

Mark Freeman

Miko Peled tape 11

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And then my sister came out with the statement saying, cause the issue of revenge surely comes out and she says that no real mother would ever want to or see any sense, happiness, any satisfaction to see other mother to suffer the same thing, no any mother would want that to happen to another mother. So revenge, retaliation was totally irrelevant, as far as they were concerned. And Nathaniel was prime-minister then who also happened to be a high school friend of my sisters, called and they told him not to come. And other people came, you know, government, people from the government, representatives and so forth, wanted to come. There was a Palestinian from PA and a representative of the Settlers, the Isha movement, drove together from the West Bank to come and pay their condolences. I remember coming in, it was in the afternoon, I came to the house and they were sitting in the backyard, talking, and I just could not believe of what I was seeing and Ronnie says to me: you know who this is? Incredible things because everyone feels that this is insane. So, anyway, this went on for a whole week, and goes on still, because my sister Irit goes and speaks everywhere, speaks Irami They both joined the group called Israel-Palestinian B... families to Peace. And it's unfortunately that group is growing. 02:03:12 Unfortunately growing, may be 4-500 families. And they meet and they talk and meet with dignitaries go around the world and they speak and their message is completely clear: we've got to make peace. If we can sit and talk to each other and figure out the solution, we paid the price, we're willing to do this, so don't tell us that that can't be done. And everyday and every year that goes by and that group grows, because nothing is done, and they know it. And then my sister Nuriat won the Saharov prize from European parliament, couple years ago. So, all of us went through Paris, through Paris, then took the train to Strasbourg where European parliament meets, and she was awarded together with Zlat Gotzavi, who is a Palestinian writer, who sat in many Israeli prisons for many years and lost his son, his 16 year old son was shot by Israeli soldiers. And they worked together a lot, they were doing the same thing for the same cause and they were awarded that prize together. They both spoke, it was very moving. His wife came with the full Palestinian dress, with embroidery and everything, Palestinian clothing and everything... And it goes on everyday, they are very active, they conveying the same message, everyday of their life.

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After the peace process fell apart, the end of after campaign did not work out, at the end of 2000, after the second broke out, after it was became very clear that it was not just a small little snag, but this is turning into a full blown out war, and everyday I would see that the Israelis are shooting more and more and more Palestinians demonstrators, shooting to kill, it seemed to be that it was..., I just could not take it, personally I felt in the sense of disappointment from the fact the Israel dropped the ball the way it did. And

throughout the 90s when there was so much hope and at the time Israel just settled months before that, and it was clear that peace was around the corner, they crossed the tease, they dotted the eye, they just needed to sign it, it was just question of formalities, and suddenly this, and sure on prime-minister. I mean it was such, such, such unthinkable, you know, chain of events that lead to this. So, I started to look for people to discuss it with, to talk to, because I did not know anybody, because we never had much of contact with Israeli or Jews here, it wasn't an issue for us. So, I talked to people, then I heard that there was such a thing called Living Dialogue group, so I just, first thing that I did was I put an add in the paper, in San Diego Reader, and nobody called. And then I looked on the net, and I looked everywhere, I just did the search, anything that was Palestinian, anything that was just "dialogue", and I came across the ADC website, the A..American Unti Discrimination Consul website, so I wrote to somebody there, I said: do you know anything about that , and they gave me an email of Majihoori, here in San Diego, Palestinian American leader, Palestinian American. And so, we corresponded by email several times, and he invited me to his office, and we had a nice little chat, and the following week there was a meeting of the group, that only started several months before that, at his house, so he invited me to come to his house. And I remember at the meeting, everyone was supposed to, they went around the room and talked how they viewed the solution, what they viewed as the goal of peace what people looked like. And this is my first meeting, and later on I learned, everyone, I heard, I was told this much later on, that they all looked at me and thought: this guy must be a spy, must be M. agent, what is he doing here, what does he want.. And it's funny because I heard it from several people in that group and other people as well, something about me gave them a sense that I probably was up to no good, I think I alleviated it in few years. Anyway, that's how I started and it was fantastic because it was personal. I think, even growing up the way I did, knowing so much about Palestinian issue, about Israeli Palestinian relations, Israeli Arab relations, with the war, with all that. I never really spoke to a Palestinian in my life, I mean, other than that short time when I met with the young teenagers at that club, but we did not talk about politics, that wasn't an issue. So, I never spoke to anyone, I have not heard any stories, and I figured if I have not, nobody has, you know, and the same true with Palestinians. Palestinians in West Bank did not study Hebrew, the Israeli Palestinians, the one who live in Israel do, but still, everything is so completely segregated that we never meet; there is no occasion to meet, no reason to meet. As to me, it was an eye opener, it was a great opportunity, you know, forget the politics, let's hear, let's talk, let's hear about each other. And I started hearing things that I never thought I would hear. I thought, first of all I thought I knew everything that there is to know, and of course, I did not. And the sense that I was coming from where I was and still be able to engage in the dialogue, and still could see the Palestinian point of view was new to Palestinians. They did not know that there could be such a creature with a background that I had, and still some kind of connection to them, and to their plight, and everything. That got me going into my own research, into the history again, and reading again, and examining myself, examining my beliefs, examining Zionism, and examining what my father did, and his role in the military, my role, and all that, kind of soul searching. And in a way, it made me a more firm believer in what I believed in. I think that one of the wonderful things in the dialogue is that the lines become blurred, but your identity does not become blurred. And so, the more we meet, and this is my sense, this is why so many

people are afraid of dialogue, so comfortable in political setting, because in political setting the lines are never blurred. It's us, it's them, this is the argument, and we all happy, because we all go home, disagreeing. In dialogue, you can't, there is nothing to disagree on: this is his story, this is what happened to this man, this is my story, this is what happened to me, what can you argue about, there is nothing to disagree on. And little by little, the lines between us become blurred, because we are not two different camps, he is Palestinian, I am an Israeli, and we both on the same side. And that's incredible; I think that this is really the key to peace. And certainly a lot of us involved in political activism, but this is totally different thing. I think that it is very very powerful. And I see that we make presentations together, we make presentations as a dialogue, representing dialogue. And there is very very little confrontation in what we say between us and the audience, even if we say things that audience disagree with, and they often do. There is never sense of this tension that's built up when you have a political debate. Everyone is more at ease and then you can get through to people. We have a couple of examples, I don't know if you want me to get into that.

2:12:00

The city of San Diego put together like an hour, like a day where they had their engineers, come to hear on different topics, and they wanted to know on Israeli Palestinian topic. Invited me to represent the Israeli side. They had a Palestinian there who worked at the city as as there. Very angry, would not even engage in the dialogue. And we spoke for 15 minutes and then we had Q&A session. I knew the man, I knew exactly what he was going to say, and I said represent anyone, but I will talk about dialogue. I am Israeli, speaks for itself, my family history speaks for itself, not to get into an argument with anyone. And this what I did. I spoke 15 minutes about the dialogue and I told them what I just told you. They were courteous enough. And then he spoke. He brought his folder with all the scenes and crimes and assassinations, and the massacres and so on and so forth. Israel was to large degree a guilty one. I probably would argue with him about several finer points, but not much about the facts, but that's beside the point. The conclusion arrived at the end, that is what important. And then there was Q&A session and the first two rows were occupied by Arab Americans. As it happens many Palestinians work in city of San Diego, as engineers and so forth.. And there were a lot of questions, a lot of questions, and they all were directed to me. They asked about dialogue. And the reason for that is that dialogue creates that kind of atmosphere. And someone at the end asked him a question. And you can imagine that this topic creates always a lot of questions. Everything, all the questions were about the dialogue. That's one example. And another example is that I am doing this about an hour. He is a member of ...rity club in Escondido, I am a member in Coronado. It just turned out that we learn about each other. We both rians, we both in , have a lot in common. We met in Israel last summer, and we went to, he is from Nazareth, so we went to , there, then went to Jerusalem, it was incredible. They put us on the list and the rority club locally invited us to speak. He speaks a few minutes, I speak a few minutes, and he's got a video of our trip. And I kept saying that we've got to shorten our talk, shorten our video and give people a Q& A session. So, the last time we did it, a couple of weeks ago, he still did not shorten it, and the time that we were allotted was exactly the time that we used up. And

he said to me: look and we were talking about people's reactions. And we look at people, we look at people while he is talking, the video is showing, to see we kinda wonder what's on people's mind. Some people sleep, some people look, you know, like they are thinking about breakfast. And at the end, when we were done, people lined up to shook out hands with tears in their eyes. And these are not some kind of liberal lefties, these people, you know, they standing in line to shake our hands with tears in their eyes. So, we talked about that and he said: look, we need to leave them with this impression, if we start Q& A session, we'll get into politics. I don't want to represent, you don't want to represent Sharon, why get into that? Leave them with this impression that is what dialogue is. And he's right, I agreed with him completely, I said you know, you are right, this is what we need to do, and this is the power of the dialogue that shows that there is a dialogue. This is actually the dialogue. People ask what do you do, what do you do, well, this is actually it, bring people together. So, there is no dramatic political events, but it's very personal, very powerful, very effective way to bring people together.

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Doesn't make you feel good. I know the first time I heard, I think it was Mazhi who said: talk to Bob. The war of 1987-88, from the Palestinian perspective. This was David Glide (?), we were David. And he is telling me the story where he is the David. And it's a little absurd. And so, when you hear the narrative of another side, it's very painful, it doesn't make anyone feel good. And at the end you have a sense that you're accomplishing something, but it doesn't make you feel good. Not by long shot, it does not make you feel good at all. It's a lot of pain; it's a very painful process, very very painful process. And I've been through a lot, so I am kind of gone through a lot of it, but I see people coming to the dialogue, telling the stories of their families. It's a very painful process; it's a very painful process. That's what dialogue is about. You need to tell all this painful things, because that's what the dialogue is about, otherwise people don't know, because they don't know. They do not know. When one Palestinian woman, very strong, you know, proud Palestinian woman said to me I never thought that I would have a friend who is an Israeli and Zionist, I thought we made progress. But on the other hand I thought: what! That's a terrible statement. What have we done! What have we done, you know. How we've come to this. When somebody would say something like this. Nazis. Well, then you start more self examinations, well, what have we done, how did we get to this. And I remember another woman, Manala, said, was talking about the language of the enemy. Hebrew, referring to Hebrew. Hebrew, it never even crossed my mind; it never crossed my mind that somebody can refer to Hebrew language as to the language of the enemy. I come up from the house where language is everything, books are everywhere, everybody writes and reads and speaks. Everything about writing and reading, everything is about language. The Bible, the Prophets, the Son of Soam (?), I mean, the Soams, it's all Hebrew. So how we arrived at this that we created the situation or situation was created that the Hebrew is considered by someone as the language of an enemy. It's very painful, very painful, very very difficult. So, yeah, people think it's easy and it does not do anything, and they are wrong: it's not easy and I think it accomplished a lot.

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What it accomplishes is that it brings people from the point of ignorance to the point of knowledge and understanding. And what more could you ask for, really. You are ignorant about something and suddenly you're knowledgeable about something. Even if it was about most mundane thing, it would be enough. You think at the other side is a monster, is a devil, demon.. They are killers, they're terrorists, you know how could they let children do this. Or on the other side, these Zionists, they are rapists, they are murderers. And this whole Zionist idea was just like Nazis, really, no difference. Thinking Zionism is equated with Swastikas. And growing the way I did, this is God.., I can't even begin understanding it. I begin to understand it now; I mean, come from the ignorance I was in to what I know. For Palestinians a concept, the word, forget the concept, the word Zionist was like for us the word Nazis. And for us growing up, Nazi was the worse, it was the worst. Arabs, Pasha, ...nothing was like Nazis. You would not even say it somebody. You don't even address, you don't even call that somebody, you know. So, they equate us with that? This process of bringing people from the state of ignorance and prejudice and hatred to place where they look at people and say, not everybody is the same, not everybody is bad. We all come from where we come from; we need to find the way out. And at the end, everybody's got a relative, everybody's got a friend, everybody's got connection back in Middle East, back in Israel, back in Palestine. So, in a way, especially right now, really, that's the only game in town right now, that's the only effort, the only thing happening. It started in San Diego, but this type of activity everywhere, they have it in Europe, all over the United States, some things happen in Israel. You have things like Geneva Court, that just came out and which a lot of people like, a lot of people hate, but the bottom line is it's the result of many use of dialogue.

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Sure, I got several. I can do the whole program just on that. Because we've been together for several years now. Well, the first one was the thing was with Mazhi, when he talked about David Galad thing and then I went back, and my brother teaches Political science in Televiv, and he is very involved with peace movement. He is with his group of his Israeli academics and Palestinian Israeli academics who work together and publish books, and publish articles on this whole issue, so he knows it a lot. So, I wrote to him in the e-mail and said, look, this guy claims that this, and this, and this...does it make sense. And he said, actually, as a matter of fact, it does, and he referred me to a new history book that just came out in Hebrew, by Israeli historians. We talk about documents of another. Israeli academics, historians who live today, who researched, and found out. And I could understand where he is coming from. I certainly knew the numbers, I knew the force, I knew how many Palestinians were fighting this point and that point what happened, so he became an expert, it was knowledge, not just someone who was a fighting expert And I don't think I think if several years a Palestinian would come up to me and said that I would say...psh...don't believe everything you hear. I know where we were and, something like that. When in this context it made me to say, well, let me go back, let me find out, because you trust someone in dialogue, and besides, I want to know what So, that was one example, and I learnt a lot from that. First of all I learnt that he was right, the number of Palestinians fighting was insignificant. And the numbers of Israeli managed to train as militia were incredible About a million and a have of Palestinians in

Palestine and about half of million of Israelis, the Jews in Palestine then, it's unbelievable that they can put it together. But nevertheless, he was... the way he described it, he was correct, it was true. With Jamal, I remember, in the early 70s when Israel started attacking refugee camps in Lebanon (?), with air force plane, I think it was not early 70s, it was later, it was late 70s, and my father would write and speak, and say that we were killing innocent women and children. We are not getting any terrorists, we're not getting any, because they were gone by the time the planes would show up, but we're killing many, many, many, many, many innocent civilians. And everybody said: the Israeli force would never do that, the Israeli army would never do that, the Israeli planes have smart bombs, and this is thirty years ago. They know how to hit the guy, from 30 thousand feet, boom, they know how to hit a guy, right between the eyes. Well, Jamal grew up there. And then there were raids, all these commander raids, all the refugee camps, heroic raids. Strange kind of heroism, we can talk about that later. So, he grew up in that. He saw the houses, he saw the rubble after that, he said as a kid he saw the bombs exploded and, he used to play with them, with the shells and the b..., kids would play with them. He remembers the raids, the commander raids; they would come in from the ocean. These commanders they were like heroes, and you would think, that's the best trained commanders in the world, without a doubt. They've got Israeli navy just off the coast, waiting for them, and who are they fighting against? A largely unarmed, a group of people who have a few of Kalashnikovs, may be, nothing, really nothing. Militarily they are nothing; Palestinians never had a significant military force. They had gorilla fighters, you know, but how well they were trained. So, it kind of puts a different perspective on those heroes, Israeli commanders, you know. Fighting against civilian population that had very little arms, and very little training, and so what's the big deal. And then you learn in fact that what they are fighting for, they're fighting for own liberation, for own freedom, they are fighting for own independence, things that we admire. And this is Jamal telling us story of him as a child experiencing exactly what people were saying that was not happening. And I remember I wrote to people Israeli force would never, you think that Israelis would do thing like this do thing like this, who do you think, you know... Turned out they did. And then I remember meeting with Manal's father a while ago, and he's from Mazhdel. He was 13-14 when they had to leave. They were evacuated, sent out by Israeli army, into Gaza. And Gila, my wife kebubs just a few miles a way. We all ended up in Manal's house, after Manal had a baby. And he was there and he met with Gila, and the whole thing suddenly came up, he learned where she was from and she learnt where he was from, and things suddenly came to this boiling, but in a very positive way, because Palestinian is very very gracious host, he would never insult us, they would never say a things, you know, but apparently he went back to the kitchen and he was in tears. And Manal said I never've seen his crying for Palestine. And he had a good feeling about Gila, about my wife, because she grew up without a clue that all these lands belonged to somebody. She says I always wondered why Gaza is so so overpopulated. And it never occurred to any of us that all these people came from other places that were not overpopulated, but they can't go back, because we took their land, it never occurred to us. You know, you drive around, and you see these homes. We see Arabic home, Arabs homes. One here, one there, one here, one there, and then you always wonder, why there is a house right there, there is nothing there, just a freeway. Why there is a house here, there is nothing here. It never occurred to us, that it used to be a village here, and

this is happened to be one home that remained. Somebody lived there, and somebody lived there, and somebody lived there, and somebody lived all around, these were the lands that were occupied by somebody else, it was inhabited by somebody else, before these people were sent out. So, this was a very very moving moment also, with Manal's father. It suddenly puts a face on 800 thousand or so people who were sent away from homes.

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First of all, there is a solution; peace can be achieved, now. Every moment that goes by, every second that goes by without signing a peace agreement between Israeli and Palestinians is wasted. Every drop of blood that is dropped is dropped in vain. There is no reason for this war to continue, it can be stop today, it could have been stopped 30 years ago, thousands died, there is no reason for this to go on. People need to understand that this is the reality, this is the truth. This whole thing can be stopped, right away, and it could be peace. Without going to Geneva Courts, this .. that was just signed a month or a couple month ago, this was peace agreement that was not signed three years ago. It could be signed 20 years before that, but never mind that, it was on the verge of signing three years ago. 3500 killed, who knows how many thousands are injured for life, because that piece of paper was not signed. So, what I want people to know is that peace is possible and it's possible right now. And this whole madness can stop right now. And to why it hasn't been stopped is when we are in dialogue, the point that I try to make is that there is someone to talk to, you can get engaged in the dialogue, you can sit side by side, you can. Israelis and Palestinians can exist side by side, they are very close. They all agree, at the end, they all agree that that is the solution, and that what they are willing to live with, and agree to. So, people can make up their own minds, their own conclusions. Their own conclusions to why this is happening.

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Yeah, there is real connection between karate and peace. I am just finding that I am sitting in this really funny cloth. People have this perception of karate as being a violent activity, because what you see first of all in the movies, and then you see people train and then you see them fight, and you see them train and fight, and you see them punch and kick and throw and all that. Karate is a very very very deep philosophy, very deep philosophy. It takes years to unravel, and years to understand, and years to comprehend, and you know, to grasp. The way you reach that understanding is through training and training. And I always tell people that among thousands of people who wear black belts, who have done karate for 20-30 years, none of them ever ever fights. Ever. And if they did when they were young, now they don't anymore. Now, that they're really good, they would not even think of it. And so people would say, well, how do you know it works. That is exactly the proof that it works. That is how you know that karate works, that all these perfectly trained people, never ever ever have to use it, never ever ever have to use it, that aspect of the training.. There is another aspect of the training; it is what's going up here. The key is knowing how to resolve a conflict peacefully, knowing how to foresee things, know how to look forward, know how to look several steps ahead before

something would happen. And then there is incredible amount of mental and spiritual growth that goes on when you train for many years, when you practice something like this for many many years. You become attached with your body, you become attached with your mind, and this mind and body connection is really powerful, something that we lost in our civilization. We have athletes and we have intelligent people who read books, and that's it, either you this or either you that. And there is very few things that we do where we engage, where the two are connected. This is exactly the place, this is exactly the activity that brings these two together, the quest for peace does not mean you have give everything else up. The quest for peace sometimes involves real physical effort. And training, just because we train to fight doesn't mean you have to fight. Just because we know how to punch and kick and kill someone with one blow or whatever, that's not what it's about. Because often people wonder, oh, you're karate guy, what all this thing about peace, and a lot of people are completely surprised. Are you a military guy, a navy guy, are you this and that, are you in Israeli commanders, it has nothing to do with this. To be karate has nothing to do with military, it has nothing to do with fighting, never has. I love it, I enjoy it, I love watching it, but I would not dream of p anyone, it would not even cross my mind. Because it's a very peaceful philosophy, not just philosophy, it brings you peace. And teaching people, working with children, working with adults, seeing how people grow as the result of training is incredible. You realize, there is so much more, there is 10% of physical stuff, that people can see and 90% of the depth that goes on and the development that goes on as you train. That's what karate is about.