

# **Two States and Beyond**

## **A Joint Israel Commission Policy Resource for Reconstructionist Communities and Rabbis**

**August 2021 / Elul 5781**

For several decades, Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association have publicly endorsed a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, recent events have raised questions for many in the progressive Jewish community about the viability of the two-state solution. In the summer of 2020, questions about the two-state solution intensified in the Jewish press after long-time progressive Zionist Peter Beinart announced that he could no longer support the two-state solution (see his article below). This short compilation of online articles offers a range of perspectives about the future of Israel, the occupied territories, the two-state solution, and the possible resolution of the conflict. We seek through these readings to inform our communities, stimulate discussion, and raise awareness about differing Jewish views on pathways to peace.

Please note: by sharing these various articles, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and Reconstructing Judaism do not imply endorsement of the views they present.

### **1. J Street, “A Two-State Solution Is Possible and Necessary.”**

<https://rb.gy/vfpwtx>

J Street maintains its traditional view that the only path to Israeli-Palestinian peace is establishing a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel. The borders between the two states would be “based on the pre-1967 lines with limited, agreed-upon land swaps of equivalent size and quality. These borders would allow established Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and some of the large West Bank settlement blocs close to the Green Line to be incorporated into the State of Israel.”

**2. Peter Beinart, “Yavne: A Jewish Case for Equality in Israel-Palestine,” *Jewish Currents*, July 7, 2020.**

<https://rb.gy/badjru>

Peter Beinart, formerly a prominent supporter of the two-state solution (TSS) along lines similar to those of J Street, announces his abandonment of that position because it is no longer a compelling alternative to Israel’s current path. To advocate for two states without pressuring Israel to bring it about perpetuates the occupation and the current unequal one-state reality. Beinart offers a Zionist argument for abandoning the goal of establishing a separate Palestinian state alongside a separate Jewish state, and instead embracing the goal of establishing a Jewish home within a single state built upon a legal foundation of Jewish-Palestinian equality.

**3. Carolina Landsmann, “How Israeli right-wing thinkers envision the annexation of the West Bank,” *Haaretz*, Aug, 8, 2018.**

<https://rb.gy/14svt6>

*Haaretz* journalist Carolina Landsmann interviews several prominent Israeli figures who advocate Israeli annexation of either substantial parts of or the entire West Bank. They offer a wide range of views on what kind of political rights the incorporated Palestinian Arab population should receive from none at all to transferring them out of the country to full Israeli citizenship.

**4. Lev Grinberg, “Neither One nor Two: Reflections about a Shared Future in Israel-Palestine,” In *Israel and Palestine: Alternative Perspectives on Statehood*, eds. John Ehrenberg and Yoav Peled (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 279-304.**

<https://rb.gy/iybsbg>

Grinberg examines the different ways Israeli policy controls and subordinates Palestinian Arabs and concludes that there is no clear path to either a two-state or a one-state solution. Moreover, neither of those solutions takes into account the economic, political, cultural and military realities of Israel/Palestine. He advocates an Israeli-Palestinian Union - one political

framework for two nation-states along the lines of the European Union. He examines the obstacles in the way of such an outcome and offers some ways to overcome them.

## **5. A Land for All, “Two States, One Homeland: An Open Land for All”**

<https://rb.gy/3hnode>

A Land for All/ *Eretz le-kulam/Bilad lil-jami'* is an Israeli-Palestinian organization with the foundational proposition that both the Jewish-Israeli and the Arab-Palestinian people regard the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea as their homeland. It rejects the “us here, them there” version of peace promoted by Yitzhak Rabin and Ehud Barak and considers separation with a clear frontier as neither possible nor desirable. A Land for All envisions two independent and sovereign states based on the June 1967 borders with full freedom of movement and residency between the two and a common federal superstructure (similar to Grinberg, above) with Jerusalem as an open city and binational capital administered by a special regime.

## **6. Khalil Shikaki and Dahlia Scheindlin, “Role of Public Opinion in the Resilience/Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” *Palestinian/Israeli Pulse Final Report*, January 2019.**

<https://rb.gy/wbh9z5>

Shikaki and Scheindlin are respected academic pollsters who support the TSS. Their data show that Israeli and Palestinian support for two states has declined from 2008 to 2018 (to the 40% + range for both peoples). Israeli youth are the least supportive, but Palestinian youth are also less supportive than their elders. Nonetheless, support for the TSS is stronger than any of the alternatives. A significant number of Israeli Jews would support the TSS if they were offered certain incentives (like the right to visit the Temple Mount). A smaller proportion of Palestinians would also change their opposition in exchange for incentives (like the release of Palestinian political prisoners).

## **7. Stephen Zunes, “Reflections on BDS,” *Tikkun*, February 11, 2019**

<https://rb.gy/pow8lh>

Professor Zunes is a political scientist and Middle East specialist who has long supported the TSS. He offers a succinct introduction to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign directed at Israel since 2005. For Zunes BDS is an acceptable non-violent set of tactics and neither necessarily antisemitic nor intrinsically opposed to the TSS. He advocates a BDS campaign directed at ending the occupation and argues that successfully utilizing BDS would “be greatly enhanced if put forward not from an ideological agenda against Zionism and Israel, but as one component of a multifaceted campaign for peace, security, and equality for Palestinians and Israelis based upon universal moral principles of justice for all peoples.”

## **8. Hanan Schlesinger, “Israel and the Palestinians: A Land for All,” *Allgemeiner*, December 1, 2020**

<https://rb.gy/1gwa9w>

Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger lives in Alon Shvut, Gush Etzion, and serves as Director of International Relations for Roots/Judur/Shorashim, a joint initiative for nonviolent transformation by Jewish settlers and West Bank Palestinians. In this piece, Schlesinger argues that the two-state solution “disrespects” Israelis’ and Palestinians’ deep connections to the same land and holds that binary thinking cannot resolve the conflict. He promotes “a land for all” as the “only realistic way forward.”

## **9. Jonathan Kuttab: Executive Summary of his book *Beyond the Two State Solution*, pp. 91-100 (2020)**

<https://rb.gy/ds17nz>

*Please note: Copies of the entire book can be downloaded free at [this link](#).*

Kuttab is a co-founder of the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq and co-founder of Nonviolence International. A well-known international human rights attorney, he practices law in the US, Palestine and Israel. Jonathan serves on the Board of Bethlehem Bible College and is President of the Board of Holy Land Trust. He is co-founder and board member of the

Just Peace Advocates. He was the head of the Legal Committee negotiating the Cairo Agreement of 1994 between Israel and the PLO.

### **10. Michael Sfard, “Occupation & De Facto Annexation: How the Israeli Gov't Seizes and Controls Palestinian Territory” (2021)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG1sxIhJjxM&t=388s>

Michael Sfard is one of Israel’s foremost legal experts on settlements, international human rights law, and the laws of war. He has represented a variety of Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organizations and individuals before the Israeli High Court of Justice. In this video he argues that Israel has already accomplished a de facto (but not a de jure) annexation of the West Bank. He presents four categories of evidence to justify this claim: 1) demographic engineering--i.e., creating over 120 settlements and 100 so-called outposts; 2) building an elaborate infrastructure connecting the settlements to pre-1967 Israel; 3) unifying the administrative systems; and 4) applying Israeli laws territorially to the West Bank.