be picked up and later brought to Gaza. Her nerves finally cracked and she straddled the rail, throwing herself into the sea. In an apparent effort to save her, her husband jumped in after her. The angry waves finally swallowed them up under our very eyes.

We remained rooted to the boat, paralyzed with horror.

Lights dim and come on stage where ISRAELI MAN #3 talks excitedly.

ISRAELI MAN #3

I live in a place not far from Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, and I got the invitation from someone who came on a motorbike. He handed it to me and did not say another word. I asked him what it was, and he said he was not allowed to tell me. At the same time I got a telephone call, from one of Ben-Gurion's staff, and they asked me not to tell anybody that I had got this invitation. But of course in a way that was rubbish because a few hours later everybody knew about it. I still have the original invitation. It reads:

'From the Administration of the Nation, Tel Aviv, 13 May 1948. We are honoured to send to you this invitation to the session of the declaration of independence. It will take place on Friday, 14 May 1948, at four o'clock in the afternoon in Museum Hall, 16 Rothschild Boulevard.

'We request that you keep the content of this invitation and the date of the convention of the council a secret. Invited guests are requested to come to the hall at three-thirty. Sincerely, the Secretariat.

I will never forget it. We were called to the meeting, it started at four o'clock, the state was declared, and it finished on the dot at five-thirty - such punctuality never normally happens at a Jewish function! I had this feeling in me that this was a historic moment, not just for the Jews, but for the world.

Lights dim and light again on right center stage, where PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 stands exhausted.

Sound Effect #7 – Trucks

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1

At Al-Nakura, our truck parked, along with numerous other ones. The men began to hand in their weapons to their officers, stationed there for that specific purpose. When our turn came, I could see the rifles and guns lying on the table and the long queue of lorries, leaving the land of oranges far behind and spreading out over the winding roads of Lebanon. Then I began to weep, howling with tears. As for my mother, she eyed the oranges silently.

Lights come on again at left center stage, where ISRAELI WOMAN #2 talks.

3

ISRAELI WOMAN #2

From the roof of the hospital, I watched this morning's parade, a parade of soldiers of the Jewish State. Not partisans or underground fighters. Soldiers, standing erect and proud, rain puddles six inches deep, wearing shabby outfits -- winter uniforms still haven't reached us -- listening to lofty words of accomplishment and tribute.

I, too, listened but my thoughts wandered -- drifted back to last November 29th, 1947, Jerusalem, the courtyard of the Jewish Agency building, the spontaneous joy that filled the streets when the United Nations resolution calling for a Jewish State was approved.

And now we march, we form ranks, we listen to speeches, we salute officers: Natan, as they taught him in the Russian army; Lev, as he learned in the RAF; Aryeh, as they do in the Polish army; Uzi the Sabra, reluctantly; Moshe, in Turkish style. All of them, saluting the Jewish Officer in Command, representing Tzva Haganah LeYisrael, Israel Defense Forces. The same people who were partisans last year are soldiers today and civilian citizens of the State of Israel tomorrow. I wondered whether "tomorrow" would be another year or an eternity? Like everything else here, it has happened very fast, too fast --the twenty-ninth of November is just a red-letter day on the calendar. A fighting people hasn't time to be sentimental. But I couldn't help thinking of Moshe, Oded, Zvi, Amnon, Yaakov, Aryeh, Matty, Nachum and a hundred others in Jerusalem, who a year ago danced and sang through the night with me, but didn't live long enough; they fell before the dream came true.

ISRAEL MAN #2

That night on the roof in Beersheba we talked about life and death, mourned those who had died and wondered about the progress of the wounded, talked a lot about what had happened to us that day, about fear..... We talked about banding together after the war and settling down to raise chickens in a cooperative. Nobody talked about their children, none of us had children.

ISRAELI WOMAN #2

4

The lump in my throat was too big in my mouth.

Was it only a year ago? No, it was worlds ago, each a separate world: the University, the Haganah, Deir Yassin, the Burma Road, Sheikh Jarrah, Katamon, Talpiot, Tel Aviv, Haifa -- worlds of people, places and events.

Lights on slightly left of center Stage. ISRAELI MEN #1 and #2 walk to lit area talking to each other.

ISRAELI MAN #1

We feel that we were taking part in an unprecedented heroic undertaking, creating a new world, a new society, a new human being, a new culture, a new language. We remember where we came from -- from a Europe that was turning into a hell for the Jews. We know that it is our duty to build a safe haven for millions of Jews who are living in growing danger and who have nowhere to escape to.

Pioneer Song – low volume background

There is a spirit of togetherness, of belonging, of idealism. The new songs express it. We all sang them in the youth movements, at Kibbutz evenings, during trips around the country, even in the diverse underground organizations, and at school.

Military Song – low volume background

ISRAELI MAN #2

The songs of the War of Independence have joined the pioneer songs. Regarding them, too, not a few among us suffer from cognitive dissonance. On the one side -- what we felt then. On the other -- the truth as we know it now. For the fighters -- as for the entire Yishuv -- it is, quite simply, an existential war. The slogan is "There is No Alternative," and all of us believe in it completely. We are fighting with our backs to the wall, the lives of our families hang in the balance. The enemy is all around us. We believe that we, the few, the very few, almost without arms, are standing up against a sea of Arabs. In the first half of the war, the Arab fighters, known to us as "the gangs," indeed dominated all the roads, and in the second half, the regular Arab armies approached the centers of the Hebrew population, surrounding Hebrew Jerusalem and coming close to Tel-Aviv. The Yishuv has lost 6000 young people out of a population of some 635 thousand. Whole year-groups are decimated. Innumerable heroic acts were performed.

The idealism of the fighters find its expression in the songs. Most of them are imbued with faith in victory, and, of course, total conviction of the justness of our cause. We did not leave Arabs behind our lines, nor did the Arabs leave any Jews behind theirs. It looked in those circumstances like a simple military necessity. The fighters did not think about "ethnic cleansing" -- a term only more recently invented.

ISRAELI WOMAN#1**5**

Today we sit at home and criticize. We accept a reality to raise our children for 18 years, send them to the army, and encourage them to be good soldiers. They might die. This is not a reality we should accept! Women, let's get together, change politics, and make sure we are in a more powerful position. Maybe women have a different perspective where we can overcome conflict and change reality. We must make our voices heard together. When you lose a child, it's not a matter of whether you are from the Palestinian side or the Jewish side. A mother is a mother.

Lights dim and light again on right center stage, where PALESTINIAN MAN #2 stands.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

And after the flood none was left of this people

 This land. But a rope and a pole

None but bare bodies floating on mires

 Leavings of kin and a child

None but swelled bodies

 Their members unknown

Here wreckage, here death, here drowned in deep waters

 Scraps of a bread loaf still clasped in my hand

Here quivering dead eyes

 Here lips crying vengeance

Scraps of my people and country

 Some weeping, some crazed, some in tremor

Scraps of my people, my father, my mother

 There's nobody left in the tents

Here children? You ask and she'll scream

 And the torrent is jeering, she never gave birth

How to these people, black tents,

 On pole sands

Drowned have they been forever.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 leaves.

Lights on slightly right of center Stage.

ISRAELI MAN #3 enters the conversation.

ISRAELI MAN # 3**6**

I feel sympathy for the Palestinian people, which truly underwent a hard tragedy. I feel sympathy for the refugees themselves. But if the desire to establish a Jewish state here is legitimate, there was no other choice. It was impossible to leave a large fifth column in the country. From the moment the Yishuv was attacked by the Palestinians and afterward by the Arab states, there was no choice but to expel the Palestinian population.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 enters

As if we were a thousand prodigies

Spreading everywhere

In Lydda, in Ramallah.

 In the Galilee...

Here we shall stay,

A wall upon your breast,

And in your throat we shall stay,

A piece of glass, a cactus thorn,

And in your eyes.

A blazing fire.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 stands at right center stage.

In 1953, five years after the year of the disaster, we settled close to Ramallah, so near to our Katamon neighborhood in Jerusalem, yet so far. A rigid Jordanian-Israeli border divided us from the family home that came to life over and over in our memories, as if we had left only yesterday.

In 1967, a month after the Six Day War, when people were allowed to go from one part of Jerusalem to the other, my sister and I made our way on foot into Katamon, yearning. Now, in the heart of the Jewish neighborhood called Gonen, on Yordei HaSira Street, Number 8, we found what had been, in our youth, our house, our mother's and father's and son's and we two daughter', and the house of relatives and friends and guests from near and from far. A building that housed a committee of wise men who considered all aspects of Palestinian life ceased in an instant to exist under the blows of the weapons of war and became, over time, with the help of contributions from American Jews, a WIZO nursery and kindergarten.

When we heard rumors that our father's large, renowned library was being held in the Hebrew University National Library, we went there. We introduced ourselves, and were taken to one of the senior librarians. He was courteous, but what he had to say was harsh. You have no right to claim anything, he said, because each volume individually, and all of them together, are abandoned property. He may have seen us look amazed, and perhaps also angry, for he repeated that since 1948 all Palestinian property, books, buildings, fields, villages, towns, has become the property of the state of Israel. We asked at least to be permitted to view the books, maybe touch them, or page through them, but the librarian, obstinate, agreed to show us just one book, only one, whichever we chose, whichever they remembered. After some time the librarian returned, holding the book. He let us page through it in front of him, as if we were dangerous culture robbers, and waited for us to return it

- LIGHTS OUT -

VOICES SPEAK TO US
ACT 3 – Reaction

1

The year is 1968. Scene 1
Light is on PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 at right front stage. Her movements follow her words. She acts out each movement.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1

Twenty years since I had seen Northern Galilee. I was finally given a permit by the Israeli military authorities to visit and decided to take my daughters with me. It took less than three hours to reach Safed, renamed Tsvat by Israel after 1948. The van stopped in front of the white stone home that held childhood memories. I proceeded to the familiar metal door, where I knocked. A large eastern European woman opened the door. We argued. I returned to the van, my hardened face wet with tears. “She wouldn't let me in! She still has the same curtains I made with my mother.”

We proceeded in silence, as I wept discretely, to lunch at a hotel on Lake Tiberias, where my youngest child grew hyper. Instead of imposing my usual military-style discipline on the child, I encouraged her “splatter water,” “make more noise” – a shock to the rest of the family. The Israeli waiter hurriedly came to the table demanding, in Hebrew, they stop the raucous behavior. It was then that my defiance exploded into cursing the waiter in Arabic. “We can do whatever we please! This is my father's hotel!” Until that moment, my children had been sheltered from knowing anything about my dear loss.

Light shifts to left front stage where ISRAELI WOMAN #1 stands.

ISRAELI WOMAN #1 (walking around)

We finally settled in Ramle, in a big stone house that had belonged to an Arab family...In the back of the house was a lemon tree, which almost collapsed each year under its fruit... One morning, right after the Six-Day War, an Arab man turned up at the front door. He said: 'My name is Bashir el-Kheiri. This house belonged to my family.'

One day - I shall never forget it - Bashir's brother came to Ramle with his father. The old man was blind. After entering the gate, he caressed the rugged stones of the house. Then he asked if the lemon tree was still there. He was led to the backyard. When he put his hands on the trunk of the tree he had planted, he did not utter a word. Tears rolled down his cheeks. My father then gave him a lemon. He was clutching it in his hands when he left. Bashir's mother told me, years later, that when her husband couldn't sleep, he used to pace up and down their apartment holding in his hand an old, shriveled lemon.

Both leave stage.

Scene 2 The year is 2000

2

ISRAEL MAN #2 and ISRAEL MAN #3 come to mid left stage.
PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 is at mid right stage.

ISRAEL MAN #2

It was a battalion operation. They spread out over the whole village, took over the school, smashed the locks, the classrooms. One was used as the investigation room for the Shin Bet, one room for detainees, one for the soldiers to rest. We went in house by house, banging on the door at two in the morning. The family's dying of fear, the girls are peeing in their pants with fear. We go into the house and turn everything upside down.

Gather the family in a certain room, put a guard there, tell the guard to aim his gun at them, and then search the rest of the house. We got another order that everyone born after 1980... everyone between sixteen and twenty-nine, doesn't matter who, bring them in cuffed and blindfolded. They yelled at old people, one of them had an epileptic seizure but they carried on yelling at him. Every house we went into, we brought everyone between sixteen and twenty-nine to the school. They sat tied up in the schoolyard.

ISRAEL MAN #3

The Defense Minister awoke me with the news that a four-month-old Palestinian girl had been killed when an Israeli tank opened fire on the Khan Yunis refugee camp in Gaza. The Israeli military said the attack was in response to mortar fire from the area. Iman Hijo was the youngest victim of the Palestinian uprising to date but, though her name went round the world, the story did not lead even the liberal Ha'aretz newspaper. Instead, the story of the day was that the Israeli navy had intercepted a boatload of weapons destined for Gaza.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1

I want to avenge the blood of the Palestinians, especially the blood of the women, of the elderly, and of the children, and in particular the blood of the baby girl Iman Hejjo, whose death shook me to the core.... I devote my humble deed to the Islamic believers who admire the martyrs and who work for them.

We have been asking for help all along but the world is deaf to what we say. The only way we can make an impact is to take steps to be heard. We scream, we cry and become martyrs, but no one hears us because they don't want to hear. If you want a strong person to hear you, then you have to be stronger than that person. The only way the Palestinians can be stronger is through suicide bombings.

ALL leave stage.

Scene 3

ISRAEL MAN#1 ISRAEL MAN #3 and ISRAEL WOMAN #2 on left stage.
PALESTINIAN MAN #2, PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1, PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 on right stage.

Lights come on ISRAELI MAN #1 standing at front left stage. 3

ISRAELI MAN #1

It was a cold, miserable winter day, the week before Pesach, and Yehonathon hadn't been feeling well. That's how this whole thing started. he had a strep throat, he could hardly speak. I'd just taken him to the doctor and had a prescription in my pocket. I was going to stop off at the pharmacy to have it filled, and the two of us were on our way home, walking hand-in-hand along King George.

Lights flash on and off

Sound Effect #8 – Bomb Explosion

ISRAELI MAN #1 (CONTINUED)

The guy blew up three feet behind us.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 moves to right front stage.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

Do you know what it means for a child to see his father spat at and beaten before his eyes by an Israeli soldier? Nobody knows what happened to our children. We don't know ourselves except we observe that they lose respect for their fathers. So they, our children, the children of the stone as they became known, tried the Intifada - the Uprising. Seven long years our children were throwing stones and being killed daily. Nearly all our young men were arrested, the majority were tortured. All had to confess. The result was every one suspected that all people were spies. So, we were exhausted, tormented and brutalised. What else could we do to return to our home? We had almost forgotten that and all what we wanted was to be left alone. What else could we try?

Lights flash on and off.

Sound Effect #9 – Bomb Explosion

ISRAELI MAN #1

Everything was in smoke, like a fog, and I couldn't see anything. I didn't see Yehonathon fall down. I was pushed forward by the shock wave. Picture someone pushing you powerfully from behind and you have no control. I was thrown like a sack of potatoes about five meters forward and the next thing I knew, I saw that my arm was bleeding.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 moves to right front stage.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1

Our blood will not be shed in vain. The murderer will yet pay the price and we will not be the only ones who are crying. If our nation cannot realize its dream and the goals of the victims, and live in freedom and dignity, then let the whole world be erased. May you always be content with me, my parents, and au revoir in the gardens of Paradise.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 and PALESTINIAN WOMAN #1 leaves stage

Sound Effect #10 – Bomb Explosion 4

ISRAELI MAN #1

He was the first one to be put in an ambulance. I started to climb in but they closed the door and started pulling out -- they didn't know who I was. I screamed, 'Ani ha aba! I'm the father. At Hadassah, CT scans showed Yenothon had a brain wound. They determined that Yehonathon was paralyzed on the left side and that he was blind.

Scene 4

Sound Effect #11 Loud banging

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 on right stage

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2

I was riding in a taxi, looking out for my daughters who were coming out of school. On the left I saw a Border Police jeep. I looked at them and thought: Why are they coming now? To abuse our children? Inshallah, nothing will happen. My daughters will only inhale gas. When I arrived at the Al-Ram intersection a teacher from the school called me and told me that Abir had fallen, and asked that her mother come to school to pick her up. I called home to tell her mother, and Arin, my older daughter, who is 12, was crying. I didn't understand a thing. A neighbor took the phone and told me: The soldiers fired at your daughter's head and she's been wounded.

ISRAELI MAN #1

The morning after the bombing, when I saw Yehonathon for the first time after his first surgery, his eyes were completely gray. His head was terrifying to see. I sat next to him and said Shema. Then I went outside and cried. When the doctors decided to bring him out of the sedative, the entire staff came in to watch. They wanted to see how he'd react to questions, and to some general commands -- to see what he could and couldn't do.

They asked his mother to say something, and at the sound of her voice, Yehonathon opened his eyes and said, 'Ima sheli. Ani ohev otah.' My Ima. I love you. Everyone in the room started crying.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2

I called the school and they told me they had taken her to Makassed Hospital [in East Jerusalem]. I immediately drove to Makassed, on the way I saw the Border Police jeep next to the local council building, but I thought that there was no time for speeches now. When I arrived at Makassed they told me that her condition was very critical. They told me she needed an operation. I was afraid and I told them that she had an Israeli ID and I wanted to take her to Hadassah Hospital. In order to speed things up I contacted the Peres Center for Peace, whose staff really helped me and sent a Magen David Adom ambulance and took her to Hadassah. There they decided that no operation was necessary. Thank God, I said to myself.

ISRAELI MAN #1

6

Why did this happen? You can answer it in one of three ways. The first answer is: 'It was a random event. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.' The second is, 'It happened because of the Arabs; Arabs have the power to hurt people.' If you believe either of these two, you're repudiating the Torah. The Torah is full passages that there is no such thing as chance, and that there is nothing separate from God. Would anyone say, 'God was out having coffee when this happened'? And if you believe that the Arabs possess power independent of God's Will, you're denying Divine providence, and that God is One. There's only one other possibility: everything is from God and God is only good. Everything evil in the world is under God's total control. The Ramchal writes this, and a person has to see this very clearly, that all is controlled by the Almighty. Even though we may not understand it, this is the foundation: that everything which happens is for the good. Even though it was very painful and we did a lot of crying, what we went through was only from the Hand of God. On this, there was never a moment of doubt. We knew that whatever would be with Yehonathon, either God runs the world or 'God is One' is not true. One answer that's given is this: it says in the passages that when we went down to Egypt we were 70 souls, but when we left, it was as one, a united people. That's what happened with this bombing. We came out better than we came in.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 (almost screaming)

At 7 P.M. her condition deteriorated; suddenly she needed an operation. We have to hope for a miracle, the doctors told me. I understood that my daughter needed a miracle and there are no miracles these days. I told myself that I didn't want to take revenge. The revenge is that this 'hero,' whom my daughter endangered and shot at, be put on trial. Afterward she was officially declared dead.

ISRAELI MAN #3 and ISRAEL WOMAN #2 come to front left stage

ISRAELI MAN #3

My children would never do such a thing. . . never have killed in cold blood. But my children were never humiliated. They have never been hungry. My children grew up in warm and peaceful home. No one ever burst in on them in the middle of the night. I'm not in a position to judge. Nor do I want to.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2

I'm not going to exploit the blood of my child for political purposes. This is a human outcry. I'm not going to lose my common sense, my direction, only because I've lost my heart, my child. I will continue to fight in order to protect her siblings and her classmates, her girlfriends, both Palestinians and Israelis. They are all our children

ISRAELI WOMAN #2

7

Years before the bombing, our rabbi told us, 'A person should feel the Hand of God on his shoulder.' He told us to feel that God is with you in times of distress. After the bombing, people would say to us, 'God is with you.' But we really did see it. We really felt God. I want to feel this sweetness of closeness with God without the suffering.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

I am against my country's revolutionaries
Wounding a sheath of wheat
Against the child
 Any child
Carrying a hand grenade
I am against my sister
Feeling the muscle of a gun
Against it all
And yet
What can a prophet do to a prophetess
When their eyes
Are mad to drink
The sight of the raiders' hordes?
I am against boys becoming
Heroes at ten
Against the tree flowering Explosives
Against branches becoming scaffolds
Against the rose-beds turning to trenches
Against it all
And yet When fire cremates my friends My youth And country
How can I Stop a poem from becoming a gun?

All move offstage

Scene 5

ISRAELI MAN #2 w/o uniform enters from left and moves about right stage. All PALESTINIANS, except PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 come on stage and move about without noticing the soldier.

ISRAELI MAN #2

7

With no M16 by my side or grenade in my pack, I passed through the checkpoint and took my first tentative steps on so-called enemy terrain, I walked the same streets of the Aida refugee camp that a day earlier I'd been patrolling armed to the teeth and with five other soldiers backing me up. I gazed casually at the same windows and doors at which I'd previously had to stare, hawk-like, in case a gunman or bomber should burst out and attack our squad. The fear instilled in me by the army all but dissipated once I was simply a tourist strolling through the town. Conversely, the more weaponry and protective gear I carried, the more terrifying the place became which, it dawned on me, was a distillation of Israel's core and eternal paradox - one that has dogged it since the state was created.

ISRAELI MAN #2 leaves stage.**Scene 6**

ISRAELI MAN #3 at left center stage and PALESTINIAN MAN #1 at right center stage.

ISRAELI MAN #3

If I forget thee, Jerusalem, Then let my right be forgotten.
Let my right be forgotten, and my left remember.
Let my left remember, and your right close
And your mouth open near the gate.
I shall remember Jerusalem, And forget the forest -- my love will remember,
Will open her hair, will close my window, will forget my right. Will forget my left.

If the west wind does not come
I'll never forgive the walls,
Or the sea, or myself.
Should my right forget
My left shall forgive,
I shall forget all water,
I shall forget my mother.
If I forget thee, Jerusalem,
Let my blood be forgotten.
I shall touch your forehead,
Forget my own,
My voice change for the second and last time
To the most terrible of voices --
Or silence.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

8

Do not ask me
the impossible
Do not ask me
to hunt stars,
walk to the sun.

Do not ask me
to empty the sea
to erase the daylight
I am nothing but a man.
Do not ask me
to abandon my eyes, my love
the memory of my childhood.

I was raised under an olive tree,
I ate the figs
of my orchard
drank wine from
the sloping vineyards
Tasted cactus fruit
in the valleys
more, more.
The nightingale has sung
in my ears
The free winds of fields and cities
always thrilled me

My friend
You cannot ask me
to leave my own country.

PALESTINIAN MAN #1 moves to middle of stage. ISRAELI MAN #2 moves close to middle of stage. He eyes the Palestinian suspiciously for a moment and then turns around as if lighting a cigarette. A PALESTINIAN MAN with a rifle emerges from the shadows with a gun. He looks at the Israeli soldier and raises a gun.

**Sound Effect #15 – Rifle shot (after Palestinian aims gun)
ISRAELI MAN #2 falls.**

- LIGHTS OUT –

VOICES SPEAK TO US

ACT-4 – Awakening

1

The year is 2005.

Scene 1

Lights come on with ISRAELI WOMAN #1 at front left stage.

ISRAELI WOMAN #1

(Carrying a small book with paper and pen, as if reading and editing an already written letter.)

This for me is one of the most difficult letters I will ever have to write. I am the mother of David who was killed by your son. I know he did not kill David because he was David, if he had known him he could never have done such a thing.

David was part of the peace movement and did not want to serve in the occupied territories. He had a compassion for all people and understood the suffering of the Palestinians. He treated all around him with dignity. David was part of the movement of the Officers who did not want to serve in the occupied territories, but nevertheless, for many reasons he went to serve when he was called to the reserves.

What makes our children do what they do? They do not understand the pain they are causing; your son by now having to be in jail for many years and mine who I will never be able to hold and see again or see him married, or have a grandchild from him. I cannot describe to you the pain I feel since his death and the pain of his brother and girlfriend, and of all who knew and loved him.

After your son was captured, I spent many sleepless nights thinking about what to do, should I ignore the whole thing, or will I be true to my integrity and to the work that I am doing and try to find a way for closure and reconciliation. This is not easy for anyone and I am just an ordinary person not a saint. I have now come to the conclusion that I would like to try to find a way to reconcile. Maybe this is difficult for you to understand or believe, but I know that in my heart it is the only path that I can choose, for if what I say is what I mean it is the only way.

I understand that your son is considered a hero by many of the Palestinian people. He is considered to be a freedom fighter, fighting for justice and for an independent viable Palestinian state, but I also feel that if he understood that taking the life of another may not be the way and that if he understood the consequences of his act, he could see that a non-violent solution is the only way for both nations to live together in peace.

I hope that you will show the letter to your son, and that maybe in the future we can meet. Let us put an end to the killing and look for a way through mutual understanding and empathy to live a normal life, free of violence.

Scene 2 PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 at front right stage.

2

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2

I am not the mother of the man who shot your son. However, I've known Israeli bereaved mothers for many years. The mothers' pain is similar, no matter if they are Israeli or Palestinian. It does not matter whether she is from Nablus, Shoafat, Rosh Pinah or Nof Ayalon. The pain is seared into us and will be with us forever. We must not give in to blind fury. We must understand that revenge will lead to more revenge and it is our responsibility to stop the cycle of violence. We must understand that there are people on the other side as well, beyond the wall of blindness and hatred and behind harsh words like enemy and vengeance. No mother should grieve for her sons.

I know the "other" and invite you to reach out and work for a different reality. There are people like you on the other side, who love their sons and wish to see them grow and prosper, not buried in the ground.

PALESTINIAN WOMAN #2 leaves stage **3**

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 comes to front stage **Scene 3**

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

Dear Mr. President:

I was born in Beit Nateef, My two eldest brothers, as well as my father and his father and all those who were born before them, originate from Beit Nateef village destroyed on 21 October 1948. My mother was born in Zakareya village, also destroyed in 1948. I lived in the Aida refugee camp. I remember that we were fed the love of this occupied country, because it is ours. I remember the rusty keys of our houses in Beit Nateef, keys for doors that exist no more, but keys that have their doors in our hearts and our imaginations, keys for doors that were real and are now gone, for real houses that were built and are now gone, in which real people lived in and brought up children. These rusty keys are still with me. I remember that we were brought up with the eternal belief that the right of return is the right, and nothing can justify abandoning it. I remember that our right of return to our original villages and homes is eternal, and nothing can change it, neither realities on the ground nor political agreements, because it is not only a collective right, but an individual right. It is my right, Mr. President, and the right of my children and grandchildren, and all those who come after, wherever they are born.

ISRAELI WOMAN #1

Growing up as an Israeli provided me with an intimate understanding of Israeli-Jewish psychology. Ever since I can remember, we in Israel were told that Jews have nowhere else to go because the world didn't like Jews. Seventeen years ago, when my former husband and I were about to migrate to Australia, most of the people we knew were dismayed by our decision. I was told by many that I was making a big mistake. My father's heart surgeon for example, was in complete shock when he heard our news. He took me aside and said that he did not understand how I could leave; that he would never be prepared to live anywhere where there might be even one anti-Semite alive. Like many others he believed that Jews can only safely live in Israel.

(Moves off stage.)

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

Dear Mr. President:

I am not ready to leave. I will never leave, even if it is the only way to earn a living. I will never give up my right to return to my village, even if I have a castle in the UK, and a chateau in France, and chalet at the Red Sea, and property in the Bahamas. My right is mine, and neither you nor anybody else has the right to erase it and exchange it or play with it. I am full believer in peace and nonviolence. I am a full believer in hope and right and justice. I am a

PALESTINIAN MAN #2 (CONTINUED) **4**

full believer in the values that make humanity what it is. I never learned to hate. I never hated anyone. My parents were full of love and peace. They never taught me or my brothers anything other than respect for others and endless love to give and help others. They taught us that when you practice violence you lose part of your humanity. But at the same time, they taught us to defend what is right and to stand against what is unjust and wrong.

ISRAELI MAN #3 at front left stage.

ISRAEL MAN #3

Nine months ago I opened the front door of my apartment in Alon Shvut and took a 20-minute walk that began to change my life. My wife asked me to reconsider – it might be dangerous, she said – but I went anyway. My heart beat just a little bit faster than usual as I walked through the Arab fields and vineyards that surround my home in the Judean Hills.

Never before had I met a Palestinian as an equal, never before had I socialized with one or broken bread with one. I knew nothing about them. We live so close to each other, and yet we are so far apart.

For us the Palestinians are the consummate other. The other that you ignore, that you never see. The other that you would never give a ride to, the other that you would never invite into your home. The other from whom you are completely distant, the other of whom you are thoroughly suspicious.

For 3 hours or more I chatted with them and ate with them. I looked into their faces from up close, and saw – despite my prejudices – human faces. And I heard stories that were so different from my stories, stories that created strange unfamiliar narratives from the same building blocks as my own narrative, but which I could not reject out of hand. The stories I heard – of deep connection to the land, of exile, of suffering, of humiliation, of loved one lost in the conflict – were authentic and they were real. Never before had I heard such stories. And they affected me deeply.

PALESTINIAN MAN #2

Mr. President:

I don't know if you will read these words or not, or if I will be alive if you do. But I do hope that these words, which come from the heart, reach your heart, Mr. President, and that you can find the hope and strength that our people -- your people -- still have. We do not give up our rights. We will never give up our rights. Peace can be built with justice. Real peace can be built with real justice, anything else is just a joke in the face of history.

I am still a refugee in my own country with two rusty keys to his house.

ALL leave stage.

Scene 4

ISRAELI WOMAN #2 at front left stage.

ISRAELI WOMAN #2

A letter from my granddaughter.

(opens the envelope)

A poem. How lovely. A poem.

(scans before reading)

Sometimes I wonder, what if I was someone else

Not born in Israel, but in Palestine?

After all, it's the same place, so why two different names?

And if I was born on the other side of the Green Line?

Is my world here so different, so far?

Perhaps, perhaps there is a girl there like me, naive,

Who asks: What would it be like if I were different?

I'm sure she plays hopscotch and ball, just like me,

And hates it when her father goes to the reserves

"Just so we can be ready ...in case..."

She, too, must be sick of things as they are...

In a few years, when I am a soldier,

What will I tell that girl then?

If only there would be real peace!

I bet she wants it as much as I do!

Sure, we have some agreements and signatures

But also attacks and bombs

And daily news of those wounded or killed

They also cry over their dead...

So, for my sake and her sake, and all of the children,

Let us make peace between the two sides!

Let us behave like human beings,

And make an end to tears and blood!!!

(Moves off stage.)

Scene 5

ISRAELI MAN #1 at front right stage and PALESTINIAN MAN at front left stage.

ISRAELI MAN #1

Ask them to return,

Cousins, children to one father are we

Ask them to return, praying thinly

Whispering the earthbound sounds, beg

Them to come back.

5

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

Of what benefit is it, if man were to gain the whole world
But lose the green almond in his father's orchard?

Of what benefit is it,

If man were to drink coffee in Paris

But none in his mother's house?

ISRAELI MAN #1

A day shall come when

Words of prayer will be cherished, whispered

Loudly called again to come,

Return to the mountains, houses, fields,

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

Of what benefit is it, if man were to tour the whole world

But lose the flowers on the hills of his

native land

He gains nothing but deadly silence

Within the hearts of the living.

ISRAELI MAN #1

Engulfing voices calling to return,

And none but screams shall be their boundaries

Nor shall the sea be their last hold, it's

Waves still silencing the voices shouting

To return,

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

You look through the mirror of lands not your own

And see your exiled face;

You recognize your face

Despite the deadly dust of travel

From Jaffa, to Lydda, to Haifa,

Through the Mediterranean to exile;

You recognize your face

And try to deny that face!

ISRAELI MAN #1

Shackled, chains of soldiers

Marching into brothers' wars on fathers'

Earth that swallow all.

6

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

You worship your own face
Even though exile has obliterated its
features;
The hangman of the twentieth century
assumes the countenance
Of the eternal face!

ISRAELI MAN #1

Beloved lands were called by men and women not to run,
Do not run too fast, don't rush, the place is burning,
And my mother's voice like tunnels calling back her cubs
Into her flameless earth, becoming
Burning ashes,

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

You close your eyes
To worship your face in the darkness of
this century.
You deny... Your worship,
You deny... Your worship,
And the God of truth cries to your face:

ISRAELI MAN #1

While winds go round themselves and silence's scepter
Is upon us,

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

He who denies his face
Is renounced by all the birds of paradise
in this universe,
And those whom silence has turned mute
Will never be heard by the roses of the field
He who kills the nightingale of his dreams
Will be buried in the forgotten graveyard
of the living.

ISRAEL MAN #1

and till we freeze where called upon
Inside the circle
And we die
Encircled,
Like Philistines in temples
Beloved lands to say.

7

PALESTINIAN MAN #1

You open your eyes
And see the face of your country in the
mirror of exile.
The deadly silence in the hearts of the
living
Strips away the skin of your face;
It cuts and dries your flesh,
Then hangs what remains on poles
Under the forgotten sun of the West.

LIGHTS DIM

-END OF PLAY-

8