



## **Spirituality, Economic Interdependence and the One State Solution**

By Rabbi Jakov Weisz

The notion that groups have moral obligations towards each other as do individuals is a difficult for many peoples to fathom. This is particularly true when the group has a firm sense of its own identity. It is often very hard to hear the cry of the Other for those whose sense of self is linked to unique religious or cultural mission.

If one's group is seen as specially blessed or chosen by the Almighty how much should or may its members worry about the sufferings of other tribes of men?

It is this dilemma which haunts any discussion of the Palestinian - Israeli conflict which speaks in terms of one unitary state. Obviously, there are many other obstacles to a peace which would unite both peoples. But, one can't escape the fear that given the current, clear economic superiority of the Jewish inhabitants of the Holy Land the beneficiaries of any merger would be the Palestinians. We are, of course, assuming that the various government benefits given at present to citizens of Israel would, in a unitary state be given to both peoples. This prospect might certainly be a daunting one for most Israeli Jews.

But beyond the transference of economic well being that One State would entail, it would also require both peoples to say openly to each other, "We feel that you have deeply wounded us over the past 60 or 100 years. Yet, we are willing to look

to the future and not to the past. We are willing in order to end the pain of both our peoples to look to the future."

This clearly seems at present to be a utopian perspective. The wounds on both sides are just too deep.

But this time of year is a period of introspection for world Jewry and I offer the following ideas for communal introspection for my own people and to our Palestinians friends.

First, the concepts of charity and peace are not very difficult to implement when we must exercise them to our own. There the natural human instinct takes over. We are kind to family and friends and co-religionists because they are an extension of ourselves.

It is when we are called upon to show kindness to strangers and make peace with enemies that problems begin. So much within us rebels against these callings.

But it is precisely when so challenged that we must turn our ear to the still and holy voice within that gently nudges us in the direction of opening our hearts to the other with care and forgiveness just as the Almighty does to us.

Second, Israeli itself is speeding to its own economic meltdown. Many of its most rapidly growing constituencies are its most impoverished. I refer to the ultra-Orthodox, the Sephardim, and the religious Zionist settlers.

It is difficult to fathom how Israel can survive the enormous economic drain on its taxpayers by continuing to support these groups, especially when the nation's military budget is astronomical and continues to grow.

Thus, two undeniable givens emerge. The Israeli state must get beyond its vast military expenditures and it must accept that its current level of economic plenty is coming to an end.

A means to alleviate the former is the one sane solution. It offers the hope of wiping out almost all Israeli and, for that matter, Palestinian spending on fighting and killing. But it also plunges both peoples into the challenge of creating a sustainable economy. It will be an economy of less consumerism and spending, an economy of limits and restraint. Into that picture will step the Palestinian people long schooled in living with less. They may have much to offer in providing alternatives to the current advanced industrial and largely urban lifestyle.

Plus, the moral growth that each people's helping the other will bring to both is inestimable.

A pipe dream? Yes, it certainly looks that way today. But, with the Almighty's help all things are possible.

Economic interdependence amongst different peoples and former enemies may yet allow Jews and Palestinians to show the world a model of empathy and concern that may inspire other peoples to scale the same heights. Im yirtzeh hashem, inshallah, G-d willing.

Thank you.