



Zionism Unsettled: A Congregational Study Guide

Wasatch Presbyterian Church

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Better web link for the companion videos:

[Vimeo.com/channels/zuepisodes](https://vimeo.com/channels/zuepisodes)

Part 2:

- A Tale of Two Villages
- Christian Views of Jews and Judaism
- The Covenant
- A Jewish Theology of Liberation
- Extremism and Intolerance in Israel

A Tale of Two Villages:

Ayn Hawd morphed into Ein Hod

Palestinian citizens of Israel were subject to military law until 1966.

Nur Masalha: “In the post-1948 period the minority of Palestinians – those who remained behind, many of them internally displaced -- became second-class citizens subject to a system of military administration by a government that confiscated the bulk of their lands. Today almost a quarter of the 1.3 million Palestinian citizens of Israel... are ‘internal refugees.’”

Many Palestinians living in Israel are considered “absentees,” a legal classification that has served Israeli state interests by stripping Palestinians of their rights under law.

“The category of ‘absentees’ was originally a juridical term for those refugees who were ‘absent’ from their homes but ‘present’ within the boundaries of the state as defined by the Armistice Agreements of 1949. The vast majority of the Palestinians so classified were not allowed to return to their homes, to reclaim their property, or to seek compensation. Instead the state promulgated the Law of Absentees’ Properties in 1950, which legalized the plundering of their possessions. The looting of Arab property was given the guise of a huge land transaction that the state had conducted with itself.”

- Gabriel Piterberg, “Erasures,” *New Left Review*, July-August 2001.

Christian View of Jews and Judaism:

European Jews experienced the religious intolerance of the dominant Christian culture in a variety of ways: forced conversion, exclusion, execution, humiliation, caricature, ghettoization, pogroms, and genocide. Little wonder, then, that 19th-century European Zionists linked anti-Semitism to the necessity of a state in which Jews could, finally, determine their own fate.

The Nazis used homilies of St. John Chrysostom of the late fourth century C.E. as well as vicious attacks by the 16th-century Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, to justify the Holocaust and as a theological basis for anti-Jewish prejudice.

Early Christian Anti-Jewish Rhetoric:

The Gospels depict an atmosphere of conflict between Jesus and a whole range of Jewish leaders including scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests and others whose authority he challenged and threatened. Many of these leaders served the Judean temple-state that governed and collected taxes on behalf of the harshly oppressive Roman Empire. The Christian-Jewish conflict expanded during the next few centuries as Judaism and Christianity vied with each other throughout the Roman Empire. Christian leaders often used virulent anti-Jewish rhetoric in their competition with Judaism. These writings attacked differences in religious doctrine and practice and thus were *theological* in nature.

Examples of the literary genre “Adversus Judaeos” (against the Jews):

1. The *Epistle of Barnabas*. Author unknown, 130-140 C.E. Argued that Christians are the only true covenant people and that the Jewish people had never been in a covenant with God.
2. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 155-161 C.E. Levelled the accusation of “Christ-killers” at Jews as a people.
3. Mileto, Bishop of Sardis in Asia Minor, wrote a treatise called “On the Passover,” 160-170 C.E.
4. The homilies of John Chrysostom, 386-387 C.E., a series of eight sermons. Stated that since their murder of Jesus, God allows Jews no possibility of repentance. Chrysostom was later appointed Archbishop of Constantinople, and after his death became a saint.

Although contemporary Christians are not responsible for the sins of our spiritual ancestors, we are responsible for combating the perpetuation of those sins in our time.

The Vatican and Judaism:

The Vatican's relation to Judaism has changed since the 1960s, although the Vatican has always and still does oppose the Zionist claim to all of the Holy Land. At first the Vatican's opposition to Zionist land claims was *theological*. Now it is moral and humanitarian, based on the violation of Palestinian human rights, the suffering inflicted upon the Palestinians, and the Gospel ethic of love.

Christianity and Other Religions:

Is there a way forward for interfaith dialogue that allows for each religion's uniqueness without claiming superiority for one's own religion and contempt for others'?

Rabbi Brant Rosen:

“To put it plainly, a voice that affirms claims of theological superiority in the name of *one people* cannot be the voice of God. A voice that asserts God's word to humanity was vouchsafed *exclusively* to the children of Abraham cannot be the voice of God. A voice that looks to the messianic day in which all nations will ultimately serve the *God of Israel* cannot be the voice of God.”

The Covenant:

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé:

“[T]he secular Jews who founded the Zionist movement wanted paradoxically both to secularize Jewish life and to use the Bible as a justification for colonizing Palestine... [I]n other words, they did not believe in God but he nonetheless promised them Palestine.”

Daniel Lazare, journalist and author:

“In what is supposedly the only real democracy in the Middle East, 97.5 percent of publicly held land in pre-1967 Israel is reserved exclusively for Jewish use; and a bizarre Law of Return allows any Jew immigrating to Israel from anywhere in the world to apply for a government-subsidized apartment in East Jerusalem, thereby displacing a Palestinian whose roots in the area go back generations. For Zionists, this is perfectly compatible with *Yahweh's* supposed promise to Abraham some four thousand years ago; but for anybody committed to democratic principles, it is perfectly perverse.” (2003)

A Jewish Theology of Liberation:

Rabbi Brant Rosen:

- Used to serve a Reconstructionist synagogue in Evanston, Illinois.
- In 2015, he founded a non-Zionist synagogue in Chicago called Tzedek Chicago.
- He dedicated the second (2017) edition of his book, *Wresting in the Daylight: A Rabbi's Path to Palestinian Solidarity*, to the people of Gaza.

- His eyes were opened during the 2008 Israeli 22-day bombardment of Gaza (Operation Cast Lead).
- He was further challenged by reading *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, by Anglican Canon Naim Ateek, founding director of Sabeel, the Jerusalem-based Ecumenical Center for Liberation Theology (a Palestinian Israeli and a 1948 refugee from his ancestral home in Beisan, in northern Israel).

Ateek writes:

“What is quite clear from a Palestinian Christian point of view... is that the emergence of the Zionist movement in the twentieth century is a retrogression of the Jewish community into the history of its very distant past, with its most elementary and primitive forms of the concept of God. Zionism has succeeded in reanimating the nationalist tradition within Judaism. Its inspiration has been drawn not from the profound thoughts of the Hebrew scriptures, but from those portions that betray a narrow and exclusive concept of a tribal god.”

Exodus (Journey Out), Not Eisodus (Journey In):

Rabbi Brant Rosen:

“The insidious comparison of Palestinians to the nations of Canaan has become particularly ubiquitous in the words of Israeli politicians, settler leaders and ultra-religious rabbis alike. Statement such as these must not be dismissed as mere religious rhetoric. These theological linkages have enormous power, particularly when we consider the historical reality of the Zionist enterprise that includes the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in 1947-48 and policies of displacement and transfer that continue to this very day If we are to truly hear the God of liberation speaking to us through Biblical tradition, we must be prepared, quite simply, to read the story of Exodus through the eyes of the Israelites and the story of Eisodus through the eyes of the Canaanites.”

Extremism and Intolerance in Israel:

[O]bservers see racism and intolerance as inextricably entwined with a political system that confers special privileges on Jews. Palestinians in particular are perceived as a perennial threat to Israel's Jewish character. It is inevitable, perhaps, that Palestinians are widely regarded with contempt and their marginalization is accepted as a state necessity. "Hatred of Arabs," admits Zvi Bar'el [Israeli journalist], "is part of the test of loyalty and identity that the state gives its Jewish citizens. A good Jew hates Arabs."

Questions for reflection pages 30 and 35.