

## Tools for Peace in the Middle East

When two factions find themselves at odds with each other an outside mediator is often required. Many times this mediator is in the form of a person, but the mediating can come from other sources. Jonathan Boyarin states, in his essay, "Waiting for a Jew", anthropology is "a tool for mediating between the self and the community" (163). Boyarin's thoughts introduce tools which could be effective in improving the Roadmap to Peace. These tools can be used on a much greater scale for mediating between multiple communities. These communities could be as small as two neighboring villages or as large as two entirely independent countries. The tools would act as a way of bringing the two communities closer together through the efforts of both sides, and in turn be used to improve the plans set forth in the Roadmap to Peace. This plan is instituted as a way to end the occupation between Israel and the Palestinians. The Roadmap to Peace is well designed, but through the application of Boyarin's thoughts on punishment, communication, and education, it could be improved.

The Roadmap to Peace focuses on the importance of improvement rather than punishment. Punishment is intended to show the aggressor he or she was wrong and to make him or her pay for whatever it was he or she did. The idea is that a lesson will be learned and the same actions will not be repeated. At the same time the victim of aggression is supposed to find some relief knowing that punishment was given. This idea is good in theory, but it often does not offer this relief. While the aggressor is punished, the victim is required to watch and see that the aggressor's actions were recognized. In a way this is both giving the aggressor some sense of pride and reminding the victim of the incident as they watch the punishment take place. Boyarin recalls a time when his so called friends vandalized his property. Rather than letting it go, Boyarin's father forced the boys to erase what they had written. For Boyarin, this was more painful than the damage originally done. Boyarin stated that, "a victim is likely to view any response as adding insult to injury" (150). He felt as though they were given a chance to recreate the graffiti while

this time, Boyarin watched. Many times, things are better left alone, because the damage has been done and it is in the past. In order to punish the parties involved, the past must be revisited. Often, this creates the beginning of more problems and hard feelings between enemies. The Roadmap to Peace is a plan to return the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians to the status quo that existed before the occupation started in 1967. This is essentially a request for both groups to end military force and return to life as normal. The Roadmap to Peace states that, "conflict will only be achieved through an end to violence and terrorism" (U.S. Department of State). By forcing either group to pay reparations for what was done, more hostility will be created. At a time when there is already too much anger, a simple plan to end violence and move on is what best suits both sides. Rather than punishing anyone today, a better plan would be to develop steps to ensure the same mistakes will not be repeated.

In order to ensure that the progress of today does not go to waste, both sides must agree to participate in improvement. The process of continuing the success of the Roadmap will require both groups to make sacrifices and come to some compromise. Sacrifice and compromise are two major components of success in any conflict. Both sides must consider what is important and what could be given up or changed to resolve the conflict. If both sides agree to meet half way on the compromise, no one group is giving up everything, but both groups give up something. Without this joint effort, a resolution to the conflict will never be reached. Boyarin points out, from his own life experience, that sacrifice and compromise are a key part of every day life. He considers a Jew's move from secular society into a traditionalist community and realizes that it is impossible for a Jew "to join a traditionalist community without giving up major parts of his or her identity" (157). The person making the move agrees to sacrifice part of them to blend in with their surroundings. This is a move which Boyarin says would be impossible without sacrifice, but through a person's willingness to adapt and compromise, the change in life style is successful. A change like this would require major sacrifice while other changes require

only small compromises if any at all. Boyarin stated that in order to be a member of the Eighth Street shul, a person would only have to agree to return regularly. This is a small price to pay, but is an example of how nothing comes without compromise. The Roadmap to Peace does begin to express the importance of compromise, but would be improved by reminding both sides of the importance of fair compromise and sacrifice. The plan states that "Palestinian leadership issues unequivocal statement reiterating Israel's right to exist in peace", while, "Israeli leadership issues unequivocal statement affirming its commitment to the two-state vision" (U.S. Department of State). It does not express the importance of compromise to resolve the situation, but this addition would increase the chance of success. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians should be urged to review what they want and what they need. When this is done, the two sides could sit down to discussion and agree on a plan for the future. This meeting would be effective for continuing the success of peace in the Middle East. To ensure the success of the meeting, location is crucial, and should be a joint decision.

In order for a meeting to be productive, communication is essential. A common language for communication will be needed because Israelis speak Hebrew while Palestinians speak Arabic. From a young age, people are raised in a house with some form of communication taking place. This communication is most often found in the form of spoken language. As a child grows up around this language, he or she will begin to speak the language with no formal education. This is where the first words of a child's life are learned. When the child reaches school age, many times schools will introduce a new language. This offers the children a chance to communicate with an entirely different group of people. Boyarin recalls a trip to France when he found himself, "speaking Yiddish to people with whom I have no other common language" (158). Boyarin spoke English and the people he met with spoke French. Yiddish became their language of communication. This is an example of the importance of having some common language. In a press statement from the Office of the Spokesman, the Roadmap to Peace is referred to as, "a

settlement, negotiated between the parties" (U.S. Department of State). The negotiators obviously share some common form of communication, but a plan for a two-state common language would be beneficial. A useful addition to the Roadmap to Peace would be a common language education program. People who are not able to communicate will never be able to resolve a conflict, but with this common language, a resolution could be more easily reached. A common language is a step towards success, although it will not put an end to the hatred between groups.

There is increased tension between Israel and the Palestinians at this time of transition and in order to alleviate the tension, hatred of the enemy must be removed from the people's lives. Children will grow up to be a product of their environment. Often, children will grow up to be like their parents were unless given the opportunity to do more and be better. When a parent raises a child in an environment of hatred towards a certain group, that hatred will pass down to the younger generations. As the cycle continues, people are bred to hate others and often don't remember why. In an attempt to end this senseless pattern, children should be educated about and exposed to other types of people. This process will show children that there is no reason to hate an entire group of people based solely on the religion they practice. In the process of educating the young children, exposure to the other cultures would be a useful tool in developing a more open minded society for the future. A balanced combination of education and exposure would create generations with a greater respect for other cultures. Boyarin would argue that people borrow from other cultures regardless of where the customs or traditions are from. Boyarin says, "Individuals may choose to adopt traits from other communities" and goes on to say that this borrowing can be based solely "on what they read in ethnographies" (155). Often, this borrowing goes unnoticed by both parties. Allowing for this borrowing or sharing of cultural ideas is a start to a better future. If both sides realize they share common cultural practices, it is a common ground on which they can build. As part of the education process, children should be made aware of ideas and practices which were originally from a different



culture. This will make children realize that while everyone is unique, we all share similar interests. The President stated, in a Press Statement in April 2003, that the Roadmap to Peace "is a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict by 2005" (U.S. Department of State). The Roadmap to Peace does not encourage any future education. Returning to a non-hostile life by 2005 is an improvement, but the damage cannot be fully undone until precautions are taken to prevent reoccurrence in the future. This addition to the peace plan would be an extremely productive method for ensuring that the work done today, to create peace, will still be evident in ten years.

"Waiting for a Jew" is a compilation of many experiences Jonathan Boyarin had while working as a Jewish anthropologist. Boyarin's work introduces ideas and thoughts which can be developed into creative tools for use on a small scale, but the same tools can be used to resolve major world issues. Many of Boyarin's memories are simply a recollection of his past, but offer hidden tools for a better and more peaceful lifestyle. These tools can be applied to the Roadmap to Peace in the Middle East. With some adaptation and the proper application of Boyarin's thoughts, the peace plan would prove to be far more effective than if used as it stands today.