

Issue 11

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"Christ is Risen." "He is Risen Indeed."

by Jonathon Kuttab

Easter is the time of spring, rejuvenation, rebirth and revival in many cultures. The traditions and symbols, customs and festivities of the Mediterranean area since ancient times repeat the same themes of renewal and hope. Yet nowhere is this message more needed than in the Palestinian community - which continues to live in the frozen winter of frustration, denial, despair, alienation, exile and oppression - tangible evidence of progress toward a just solution that would provide them with a minimum of rights and normalcy seems to be receding further and further away.

It is precisely in that atmosphere of Al Jum'a Al Hazineh (literally "sad Friday" - the Palestinian name for "Good Friday") that the message of the Resurrection is most

relevant. Palestinians now see the prospect of a two-state solution being blocked; the settlements expanding and being secured as a permanent feature of their future; their economic life deteriorating; their freedom of movement further restricted; their nascent government shackled by Israeli constraints as well as by its own inefficiency and corruption; and international solidarity just as frustrated and stymied as their own feeble attempts at resistance.

Yet this is the time when we are reminded that hope springs eternal, and that life will spring forth again after the long winter. For Christians, the issue goes beyond cyclical movement in nature or in history, but is based on the ultimate sovereignty of the God of history, who will not let evil and oppression continue to dominate the world, and who watches over and cares for all of God's children. The message of Easter is one of the certitude of eventual salvation and regeneration, with the Resurrection being the foretaste and harbinger of the coming Reign. The Resurrection marks a definite victory, against all apparent odds, of the forces of good over the forces of evil. It boldly proclaims that death the final enemy has been defeated and vanquished, leaving us with nothing to fear, and confirming us in the certainty of the final victory.

For Palestinians, as for other victims and the oppressed throughout the ages, that message is often hard to accept in the face of their current sufferings. Even the faithful cry out "*Lord ... how long will the wicked triumph?*" (Ps.94:3 [NKJV]) The Psalms of David are full of the lamentations and the cry for God's prompt deliverance. Yet Christians can find in the darkest hour the solace of their faith in the ultimate sovereignty of God, and permit themselves to look beyond, and far deeper than the "facts and realities" that appear on the surface of things and that impress their secular compatriots. And this faith is neither naiveté, nor "other worldliness", but is based on a deeper awareness of the nature of the world God has created, and of the internal contradictions inherent in every evil and oppressive system. They call to mind the reality - that the arrogance of power is often a prelude to its downfall.

History is full of examples of tyrants and oppressors who appeared invincible only a short time before their downfall. In retrospect, the end of the Shah of Iran, of the African dictator Bosaka, of the apartheid regime in South Africa, or of the totalitarian regimes behind the Iron Curtain, all appear logical and inevitable, yet they all caught the experts and the pundits by surprise. Recently, in our own context, the Intifada broke out and stirred the conscience of the whole world totally unexpectedly. It occurred precisely when, as now, the situation of the Palestinians appeared most desperate and hopeless. While no one can predict precisely where, when or how "salvation" in our context will arrive, yet we do not give up that hope. In the meanwhile much solace can be gained from the breakdown of many of the myths surrounding the creation, nature and policies of the state of Israel, and in the deep and genuine heart searching carried out by Israelis: no longer snugly comfortable with the

self justifications concerning the creation of their state, or the present policies of its government.

It is therefore extremely profound, meaningful, and revolutionary for the Palestinian Christian Church in the Holy Land to continue to proclaim today the Easter message it has proclaimed throughout the ages: "Christ is Risen." "He is risen indeed."

Jonathon Kuttab is a lawyer, co-founder of the human rights organizations Al-Haq and the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners. He is a member of the Board of Sabeel.

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From Bypass Roads to the Way of the Cross

by Dianne Roe

Ash Wednesday, February 25, 1998

I came home last night from Beit Ummar where fellow Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) member Pierre Shantz and I had met with members of the Abu Maria family. Last October in the space of a few hours the Israeli army demolished the homes of two of the Abu Maria sons. The rubble in the background bespoke of the shattered hopes and dreams of one family.

From Beit Ummar junction on road 60 I took a taxi. Along road 60 even in the dark I could see the heaps of concrete of other recently demolished houses, and I could make out the forms of the structures still standing. Dozens of these have demolition orders. Along road 60, in Beit Ummar, in Halhul, in Hebron, in Sa'ir, Palestinian family land has been confiscated and permits to build denied. In 70% of the West Bank (in what is known as Area C), families who own land must appeal to the Israeli occupation forces to get a permit to build a house. Permits are routinely denied. Like the brothers in the Abu Maria family their homes are vulnerable to demolition.

I passed by the sign that pointed toward Karme Tsur, the Israeli settlement between Halhul and Beit Ummar. I remembered that three weeks earlier there had been another settlement expansion onto village land, this one sanctioned by the Israeli government. With an announcement in the newspaper and the movement of a fence, Beit Ummar families had lost more of their land.

I looked out on the farmers' fields and grape vineyards and saw how trees had been uprooted in places, and entryways had been bulldozed or fenced off, separating the farmer from his land.

Road 60 is one of several bypass roads throughout the West Bank. It is the "way" of the Israeli settlers who must get from one settlement to another or to their destination in Jerusalem. Road 60 is the "way" of security - a security that demands separation from the "other". The security of the bypass road is the security of domination, of containment, of military might and violence.

As I left road 60 and re-entered Hebron, I wondered how I could learn to leave behind my own personal road 60, my own personal need for security. How could I find the "way" of the cross?

Back in Hebron I reread a passage from Ched Myers' *Say to This Mountain* on taking up the cross: "The call to follow, then, is a call to walk in a path of radical love that challenges oppressive power structures."

How can we find the "way" of the cross in the Middle East? The way of the cross is the way of peace; yet the peace process has only legitimized oppressive structures. The way of the cross is the way of justice; but here the justice system is unjust.

I remembered the Abu Maria families with whom I had visited earlier in the evening. I felt something of the "way" of the cross in my encounter with their intense suffering. How can we challenge the oppressive power structures that rob families of hope for the future? We must exit road 60 to rebuild the crossroads where the farmers plant vines and fig trees. We must climb over fences. We must resist the structures of oppression. We must challenge both the "peace process" and the "justice system" when they become part of the system of subjugation.

And we must find our security in that radical love that Jesus exemplified for us when he faced the cross and gave up the security represented by the bypass road.

Dianne Roe is a member of [Christian Peacemaker Teams \(CPT\)](#), living and working in Hebron.

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Photo Exhibit Bookings

Locally:

April: Ramallah.

May: Shafa 'Amr, Ramallah, Nazareth, Haifa, and Majd al-Kurum.

June: Jerusalem, Bethlehem.

Friends of *Sabeel*, North America: see FOSNA.

Friends of *Sabeel*, UK:

May 2: At Westminster Cathedral .

May 16-19: Church of Scotland Assembly, and the University of Edinburgh.

See [Forthcoming Events](#) for more details

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News in Brief

50 Years On - Let Us Remember

Deir Yassin was a Palestinian village of 600 people, location: 2 miles West of Jerusalem. On 9 April, 1948, Jewish fighting men from the Irgun and Stern groups attacked Deir Yassin and massacred about 245 men, women and children. (Jewish dead - 4 men.) Here are two very different Jewish views of this tragedy: Menachem Begin sent the fighters this message:

"Accept my congratulations on this splendid act of conquest ... We are all proud of the excellent leadership and fighting spirit in this great attack ... Tell the soldiers: You have made history in Israel with your attack and your conquest. Continue this until victory. As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy. God, God, Thou has chosen us for conquest."

But Meir Pa'il, a Jewish intelligence officer and eye-witness, described the atrocity in these words:

"It was a massacre in hot blood; it was not preplanned. It was an outburst from below with no one to control it. Groups of men went from house to house looting and shooting, shooting and looting. From within the houses you could hear the cries of Arab women, Arab elders, Arab kids. I tried to find the commanders, but I did not succeed. I tried to shout and to hold them, but they took no notice. Their eyes were glazed. It was as if they were drugged, mentally poisoned, in ecstasy."

Getting a true perspective on this terrible episode will be the subject of a conference to be held under the title "Deir Yassin Remembered". The conference will take place in Jerusalem; because of religious holidays, it has been set for April 14.

By the way, a sign has appeared recently at a new building site in West Jerusalem. It reads: "Menachem Begin Heritage Center".

(Source for the quotes above: Original source - *Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*, a book by David Shipler. Quoted in - *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, a book by Audeh Rantisi and Ralph Beebe.)

The Losses Continue

Only last month (on March 10), three Palestinian workers lost their lives, being shot at a checkpoint just outside Hebron. In the ensuing clashes in Hebron, a 13 year-old boy was rendered brain-dead - also by gunfire from Israel's armed forces.

Signs of Hope

There is no shortage of "bad news". So it seems particularly important at this time to make an effort and consciously bring to mind the Good News. This is what we try to do in **News in Brief** (please let us know whether we're succeeding or not!)

1. Great controversy is stirring Israel as its Channel 1 television service airs a 26-part series: *Tekuma* ("Establishment"), about the creation of the state of Israel. The series boldly presents a revisionist historical view admitting the truth about the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948, and debunks the myth that they fled or were induced by their leaders to voluntarily evacuate.

While some Israelis opposed the airing of the series, fearing the weakening of Israeli propaganda, others insisted that Israelis should be mature enough to face the truth about their country. They argued that the youth in particular wanted the real facts and were struggling with the meaning and consequences of 1948 for them.

2. When British Foreign Minister Robin Cook visited a planned Israeli housing development on occupied land at Jabal Abu Ghneim (Har Homa), media coverage focused on crowds of enraged Israeli right-wingers hurling insults - "Anti-Semite!"

So it was good to receive a report including the following quote - from an article by Michelle Landsberg in *The Toronto Star* of March 28:

"What you didn't see: a group of women who greeted him enthusiastically. They were *The Jerusalem Link* - a joint Palestinian and Israeli women's peace network. For four years, the women have lobbied and demonstrated together, working toward full human and political rights for both peoples, with two states and Jerusalem as a capital for both.

"The women thanked Cook for the European Commission's efforts for peace in the Middle East and told him of their own "tireless grassroots efforts" for the same goal. "This is the warmest welcome I've had today", Cook said smilingly as he greeted the women personally."

The quote concludes with:

"If women's and grassroots' groups were considered as newsworthy as a bunch of extremist and violent men, the whole world would look different."

3. The popular US children's television program *Sesame Street* will be shown in homes here, starting April 1.

The fruit of a pioneering joint project between Al Quds Modern Media (Palestinian station) and Channel 2 (Israeli) educational channel, the first series of 20 programs will be broadcast - in Arabic as *Shari' Simsim*, and in Hebrew as *Rechov Sumsum*.

In addition to the episodes tailored especially for Palestinian and Jewish children respectively, there will be "crossover" programs. In these, Jewish and Palestinian children invite each other round, and get to know each other. These episodes then, will be in both Hebrew and Arabic, and sub-titles will also be shown.

The aim of the project is to educate children in the way of peace; it is unique in that it offers a model for cooperation with integrity and mutual respect, rather than tokenism and stereotyping.

"Tent City" Revisited

On February 26, 1998, we at *Sabeel* got an urgent phone call from MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) to the effect that the residents at Tent City had been threatened with eviction and could be forcibly removed any day. (Please see [Issue 10 of Cornerstone](#) for the original article on Camp Sumood/Tent City.)

Four of us went over to the camp, and found that the people there were indeed under pressure to leave. The municipality had "discovered" that part of the land on which the camp was sited had been earmarked, years ago, for building. A center for the disabled, and a school had been planned, but nothing more had been done about these. The urgency to get the people out was built around these pre-existing plans.

Ashraf Abu Turk (age 11) delights in the second "snow day" this year - Camp Sumood, March 18.

As a result of some careful mediation between the Tent City residents and the municipality, a month's grace was given, and in that time, the majority of the camp-dwellers have found other accommodation. However, by March there were still some 15 families stuck there, with nowhere to go. We hoped that a constructive solution would be found in their case also.

Readers will remember that Camp Sumood sprang up as a protest against the iniquitous Jerusalem ID card scheme. As you can see, the steam was taken out of the brave protesters, when they faced the very real threat of being made entirely homeless. Please remember these people in your prayers.

In a further turn of the screw, according to the *Palestine Report* of March 6, Israel's Interior Ministry has refused Jerusalem ID cards to "thousands" of Jerusalem residents. It is not clear whether the agency has stopped issuing ID cards altogether, neither was a reason given.

On April 1 the Israeli powers cleared the camp - no one is left there now.

Campaign for Secure Dwellings

The hardship created by the demolition of Palestinian homes by Israeli powers is ongoing. But a way has been found whereby those who are concerned about this can help. Three bodies united in December to launch a program to support the affected families.

CPT (Christian Peacemaker Teams) are calling this the Campaign for Secure Dwellings (CSD). They are working in conjunction with the Israel Committee against Home Demolition (the "Matching Program" is their term for this), and the Palestinian Land Defense Committee.

Families here who are at risk of demolition, or who have had their home demolished, are matched with caring families/individuals here and abroad.

If you are interested in this program, may we encourage you to go ahead - with the support of your local congregation, synagogue or mosque? For the next step you should contact CPT at:

*CPT, P.O. Box 6508,
Chicago, IL 60680, USA.
Tel: (312) 455-1199
E-mail: cpt@igc.org
WWW: <http://www.prairienet.org/cpt>*

By the way, isn't it great to see "business as usual" at CPT, in spite of death threats?

Demolitions in the Galilee

Three homes were demolished in Um al Sehali - an "unrecognized" village in the Galilee, April 2. The homes were owned by three brothers of an extended Bedouin family which has lived in the village for decades. (See "[Unrecognized Villages](#)").

Two days later, when a start was made on rebuilding the houses, this constructive activity drew a large body of police. Putting the village under siege, the police began a "vicious assault" on the people there, resulting in the admission of four to hospital in "serious condition".

A general strike was called for Monday, April 6 as an Israeli Arab response to the above excesses.

Source - *Ha'aretz*, April 7.

The Re-builders and CPT

In Qilqis, South of Hebron, the family of Yussef and Zuhur al-Atrash are trying to rebuild the house that Israel's armed forces destroyed on March 3. CPTers, Palestinians, Israelis, and other peacelovers have been helping them. Rebuilding was on hold for a while, when on March 22, four of the family were arrested (in a violent operation) by the armed forces.

Zuhur and her 17 year-old daughter Manal were released the same day (as a result of her beating, Manal needed medical treatment on three occasions since). The father and eldest son Hussam, were kept in prison a week, fined 1,500 shekels (\$420) and put on 3 years probation.

CPT are trying to maintain a continuous presence at the al Atrash home. They have been greatly encouraged - in CPT's own words:

"About 15 Israelis from Peace Now and Rabbis for Human Rights visited the al Atrash family and helped with some of the rebuilding work." (Friday, March 20)

The next Friday, about 70 Israelis came. People from the constituent groups of the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions helped build a dividing wall inside the new house.

Scottish Palestinian Forum

The Scottish Palestinian Forum got off to a great start with its first meeting on Sunday March 22. Despite a rugby match between Scotland and England, over 100 attended the meeting, including both Christian and Muslim Palestinians. The meeting opened with a short play and *dabke* dance by Palestinians living in Scotland, followed by a report from four participants in the *Sabeel* conference and from Janet Davies, coordinator of Friends of *Sabeel* UK.

The Very Rev. Robert Davidson explained the formation of the forum as well as giving details of meetings planned in May - at which Marc Ellis, Yasser Suleiman, and Naim Ateek would speak. We are grateful for all the effort put into forming this new and exciting branch of support, and are again overwhelmed with the loving support of all our brothers and sisters around the world.

Iraq - Divine Deliverance?

A further tragedy in Iraq - the bombing of that beleaguered country by US and British forces - was averted in February. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan certainly did a wonderful job. He should be congratulated for defusing the crisis, and for returning to the UN its responsibility for international conflict resolution.

We hope and pray that he will not stop there, but will go on and extend the UN role to the peacemaking so sorely needed between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matt. 5:9

Israelis Learning Arabic

A 15-member delegation of Israeli intellectuals are attending an Arabic language course at the International Jerusalem Hotel in Gaza. The members of the delegation are also peace activists in various movements inside Israel and are continuing with the course despite the opposition of the Israeli government.

(Source - *Palestine Report*, March 6, 1998 - quoted verbatim.)

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Forthcoming Events

Sabeel Center:

April 20: Lecture by the Rev. Dr. Tom Wright.

April 30: Ecumenical Easter dinner.

May 22-1 June: Seminar for a group from Wales.

Sabeel at Nazareth:

May: Ecumenical dinner.

Friends of *Sabeel*, North America: see FOSNA.

Friends of *Sabeel*, UK:

May 2: An Ecumenical Palestinian Remembrance Service at Westminster Cathedral, to commemorate Fifty Years of the Palestinian Al Nakba (Catastrophe), with Canon Naim Ateek, Director, *Sabeel* Center, preaching.

May 16-19: Prof. Marc Ellis will be lecturing at Oxford, Cambridge, the Selly Oak Federation of Colleges, and the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Canon Naim Ateek and Prof. Yasir Suleiman will be sharing lectures with Prof. Ellis.

Note - for Photo Exhibit bookings, [click here](#).

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Water in Israel-Palestine - a Palestinian Perspective

by Jad Isaac

Available Water

Total water resources are made up of two components - surface water and groundwater. Firstly, surface water: The Sea of Galilee is the major regional water reservoir in the Jordan River basin. It has a storage capacity of 4,000 million cubic meters (mcm) or about 1 trillion US gallons, and receives an average annual replenishment of about 840 mcm. The Yarmouk River is also an integral part of the Jordan River basin. Its headwaters join the Jordan River 10 km (6 miles) below the Sea of Galilee.

Groundwater: this is the most important source of fresh water supply in the area, and consists of the main West Bank aquifer systems. Around 600 mcm of the annual rainfall is estimated to infiltrate the soil to replenish the aquifers. In addition there is the Gaza Strip aquifer - each year about 40 mcm of rain percolates to recharge the shallow aquifer underlying the Strip.

Water allocations

Israel currently has control over a major part of the Jordan basin waters. Israel, Syria, and Jordan siphon 450 mcm annually from the Yarmouk River, but Israel siphons a further 470 mcm from the Sea of Galilee. This reduces the downstream Jordan to a fetid trickle.

Following the 1967 occupation, Israel applied stringent policies that prevented Palestinians from fully utilizing the West Bank's groundwater. These included the expropriation of wells belonging to absentee owners, denial of granting permissions for new wells, and imposing rigorous water quotas. The result can be seen in the following chart.

Extraction of water from groundwater basins in the West Bank

(In millions of cubic meters - mcm - per year)

In Gaza, ground water is the only source of fresh water. It is estimated to have a potential of 65 mcm per year. At present though, more than 100 mcm a year are being pumped from the shallow aquifers, resulting in the gradual invasion of seawater.

In sum, due to the restrictions on water allocations imposed by Israel, the water situation in Palestine is approaching a critical phase - threatening the livelihood of the Palestinian population and hindering economic development. Clearly, Palestinian water rights should be put on a more just footing.

Water and agriculture

Despite the fact that the Middle East is a water-scarce region, over 70% of the water resources are used in agriculture. Comparing the use of irrigation country by country in the region, we see that Israel has the most land under irrigation - even more than countries (such as Lebanon and Syria) that are rich in water resources. Proper water management is therefore essential for Israel, to ensure optimum utilization of this valuable resource. Suitable measures are - reduction of irrigated areas, development of rain fed farming, cultivating low-water consuming crops, and cutting out water subsidies. It has been estimated that in this way Israel could conserve up to 500 mcm of water annually.

Water Supply and Demand

A serious discrepancy exists between the amounts of water supplied to Palestinians compared to Israelis. The average Israeli uses 370 cubic meters (cm) per year, a Palestinian uses 107-156 cm/year, while a Jewish settler uses 650-1,714 cm/year. This discrepancy is not limited to water quantities, but extends to water pricing also. Israelis pay \$0.40 per cm for domestic water and only \$0.16 per cm for agricultural water, whereas Palestinians pay a standard rate of \$1.20 for piped water. There would seem to be real scope then for a re-allocation of this vital resource, between the two main communities. (Please see following chart)

Differences in Water Consumption Between Israelis and Palestinians

(In cubic meters - cm- per year)

Re-allocation, by itself however, would be an insufficient means of averting conflict over water resources. Due to the growing need for water to meet the needs of an increasing population and standards of living in the Middle East, an increase in supply relative to demand must be achieved. This can be done either through enhancing

supplies or reducing demand (conservation), or through a combination of both approaches.

Water and the Final Status Map

Israel's plans for the division of West Bank water resources under the Oslo Final Status Agreement, can be gathered from a strategic map published in *Ma'arev*. In its December 4, 1997 edition, the Israeli newspaper printed a map combining features of three maps devised previously (the Allon-Plus map, the Sharon map, and the Security Interests map). Going by this strategic map, 60% of the West Bank would be under Israeli control, leaving 40% under control of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

However the 40% would be divided into three separate and distinct cantons. There would be no free and unencumbered access between the Southern canton and the two Northern cantons. No access at all to the Jordan Valley - the 'food basket' of the West Bank. Clearly, a Palestinian state could not be operated in such an environment.

Regarding the water issue in particular, Palestinians would not have access to enough water for domestic, agricultural and industrial needs. There would be no physical access to the Jordan River Basin - even though Palestinians are a riparian of this international water system. Under the Johnston Plan of 1955, a West Ghour Canal was to be built, to provide Palestinians with an equitable share of water from the Jordan. But where is the West Ghour Canal in this new map? Again, the map has been so drawn that the vast majority of West Bank Palestinian wells fall within the areas designated for Israeli control.

In summary, under Final Status arrangements as envisaged in the published map, Palestinians are deprived of their own natural resources, even though these are crucial to the building of a sustainable future. Such a status directly contradicts the spirit of Oslo ('land for peace') as spelled out in the Oslo II Interim Agreement, as well as defying international resolutions - UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

Water and Peace

It is now more than six years since the initial peace conference at Madrid was inaugurated. Israel and Jordan have since resolved their water dispute based on mutual recognition of the "*rightful allocations*" of both parties from the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers as well as from the Araba/Arava ground waters.

The first principle in Article 40 of the Oslo II agreement - dealing with water and sewage states: "*Israel recognizes the Palestinian water rights in the West Bank. These will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations and settled in the Permanent*

Status Agreement relating to the various water resources." There is no doubt that this may be considered as an important breakthrough - it is the first time that Israel has recognized Palestinian water rights.

Integrated Management of Water Resources

A Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) has been recently established and is mandated to deal with all water related issues, including waste water. A Palestinian Water Council which comprises representatives from the ministries of agriculture, local government, planning and international cooperation, in addition to the PWA and universities, has also been formed. It remains for Israel to transfer its control of West Bank water to the new authority.

So far, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have not seen the Oslo II measures translated into water in their taps, but are witnessing severe water shortages - and Gaza Palestinians do not have access to clean water.

The following steps would help resolve the situation.:

1. Israel to freely provide Palestinians with water data. It is regrettable that although Israel has committed herself to such an undertaking, she has so far done very little.
2. Israel to satisfy Palestinians' immediate needs for water. Assuming 50cm/year per Palestinian as a minimum requirement for domestic needs, then there should be an additional allocation of 70 mcm/year.
3. Israel should lift the restrictions imposed on Palestinians - so that they can properly utilize land and water resources, especially in the Jordan Valley. Israelis and Palestinians should start work rightaway on clearing the heavily mined areas in preparation for this. The international community is asked to assist in this task.
4. Israel, Jordan, and Palestine need to make a start on constructing the West Ghour Canal, as in the agreed-upon Johnston plan.
5. All the countries that are riparians of the Jordan River basin need to cooperate in forming a basin-wide regional authority.
6. A mechanism must be established to ensure that Israel-Palestinian negotiations on Palestinian water rights get moving. So far, there has been no progress on this front and it seems as if Israel is attempting to impose its will on the Palestinians.

The potential does exist for agreeing on cooperative solutions to the water crisis. And finding a common understanding of water issues in the Middle East would go far to

enhance the prospect of attaining stability in the region. A program based on the above steps would pave the way for resolving current tensions over this precious resource. Unless the political will to move in this direction is found, the real accomplishments of the last few years will evaporate, and regional problems will increase.

Jad Isaac, PhD, is the director of [Applied Research Institute Jerusalem \(ARIJ\)](#).

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The Gift of Water - a Symbol of Grace and Power

by Naim Ateek

Sabeel held ecumenical Bible studies this past Lent. Bearing in mind the water situation in Israel-Palestine, we tried to explore the theme of Water in the Gospel of John. The following four texts were selected, and formed the framework of the first Bible study, which in turn became the background for this article.

It was noted that Water was a particular theme of John's Gospel. There are 21 references to it in the Greek original - more than in any other New Testament book.

John 1:33. *"I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'"*

For John the Baptist, the baptism with water at the Jordan symbolized at least two things: firstly, physical and spiritual cleansing, and secondly, preparedness and commitment to a new and better life that would welcome the coming of God's kingdom into one's own life. Christians believe that although Jesus did not need to be baptized with a baptism for repentance, he voluntarily submitted to it since he was doing it vicariously on behalf of sinful humankind. In that sense, the baptism of Jesus is very much linked with his redemptive death on the cross. Moreover, Jesus' baptism was manifestly of the Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives empowers, purifies, and guides us. The Spirit not only points us to what is just, right, and good, but gives us the strength to do it.

John 4:13-15. *"Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'*

The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'" And:

John 7:38-39. *"... and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"*

There are many references in the Old Testament to water. To mention two examples: The Psalmist used water as a metaphor of his longing for God, *"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God"* (42:1). Amos used it to express his concept of a consistent and permanent justice, *"Let justice run like water and righteousness like an everflowing stream"* (5:24).

The words of Jesus in the above text reflect a messianic claim on his part. Some prophets of the Old Testament had the vision that only God possesses the living fountain which will quench the thirst of people (Isaiah 49:10; Psalm 36:9; Jeremiah 17:13). There is certainly a fundamental truth in the fact that in every person there is a thirst for what is truly satisfying. We all need water that quenches our physical thirst, and many of us are striving for the right of all people to have their just share of water. But beyond that we work for satisfying the deeper longings of people. Genuine and lasting satisfaction are found in the knowledge and love of God. God alone can quench the inner thirst of people.

God is the true fountain of living water. When the life giving water of God quenches our inner thirst and fills us, we then become channels of living water to others. Indeed, it is the knowledge and love of God which ultimately make us truly human and open the possibility before us to love our neighbor as ourselves. This has practical implications in our daily lives here, for without an equitable share of water resources between Palestinians and Israelis the conflict will continue. Unfortunately, many times the physical thirst can stand in the way of seeking the quenching of the spiritual thirst and leads to more conflict and turmoil.

John 19:34. *"Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out."*

Various interpretations regarding this text have been offered over the years. Some of these are:

1. Water stands for the gift of the spirit which Jesus can give. In other words, from his death flows living water which will be a source of life for all who believe. The blood stands for the fact that Jesus died as the Paschal lamb. Just as the blood flowed out of the slain lamb, so it flowed out of Jesus Christ who was slain for the salvation of the world.

2. The reference is to the baptism by water, and the baptism by blood (which martyrs for the faith will experience).
3. Some physicians have suggested that Jesus' heart was ruptured, and the flow of water and blood as a purely natural phenomenon cannot be ruled out. Jesus may have died of a broken heart.
4. There is an analogy with Adam and Eve. As Eve was taken from the side of Adam, so the New Eve, the Church emerged from the side of Jesus. The reference to the water and the blood relate to Baptism and the Eucharist. The first is administered by water and stands for the cleansing grace of God in Jesus Christ and our adoption as children into God's family. The latter stands for the cleansing blood of Christ which was shed on the cross for our salvation and liberation, and gives spiritual sustenance in the Eucharist. John saw the water and the blood representing the grace and power of God flowing from Jesus Christ in his death and empowering those who believe as they journey on in life. And so the cross and death of Christ lead us to Easter and to a life of victory over evil and death.

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, director of Sabeel, is author of Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation

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"Unrecognized" Villages

With so many reports coming out of the West Bank and Gaza, describing the situation there, it is as well to remember the situation the other side of the Green Line. It may not be generally known that even within "Israel proper", the living is hard for a substantial number of people.

For example, there are roughly 75,000 Palestinians (Arab Israelis) living in 149 "unrecognized" villages in Israel. Officially these places do not exist - you will not find them on the state's maps. As a result Israel refuses to provide the villagers with basic services such as running water, sanitation, health services, electricity, access roads. With an average of 10 people per household, it is easy to see why recent US visitors to one of these villages described the situation as "worse than a refugee camp."

The rate of emigration by these villagers is nil. Isn't that amazing, in view of the tough conditions endured by these communities? Let us therefore look closer at the situation.

How did these villages get to be "unrecognized"? Most of them are older than the new state of Israel; later in 1948 a smaller number of new villages were created, as a response to the mass displacement of Palestinians which was carried out by the new state. However, the 1965 "Planning and Construction Law" excluded many of these Arab villages from the plans laid out for the country. These villages then, are built on what Israel has defined as agricultural land. The houses in these villages are therefore illegal, under Israel's chosen definition. (There is heavy irony in the official language: these inhabitants are said to have "moved beyond the boundaries laid down and to have stolen land from the State.") The result of this is that most of the villagers have to live under the constant threat of demolition orders. When a demolition order is issued, the owner is charged with carrying out the order himself, or else he is arrested. If he refuses to demolish his house, the authorities do this for him and then charge him for their costs.

The Fight for Justice

The Arab villagers together with some of their Jewish neighbors, formed The Association of Forty in 1988 in a joint struggle to obtain their rights and have their villages recognized. Fighting through the Israeli courts and legal system, they have achieved some success. Eight villages in the north of Israel were recognized. This happened under the last Israeli government, headed by Yitzhak Rabin and then

Shimon Peres. However, these limited moves forward have ground to a halt - the Netanyahu government has frozen all further steps towards recognizing more villages. And some Ministers have even called for recognition of the above eight villages to be canceled.

The Government "Solution"

The government's policy for dealing with these inconvenient villages is simple: Get rid of their inhabitants. Putting the eight villages back into unrecognized status is in line with this aim. In addition, the following measures are adopted:

1. Denial of basic services. (There are cases where this deprivation bites especially deep - in those villages which have services such as water, electricity and sewer lines passing through them, to serve nearby Jewish settlements. Still inaccessible to the Arab villages along the way.) Regarding the lack of health facilities, the situation of the villagers is particularly bad in the Negev.
2. Closing of existing schools, under the pretext that they are too small.
3. A ban on all new construction, including the extension of homes already in place. Going even further - residents are not allowed to reinforce the foundations of houses in need of these repairs.
4. Putting families under permanent threat of house demolition.
5. Handing out eviction orders, and other charge sheets, to the villagers.
6. Demolishing of houses which have been standing for many years.

A Just Solution

The Association of Forty commissioned a plan for the villages. This plan was based on field surveys, and takes into accounts the needs and wishes of the people living in these unrecognized communities.

Accepted by all parties, the plan provides for most of the villages to be incorporated as a neighborhood within the nearest locality. The balance to be either recognized as independent villages or included in a new locality combining a number of small villages.

Some progress has been made toward this goal: The International Court of Justice in the Hague has ruled that all the "unrecognized villages" should be connected to the water system and that the villages, and their residents, should be included in planning programs.

Can you help - to ensure that the Israeli government does actually move on this matter? We are after all only asking that the powers fulfill their legal obligations, as laid down by the International Court, together with other modest proposals. Namely that Israel refrain from using demolition, eviction and land confiscation as a policy against these downtrodden Israeli citizens.

Faxes, e-mails and phone calls to ministers or embassies will have an effect on Israel's policies in this area! You can reach them as follows:

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu: Fax: +972-2-566 4838; E-mail: pm@pmo.gov.il

Israeli Foreign Minister: Fax: +972-2-530 3506; E-mail: ask@israel-info.gov.il

Embassies of Israel:

Ottawa: Tel. (613) 567-6450; Fax: 613-237-8865; E-mail: embisrott@cyberus.ca

Washington: Tel. (202) 364-5500; Fax: (202) 363-4156; E-mail: ask@israelemb.org

London: Tel. (0171) 957-9500

(Sources - the US visitors, CAABU and The Association of Forty.)

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Snapshots of Our Activities

Vatican:Israel Agreement

In an attempt to clarify pending questions about the latest Vatican:Israel agreement, *Sabeel* invited the Apostolic Delegate, Mgr. Andrea Di Montezomolo to a round table talk. (Note - strictly, the "Legal Personality Agreement" - signed November 10, 1997 is between the Holy See [not the Vatican] and the state of Israel.)

The round table took place January 22, when an ecumenical group of about twenty people met together at the *Sabeel* center. They listened carefully as the Nuncio explained that bringing about this legal agreement had been a personal work of his over many years. The pact would protect the legal status of Catholic properties in Israel. Round table members expressed their concern that the pact does not relate in any way to the hardship of Palestinians' daily lives under Israeli occupation. In answer he explained that this is only one step - further agreements are hoped for. The aim being to complete the process of securing legal rights for Catholics here. He invited other denominations to follow suit.

It is important to point out that many Palestinians still believe no agreements should have been forged between the Vatican and the state of Israel, before the achievement of a just peace.

Relief! A weekend in the Galilee

With the last conference participants leaving the country and with our own move back to Jerusalem, the *Sabeel* family - Board members and staff - decided to get away from it all for the week-end of February 20-22. The Sea of Galilee Centre in Tiberias was a warm, picturesque refuge, an ideal place for a retreat. Time flew by too quickly, between pleasant walks and a picnic, meditation and laughter, a special worship service by the seashore. This was all mingled with some work also. Being joined by *Sabeel* family members from the Galilee, it was a timely occasion for evaluating the conference and brainstorming about the future of *Sabeel*. Rejuvenated and filled with plans and hope, *Sabeel* is preparing to meet new, post-conference challenges!

The Sabeel retreat - lunch beside the Sea of Galilee - a change of pace!

Conference follow-up meetings

One of the effects of the *Sabeel* conference was that many local new 'friends' rallied to the cause; without their help, the conference would not have been what it was. In two simple gatherings, we at *Sabeel* sought to show our thanks for this.

The Bethlehem-based volunteers met there March 7, at the Women's Union. (This same society had provided conference lunch boxes and hosted two of the Friday sessions.) Over 60 people were able to socialize, to ask questions about *Sabeel*, and to discuss possible ways of furthering involvement and co-operation between the various grassroots and church-related bodies.

March 11 was beautifully sunny in Jerusalem, and so we met under the olive trees in the *Sabeel* garden that day. About 40 people joined in a real meeting of hearts and minds., The emphasis for all concerned was - how to build on the momentum generated by the conference. Many good ideas were discussed, and it remains to be seen how *Sabeel* can translate the best of these into concrete developments. We believe that there is a key role for *Sabeel* to play in building human bridges of understanding and unity as we all work for a just peace.

Sabeel in Nazareth

On March 29, *Sabeel* organized a tour and visits to villages affected by the events of 1948. In spite of the very bad weather, 55 people took part in: visiting and worshipping with the Maronite community at Jish, walking on the hallowed ground of Kufr Bir'am, meeting the St. Joseph Sisters at Mi'ilia and Fr. Elias Chacour at Ibillin.

One feature of the tour was the way it introduced *Sabeel* to many who had not previously known of its work.

A Deluge of Mail!

Over 160 envelopes all coming from the UK - all addressed to "Nora Carmi, The Administrator"? Most contained a particular postcard of the Dome of the Rock - but not one of the usual cards seen in souvenir shops in Jerusalem. Taken from a special angle by the Rev. Peter Brain, the beautiful monument seems to touch the sky, sending out its own message - reinforcing the words of support written on the reverse. One special letter threw light on the puzzle.

The cards turned out to be "Action Cards" sent by members of the Baptist Church, Christians Aware, the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland, and the United Reformed Church, to be a live expression of solidarity with the people here. The Ecumenical Card Scheme aims at raising awareness of different issues including: the environment, child labor, ethical tourism, and peace and reconciliation. In March, the focus was on Jerusalem and the Rev. Peter Brain who attended the *Sabeel* Conference in February, encouraged people to write through *Sabeel* to their fellow Palestinian brothers and sisters. The aim of the Action Cards is to seek understanding of the injustice and to foster the lifting up of prayers for a just peace for all.

To each and every one of you - those who initiated the scheme, and those who wrote messages - on behalf of all those who pray and work for a just peace here, we at *Sabeel* express our deep appreciation for your concern and your care. We are deeply moved; we would have liked to print many more of your messages but we can only print the following quotes:

"It saddens me that there is so much unrest and division when so much was promised for all. To live in peace is surely the desire of all peoples, whether Christian, Jew or Muslim - or no religion."

"May your work in the love of Christ enable bridges to be built as The Gospel Message enlarges common humanity and reduces the importance of nation states."

We pray that it (The Holy Land) may become just that, a land of peace before too long ."

Prinity De Alwis Jayasinghe, a 16 year-old student from Chelmsford concludes her message with this verse:

Whenever we are troubled
And Life has lost its song
It's God testing us with burdens
Just to make our spirit strong.

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1998 *Sabeel* "Wish List"

We're very glad about all the peacemakers who have joined us recently. However, we find that *Sabeel's* office needs have grown as a result! We therefore offer our "Wish List" - if any of our readers feels moved to give one/toward one of these, that would be great! The items fall under five headings:

1. Networking our computers - our rapidly-expanding mailing list consists of several databases on various computers. With a network, we could focus on a single database.
2. Two new desktop computers.
3. One new laser printer.
4. Three filing cabinets - to cope with the growing volume of paper.
5. Van (or car).

We thank you in advance, for prayerfully considering these gifts. But most of all, we thank God for your ongoing support of *Sabeel*, and for the solidarity you bring to the movement for a just peace