

A night sky filled with stars and constellations, including the Orion constellation, is visible above a desert landscape. The landscape features several prominent, flat-topped rock formations (hoodoos) in the foreground and middle ground, illuminated by a low light source, possibly the moon or a distant star. The ground is covered in sparse, dry vegetation and small shrubs.

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 4:

- A Palestinian Muslim Experience with Zionism
- Memoricide
- A Palestinian Christian Postscript
- Emerging from the American Jewish Cocoon
- “Judaizing the Land”
- Making Explicit That Which Is Implicit

A Palestinian Muslim Experience with Zionism:

Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies at Hussein College, Al Quds University in Abu Dis (greater East Jerusalem):

Such an evil as the Holocaust should never again be inflicted upon Jews or any other group of human beings. According to both the *Qur'an* and the Bible, all human beings are made of one blood, descendants of one father, Adam, and are of equal value in the eyes of God.

In like manner, the Nakba (Catastrophe) that befell the Palestinian people in the late 1940s at the time of Israeli independence should never have taken place. The Palestinian story is one of suffering at the hands of the international community, which authorized the division of Palestine in 1947, and at the hands of the Zionists who planned, organized, and implemented systematic ethnic cleansing that resulted in the exodus of over half the Palestinian population in 1947-1948 and prevented those refugees' return to their homes after the end of the war. The Zionists destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages. They slaughtered untold numbers of Palestinian men, women, and children. And they drove over 750,000 refugees from their homes and land.

Why would the international community, led by Europe and America, make Palestinians pay for the sins committed by European Christians against Jews, sins that culminated in the Holocaust? And how could Zionists, past and present, condemn the suffering inflicted on Jews through the ages while inflicting so much suffering today on Palestinians?

Abu Sway contrasts the inclusive theology of the *Qur'an* with the exclusive theology of Zionism, which makes use of certain texts of the Old Testament to justify separatism, domination and ethnic cleansing.

Examples from the Old Testament:

- Psalm 137:9 (crushing babies against rocks)
- Joshua 6: (the slaughter of all living creatures in Jericho)

Examples from the *Qur'an*:

The *Qur'an* insists that Muslims demonstrate God's special respect for Jews and Christians because God is revealed in all three Abrahamic faiths. For example:

“We have believed in God and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.” (The Holy *Qur'an* 2:136).

Islam allows self-defense. But no civilians of any age, group, or background should be targeted.

In response to the Zionist claim that God promised the land of Palestine exclusively to the Jews, the *Qur'an* states that God has blessed the land "*for the nations.*" (The Holy *Qur'an* 21:17)

Abu Sway offers a critique of Zionism:

“Racism is the cornerstone of the Zionist project. Instead of equal rights for all, Zionism has created a system of domination and subservience.”

The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah) has compiled a database of over 50 Israeli laws that discriminate in all areas of life against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Jewish theologian Marc Ellis (wrote *Judaism Does Not Equal Israel*):
At the heart of Judaism is prophetic justice, especially for the vulnerable, the poor, and the oppressed, and a love for all people. Ellis refers to today’s establishment Judaism as “Constantinian Judaism,” since it has been changed by the acquisition of power.

The Ongoing Nakba:

Not much has changed in Zionism's purpose since Israel was born: to maximize the amount of Palestinian land and minimize the number of Palestinian people falling within the borders of the state.

- Hard ethnic cleansing. Documented by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé.
 - Plan *Dalet*: military plan to drive out Palestinian Arabs.
 - Massacres. Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948 (before Israel's declaration of independence) is the most well-known example. Committed by the Stern Gang and the *Irgun*.
- Soft ethnic cleansing: Carried out through laws and bureaucracy since 1948.
 - Revocation of residency permits.
 - Revocation of Jerusalem IDs.
 - Absentees' Property Laws. (See sidebar on page 53, describing the legal battle over the Cliff Hotel.) Note the irony of the classification of a category of "present absentees."

Memoricide:

Meron Benvenisti (Israeli political scientist and former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, and author of *Sacred Landscapes*). States that more than 9,000 natural features, villages, and ruins in Palestine have been renamed with Israeli and Hebrew names to “erase” the memory of Palestinian habitation there.

Zochrot (Hebrew for “Remembering”): An Israeli organization founded in 2002 to create an alternative to “memoricide” in Israeli society.

Zochrot's projects promote acknowledgment and accountability for the *Nakba* and foster the conditions for the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel.

A Palestinian Christian Postscript:

Rev. Naim Ateek (Anglican priest and founder of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Center in East Jerusalem). One of the authors of *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth* (2009). Also wrote *Justice and Only Justice* (1989).

Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth:

A call to action of Palestinian Christians.

“We ... declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives the Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God. It distorts the image of God in the Israeli who has become an occupier just as it distorts this image in the Palestinian living under occupation.”

Kairos cont.:

“We declare that any theology, seemingly based on the Bible or on faith or on history, that legitimizes the occupation, is far from Christian teachings, because it calls for violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, subordinating God to temporary human interests, and distorting the divine image in the human beings living under both political and theological injustice.”

Kairos cont.:

“Therefore, we declare that any use of the Bible to legitimize or support political options and positions that are based upon injustice, imposed by one person on another, or by one people on another, transforms religion into human ideology and strips the Word of God of its holiness, its universality and truth.”

Kairos cont.:

“Love is the commandment of Christ our Lord to us and it includes both friends and enemies... Resistance is a right and duty for the Christian. But it is resistance with love as its logic. It is thus a creative resistance for it must find human ways that engage the humanity of the enemy.... Christ our Lord has left us an example we must imitate. We must resist evil but he has taught us that we cannot resist evil with evil.”

Prophet Isaiah (32:17):

“... and justice will produce lasting peace and security.”

Emerging from the American Jewish “Cocoon”:

Peter Beinart writes: The organized American Jewish community is “a closed intellectual space, isolated from the experiences and perspectives of roughly half the people under Israeli control.”

Unfortunately for both Israel and the Palestinians, the Jewish organizations that dominate the public discourse are the ones for whom defending Israel’s image and silencing Israel’s critics are top priorities.

Birthright Israel: Has provided free 10-day trips to Israel for 350,000 young Jewish people since 1994.

Birthright Unplugged: Founded in 2004 as a response to Birthright Israel. Although participation numbers are tiny in comparison to Birthright Israel, Unplugged alumni/ae speak of being moved and changed by the experience.

“Judaizing” the Land

A *Haaretz* editorial from December 2013 explains this phenomenon:

“Since 1948, Israel has blocked the establishment of new Arab communities in the Galilee, even though the older communities are bursting at the seams for lack of land reserves, while it has expropriated huge tracts of Arab land. It has developed industrial zones almost exclusively in the Jewish communities.”

Making Explicit That Which Is Implicit

There are a number of terms commonly used in Christian liturgy that are used to “brand” biblical Israel as today’s political State of Israel.

How do we untangle the confusion that exists about the applicability of those scriptures and terms to the modern, political State of Israel?

We who advocate for a just peace for both Israel and Palestine must raise our voices to point out language that eliminates Palestinian Christians from full presence in our liturgy and our understanding.

Questions for Reflection:

Pages 54 and 58.