

# **HEALING THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM**

## **A Political Psychology Approach to Jewish-Christian-Muslim Reconciliation**

**Keynote Address by  
Joseph V. Montville**

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**Dedicated to the Memory of Dan Bar-On**

### **On Dan Bar-On**

Until the very end of his life last year, Dan Bar-On--and here I embrace the Jewish tradition, Dan Bar-On of blessed memory--was at work applying the knowledge and insight he had gained as a professor at Ben Gurion University and a clinician working with Holocaust survivors and the children of Nazi perpetrators. But I knew him most directly as a psychologist working to strengthen the close personal alliances between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Christian and Muslim high school teachers who had created the dual-narrative high school text book. He and his Palestinian partner and brother, Bethlehem University professor of education, Sami Adwan, had been laboring for seven years to provide an environment for each group to write its national story from its own perspective. The idea was for Israeli and Palestinian high school teachers to pay each other and their people the honor of recognizing that each has a story and a set of aspirations in the Holy Land and a justified desire for mutual recognition, acceptance and respect. As we meet today in Dublin the teachers under the auspices of the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) organization that Dan and Sami co-founded are in Hamburg for the final consultation before the textbook is released in Arabic, Hebrew and English.

The teachers have been doing their part to promote healing in the family of Abraham, and I have had the honor and privilege to participate with them on the project for several years. This is what could be called a portion of the "professional contribution to political psychology," that the late Nevitt Sanford embodied in his own life and in recognition of which ISPP created the Nevitt Sanford Award when the society came into being. Dan,

Sami, Nevitt and I were/are part of a body of people who are committed to solving social and human problems. We have wanted to make things better. We have been and are driven people. And political psychology has been not only our instrument of research but also our guidance for prescription. I will briefly explain how I came into this activity.

### **Some Biography**

I discovered depth psychology through the personal experience of a close family member's psychoanalysis after returning to Washington from diplomatic assignments in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Morocco between 1965 and 1973. My family and I had experienced the Six Day Israeli-Arab war that started for us the morning of June 5, 1967, with a large and violent mob attack on the American consulate in Basra. No one was hurt but the imprint of terror affected our small group of three wives, three husbands and two little girls for many months thereafter. Foreign Service began to lose some of its romantic allure for us.

Transferring to Beirut for eighteen months of intensive Arabic language training, the environment was tense politically, but we were in no noticeable personal danger. However, during this period Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were both assassinated back home. The many Lebanese people mourned these losses with us. A shop across from the American Embassy where the language school was housed erected a large bill board with the pictures of the martyred John F. and Bobby Kennedy and Reverend King. (That was the same embassy that was destroyed by a terrorist truck bomb in 1983 with great loss of American and Lebanese life.)

From Beirut, we transferred to Libya in February, 1969, where the doddering, pro-Western King Idriss reigned, but not for long. On September 1, 1969, then lieutenant—soon to be colonel--Muammar Qadhafi overthrew the monarchy and established a revolutionary Arab republic. Two years later we moved to Rabat, Morocco. Seven days after our arrival came the first coup attempt against King Hassan II. Much gunfire in the city as the Berber generals behind the plot were rounded up and put away. The second—also unsuccessful—coup attempt against Hassan came sixteen months later. Rebel Moroccan Air Force fighter pilots, who had, incidentally, been trained by Americans instructors, tried to shoot down the king's Boeing 727 returning from Bordeaux. Aircraft streaked at low levels past our balcony where our British houseguests watched them while sipping gin and tonics on the way to strafe the palace compound. But the revolt—organized by another Berber general--collapsed. One of the rebel pilots had rammed the 727 with his American-built F-16, but it would not go down. Boeing officials later came to Morocco to brag about their sturdy airliner. Hassan was to die of natural causes in his sleep several years later.

I don't want to burden this audience with autobiographical excess, but this background seems relevant to explain how a career Foreign Service officer came to be a founding member of the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP). After returning to Washington in 1973, I joined the bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian affairs in the State Department and tracked bilateral relations with Morocco and then regional affairs.

But my attention was constantly drawn to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the enduring frustration of traditional approaches to the diplomacy of peace negotiations. When I was made chief of the Near East division of the State Department's bureau of intelligence and research my involvement in U.S. Middle East policy intensified. Every day new reports of violence and destruction came across our desks. And there were personal tragedies suffered as we absorbed news of Foreign Service colleagues killed in individual terrorist attacks or mass bombings. My working environment was pathological. Death and destruction were persistent themes.

My colleagues at State were aware of my interest in the psychological aspects of foreign policy, and I was told of an Institute for Psychiatry and Foreign Affairs housed in the Watergate complex down the road from the Department. There, through its psychiatrist-founder, William D. Davidson, I came to meet members of the committee on psychiatry and foreign affairs of the American Psychiatric Association. Among the most prominent members of the APA committee were Vamik D. Volkan and John E. Mack, two physician psychoanalysts who one day would become presidents of ISPP. Inspired by the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord negotiated with the help of the Carter administration, our APA committee—I moonlighted as an unpaid consultant with the approval of my supervisors—organized six major five-day workshops which brought together Israeli and Egyptian former cabinet members, military and intelligence officers, diplomats, academics and journalists but importantly also psychiatrists from both countries. This was the beginning of a process I came to call “Track Two Diplomacy.” We met twice in Switzerland, twice in the U.S., and once each in Austria and in Alexandria, Egypt. At the third meeting, we added Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. We aimed to help give intellectual and emotional support to the new Israeli-Egyptian new peace treaty, especially after Egyptian President Sadat had said that 70% of the problems between Israel and the Arabs were psychological.

### **A Political Psychology Approach**

Out of the APA effort, which lasted until 1985, emerged a theory of the psychodynamics of ethnic and sectarian conflict and also some ideas about the necessary steps of therapeutic interventions. The psychiatrists focused on the concepts of dehumanization, the intergenerational transmission of historical grievance and the psychology of victimhood. Our founder of ISPP, the late Jeanne Knutson, had contributed mightily to our understanding of victimhood psychology in her own active interventions in the Northern Ireland conflict and in American domestic prison conflicts among others. I became a close friend and confidant of hers through almost daily, long telephone calls between Palo Alto and Washington, DC, and we reinforced each others energies and fantasies as psycho-dynamically oriented peacemakers.

I will pause here to tell a little story for the ISPP historical record. During the Iranian hostage crisis after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Jeanne was in Washington, and I brought her into the State Department's operations center on the Seventh Floor, the power floor, where there was twenty-four hour monitoring of the situation in Teheran. We had one of the revolutionary hostage takers on the phone, and Jeanne—never a

shrinking violet--asked the people in charge at the operations center for permission to talk to him which they agreed before thinking to ask authority from their bosses. At the end of the call, Jeanne said she had to fly to Iran and start using her negotiating skills with the captors. She thought she could resolve this mess. This caused a minor sensation to the extent that the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the late David Newsom, convened a meeting on a Saturday morning, including me—the one what brung her so to speak—to rule that the Department of State would in no way permit Jeanne Knutson to go to Teheran to negotiate with the captors. Unstated but clear also was that we (I) have to keep her out of the operations center. The Americans remained prisoners in Iran for 444 days, freed only on January 20, 1981, as a present to the new American president, Ronald Reagan. I think that in retrospect, the captives would have voted to give Jeanne a try.

But back to the theory-building generated by the APA committee's real world involvement in the Israeli-Egyptian-Palestinian dialogue workshops and Jeanne Knutson's prodigious experience in dealing with ethnic groups in violent conflict and with putative terrorists. We came to believe that effective, psychologically sensitive facilitation of dialogue between representatives of groups in conflict required that we listen carefully to the stories and especially the fears and anxieties of peoples in seemingly intractable political and religious conflicts. We came to understand that we must show respect for their humanity and their cultural identity, including religious identity, and to express our concern for their well-being and their children's well-being and future. Or more simply, that we cared about them.

If the third party mediation of the dialogue is carried out in a safe environment, preferably away from the zone of conflict, and with psychological--indeed, clinical--sensitivity, with the necessary time and long-term commitment, it almost always begins a rehumanization process between the adversaries and the generation of what former ISPP president Herb Kelman has called working trust among them. In the almost thirty-five years Kelman, Mack, Volkan, Knutson and many other ISPP members and I did dialogue or problem-solving workshops, we consistently proved that with the careful selection of emotionally secure and intellectually capable representatives of the adversary groups, we could help develop trusting personal relationships and, indeed, even negotiate unofficial peace agreements among ourselves. What we could not and did not do was extend our psychological progress in small groups to public opinion at large in the communities affected by the conflict.

There is a need to develop a strategy for communicating to public opinion in conflicted societies a recognition of grievances of all parties, of historic losses, of the loss of faith in the concept of justice, and of the fear that enemies are just waiting for another chance to hurt them—the key, sustaining element of victimhood psychology. The cliché is true—there can be no peace without justice, although what constitutes justice is a major negotiating project itself.

The parties to any ethnic or religious traumatic conflict need to be helped to acknowledge wrong-doing by their people and to accept moral responsibility for their hurtful behavior

and that of their forebears. For it is only when a sense of justice achieved begins to emerge among victimized peoples that movement toward reconciliation and genuine peace become possible. There is a strong link between justice and peace that is documented in the study of human psychology but which has rarely been integrated into traditional diplomacy and peace processes. There is an enduring tendency toward what government foreign policy specialists believe is hard-headed realism, flavored with a measure of cynicism and exercise of power even by would-be mediators. In other words, traditional *realpolitik*.

As I have written elsewhere, there is a new, much more realistic *realpolitik*, based on new knowledge acquired through the synthesis of political analysis and the scientific study of human behavior in the enriched discipline of political psychology. (See “Reconciliation as *Realpolitik*,” in the Theory section on Web site [abrahamicfamilyreunion.org](http://abrahamicfamilyreunion.org).) There is ample evidence of the dominance in universal human needs certainly for food, shelter, and physical safety, but also for recognition, acceptance and respect, what I have called the iron laws of human nature. There are incontestable material and structural factors in political conflicts, but the most persistent evidence of the sources of continual antagonism and inclination toward violence comes from wounds to the self-concept or self-esteem of groups and nations. The new *realpolitik* recognizes that genuine, sustainable peacemaking occurs only when the circumstances that caused a people’s sense of victimhood are faced squarely, honestly and with whatever courage is required.

Many if not most foreign policy specialists and professors of political science and international relations find the idea that they need to learn something about the psychodynamics of the conflict they are dealing with unwelcome or intimidating. And so it was a special pleasure to find support for our psychological theory from someone who is neither a psychologist nor a policy-maker. The distinguished South African jurist, Richard Goldstone, gave a remarkable talk at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, in 1997. Goldstone had been a justice on the South African Constitutional Court appointed by President Nelson Mandela, and a prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal at The Hague which dealt with war crimes in Rwanda and Bosnia. Significantly, he was appointed special representative of the UN Secretary General to investigate potential war crimes in the Gaza war last December and January.

Justice Goldstone’s speech was entitled, “Healing Wounded People.” It is worth quoting at some length:

“The most important aspect of justice is healing wounded people. I make this point because justice is infrequently looked at as a form of healing—a form of therapy for victims who cannot really begin their healing process until there has been some public acknowledgement of what has befallen them. How one deals with the past, with a series of egregious human rights violations, is a problem that has come to the fore since the end of World War II. How is it that there has been more genocide since World War II than before? How do we explain that people seem not to have learned the lessons of history? ...

One thing that I have learned in my travels in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and South Africa is that where there have been egregious human rights violations which have gone unaccounted for, where there has been no justice, where the victims have not received any acknowledgment, where they have been forgotten, where there has been national amnesia, the effect is a cancer in the society and is the reason that explains the [recurrent] spiral of violence...”

### **About the Family of Abraham**

From this point on, I will concentrate on the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and the third party role, primarily, of the United States, which, in my conception makes this an Abrahamic conflict among Jews, Muslims, and Christians. The Jewish-Christian relationship is suffused with a history of distrust, violence, episodic and then near apocalyptic genocide. This pathological relationship started in the first century C.E. and persists until today. The Muslim-Jewish antipathy is a very modern phenomenon with incidents of violence beginning in the 1920's between Arabs of Palestine and the growing numbers of Jewish immigrants as the European Zionist movement gained steam. After Israel was created in 1948 and a vigorous effort to “in-gather” the Jews from Arab and Muslim lands was launched by David Ben-Gurion, an accumulation of bitter experience with the 1956 Suez War, the 1967 Six Day War, and the 1973 Yom Kippur/Ramadan War as exclamations points, rounded off by the two invasions of Lebanon in 1983 and 2006, and the recent Gaza tragedy, one has the sense that Muslim-Jewish enmity is organic and deeply rooted in history. The use by Palestinians and other Arabs of terror against civilian Israelis, especially in the second intifada of 2000 has tended to reinforce this impression in public opinion. However, this modern myth of innate Jewish-Muslim hatred is false, as a small army of Jewish and Christian historians has attested over the decades and centuries. Tragically, this myth has been supported by individuals and organizations who think they are protecting Israel's chances of survival by nurturing permanent enmity between the world's fifteen million Jews and 1.3 billion Muslims.

For its part, the Christian-Muslim historic dyadic relationship has been one of Christian insult and disdain for Islam, launched dramatically by Pope Urban II, in 1095 C.E. when he called for the first Crusade, and slowly cumulative humiliation at being put down by European--that is Christian--imperialism pushing back the Ottoman Empire and commenced in the modern era by Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of the Nile Delta in 1798. In 17<sup>th</sup> century Britain and the American colonies, Reform Christians quite happily linked the Pope in Rome and what they called the “great imposter Mahomet” as the Antichrist twins. In modern America, militant evangelical preachers have exonerated the Pope, but continued the insults to the Prophet and Islam.

At this point, I would like to focus in on the state of current behaviors and attitudes in the Abrahamic relationship. Specifically some of the less obvious conflicts within the overarching Arab-Israeli conflict that need to be exposed and addressed, and discuss some of the political-psychological approaches I have been pursuing in efforts to help heal the family of Abraham. Please keep in mind that our theoretical analytical approach is based on the belief that offense against and traumatic attacks on the sense of good self,

or worth of a people—an identity group--produces and automatic reaction of counter-aggression. If the attacker is overpowering, the reactive, defensive aggression may be displaced against a weaker group or internalized in a form of self-destructive behavior—the case of native Americans repressed by the dominant white culture is an example that ISPP founder Erik Erikson wrote about in *Childhood and Society*. Psychiatrist Gregory Rochlin elaborated this theory in *Man's Aggression: The Defense of the Self*. I recently heard someone say that identity is composed of cumulative memory. This strikes me as not only apt but as a definition of our task of forensic scholarship to uncover those memories that are most hurtful to groups and nations.

I have a close friend and colleague named Nissim Rejwan, an 83 year old Iraqi Jew who immigrated to Israel from Baghdad in 1951. He is a journalist and historian who had close relationships with Iraqi Muslims, Christians and Jews of a literary bent. Like almost all the Jews who went to Israel from Arab or Muslim majority countries from 1950 on, Nissim's experience was a major culture shock starting with the practice of the Orientals or Sephardic Jews being dusted with DDT before being permitted to get off the plane in Tel Aviv. They were then placed in quite primitive transition camps while waiting to be slowly integrated into the Israeli economy and society. Most were settled in frontier towns close to neighboring Arab countries. Sderot, the town continually targeted by Qassam rockets from close-by Gaza, is one such place the Israeli authorities settled Moroccan Jews, for example..

Nissim's story is one of a continuous struggle to win the respect of his Ashkenazi Israeli supervisors. He was and is a gifted essayist and he had made a living in Baghdad writing book and film reviews for The Iraq Times. When he worked in Israel for the Jerusalem Post, he wrote reviews of new books from England. One time, a vexed Ashkenazi editor demanded to know why "that Egyptian Communist" was reviewing European books. He said Rejwan should stick to Arabic publications. (The University of Texas Press has published three of a four volume set of his autobiographical memoirs and currently holds the manuscript of the fourth.)

In 1997, Nissim won the (American) National Jewish Book Award for his historical monograph, *Israel's Place in the Middle East: A Pluralist Perspective*. The award citation said, "In a very engaging manner, Rejwan points out the error of those who think that Jews and Arabs stand in opposition representing two clashing cultures, mentalities and temperaments. From the standpoint of history, religions, and ethnicity, Israel is an integral part of the Middle East." This was a remarkably insightful and broad-minded perspective from what had to be a mostly if not entirely Ashkenazi jury of Americans, given the dogged resistance of the Israeli political class to such an idea. Nissim had tried to promote the idea that Israel could strengthen its roots and therefore security in the Middle East if it accepted the reality psychologically that it was in and historically of the Middle East. And he believed it would help a great deal if the Ashkenazi elite recruited the Jews from Arab and Muslim countries to facilitate the engagement with the Arab world. Alas, it was not to be and has not been even to the present period.

The prevailing attitude was reflected by David Ben Gurion who said in a *Look* magazine interview in 1965, "[Jews] from Morocco have no education. Their customs are those of Arabs. They love their wives, but they beat them... Maybe in the third generation something will appear in Oriental Jews that is a little different." And Golda Meir, then prime minister, told a meeting of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain in 1964, "We in Israel need immigrants from countries with a high standard, because the question of our future social structure is worrying us. Shall we

be able to elevate these immigrants up to a suitable level of civilization? If the present state of affairs continues, there will be a dangerous clash between Ashkenazim, who will constitute the elite, and the Oriental communities of Israel... ”

I am convinced that Nissim Rejwan was on the right track politically, culturally and psychologically. And I am further convinced that the Palestinians and other Arabs are fully aware of the dominant Israeli political culture’s passionate commitment to its “European” identity and the many levels of superiority that attitude communicates to the Middle Eastern peoples and cultures. This is one of the difficult and extremely important sub-conflicts I have referred to. It needs to be addressed and political psychology is an essential tool in doing so.

There is at least the beginning of an explanation of vigorous, Zionist Eurocentrism in a remarkable essay by Jacqueline Rose, a keen student of psychoanalysis who teaches literature at Queen Mary, University of London. It is called “The Zionist Imagination,” and it appeared in *The Nation*, a venerable American weekly, on June 8, 2006. It is a portrait of the mind of Vladimir Jabotinsky, a literary writer, and the founder of militant Revisionist Zionism. He is considered the philosopher of the Jewish radical right. Jabotinsky joins Theodore Herzl and David Ben Gurion in the triumvirate of Zionist founding history.

In, 1935, Jabotinsky created the New Zionist Organization, a structure of violent activism. The same year, he completed his last novel, *Pyatero*, or *The Five*. It is a story of the tragic fall of a financially successful, well-educated Jewish family, the Milgroms, as assimilated to Russian society and culture as Jews could be in Odessa. Thus Jabotinsky simultaneously declares his militant Zionism and mourns the loss of a life in Russian he seems to have always hoped to have. Jacqueline Rose writes,

“...it is arguable whether the demise of the Milgroms in *The Five* can be traced to their betrayal of their Jewish identity and spiritual legacy, or whether Zionism itself—or rather Jabotinsky’s Zionism—arose at least partially not just out of the desire to be free of an increasingly violent anti-Semitism but paradoxically also from a longing to leave the Jewish legacy and world behind. Better get out, if a family as beautiful and talented as the Milgroms—carrying the forlorn hope for the Jews of civilized European life—cannot survive. The novel does not judge; it laments. Seen in these terms, Jabotinsky’s Odessa is less a prelude to Zion than its rival... The city rises up at a counter-utopia to his own chosen [militant Zionist] identity, a lost paradise rather than a mistake. This gives an added dimension,,to the Zionist fantasy of creating an outpost of Western civilization in the East. It was because the Jews could not fulfill the true dream—to assimilate in Europe—that they were so determined to travel as Europeans to Palestine.”

I find Rose’s analysis persuasive at least as a kind of hypothesis psychoanalytically oriented literary critics love. It offers a basis for a discreet, sustained dialogue among Israeli Jews and Palestinians and other Arabs for discovering the roots of the anti-Orientalism of the Israeli leadership elite which ironically sometimes selectively includes civilian and military officials of Sephardic origin. From the standpoint of my own experience in dialogue workshops with representatives of ethnic and religious groups in conflict, it is an essential, non-negotiable task for all the parties to believe or come to believe--and to communicate this belief--in the dignity and respect of their adversaries. The need for recognition, acceptance, and respect, in my conception of the iron laws of human nature, is shared by all individuals, tribes and nations. The absence of these social values inevitably leads to intergroup conflict and very often, even at some point, to conflict and violence.

But there is also more insight in Roses's *Nation* essay into the place of violence in Israeli existential security policy. She discusses Jabotinsky's introduction to an English translation of a poem in Hebrew by Chaim Nahman Bialik, whom with Theodore Herzl he called the two founders of Zionism. The poem was Bialik's response to the bloody Kishinev pogrom in Moldavia, in 1903, in which 60 Jews were murdered and more than 300 wounded. The czarist police took three days to intervene to end the slaughter which they are believed to have played a major role in provoking. Assessing Jabotinsky's introduction to Bialik's poem, the Columbia University historian, Michael Stanislawski, a specialist in Jewish history and culture in turn of the century czarist Russia, has written, "Bialik revolts, and becomes a singer of triumphant, invincible, rebellious Manhood, of the arm that wields the sword, of muscles of granite and sinews of steel .The main lesson of the pogrom was shame."

Rose then continues saying, "For Jabotinsky...as for many Zionists, militancy was the answer not only to [European] persecution and injustice but also to humiliation. It is a recurrent theme throughout Zionist writing and, I believe, the key to much of Zionism's own ruthlessness toward the Palestinians, that persecution of the Jews was experienced as moral disgrace. What is short-circuited in this logic is grief. 'I will harden My heart,' God addresses his 'mournful and slinking' followers in Bialik's poem. 'I will not let thee weep!' 'Thy tear, son of man, remain unshed!/Build thou about it, with thy deadly hate/Thy fury and thy rage, unuttered.' Rose concludes that "Bialik has laid on the Jewish people an injunction from which the new nation will not recover—redemption of the people on condition of an inability to mourn."

### **A Political Psychology Approach to Jewish-Christian-Muslim Reconciliation**

I cannot overemphasize the importance of this observation by Jacqueline Rose. It is one of the core principles of dynamically oriented conflict analysis and resolution theory that in apparently intractable ethnic and sectarian conflicts the antagonists, very often both sides of the fight, are suffering from the inability to mourn their traumatic losses. They are in the words of my close friend and collaborator, Vamik Volkan, in a state of suspended mourning. But since mourning, Volkan asserts, is an involuntary and obligatory process for all humans, living with uncompleted mourning leads to dysfunctional and usually destructive behavior. (I have written a book chapter on the subject entitled "Complicated Mourning and Mobilization for Nationalism," which is in the Theory section of the Web site, [abrahamicfamilyreunion.org](http://abrahamicfamilyreunion.org).)

And so Jacqueline Rose is one of the most exciting discoveries for me in recent years. But she has under-analyzed, as almost all Ashkenazi intellectuals do, the eight hundred ton gorilla in the picture. The enormity of the debt European Christendom has incurred from about the 2nd century C.E. on toward the Jewish people who were unlucky enough to live under Christian rule. From my psycho-political perspective all roads in this tragedy lead to Rome, Constantinople, Canterbury and Geneva. Christians—I am one of them—and European Jews need to walk systematically through our shared, miserable history. Christians need to acknowledge the unspeakable.

This is much easier said than done. It is scary for Jews and deeply depressing. Two years ago, I showed a DVD of James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword*, a ninety-minute documentary film digest of his monumental history of the same name on Christendom's structured hostility toward the Jews of Europe in Jerusalem at the Shalom Hartman Institute. The film's impact was powerful and devastating. After the showing, I explained to a very senior rabbi that my ultimate personal goal was for Jews be loved and feel loved by Christians and all the other nations. He was silent for a minute, and then he said with emphasis, "All we want is to be left alone." A rabbi in Los

Angeles with whom I work very closely on Abrahamic issues has advised me not to show *Constantine's Sword to Jews*.

There is no sensitive third party mediator for this job. Christians, if we are aware at all of our oppressive history—it is not taught in our schools except for specific lessons on the Holocaust. Are generally clueless. Despite the work of Vatican II 1963-65, random surveys indicate many Christians still believe the Jews crucified Jesus Christ. *Nostra Aetate*, issued by Pope Paul VI, in 1966, absolved the Jews of the Christ killer charge, and removed the condemnatory language from the Good Friday liturgy, but the document was approved by the Vatican II Council only in a very close vote. No where has the Church as an institution done a critical, retrospective self-analysis of its complicity in the centuries old campaign against European Jewry. John Paul II came close in a genuinely heartfelt effort to express remorse for the cruelty of some Christians toward the Jewish people. But he stopped short of acknowledging institutional moral responsibility of the Church. It is a matter of the asymmetry of power. There is historically little incentive for the winners in a power contest to do critical retrospective, self-analysis. To ask, “Where did we go wrong?” Most simply, we did not. We won. Yet from the political-psychological point of view, this retrospective analysis is a critical, moral imperative.

I will close with a brief description of some of the activities being pursued in my current project called *Toward the Abrahamic Family Reunion*. On the issue of vastly raising Christian consciousness of our moral debt, I have been working closely with the Boston Theological Institute (BTI), a coalition of nine Christian seminaries, divinity schools and religious studies departments in the greater Boston area to introduce and disseminate the idea of acknowledgment and contrition to Christian education. At my suggestion, BTI introduced a course this year called “Toward an Abrahamic Family Reunion,” being co-taught by a Presbyterian minister, a Catholic priest, a rabbi and a leader of the Islamic Society of New England at Boston College, America’s premier Jesuit institution. BTI has also convened and is planning a series of conferences on the theme of religious pluralism and given me keynoting opportunities. (My address on the history of Christian violence to a BTI conference at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA last February is in the Theory section of [abrahamicfamilyreunion.org](http://abrahamicfamilyreunion.org))

Further afield, I have sent the BTI course syllabus to the president of the Graduate Theological Union at the University of California at Berkeley with whom I have met twice. And we are now working with the Washington Theological Consortium (WTC) of eighteen members and affiliates—including the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences. I was a public member of the WTC for six years. BTI is also working closely with the Association of Theological Schools of 250 institutions in the United States and Canada with 79,000 students. Our plan is to get our approach to healing history disseminated throughout this broad teaching network.

On the Muslim side, our approach is also cognitive in working to recover the memory of an impressive history of Muslim-Jewish symbiosis in the medieval Mediterranean. The collaborative creation of new knowledge based on the retrieval of ancient Greek and Indian learning in medicine, pharmacy, philosophy, mathematics and other sciences—with major value added by Jewish and Muslim scholars in Al-Andalus and elsewhere laid the basis for the Renaissance in Christian Europe. There is also a documented history of Muslim respect for and symbiosis with Jewish teaching and customs. The Qur’an reveres most of the Jewish prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and the Muslim rulers in Iraq gave special recognition to the head of the Jewish exilic community in Iraq. He was honored as a direct descendent of the Prophet David.

I do not suggest that this approach to recovering the positive history of the Jewish-Muslim relationship in history is an easy sell. Four weeks ago I prepared a paper along these line for an

interfaith conference sponsored by Al-Azhar University in Cairo—the Vatican of Sunni Islam. While I was told that my paper will be published in the conference proceedings, I was not put on the program to present it to the plenary. My colleagues—including two Jews and some savvy Muslims—judged that there was too much residual anger at Israel for the Gaza war for the audience to hear about the good times of the Jewish-Muslim past. But we will continue to fight on this front also.

I will conclude with sharing some information I just received yesterday from two citizen organizations which are partners in the Abrahamic Family Reunion project (AFR). One is Abraham's Vision (AV) in San Francisco, a conflict transformation project for Jewish-American and Palestinian-American high school students to confront their history and squarely deal with their emotions is carefully facilitated dialogue. Another AV program brings together Israeli Jews and Palestinians from the West Bank and American Jews and Palestinian to deal with the Middle East conflict and work together over a ten-month period. The co-directors of Abraham's Vision, an American Jew and a Palestinian Muslim woman from Hebron, have written to me:

The way the AFR has introduced the concept of the “psycho-political” has been very helpful to our work and adds an important layer to the discussion—bridging both individual and collective psychologies and political realities/motives. This particular term (i.e. “psycho-political”) represents an idea that has been at the core of AV's pedagogy since its inception. However, now that we have learned about this additional way to frame our work, new intellectual avenues have opened in unanticipated ways.

Another organization, NewGround, of Los Angeles is the product of the Progressive Jewish Alliance and the Muslim Public affairs Council. It is also co-chaired by a Jew and a Muslim, two young women, who have adapted some of the structure of Abraham's Vision in their dialogue and community service work with young Jewish and Muslim professionals in southern California. And I must confess that they gladdened my heart when they wrote that there is a clear alignment between AFR theories and NewGround. They said that they are adapting insights from a chapter I wrote for a collection entitled *The Crescent and the Couch: Cross-Currents Between Islam and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Salman Akhtar, a psychoanalyst based at Jefferson College in Philadelphia.

The two young women, Malka Fenyvesi and Aziz Hassan, said that they have adapted the following themes from the chapter for use with their participants. “Intimate historical relationship” between Jews and Muslims; similarities in the religious texts of the three religions encourage the idea that “Jews, Christians and Muslims were all part of a monotheistic family that worshipped the one God” They also wrote that “NewGround tries to build an interfaith community which is not unlike the ideas of Muhammad which not only espouse that there is a common ‘divine scripture’ but also that the three faiths together ‘formed one united Ummah [or community]” They write also. “At one point, ‘Jews and Muslims had extensive and intimate contacts that involved social, as a well as intellectual association—cooperation, comingling, even personal friendship” And they conclude, “This is a major part of NewGround's program which brings fellows together for conversation, social activities, religious study, social action and dialogue—showing that this contact does not need to be only a thing of the ancient past.”

Clearly, it is much easier to apply healing theory to comfortable Jews and Muslims in California than to those in Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and the rest of the Middle East. Memory is much fresher and the wounds very deeply felt. But there is a noble parallel between the Israeli and

Palestinian high school teachers now working in Hamburg to complete their dual-narrative text book, with Sami Adwan and the spirit of Dan Bar-on. They endure setbacks, but they never abandon their hope that they can make a contribution, with a little help from political psychology, to make things better.

Thank you.