In Palestine and Israel we have two peoples of the Abrahamic faith. Judaism and Islam are two different faiths that stem from Abraham. Both Jews and Arabs claim as their religious heritage the land that gave rise to their beliefs. They claim Jerusalem which is sacred to both their peoples. They have this common heritage yet they are unable to live in harmony.

Abraham is the founding father of their religious traditions. Where would he stand on the Palestine-Israeli conflict?

Would he be on the side of Israel?

Would he endorse Netanyahu's demand for Arab recognition of a separate Israeli? Would he understand Netanyahu's insistence that Jerusalem not be split and that it remain under Israeli control? Would he accept the proposal that Israel remain a strong military power while Palestine remains demilitarised? Would he insist that Palestine remain divided between Hamas and Fatah? Would he understand Netanyahu’s tremendous need for security? Would he approve of Netanyahu’s expansionist ambitions and the continued building of settlements on Palestinian land?

Or would Abraham be on the side of Palestine?

Would he see Palestinians as captives locked in a concentration camp with Nazis controlling their every move, denying them human rights and expropriating their land? Would he understand the desperation that leads to the adoption of desperate measures? Would he approve of the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah? Would he want the refugees to return home? Would he support the petition to the United Nations for an independent Palestine?

But Abraham is no more. And he is forgotten.

Palestine and Israel are like Esau and Jacob, the sons of Isaac. This story from the common beliefs of Jews and Arabs is a story that they have forgotten. The story of Esau and Jacob, twin brothers, is a story of deception and betrayal. But Esau and Jacob were both banished from their lands, suffered, overcame adversity and became very rich. They were thus able to meet as equals and they reconciled. And it was after this reconciliation that Jacob’s name was changed to Israel.
Surely this is a story from which lessons should be learnt, especially by people of the Abrahamic faith.

There is suffering on both sides. Is neither side humane enough to acknowledge that? In the Bible story, Rebekah, mother of Esau and Jacob favoured Jacob and helped him deceive his father. Is this the role that the US has chosen for itself, the role of Rebekah? And is this why there can never be reconciliation. Both Esau and Jacob went away and built their lives independently of one another. Mother Rebekah was not around supporting Jacob. But the US remains in the picture and Obama has declared that he will not support the Palestinian petition to the UN for an independent state.

Esau and Jacob separated, went their own ways, discovered their humanity and could reconcile. But the Palestinians and Israelis live side by side; they cannot get away from each other and regard each other with the greatest suspicion. And because mother Rebekah is still with Jacob, she cannot see that Esau is also her son. She sees Satan, in the form of Terrorism, standing before Jacob, who is protecting her interests in the land.

In the modern world Terrorism, has distorted human relationships and created a new dichotomy of good and evil.

Now with the emergence of demands for democracy in the Arab world, Egypt has reached out to Palestine and opened a door to a confined people. Will mother Rebekah approve?