

**Palestinian Political Forgiveness:
Agency, Permissibility, and Prospects**

The Israel-Palestine conflict stands at the heart of tensions in the Middle East and, more than that, at the heart of tensions between the West and the Islamic world.¹ It is sometimes suggested that the resolution of this conflict will require forgiveness on the part of both Palestine and Israel.² However, what such forgiveness would involve has not been adequately explored. Our aim is to remedy this gap in the discussion.

We shall focus, in particular, on Palestinian political forgiveness. There are several reasons for adopting such a focus. The first concerns the distinctiveness of the Palestinian case. Whereas Israel is a durable law-based polity (at least within its 1967 borders), Palestine is a disaggregated polity in flux. This difference in the nature of the two polities has significant implications for what forgiveness might involve in the two cases. Second, there is a considerable asymmetry in the scale of forgiveness required. The major concessions with regard to territory and people are Palestinian. Israel was, after all, carved out of Palestine, and will continue to occupy at least 78 percent of the territory that comprised British mandatory Palestine prior to 1948. In human terms, Jews can expect to retain their right of immigration to Israel based on the 1950 Law of Return, whilst Palestinians are a refugee people, many of whom will be required to forgo the right of return in a final settlement. In short, Palestinians are being asked to concede that much more, and as a result one

¹See James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward: A New Approach* (U.S. Institute of Peace, 2006), http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/index.html; and the UN Alliance of Civilizations 2006 press release, http://www.unaoc.org/repository/report_press_release.pdf.

²See, for example, Marc Ellis, *Revolutionary Forgiveness: Essays on Judaism, Christianity, and the Future of Religious Life* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2000), pp. 274 ff.; Solomon Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 203 ff; Andrew McKnight, "Historical Trauma, the Persistence of Memory and the Pedagogical Problems of Forgiveness, Justice and Peace," *Educational Studies* 36 (2004): 140-58. Cf. Margaret Gilbert, "Collective Remorse," in *Sociality and Responsibility: New Essays in Plural Subject Theory* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp. 123-40, at pp. 137-38.

might reasonably expect them to feel their grievances that much more deeply. Further, the asymmetry in the balance of power between Israel and Palestine is significant for political forgiveness in the two cases. There are normative and psychological differences between forgiveness offered from a position of strength and that offered from a position of weakness that have a bearing on when and whether it is appropriate to forgive.³ As the stronger and more unified of the two polities with considerable support from powerful international constituencies, Israel is in a position from which it would be easier—agentially, psychologically, normatively, and politically—to forgive than is Palestine. For these reasons we shall restrict our analysis to the Palestinian case.

In our consideration of Palestinian political forgiveness the following questions present themselves. First, a conceptual question: what is political forgiveness? Second, an agential question: is there a Palestinian agent capable of forgiving Israel? Third, a normative question: should Palestinians forgive Israel? Fourth, a pragmatic question: what are the prospects of such an act of forgiveness being undertaken?

1. Forgiveness

When A has been wronged by B, A may justifiably feel anger, resentment, or the like toward B.⁴ Forgiveness involves some reduction in that

³Leonard Grob, “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Just Reconciliation in the Shadows of the Holocaust,” in David Patterson and John K. Roth (eds.), *After-Words: Post-Holocaust Struggles with Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Justice* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), chap. 8, p. 204. Grob does not spell out why the disparity in power matters. But it is not difficult to fill in, at least in a rough and intuitive way, some of the explanation. As a general rule it is harder to enter into an open and trusting relationship with another person if one feels that doing so puts one at considerable risk than it is if one feels that there is little risk involved. This is true not only in contexts where one of the parties has shown herself untrustworthy in the past. It is also true in contexts involving a disparity of power and risk where no wrong has been done. Think, for example, of the relationship between a wealthy patron and the artist she supports. Since the patron feels she has little to lose if the artist disagrees with her, she may feel comfortable sharing her opinions freely without worrying about whether or not the artist disagrees. The artist, on the other hand, insofar as his livelihood depends upon the good graces of his patron, may find being similarly open with regard to his opinions difficult, because he fears the financial ramifications of such openness if his opinions differ markedly from hers. The degree of risk involved is not the only difference pertinent to forgiving from a position of strength versus one of weakness. But it is sufficient to make the point that the Palestinian and Israeli cases warrant separate treatment.

⁴For a discussion of the range of attitudes evoked by wrongdoing that may be overcome in forgiveness, see Joseph Butler, “Upon Resentment,” *Fifteen Sermons* [1729] (Charlottesville: Lincoln-Rembrandt Publishing, 1993), pp. 92-101; Jeffrie Murphy and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Norvin Richards, “Forgiveness,” *Ethics* 99 (1988): 77-97; Robert C. Roberts, “Forgiving-

anger or resentment and, ordinarily, the restoration of feelings of goodwill toward the forgiven.⁵ But this is only part of the story. We don't just feel resentment losing its hold on us, we also forswear our resentment. We refuse to nurse it or act on it when we do feel resentful.⁶ We refuse to retaliate in kind.⁷ And we resolve to treat the other in ways that manifest goodwill toward her.⁸

In other words, forgiveness is both something we feel and something we do. At least, that is the case in everyday social contexts when one individual forgives another. However, when the focus shifts from individuals to collectives, one might wonder how many of the qualities of individual forgiveness can reasonably be preserved. In particular, one might wonder whether the feelings involved in individual forgiveness can play a role in collective or political forgiveness.

Peter Digeser voices several reasons for leaving feelings out of an

ness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1995): 289-306; Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 154-55; and Lucy Allais, "Wiping the Slate Clean: The Heart of Forgiveness," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36 (2008): 33-68.

⁵For an analysis of the feelings of goodwill that might be involved in forgiving, see Robin Downie, "Forgiveness," *Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1965): 128-34; Joanna North, "Wrongdoing and Forgiveness," *Philosophy* 62 (1987): 499-508; Roberts, "Forgiveness"; Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, "In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103 (2002): 39-60; Jessica Wolfendale, "The Hardened Heart: The Moral Dangers of Not Forgiving," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36 (2005): 344-63; and Eleonore Stump, "Love, By All Accounts," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 80 (2006): 25-43.

⁶H.J.N. Horsbrugh, "Forgiveness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1974): 269-82; Cheshire Calhoun, "Changing One's Heart," *Ethics* 103 (1992): 76-96; Margaret Holmgren, "Forgiveness and the Intrinsic Value of Persons," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1993): 341-52; Donald Shriver, Jr., *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); John Hare, "Forgiveness," in *The Moral Gap* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 222-42; Jeremy Watkins, "Forgiveness and Its Place in Ethics," *Theoria* 71 (2005): 59-77.

⁷See Butler, "Upon Forgiveness of Injuries," *Fifteen Sermons*, pp. 106-7; and Charles Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 38 ff.

⁸For a more nuanced discussion and defense of this account of forgiveness, see Glen Pettigrove, "The Forgiveness We Speak," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 371-92. Since the context of the conflict we are discussing has been profoundly shaped by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian commitments, it is worth pointing out that all three of the major monotheistic traditions contain conceptions of what forgiveness consists in that are quite similar to the one articulated above. See, for example, M. Mahdi Allam, "The Concept of Forgiveness in the Qur'an," *Islamic Culture* 41 (1967): 139-53; Louis Newman, "The Quality of Mercy: On the Duty to Forgive in the Judaic Tradition," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15 (1987): 155-72; George Emile Irani, "Apologies and Reconciliation: Middle Eastern Rituals," in Elazar Barkan (ed.), *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 132-50; and Glen Pettigrove, "Forgiveness and Interpretation," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 35 (2007): 429-52.

account of political forgiveness. The first is an epistemic reason: Since we cannot know “what lurks in the heart of the individual,” an account of “appropriate political conduct cannot rest on possession of the appropriate sentiments.”⁹ The second is a pragmatic reason: Rather than wasting one’s time worrying about identifying or shaping the feelings of other agents, a more sensible approach to the political “takes agents as it finds them.”¹⁰ Digeser’s third reason for leaving feelings out of the account of political forgiveness is a liberal, ideological reason: States should limit their activities to maintaining a space in which citizens may pursue what they care about—whatever that may be—subject to the constraints involved in living together. A state that attempts to shape what its citizens feel or care about, or to influence the development of their moral character (what George Will and others have labeled “soulcraft”), “is deeply intrusive and potentially tyrannical.”¹¹

Of course, to some extent Digeser is right. Our knowledge of others’ emotions is imperfect. There are times when we are uncertain what another is feeling, especially if she is not someone we know well, is not very expressive of her emotions, or is intentionally concealing them from us. And there are contexts in which it is impractical at best or invasive at worst for others to spend considerable time attempting to modify our emotions. We do not cede to our politicians the authority to get inside our heads and manipulate what they find there.

Nevertheless, these observations do not lead to the conclusion that emotions should be excluded from the domain of political concern and, therefore, left out of the account of political forgiveness. That emotions are a thoroughly ordinary object of political concern is evident, among other places, in criminal and tort law. Significant classes of legal violations in systems influenced by British and American precedent, including hate crimes and crimes of passion, refer to the presence of a defining emotional component (either in the agent who performs the action or in those subjected to it).¹² Although various attempts have been made to describe these violations in exclusively behavioral terms, these attempts often smuggle the emotional condition back in, albeit in a different guise. Not only are emotions a common object of political concern, they also seem quite an appropriate object of such concern. We care deeply both

⁹Peter Digeser, *Political Forgiveness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 17.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 18.

¹²For a discussion of the significance of emotions in defining hate crimes and crimes of passion, see Stephen Garvey, “Passion’s Puzzle,” *Iowa Law Review* 90 (2005): 1677-745; and Gail Mason, “The Penal Politics of Hatred,” *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 42 (2009): 275-86.

about how others treat us and about how they feel about us, and the feelings of those around us have a considerable impact on our quality of life even when those feelings are not overtly manifest in their actions toward us.¹³ Given the value we place upon the emotions of others, and their impact on social life, there is at least a *prima facie* case for including them among the objects of political concern.

Further, none of the reasons Digeser has offered for excluding emotions from the domain of the political is, in the end, decisive. Although sometimes we misread the emotional cues, we are nevertheless remarkably adept at identifying what others are feeling.¹⁴ Thus the epistemic argument, while reminding us that we are sometimes mistaken, does not provide a reason to eliminate emotions from the sphere of political concern. The pragmatic argument fares even less well: given that our ordinary ways of interacting with others involve identifying their emotions and shaping our responses around what we have apprehended, it does not seem at all impractical to incorporate this information into our political deliberation. It is, in fact, part of what is involved in “taking agents as we find them.” Finally, while highlighting ways in which political concern with the emotions could become invasive or manipulative, the ideological argument does not provide a reason to think it will always or even ordinarily lead to such abuses. One might, in fact, argue that an approach to politics that disregarded the emotions would leave itself more susceptible to abuses of this sort than would one more attentive to emotions, since the latter could be on its guard against such abuses in a way that the former could not.

Not only are there good, generic reasons for including emotions within the range of political concerns, there are also more particular reasons that emerge in the context of the Middle East. One of the complaints that the Israeli government voiced repeatedly with respect to then-Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yasir Arafat’s leadership was that he had done little to reduce anti-Israel sentiment among Palestinians.¹⁵ This concern with Palestinian emotions was echoed, yet

¹³See P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” in Gary Watson (ed.), *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 62-67; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 386-91; Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 225-56, at pp. 230-31; Deborah Tollefsen, “Participant Reactive Attitudes and Collective Responsibility,” *Philosophical Explorations* 6 (2003): 218-35; and Glen Pettigrove, “Understanding, Excusing, Forgiving,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74 (2007): 156-75.

¹⁴See Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed: Understanding Faces and Feelings* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

¹⁵See Peter Ezra Weinberger, *Co-opting the PLO: A Critical Reconstruction of the Oslo Accords, 1993-1995* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 108-10.

again, in then-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's speech in Annapolis in November 2007 when he referred not only to Israel's desire for peace and an end to violent conflict between Israel and Palestine, but also to the need to bring an end to hatred in the region.¹⁶ An approach to political forgiveness that left out the emotional dimension would fail to speak to an issue that the parties to this conflict deem important.¹⁷

However, even if one accepts that emotions are a legitimate object of political concern, one might still resist a conception of political forgiveness that involves the kinds of feelings associated with individual forgiveness, for, one might think, a collective agent cannot have emotions.¹⁸ If political forgiveness is offered by a political collective, then, it is assumed, political forgiveness cannot involve emotion. But this objection is misguided. Not only can collectives have emotions, they are a crucial aspect of political life, especially in conflicted situations.

It is common in everyday speech to refer to group emotions. China is proud of its Olympic success, Labour loathes the Tories, New Zealand fears a recession, Australia is sorry for its treatment of the Stolen Generations, and the United States is confident of British support. Sometimes such statements are simply an abbreviated way of saying that a significant percentage of x feels y about z .¹⁹ But they are not always mere generalizations regarding the feelings of the individuals who make up group x . Sometimes they point to deeper features of the collective. To see the kinds of features that might be involved in collective emotions, it will be helpful to say a bit more about the nature of emotions in general.

Emotions involve both feelings and dispositions to feel certain ways in response to various stimuli.

An emotion is complex in that it will typically involve many different elements: it involves episodes of emotional experience, including perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of

¹⁶Steven Lee Myers and Helene Cooper, "Israel and Palestinians Set Goal of a Treaty in 2008," *The New York Times*, 28 November 2007.

¹⁷Roi Ben-Yehuda and Aziz Abu Sarah, "Should Palestinians Accept Israel as a Jewish State?" *Haaretz*, 12 October 2009.

¹⁸So, for example, Virginia Held asserts, "Though a case can be made that a corporation, through its calculations, can have beliefs and can reason, and though it certainly can make decisions, almost no one will argue that a corporation has the capacity to have emotions." "Group Responsibility for Ethnic Conflict," *Journal of Ethics* 6 (2002): 157-78, p. 164.

¹⁹"It makes no sense to attribute feelings or emotions to countries or other collective agents, unless what is meant is just that most of the individual members have these feelings." T.M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 162. For a more detailed analysis of this way of speaking about the emotions of groups, as well as an articulation of reasons for finding such an account unsatisfactory as a characterization of all instances of collective emotion, see Gilbert, "Collective Remorse," pp. 123-40; and Glen Pettigrove, "Hannah Arendt and Collective Forgiving," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 37 (2006): 483-500.

various kinds, and bodily changes of various kinds; and it involves dispositions, including dispositions to experience further emotional episodes, to have further thoughts and feelings, and to behave in certain ways.²⁰

By way of illustration, consider the following example. Haman hates Mordecai. Every time he sees Mordecai or hears tell of him, Haman flies into a rage, ranting about what a horrible person Mordecai is and about how he despises him. Because of this hatred, Haman plans to have Mordecai and all of his relatives killed. Our everyday conception of a hatred like Haman's is not limited to those moments when Haman is feeling infuriated. We would continue to say that Haman hates Mordecai even if, at this moment, Haman is not feeling anything toward Mordecai, perhaps because he is fully absorbed in thinking about how delightful it is that he has been invited to dine with King Ahasuerus and Queen Esther.

This distinction between the feelings and dispositions of an emotion is quite useful when it comes to thinking about collective emotions. Social and institutional features within a collective can function like the dispositional elements of an emotion do within an individual, embodying and reinforcing certain affective and behavioral responses within that collective. The way in which the conflict with Israel is portrayed in the Palestinian educational curriculum, for example, invites certain types of response to the state of Israel, Israeli settlements, containment walls, checkpoints, soldiers, and so on.²¹ Official holidays and commemorative dates in Palestine like Land Day (30 March), Prisoners' Day (April 17), al-Nakba/Catastrophe Day (15 May),²² Independence Day (15 November), the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November), and Jerusalem/al-Quds Day (the last Friday of Ramadan) reinforce such feelings within the Palestinian population by providing a recurring reminder of wrongs suffered, an official interpretation of the meaning of key events in the conflict, and a sanctioned outlet for the ex-

²⁰Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 12-13. See also Michael Stocker, *Valuing Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 20-24; Richard Wollheim, *On the Emotions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 9 ff.; Robert Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 60 ff.; Robert Solomon, *Not Passion's Slave: Emotions and Choice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 5 ff.

²¹See Fouad Moughrabi, "The Politics of Palestinian Textbooks," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31 (2001): 5-19; Falk Pingel (ed.), *Contested Past, Disputed Present: Curricula and Teaching in Israeli and Palestinian Schools* (Hannover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2003); and Ruth Firer and Sami Adwan, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in History and Civics Textbooks of Both Nations* (Hannover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2004).

²²See Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

pression of anti-Israel sentiment. The veneration of martyrs, the designation of Palestinian territory as Islamic *waqf*,²³ the charter documents of the major political movements and parties, and a variety of other formal and informal features of Palestinian social life (understandably) dispose the Palestinian populace to feel anger, resentment, and the like toward Israel and to express those feelings in action.

The phenomenology of shared emotions provides a further reason to conceive of collective emotions regarding x as involving more than just the sum of individual emotions regarding x . Often the affects that are present when “we hate x ” are different from those involved when “I hate x .” Crudely put, things feel different when I know (or believe) that we are in this together. One reason that difference is salient has to do with the conditions under which my feelings of hatred might diminish. If my hatred of x was individually mine (i.e., if it was best reflected in the statement “I hate x ”), then one would not expect that state to be significantly altered if I discovered that you do not hate x . However, if I believed that the hatred I felt was *ours* (i.e., if I believed that “we hate x ”), then discovering that you do not hate x will alter how I feel. The alteration might involve no more than the loss of the “in this together” affects, or the latter might be replaced with salient “on my own” elements. But on some occasions, discovering that a shared emotion is no longer shared will be sufficient to eliminate all related affects in me. If our hatred was shared, discovering that you do not hate x (once it really “sinks in”) may remove my hatred altogether.

There are also moral dimensions to our shared emotions that may be lacking in individual emotions. If my fondness for a particular location has waned (for example, our family’s place of origin), but that fondness was shared with others, then I may regret its loss and engage in emotional work to restore my emotions to their former state, so that the fondness can continue to be ours. If the emotion was ours, others might feel upset or betrayed if I no longer share it, in a way that would not make any sense if the emotion had been merely mine.

Attending to these moral, phenomenological, and dispositional qualities suggests an illuminating way to think about the emotions of a collective agent without positing some metaphysically dubious group mind,²⁴ on the one hand, or merely referring to the individual (as opposed to shared) feelings and dispositions of individual members of the collective, on the other. When we speak of collective emotions, we refer to the complex state that includes the social and institutional features that dis-

²³See the Hamas charter, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp.

²⁴We likewise reject the so-called “Arab mind” that has been debunked by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 262, 308.

pose individual members of the collective to feel a certain way, as well as the feelings of those individual members, and the ways in which these features and feelings dispose the collective to react to the world around it. Such emotions include, but are not limited to, “the emotions we feel in response to the actions of groups.”²⁵

We are finally in a position to clarify what is involved in collective forgiveness. Like individual forgiveness, collective forgiveness will be something we feel as well as something we do. It will involve a reduction in the anger, resentment, and so on that is felt by a significant percentage of the members of a collective in response to wrongdoing,²⁶ and an accompanying alteration of the social and institutional features of the collective that dispose its members to respond with hostility toward the agent who perpetrated the wrong. It will involve the development of at least a minimal level of goodwill toward the (former) wrongdoer, which likewise will include affective and dispositional qualities. And it will involve the commitment to forswear resentment, anger, hatred, and the like and to manifest goodwill toward the other.²⁷

2. The Question of Agency

When A forgives B, it is ordinarily assumed that B has wronged A.²⁸ The assumption of wrongdoing presupposes that B is a moral agent and that the act for which B is forgiven is one for which it is appropriate to hold B responsible. The situation also presupposes that A is an agent, if rational agency is a precondition for the possibility of being wronged (as opposed

²⁵Deborah Tollefsen, “The Rationality of Collective Guilt,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 30 (2006): 222-39, p. 222.

²⁶What counts as “a significant percentage” will depend on the nature of the circumstances and on the social and political clout of the individuals who make up that percentage. In general, the larger the percentage and the weightier the social standing of the individuals who feel these emotions, the more confident we will be to speak of a collective having forgiven.

²⁷The account we are offering, then, requires more than does Digeser’s, insofar as it demands that the commitments of forgiveness be accompanied by specified emotional changes. But it is less stringent than Jerald Richards’s account, which requires the complete “abandonment of resentment, hatred, animosity, and ill will.” See his “Keys to Political Forgiveness in International Relations,” in Nancy Nyquist Potter (ed.), *Putting Peace into Practice: Evaluating Policy on Local and Global Levels* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), chap. 10, p. 165.

²⁸This assumption has recently been challenged on two grounds. Patrick Boleyn-Fitzgerald has raised questions about whether a wrong must have been done before one can forgive: “What Should ‘Forgiveness’ Mean?” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 36 (2002): 483-98; and Glen Pettigrove has raised questions about whether the wrong must have been done to oneself before one can forgive: see “The Standing to Forgive,” *Monist* 92 (2009): 583-603. However, neither of these issues need concern us here.

to merely harmed) or if forgiving is something we *do* and not merely something that happens to us. Palestinian political forgiveness, then, presupposes that there is a Palestinian agent who has been wronged by an Israeli agent. Thus, we shall need to say something about the moral agency of Israel (and the deeds for which it might be forgiven) and about the moral agency of a Palestinian collective.

Questions regarding the possibility of collective agency and moral responsibility are the focus of a lively and ongoing debate in social philosophy. On one side of the debate stand those who begin from the observation that we commonly hold collectives morally responsible. This observation is reinforced by an assumption of the sort that Margaret Gilbert has often advanced: "I take it as a good axiom to respect the intelligibility of common pretheoretical thought so far as possible."²⁹ In common pretheoretical thought, Israel is deemed praiseworthy for some of its activities and blameworthy for others. As one Palestinian woman put it,

"Victims of war are not like victims of earthquakes. Our problem isn't that we are poor and can't care for ourselves. It's that we've just been thrown out of our houses by an occupation force, by the Israeli army. *That* is the source of our suffering."³⁰

Consequently, theorists on this side of the collective responsibility debate will assume that Israel is a moral agent that can be held responsible for at least some of its actions and thus is an agent capable of wrongdoing.³¹

On the other side of the debate are those who begin with an account of the conditions for individual agency and moral responsibility, and then ask whether these conditions can also hold in the case of collective agents. The conditions for moral responsibility that are advanced include things like knowledge, intentionality, and the ability to choose.³² Some of these theorists assume that collectives can never, or almost never, satisfy these conditions. Others will offer an account of the conditions of collective knowledge, intentionality, and the like, that collectives can frequently satisfy.

²⁹Gilbert, "Collective Remorse," p. 132.

³⁰See Jeff Halper, "'Victims of War Are Not Like Victims of Earthquake': The Conflict between Humanitarianism and Political Work," in Michael Keating, Anne Le More, and Robert Lowe (eds.), *Aid, Diplomacy, and Facts on the Ground: The Case of Palestine* (New York: Chatham House, 2005), **PAGES??**, p. 188.

³¹See Neta Crawford, "Individual and Collective Moral Responsibility for Systemic Military Atrocity," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 (2007): 187-212, for a discussion of the many ways in which collectives are commonly held morally responsible for their actions both in public discourse and in international law.

³²See, for example, Peter French, "The Corporation as a Moral Person," in Larry May and Stacey Hoffman (eds.), *Collective Responsibility: Five Decades of Debate in Theoretical and Applied Ethics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991), pp. 133-49; J. Angelo Corlett, "Collective Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 32 (2001): 573-84; and Philip Pettit, "Responsibility Incorporated," *Ethics* 117 (2007): 171-201.

Recently Deborah Tollefsen has offered an account of collective responsibility that bridges the gap between the two sides of this debate. Following P.F. Strawson, she argues that the condition that constitutes the moral agency of individual persons is that those with whom they interact are prone to respond to them with attitudes such as “gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings.”³³ Our conceptions of moral agency and moral responsibility are rooted in these reactive attitudes, rather than the reverse.³⁴ It is clear that nations are the object of reactive attitudes of the sort Strawson and Tollefsen describe. An immigrant, for example, may feel grateful for being welcomed by a particular country and being invited in due course to join its citizenry, or she may feel hurt at being excluded from the territory or, if allowed to enter, at being relegated to a subordinate status within the polity. Likewise, moral hatred, resentment, and love are commonly felt toward nations in response to their actions, beliefs, commitments, and desires.

We cannot attempt to settle the debate regarding collective moral responsibility here. At most we can cast our lot among those who affirm our common ascriptions of moral responsibility to collectives and explore the ramifications of such a view for the case we are considering. However, it is interesting to note with respect to views that begin with metaphysical assumptions about individual moral agency, that if any nation can satisfy their conditions for moral agency and responsibility, Israel will. Israel’s semi-democratic political arrangements, clearly articulated and regularly observed decision-making procedures, sense of national identity,³⁵ open and active public sphere, and so on, will make it a plausible candidate for ascriptions of moral responsibility even on a more restrictive account.

To accept the possibility of Israel’s moral responsibility for its actions is not yet to say anything about how that collective responsibility is distributed amongst its individual members. Nor is it to deny that other political agents might share responsibility with Israel for many of the actions that form the basis of the Palestinian grievance. British policy decisions during the Mandate played a key role in the lead-up to 1948 and in the Zionist leadership’s consideration of the transfer of the Arab population out of the future Jewish state.³⁶ The United States’ financial and

³³Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment,” p. 62.

³⁴Deborah Tollefsen, “Participant Reactive Attitudes and Collective Responsibility,” *Philosophical Explorations* 6 (2003): 218-35.

³⁵This is true both in David Miller’s distinctive sense of national identity and in more mundane conceptions that see nations as co-extensive with political states. See Miller, “Holding Nations Responsible,” *Ethics* 114 (2004): 240-68.

³⁶See Benny Morris, “Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948,” in Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 37-59.

military patronage has contributed significantly to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians,³⁷ as have the actions of the former Soviet Union, the League of Arab States, the United Nations, and the Palestinians themselves. It would be wrong to lay all responsibility for the current plight of Palestinians at the feet of Israel. Nevertheless, an empowered Israel has played a central role in the drama and it is this role that stands at the forefront of Palestinian consciousness and is most salient to the issue of Palestinian forgiveness.

For what might Palestinians forgive Israel? Perhaps the most obvious answers to this question concern the physical losses involved in death, dismemberment, and dispossession. Every Palestinian can name a friend or family member who has been wounded or killed by Israeli military action. The vast majority have lost property: the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) estimated 726,000 Palestinians became refugees as a result of the 1948 war,³⁸ when some "two-thirds of the country's population were driven out by Zionist troops and design."³⁹ By the end of June 1950, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reported 914,221 refugees registered for assistance.⁴⁰ At present, the "Palestinian refugee and displaced population comprises nearly three-quarters of the entire Palestinian population worldwide,"⁴¹ which is estimated at around 10 million.⁴² Most of those who were made refugees, and indeed most of those who were killed, were not "enemy combatants" but civilians. Then there are the continuing economic losses that have come as a result of Israeli policy. In addition to the initial loss of property for those who have been exiled, there are the ongoing economic effects of being a refugee that are associated with the loss of one's career and the absence of comparable, wage-earning alternatives. For those who have remained behind, there are the economic costs that result from restrictions placed on the movement of persons and goods. Politically, Palestinians have been disenfranchised. Most refugees have been excluded from formal participation in political life not only in the former territory of Palestine but also in the Arab countries to which they fled, with the notable excep-

³⁷See Amira Hass, "The Israel Donors Conference," *Haaretz*, 4 March 2009.

³⁸Michael R. Fischbach, *Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

³⁹Edward Said, "Afterword: The Consequences of 1948," in *The War for Palestine*, p. 206.

⁴⁰By 2008, the number of *registered* refugees alone had risen to 4,618,141. UNRWA, "Number of registered refugees," <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/pdf/reg-ref.pdf>.

⁴¹Michael Dumper, "Introduction," in Michael Dumper (ed.), *Palestinian Refugee Repatriation: Global Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 6.

⁴²Badil, "On the Occasion of World Refugee Day," press release no. E/10/09, <http://www.badil.org/Publications/Press/2009/press508-09.htm>.

tion of Jordan.⁴³ Within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Gaza is almost hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world, while the West Bank is subject to continued, albeit modified, occupation. Palestinian citizens of Israel are not disenfranchised but are nevertheless relegated to a subordinate status with limited say in how they are governed and by whom.⁴⁴ The political turmoil has been prolonged by the highest per capita rate of incarceration in the world,⁴⁵ as well as by the exile or assassination of many of those with the leadership skills to have helped forge national unity.⁴⁶

The physical and material losses discussed above are the easiest to quantify, and for this reason they are the most frequently discussed. But, of course, they are only a portion of the undeserved suffering that Palestinians have endured. In addition, a number of psychological and cultural costs have accompanied these material losses. Psychological costs include, among other things, grief at the loss of place, persons, and property, anger at injustice, resentment of Israel and her leaders, and for most the lingering bitterness of exile. Shame at political failure and military defeat has undermined individual and collective self-esteem.⁴⁷ These psychological costs are not limited to the emotional experiences of individual victims. As shared, identity-constituting experiences, they have decisively shaped Palestinian culture. The PLO reconstituted Palestinian identity in exile around the notions of resistance and return. Similarly for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, “Occupation and many years of violent conflict have created a strong ethos of resistance and militancy, and this has permeated the national consciousness. Equally, however, the experience of extended occupation and escalating violence has left an

⁴³Refusal to normalize the condition of refugees by adopting them as citizens may be motivated, in part, by a desire to keep the “right of return” a live issue in the conflict with Israel.

⁴⁴See Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, <http://www.adalah.org/eng/>.

⁴⁵See PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, “Frequently asked Questions: Palestinian Political Prisoners,” http://www.nad-plo.org/print.php?view=facts_others_faq1p.

⁴⁶See Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), pp. xiv-xv; Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949-1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 6-9; and Nigel Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: From Oslo to al-Aqsa* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁴⁷This is reflected in the redemptive discourse of the struggle for self-determination through guerrilla warfare—informed by a religious idiom of sacrifice and martyrdom—advocated by the PLO. See Nigel Parsons, “The Palestine Liberation Organization and the Oslo Process: Incorporation without Accommodation,” in Bruce W. Dayton and Louis Kriesberg (eds.), *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 235-51; and Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

acute sense of national exposure and vulnerability.”⁴⁸ The emphasis on coping with 1948, and the subsequent conflict, has kept Palestinians looking backwards and displaced other creative potential. As Ramallah poet Kifah Fanni observes, this has caused “sixty years of cultural delay, because the community was interrupted, its evolution was interrupted.” Former centers of Arab culture largely disappeared, “Haifa, Yaffa, big cities ... even Ramallah is like a village.”⁴⁹ The modest revival of cultural life under the still deeply constrained semi-autonomy of the Palestinian Authority (PA) alludes to the foregone possibilities.

Up to this point we have argued that Israel is a reasonable object of Palestinian resentment and that, at least in this respect, it makes sense to speak of the possibility of Palestinian forgiveness of Israel. However, in order to speak of collective forgiveness we need to address what appears to be a more challenging question, namely, whether there is a collective Palestinian agent capable of forgiving Israel. The first thing with which one is confronted when examining the Palestinian political situation is factional rivalry and an unwillingness or inability to work with one another, even in relatively mundane matters. The most visible of these divisions is the one between Fatah and Hamas that led in mid-2007 to the death or exile of a number of leading Fatah cadres from Gaza. More recently, one might think of the ultra-Islamist challenge to Hamas from groups like Jund Ansar Allah (Soldiers of the Followers of God), who seized a mosque in the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza strip in a campaign to establish an Islamic emirate governed according to *Shari’a* law. This is only the latest example in a series of confrontations between Hamas and what Palestinians identify as the “Salafist trend” in Gaza.⁵⁰ Perhaps more important is the question of representation for a people divided between Israel itself, the OPT, and the diaspora.

Nevertheless, a compelling case can still be made for the existence of a collective Palestinian agent in the PLO. Established by the League of Arab States in 1964, the organization included a quasi-representative body, the Palestine National Council (PNC). Popular endorsement followed as the PLO first incorporated, and then quickly became subject to, the independent guerrilla groups formerly operating outside of it. By the close of the 5th PNC in 1969, diaspora-based guerrillas with popular legitimacy were firmly in charge of the organization and Fatah spokesman

⁴⁸Hussein Agha and Ahmad S. Khalidi, *A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine* (New York: Chatham House, 2006), pp. 11-12.

⁴⁹Kifah Fanni, interview, Ramallah, May 2008.

⁵⁰BBC News, “Profile: Jund Ansar Allah,” 8 August 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8203239.stm; Muhammad al-Jamal, “Rafah: 16 killed and 120 injured in clashes between Hamas and the Jihadi Salafi elements,” *Al-Ayyam*, 15 August 2009, <http://www.al-ayyam.com/znews/site/template/article.aspx?did=119243&date=8/15/2009>.

Arafat was elected PLO chairman. Mindful of constituents in the OPT, the 12th PNC in 1974 admitted three West Bank representatives to the Executive Committee and adopted a political program that at least alluded to a two-state solution, implicitly allowing for coexistence alongside Israel. The organization rapidly acquired greater international standing as a result; the USSR permitted the PLO to establish an official mission in Moscow, and the Arab summit in Rabat acknowledged the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁵¹ Arafat was invited to address the UN General Assembly, Resolution 3236 endorsed the Palestinian right to self-determination, and Resolution 3237 secured the PLO observer status at General Assembly sessions. The first intifada prompted a further refinement of goals as the diaspora-based organization looked to reflect the will of OPT constituents. The 19th PNC in 1988 accepted partition and declared the establishment of a Palestinian state. US recognition of the PLO as representative of a Palestinian collective followed a UNGA special session in Geneva and was later underscored when US President Clinton hosted the signing of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles at the White House in 1993, and again when Clinton witnessed the 22nd PNC repeal key sections of the PLO charter pertaining to armed struggle in 1998.⁵² Hamas and Islamic Jihad remain outside the PLO framework, but negotiations leave open the possibility of the former entering the fold. In the meantime, the PNC convened in special session in August 2009 to fill six vacant seats on the Executive Committee, with Hanan Ashrawi emerging as the first woman elevated to the PLO leadership.⁵³ For all of its shortcomings, the PLO has played a central role in reflecting and shaping the Palestinian collective, and it continues to afford that collective a claim to agency.

Moreover, the PLO enjoys a representational capacity that does not inhere in its nearest rival Hamas, and cannot inhere in either the Palestinian Authority or the prospective Palestinian state into which it may evolve. Hamas is led from the diaspora (currently Damascus), and has some popular support outside the OPT, particularly in Jordan. It also has substantial support in the West Bank. But the movement's center of gravity is firmly fixed in Gaza, perhaps decisively so since 2007.⁵⁴ Besides

⁵¹Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 344.

⁵²For the definitive history of the PLO, see Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. For treatment of the PA, see Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*. For a summary of the politics surrounding Palestinian representation and recognition up to 2009, see Nigel Parsons, "Israel-Palestine Peace: Official Efforts," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), **PAGES??**

⁵³Miftah, "Ashrawi first woman in PLO Executive Committee," 29 August 2009, <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=20425&CategoryId=10>.

⁵⁴Paul McGeough, *Kill Khalid: Mossad's Failed Hit and the Rise of Hamas* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009).

ideological objections that would seem to preclude forgiveness of Israel,⁵⁵ Hamas cannot claim the representative status still claimed by the PLO. Neither can the PA, with a remit restricted to the administration of the indigenous population in the OPT, nor could a future Palestinian state. Mushtaq Khan has noted that for Palestinian “refugees and their descendants, there are legal questions as to whether their right of return, which is an individual right, can be signed away by the leader of a Palestinian state that would be based in the territories from which most refugees did not originate.”⁵⁶ In other words, a future president of independent Palestine might choose to forgive Israel, but would not represent the collective Palestinian nation, most of which remains in the diaspora. The unique standing of the PLO was echoed in a recent conversation with Executive Committee member Ahmad Qray, who in response to the question of the possibility of Palestinian political forgiveness of Israel said, “The body—this will have to be the PLO. It is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO has the right to decide yes or no, and to form a mechanism necessary to deal with this issue.”⁵⁷

Five key features emerge from the preceding narrative that point to a collective Palestinian agent:

1. There is a highly organized group, viz., the PLO, that is capable of making and enacting decisions.
2. The PLO takes itself to be representing and acting on behalf of the Palestinian people.
3. A considerable majority of Palestinians accept the PLO as their representative.
4. The mechanism through which the PLO decides and acts is responsive to input from the Palestinian populace, both in the Occupied Territory and in the diaspora.
5. The international community recognizes the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

Consequently, if the PLO were to meet the following conditions, then the Palestinians as a collective would have forgiven Israel:

- a. The PLO alters institutional structures that dispose Palestinians to resent Israel so that they no longer embody said disposition.

⁵⁵This is not to suggest that Hamas is entirely inflexible; leading figures, particularly in the OPT, have often displayed political pragmatism. See Khaled Hroub, “A New Hamas Through its New Documents,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35 (2000): 6-27.

⁵⁶Mushtaq H. Khan, “‘Security First’ and Its Implications for a Viable Palestinian State,” in Keating et al. (eds.), *Aid, Diplomacy, and Facts on the Ground*, PAGES??, p. 69.

⁵⁷Ahmad Qray, interview, Abu Dis, 27 May 2008.

- b. An authorized representative of the PLO says, “We forgive you” to Israel.
- c. A significant percentage of Palestinians approve of these actions.
- d. A significant percentage of Palestinians experience a reduction in resentment toward Israel.
- e. A significant percentage of Palestinians are able to extend a measure of goodwill toward Israel.

3. Should Palestinians Forgive Israel?

Thus far, we have clarified a number of basic conditions for the possibility of Palestinian forgiveness and have argued that the PLO could satisfy these conditions. We now turn our attention to the normative question: Is it permissible for the PLO to forgive Israel? What we offer is, at most, a partial answer to this question. We address what we consider the most compelling objections to Palestinian forgiveness. And we identify reasons that speak in favor of such forgiveness. However, we do not attempt to address all of the possible objections that might be raised. We do not discuss all of the conditions that someone might wish to see met prior to the offering of such forgiveness or weigh in on whether they are, strictly speaking, required or merely desirable.⁵⁸ And we do not canvass all of the possible factors that might speak in favor of forgiving. So the conclusion for which we shall argue will of necessity be more qualified than a simple “Yes” or “No.” Rather, it will take the form, “Palestinian forgiveness is not ruled out by considerations x, y, or z, and reasons a, b, and c commend it.”

Contrary to the position we shall advance, one might think the appropriate answer to the question of whether Palestinians should forgive Israel is a resounding “No!” One reason for offering such a response stems from the concern that, by forgiving Israel, the PLO would be usurping a role that does not properly belong to it. It is up to the individual victims of Israeli injustice to decide when or whether they wish to forgive Israel. It is not the PLO’s place to decide the matter for them.⁵⁹

⁵⁸We have addressed a number of these questions elsewhere. For example, on the question of whether repentance is a necessary precondition for forgiveness, see Glen Pettigrove, “Unapologetic Forgiveness,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (2004): 187-204. On the issue of whether it is permissible to forgive a wrongdoer before she has ceased doing wrong, see Glen Pettigrove, “Hume on Forgiveness and the Unforgivable,” *Utilitas* 19 (2007): 447-65.

⁵⁹Khan, “‘Security First’,” pp. 61-69. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson raise a similar worry in relation to the South African TRC: see “The Moral Foundations of Truth Commissions,” in Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (eds.), *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 22-44,

This objection depends upon a confusion regarding what is happening when a collective forgives. In a context like this one, there are multiple, overlapping layers of wrongs suffered. Through the very same act, person A may suffer several wrongs.⁶⁰ For example, by seizing A's house and business and refusing to allow A access to what has heretofore been his home, B wrongs A as an individual. By evicting A's children from their home and exposing them to undeserved distress, B wrongs A as a father (as well as wronging A's children, of course). If the seizure and eviction are motivated by an undeservedly low regard for or antipathy toward A's ethnic group, then the very same act wrongs A as a Palestinian. It is possible for A to forgive (or at least not resent) B for one of these wrongs but withhold forgiveness for another. For example, A may no longer resent B for deciding to seize A's land or for the bigotry that led her to choose A's land rather than someone else's, but he may still resent her callous indifference to the suffering she thereby inflicted upon A's children. And on the basis of the latter consideration, he may refuse to have any future dealings with B, even though absent that factor he would have been ready and willing both to forgive and to be reconciled with her.

It is also possible for a group to forgive wrongs that were suffered as a group, even though some members of the group do not forgive what they suffered as individuals. Consider, for example, the massacre of Palestinian laborers in Kafr Qasem:

The incident occurred on October 29, 1956, the first day of the Sinai Campaign, when three border policemen were ordered to shoot anyone found violating the curfew that had been imposed on Kafr Qasem. Pursuant of these orders, the soldiers opened fire on 47 laborers, including women and children, who were returning home from work unaware that a curfew had been imposed.⁶¹

In this case, the laborers were targeted not on account of their individual characteristics but on account of being residents of a Palestinian village. So when the soldiers opened fire, they were not merely showing insufficient regard for the lives of these particular persons, they were also showing insufficient regard for the lives of Palestinians in general. Thus, their action simultaneously wronged the laborers who were shot, the friends and family who were thereby deprived of loved ones, and Palestinians as a group who were treated with contempt by the curfew and the

at p. 31. See also Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, "Forgiveness: The Victim's Prerogative," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 21 (2002): 97-111.

⁶⁰See Nick Smith, *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 56 ff.

⁶¹Yulie Khromchenko and Yoav Stern, "Education Minister orders schools to commemorate Kafr Qasem massacre," *Haaretz*, 24 October 2006.

order to shoot violators thereof. In such a case, the collective might take Israel's recent acknowledgment of wrongdoing—evidenced in the Education Minister's instruction to commemorate the massacre in Israeli schools and President Peres's subsequent apology⁶²—as a reason to forgive the wrong that the collective has suffered in this act, even though the victims cannot forgive the wrongs they have suffered and their family members are unwilling to do so.

When the wrong is perpetrated by a collective agent, we can end up with a similar complexity with respect to who is forgiven for the act. A might forgive the individual functionary who acted on behalf of the collective, even though A refuses to forgive the collective, or vice versa. Thus, if the Palestinian collective forgave the Israeli collective for wrongs the latter collective has perpetrated against the former, it would still be an open question whether a particular Palestinian individual forgave a particular Israeli functionary for the wrongs she had suffered as an individual. In many contexts we do not discriminate between the various layers of wrongdoing when we resent or forgive an agent for what he has done to us. But we are capable of making such distinctions, and on some occasions we find it useful to do so.

Once we notice the multiple wrongs that may be perpetrated against multiple victims in the very same act, it becomes clear that collective forgiveness need not involve usurping the place of the victim. A collective may forgive for a wrong it suffered when one of its members was mistreated, without that implying that the individual member has forgiven the wrongdoer for a related wrong that she suffered as an individual through the very same action. When we recall the ways in which the dispositions of a collective are embodied in various institutional structures, and the modifications of these institutions that might be involved in collective forgiving, it becomes even more evident that the processes of individual and collective forgiveness, while related, remain distinct.

However, the spokesperson for a collective should proceed with caution if she is preparing to say "We forgive you" to B in a context where many of the individuals who make up the collective refuse to forgive B for a related wrong that they suffered as individuals through B's action. There are three reasons for such caution. First, she will need to make it clear which wrong is being forgiven, in order to avoid the appearance that she is usurping the place of individual victims. Second, as Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd point out, even if she is careful to avoid the first pitfall, she still runs the risk of disrespecting individual victims if she is willing to forgive B when they are not.⁶³ Unless she herself has

⁶²Tom Segev, "Apology in Kafr Qasem," *Haaretz*, 27 December 2007.

⁶³Govier and Verwoerd, "Forgiveness," p. 104.

been an individual victim as well, she may create the impression that she and others within the collective do not take seriously the wrongs the individual victims have suffered or the resentment to which it has given rise. Third, she will need to make sure that the communication of collective forgiveness does not create the false impression in B that he need no longer engage in actions aimed at repairing the individuals who were harmed by his wrongful actions. She needs to prevent “We forgive you” from being mistaken for “Don’t worry about it” or “All is forgiven.” Nevertheless, provided she is attentive to these potential misunderstandings and takes steps to avoid them, there is no reason she could not say on behalf of the collective, “We forgive you,” even though there are individuals within the collective who are not prepared to forgive related wrongs that they have suffered.

The second moral objection to Palestinian forgiveness begins from the thought that, given the mistreatment Palestinians have suffered at the hands of Israel—the suffering, dispossession, disenfranchisement, demoralization, and death—Israel deserves Palestinian resentment. It deserves treatment in kind. To forswear resentment and retaliation and to replace them with goodwill would be to treat Israel better than it deserves. If justice “consist[s] in people having what they deserve and not having what they do not deserve,”⁶⁴ then forgiving Israel would be unjust.⁶⁵

Such an interlocutor might well suggest that Palestinians should only forgive Israel when Israel returns what it unjustly took from Palestinians. Or she might set the bar even higher. In discussing interpersonal forgiveness, Richard Swinburne and Peter Haas both argue that forgiveness should be conditioned on the wrongdoer having made amends for her wrongdoing.⁶⁶ And one way of understanding “making amends” is that a wrongdoer has made amends “when the victim holds herself equally content with two states of the world: the first contains the offence together with the offender’s repentance, apology, reparation, and penance; the second contains neither.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴John Kekes, “Justice: A Conservative View,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 2 (2006): 88-108, p. 97.

⁶⁵So, for example, Jiwei Ci claims “injustice should not be forgiven but should whenever possible be punished in proportion to its seriousness.” Jiwei Ci, *The Two Faces of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 202. M. Mahdi Allam suggests something similar: “Actually, forgiveness is a form of injustice—injustice to oneself: only we have agreed to give it a pleasant name.” Allam, “The Concept of Forgiveness in the Qur’an,” p. 141.

⁶⁶Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 81-89; Peter J. Haas, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Jewish Memory after Auschwitz,” in Patterson and Roth (eds.), *After-Words*, chap. 1, pp. 6-8.

⁶⁷Hare, “Forgiveness,” p. 231.

If Palestinian forgiveness is conditional upon Israel making amends in this way, then it will never be appropriate. It will never be the case that Israel returns all of the territory it took from Palestinians. Were it to do so, it would cease to exist as a state. Further, it is difficult to imagine anything Israel could do that would make Palestinians prefer their repaired condition to one in which they had never been dispossessed, their relatives had never been killed, and the violence of the past 60 years had not occurred. It is precisely because these conditions cannot be met that forgiveness strikes many people as a key component in any long-term resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Let us, then, return to the presuppositions on which the preceding objection depends. The objection assumes that forgiveness must be subordinate to the standards of justice. It also accepts a particular conception of justice according to which justice is oriented to desert. There are good reasons for contesting each of these assumptions. But one need not do so in order to see that the conclusion that claims that forgiving Israel would be unjust does not follow from the premises.

To begin with, it is important to notice that before we can establish what is “deserved” we must address the question of “by whom?” It is clear that Palestinians did not deserve to be dispossessed in 1948, 1967, and so on. But it is also clear that many of the Israelis who now live in homes and on land that previously belonged to Palestinians do not deserve to be dispossessed. Generations of Israelis who were in no way involved in expropriating Palestinians from houses and land have built their lives around beliefs regarding their ownership of certain property, making decisions on that basis regarding how they will utilize, improve upon, invest, and exchange that property. As Jeremy Waldron notes, “Upsetting these expectations in the name of restitutive justice is bound to be costly and disruptive,” to people who may not deserve such disruption.⁶⁸ A measure that did dispossess them of current holdings would simply replace one set of undeserving sufferers with another.⁶⁹ Further, such a measure assumes that the distribution of property among Palestinians in 1948 was just. But that surely was not the case, no matter what theory of justice one endorses. Some families were economically advantaged and others disadvantaged independently of their merits, these dis-

⁶⁸Jeremy Waldron, “Superseding Historic Injustice,” *Ethics* 103 (1992): 4-28, p. 16. See also Cicero, *On Duties*, ed. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), II.81 ff.

⁶⁹Herbert C. Kelman indicates that this point is widely appreciated among Palestinians: see “The Role of National Identity in Conflict Resolution: Experiences from Israeli-Palestinian Problem-Solving Workshops,” in Richard D. Ashmore, Lee Jussim, and David Wilder (eds.), *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 8, p. 201.

parities of wealth were not what would have been endorsed by citizens entering into a social contract, and all of the economic holdings could be traced back to some previous unjust act of acquisition.

Second, thus far our considerations of what is deserved and by whom have focused on past and present persons and events. But an adequate assessment will also need to look at future persons.⁷⁰ And when we turn our attention to the future, the question of which current actions are most likely to lead to people enjoying the liberties, goods, and respect that they deserve takes on a different quality. Future justice may require setting aside some of our concerns with past injustice.⁷¹ The likelihood that fewer innocent victims will die, that future generations will enjoy economic stability, that future transgressions of the law will be duly prosecuted, and so on, will be significantly improved by the establishment of a law-governed Palestinian state that is fully independent of Israel and has treaties with Israel that can be backed up by international force if needed.⁷² And at least at this stage in the conflict, the odds of establishing and maintaining a stable Palestinian state would be considerably improved if there were a reduction in the collective resentment of Israel. Insisting on “rectifying” the past as a precondition for peaceful co-existence may very well lead to the unjustified sacrifice of both present and future justice.⁷³

Even after attention has been drawn to what present and future generations deserve and the role that forgiveness might play in promoting it, someone might still insist that Palestinian political forgiveness is unjust.⁷⁴ And there is a sense in which such a claim is correct. Such forgiveness would not pursue rectificatory justice with respect to historic

⁷⁰Note that we are not here adopting a consequentialist framework. We are not reducing justice to the promotion of future goods. Nor are we weighing up justice against other considerations and suggesting that justice should be sacrificed for the sake of some other good. To adopt such a stance would not be to reply to our imagined objector so much as simply to brush the objector aside. Rather, we are looking at competing considerations of justice: justice for A versus justice for B, distributive justice versus punitive justice, punitive justice at time t1 versus punitive justice at time t2, and so on. The point is that even if someone accepts a desert-based notion of justice, in a world like ours where not everyone can get everything they deserve, the most just option may involve forgiving people who do not, strictly speaking, deserve it.

⁷¹See Kent Greenawalt, “Amnesty’s Justice,” In Rotberg and Thompson (eds.), *Truth v. Justice*, pp. 189-210, at p. 192; Leif Wenar, “Reparations for the Future,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 37 (2006): 396-405; and Thomas Dohman, Armin Falk, David Huffman, and Uwe Sunde, “Homo Reciprocans: Survey Evidence on Behavioural Outcomes,” *The Economic Journal* 119 (2009): 592-612.

⁷²See Agha and Khalidi, *A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine*, pp. 115-16.

⁷³See Gutmann and Thompson, “The Moral Foundations of Truth Commissions,” p. 23.

⁷⁴See, for example, Greenawalt, “Amnesty’s Justice,” pp. 200 ff.

offense X. In that sense it is not just, that is, it is not a case of rectificatory justice. However, the term “unjust” tends to carry more weight than “is not a case of rectificatory justice.” Philippa Foot offers it as a paradigm case of a “conceptually verdictive” action description, viz., one that entails “a final ‘should’ or ‘should not’.”⁷⁵ If this is the meaning employed when it is claimed that Palestinian political forgiveness would be “unjust,” then the claim is false. Even if we restricted our appeal to the domain of rectificatory justice (and Digeser has argued quite compellingly that one need not),⁷⁶ the observations offered above suggest that a case can be made for the justice of political forgiveness, insofar as it promotes the establishment of a situation in which rectificatory justice will be more reliably enforced than it is at present. In an imperfect world, forgiveness may not only be compatible with a firm commitment to justice, it may even be a requirement of it.

Nevertheless, even if one does not insist on rectificatory justice, one might still think that an acknowledgment of the wrong that has been done and some attempt at making amends—however partial and symbolic—are important. If this thought is put forward as a claim about the moral obligations of wrongdoers, then it is unproblematic: wrongdoers are obliged to acknowledge their moral failings and to make amends, insofar as they are able.⁷⁷ If it is put forward as a psychological claim about the conditions that facilitate forgiveness, it is likewise unproblematic: it is easier to forgive those who have acknowledged their moral failings and are attempting to make amends. But neither of these claims entails a third proposition that is often associated with them, viz., that the acknowledgment of wrongdoing and an attempt to make amends must precede any offer of forgiveness. This last claim is deeply problematic, insofar as it ties the hands of the one wronged until the wrongdoer unties them by an act of contrition. To insist upon such a precondition for forgiveness would needlessly trap the one wronged in the role of the victim.⁷⁸

However, it is worth pointing out that, in the Palestinian situation, there is good reason to think that both of these conditions—acknowledgment of the wrong and a partial making of amends—either have been or soon could be met. Detailed acknowledgment of many of Israel’s past wrongs has emerged in the Israeli revisionist historiography of the past

⁷⁵Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 78.

⁷⁶Digeser, *Political Forgiveness*, pp. 36-63.

⁷⁷In this respect we agree with Michael Moore, “The Moral Worth of Retribution,” in Ferdinand Schoeman (ed.), *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 212-16; and Christopher Bennett, “Is Amnesty a Collective Act of Forgiveness?” *Contemporary Political Theory* 2 (2003): 67-76.

⁷⁸Wolfendale, “The Hardened Heart,” pp. 352-53; For an extended discussion of whether the wrongdoer’s acknowledgment of his wrong must precede forgiveness, see Pettigrove, “Unapologetic Forgiveness.”

twenty years.⁷⁹ Bar Ilan University political scientist Menachem Klein observes, “The academic argument is no longer about whether Israel created refugees in 1948, but about the extent to which this happened, the motives of those involved, and to what extent the phenomenon was centrally planned and controlled.”⁸⁰ The historical spadework has been done, much of the factual record has been clarified, and it has been acknowledged by many that much of what that record contains is morally objectionable. Acknowledgments of Israel’s wrongdoing appear at the grass-roots level in anti-occupation protest movements like the Women in Black.⁸¹ They are made by ex-government officials protesting the current administration’s treatment of Palestinians, such as the former head of Israel’s intelligence agency, Avraham Shalom, who, during the al-Aqsa intifada, said, “We must once and for all admit that there is another side, that it has feelings and that it is suffering, and that we are behaving disgracefully ... Yes, there is no other word for it: disgracefully.”⁸² And they have been made by government officials speaking formally on behalf of the state, such as Education Minister Yuli Tamir and President Shimon Peres on the Kafr Qasem massacre. So a number of the wrongs perpetrated by Israel in the course of the conflict have already been acknowledged by significant constituencies within Israel, and there is reason to expect more such acknowledgments in future.

One way in which Israel might begin to make amends, however partial, is by allowing refugees the right of return.⁸³ Michael Dumper observes: “As the conflicts that produce refugees are increasingly perceived to involve the deliberate expulsion of populations not belonging to the same ethnic group as the perpetrators of violence, return has come to be seen as a way of righting the wrong of such ‘ethnic cleansing’.”⁸⁴ A right of return in the Israeli-Palestinian situation is complicated both by the fact that Israel conceives of itself as a predominately Jewish state and by the length of time that has lapsed since the initial expulsion of the Pales-

⁷⁹For discussion of the Israeli historiographical controversy, see Benny Morris (ed.), *Making Israel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). While Morris tends to limit himself to examining the empirical details surrounding al-Nakba, the revisionist school in general is more willing to discuss the ethical implications.

⁸⁰Menachem Klein, *A Possible Peace between Israel and Palestine: An Insider’s Account of the Geneva Initiative*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). See also Uri Ram, “The Future of the Past in Israel: A Sociology of Knowledge Approach,” in Morris (ed.), *Making Israel*, pp. 202-30.

⁸¹Ayala Gabriel, “Grief and Rage: Collective Emotions in the Politics of Peace and the Politics of Gender in Israel,” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 16 (1992): 311-35.

⁸²Helena Cobban, “Shin Bet Ex-Chiefs Speak Out,” *Just World News*, 15 November 2003, <http://justworldnews.org/archives/000354.html>.

⁸³This right was asserted in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) on 11 December 1948.

⁸⁴Dumper, *Palestinian Refugee Repatriation*, p. 28.

tinian refugees. However, neither of these obstacles is insurmountable. Sadako Ogata, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has suggested that the “right to return to one’s homeland” need not be interpreted as a right to return to the street or neighborhood from which one originally came. Intervening developments may not permit this. Instead, “the right of return” should be construed as “the right to return to the country of origin.”⁸⁵ The latter condition could be met by allowing the greater proportion of returnees to settle in the OPT.

Nevertheless, one might worry that even this arrangement would run into difficulties. The West Bank and Gaza do not have sufficient resources to absorb the millions of Palestinians who could claim the right of return. However, once again, this fact is not as distressing as it might first appear. Dumper notes that, frequently, granting the right of return does not generate the enormous waves of migration that one might expect:

The right of return often appears to be the key issue for refugees—not necessarily a reality of return, but the right to do so at some stage should the individual or family wish to do so. In this sense, although highly political in character, the right of return may not always bring with it the practical difficulties that appear to be associated with the realisation of that right. Refugees might be looking more for symbolic than practical return.⁸⁶

And there is good reason to think the Palestinian situation is just such a case. Polls conducted in the OPT, Lebanon, and Jordan during 2003 found that just 10 percent prioritized return to what was now Israel, 31 percent would opt for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, 23 percent preferred territory to be exchanged with Israel and a land swap with Palestine, while 17 percent would prefer to stay where they were (other options made up the remainder).⁸⁷ The PLO itself has internalized the point: “Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right of return does not mean that all refugees will exercise that right. What is needed in addition to such recognition is the concept of choice.”⁸⁸ A major RAND Corporation study has suggested that it would be possible for a Palestinian state composed of Gaza and the West Bank to accommodate the number of refugees that are likely to exercise a right to return. The study proposed a concept called the Arc, an “innovative transportation system” traversing the OPT and connecting with key urban centers via transit boulevards, the latter flanked by mid-density housing (30,000 per km²). The Arc

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 46.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 36-37.

⁸⁷PSR Survey Research Unit, “Results of PSR Refugees’ Polls in the West Bank/Gaza Strip, Jordan and Lebanon on Refugees’ Preferences and Behaviour in a Palestinian-Israeli Permanent Refugee Agreement,” Press Release, 18 July 2003, <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2003/refugeesjune03.html>.

⁸⁸PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, “Camp David Peace Proposal of July 2000,” http://www.nad-plo.org/inner.php?view=facts_nego_cmp_ncampdavid1p.

would lend the new state an absorption capacity of around three million returnees.⁸⁹

4. Prospects for Palestinian Forgiveness?

After offering an account of collective forgiveness in section 1, we turned in sections 2 and 3 to address metaphysical and moral objections to collective Palestinian forgiveness of Israel. The arguments of these sections suggest that it is metaphysically possible for a Palestinian collective to forgive Israel and that several of the most pressing moral objections to such forgiveness can be answered. But, while it may be metaphysically possible for a collective Palestinian agent to forgive Israel, one might wonder whether it is possible in a more pragmatic sense. This is not the place to make predictions regarding the resolution of such a protracted conflict or to estimate the future prospects for good, neighborly relations between Israel and Palestine. Nor would we presume to suggest to Palestinians the conditions under which they should come to terms with Israel. However, we can say something about how issues central to negotiations in recent years might, if resolved, facilitate forgiveness. In the interview cited above, Ahmad Qray acknowledged that forgiveness would be a required element of a resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Following an agreement that met

the national rights of the Palestinian people, including a just, agreed, solution to the refugee problem, according to [UNGA] Resolution 194; recognition of Palestinian rights to self-determination, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the borders of 1967 ... I'm sure that this [forgiveness] will be one of the main issues of the final status negotiations ... an end of conflict, and it will include that.⁹⁰

The preceding discussion of the acknowledgment of wrongs and the right of return have already shed some light on the relationship between the peace negotiations and the prospects of collective forgiveness. We shall conclude by drawing attention to two further connections.

First, were negotiations to lead to the satisfactory resolution of key items from the Palestinian nationalist agenda, one might anticipate a change in the way some of the current Palestinian holidays and commemorative dates are observed. For example, Jerusalem Day and Prisoners' Day would seem to lose some of their rationale, or at least their explosive potential, were Israel to recognize East Jerusalem as the capital

⁸⁹Doug Suisman, Steven N. Simon, Glenn E. Robinson, C. Ross Anthony, and Michael Schoenbaum, *The Arc: A Formal Structure for a Palestinian State* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2007), p. 17.

⁹⁰Ahmad Qray, interview, Abu Dis, 27 May 2008.

of Palestine⁹¹ and release all political prisoners by way of a final settlement. One might expect similar alterations in the marking of Land Day, Independence Day, and the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Even Nakba Day might potentially evolve into something equivalent to Veterans Day in the US or Armistice Day in the UK: an occasion for sober commemoration certainly, but perhaps not radical mobilization. In other words, there are reasons to expect that the formation of a Palestinian state that included East Jerusalem would lead to changes in social structures—specifically, the celebration of particular holidays—that currently dispose Palestinian society to feel anger toward Israel and have occasioned violent confrontation between Palestinian civilians and Israeli soldiers.⁹²

Second, the RAND study conducted by Doug Suisman and associates points to a number of ways in which improved transportation between Gaza and the West Bank, in conjunction with broader conflict resolution, has the potential to spur economic, social, and political development. A superficial reading of the study might take it as an argument for the “economic peace” advocated by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, in which improved material conditions are supposed to give Palestinians an incentive to cooperate with Israel in lieu of political agreement. However, such a reading would miss an important component of the Arc that is central to an understanding of the relationship between peace negotiations and collective forgiveness. Netanyahu’s “economic peace” seems, at best, to draw on a narrow conception of Palestinians as *homo economicus*; at worst, it may be seen as “a slogan designed to give the appearance of positive movement while distracting from the real issues and the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians.”⁹³ A development like the Arc, by contrast, attends to deeper features of Palestinian social life that currently reinforce resentment of Israel but that could be altered in ways that might foster forgiveness.

The high-speed rail system that is at the center of the Arc’s design would (a) provide an improved infrastructure for the transportation of people and goods, (b) enhance Palestine’s ability to accommodate returning refugees, and (c) offer a visual anchor for the construction of a new sense of Palestinian identity that is primarily forward-looking rather than

⁹¹Israeli negotiators are considered to have broken several “taboos,” including discussion of Jerusalem, from the Camp David II summit (July 2000) onwards. Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, “Camp David: Tragedy of Errors,” *New York Review of Books* 48, 9 August 2001. See also Cecilia Albin, “Explaining Conflict Transformation: How Jerusalem became Negotiable,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18 (2005): 339-55.

⁹²For instance, in the prelude to the al-Aqsa intifada; see Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*, p. 251.

⁹³Zahi Khouri, “Think Again: Palestine,” *Foreign Policy*, 24 September 2009. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/24/think_again_palestine.

backward-looking. Following the land's "formal structure" determined by topography and rainfall, the Arc would constitute "a tangible symbol of Palestinian statehood."⁹⁴ A development like the Arc, while bringing crucial economic benefits, could also serve as a "transcendental representation" of Palestinian selfhood. "Through the mediation of representative signs ... members of a community conceive of their community as such; they are recognizable to one another, and they attract one another's love. These are the means by which a community attains coherence."⁹⁵ Up to this point, much of Palestinian identity has been built around the conflict with Israel. The central symbols of this identity have been the symbols of armed struggle. However, if negotiations made possible the development of a viable Palestinian state that included a state-of-the-art infrastructure, such development could provide an icon around which a new, shared sense of Palestinian selfhood could be built—one not defined by the struggle with Israel and thus one more conducive to reducing resentment and promoting goodwill. It could make possible what Nathan Brown has called the *resumption* of Palestine: "resuming Palestine as a political entity, resuming Palestine's Arab identity, and resuming normal politics."⁹⁶ It could help transform the Palestinian collective into an agent more disposed to forgive.⁹⁷

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⁹⁴Suisman et al., *The Arc*, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁵Oliver O'Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 31.

⁹⁶Nathan J. Brown, *Palestinian Politics after the Oslo Accords: Resuming Arab Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 6.

⁹⁷Israel and international policy-makers mindful of Palestinian collective emotions will need to commit to helping a Palestinian state pay for the construction of infrastructure with iconic potential. *The Arc* study notes comparable nation-building assistance in Bosnia and Kosovo, but anticipates greater need in Palestine (Suisman et al., *The Arc*, p. 91).