**Being a Palestinian Christian Woman in Palestine and Israel**

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**Cedar Duaybis**

Born in Haifa in 1935, Cedar Duaybis fled to Nazareth in 1948, where she grew up as an “internal refugee” within Israel. She is a founding member of Sabeel (Arabic: “The Way”), an ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, and a member of its executive committee. She is a retired school teacher who spent most of her life supporting her husband’s ministry as a clergyman of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Jerusalem inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories. She has co-authored several books with Naim Ateek.

* + - 1. Autobiography.

1. Cedar Duaybis was born in Haifa, along the road to Mount Carmel. She was born into a Palestinian Christian family. After the war of 1948, her family was forced out of Haifa and relocated in Nazareth. The “Mountain Road” which was her family’s home became “Zion Road.”
2. In the days of the British mandate, there was tension between Zionist underground forces and the Palestinians, which were exacerbated by the partition plan of 1947. Douaybis remembers Palestinian neighbors who were Jews and Arabs. She said that “Palestine” is a term not based on ethnicity or religion. Anyone who lives in Palestine – Jew, Christian, Muslim – can be a Palestinian.
3. In Duaybis’ youth, Palestinian Jews had a culture like hers. Today, she said, Israel is full of Eastern Europeans, Russians, and Americans, who no longer share the Palestinian culture.
   * + 1. The Partition Plan.
4. The Americans and British wanted to give self-determination to the Jews. Ben Gurion, in 1948, spoke the Declaration of Independence. “It was full of beautiful words,” said Duaybis, and assured Palestinians that the state would promote the development of all the peoples of Palestine.
5. In reality, however, there was a plan to rid the land of Palestinians who were not Jews. Jewish underground forces destroyed Palestinian houses. Duaybis’ family drove in an open pickup truck to Nazareth, leaving her neighbors behind.
   * + 1. Nazareth.
6. The Palestinians of Nazareth enjoyed their freedom longer than did the Palestinians of Haifa. Duaybis was in Haifa when Haifa fell to the Israeli forces in 1948, and she was in Nazareth when Nazareth fell. The people of Nazareth were spared expulsion from their homes. Ben Gurion said, “Don’t drive the people out of Nazareth,” as they were driven out of Haifa. The churches of Nazareth took in the refugees from Haifa in.
7. Gradually the Duaybis family and their fellow Anglicans were able to go back to church. Her parents were devout Christians. The children attended the best schools which were run by the missionaries.
8. In Haifa there was the “English High School,” a bit of England in the midst of Middle East. Duaybis and her fellow pupils studied about England, but did not learn about their own Arabic language. Eventually the schools had to close.
9. By consequence, the Duaybis family was cut off from its own Palestinian heritage. They were taught to read the Bible through the eyes of the British missionaries.
10. The missionaries taught the OT stories, Duaybis said, as stories from “long ago.” Ben Gurion, who led the Jews to victory, was seen as a second Joshua.
    * + 1. Whose Land Is The Land of the Bible?
11. Duaybis reported that her parents disagreed.
    * + 1. Her mother taught that the establishment of Israel was God’s plan, just as the English saw it. They prayed, “Thy will be done.”
        2. Her father, however, believed that God was a God of justice, and that the partition of the land was not correct.
12. Israel. At one time, the Duaybis family and other Palestinian Christians believed that Israel was God’s chosen people. Eventually, her father rejected this. He left the church, believing that the State of Israel was not God’s chosen people.
13. The Theological Nakba or catastrophe.

The three aspects of the Nakba.

The Human Nakba. Most Palestinians have resigned themselves to the view that not all Palestinians can come back to Israel. There are 5-6 million Palestinian refugees. The Arab initiative of 2002 sought to find a solution, and spoke of “finding a just solution accepted by both sides.” The people of Gaza people are refugees, driven there by Israel. Jordan gave its refugees the Jordanian nationality. The Palestinians are the most educated of Arab peoples, said Duaybis, and created the oil industry in the Gulf.

The Identity Nakba. Israel demolished several villages in Galilee so that it could tell Palestinians that “there was no place for them” to return to. The Sykes-Picot Agreement divided Israel and Lebanon. Two Christian villages in the area were evacuated “for security reasons” and told that they would be able to go back in two weeks. One man wrote a book “Blood Brothers.” It is a catastrophe that the Palestinians have been cut off from their roots. See Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, and Elias Chacour, *Blood Brothers: The Dramatic Story of a Palestinian Christian Working for Peace in Israel*.

The Political Nakba. The PLO agreed in 1988 to “recognize Israel.” But Israel then said, “You must recognize our *right to exist*.” Eventually, at Oslo, the PLO did recognize Israel’s “right to exist.” In Duaybis’ view, however, that is a denial of the Palestinians’ own right to exist, because if Israel exists, then the lands it took are no longer Palestinian lands. Now Palestine is asked to “recognize Israel as a Jewish State.” But the Palestinians will never do so, because as non-Jews they cannot enjoy full citizenship.

The loss of faith. As a result of the Nakba, Palestinian Christians have become unwanted strangers in their own land.

Israel’s Attitude. Duaybis said that Israel regrets that it left 160,000 Christians and Muslims in the holy land.

Theological struggle. There is a tension between European aspirations for Palestine and the way the State of Israel developed.

* + - 1. The Conflict.

1. The history of the Jewish People.

When Duaybis’ family went back to Haifa from Nazareth, they found Eastern European refugees in the family home. They, the house-sitters, had suffered.

Christian theology undeniably has been influenced by anti-semitism. The Jewish people determined that “never again” would they become a minority. They will ever relinquish their majority status. It is difficult to live as an unwanted minority, which the Jews well know.

In 1978, the Palestinians called for a single democratic state and accepted the right of Israel to exist. But this was difficult for Palestinians, who have been expropriated from their own lands.

1. The Jewish People’s “Divine Right.”
   * + 1. Israelis want both a divine right to the land, and human rights, said Duaybis. But when these are in tension, human rights have been cast aside.
       2. Israel calls itself a “Jewish State.” But this hinges on the problem of who is a Jew, which the Constitution does not define.
          1. Is it a person of Jewish ancestry? Or a person of Jewish faith? If a person believes (said Duaybis) that Jesus is the Messiah – even if he or she is of Jewish ancestry – he ceases to be a Jew.
          2. The Law of Return (1950). This law applies to Jews, but does not apply to the Duaybis family. They should have a right to return to Haifa but they are not Jewish.
       3. The Laws. There are many Israeli laws that do not apply to non-Jews.
          1. Duaybis has an Israeli passport. But she is only a half-citizen, because she is not a Jew. Certain laws do not apply to her.
          2. The non-Jews pay a price, Duaybis said, for their adjustments to the Jewish state. It is a high price because Israel’s strength and independence are not fair and are unacceptable.
       4. Israel as the State of All the Jews in the World. Netanyahu describes Israel this way. But only 20% of the world’s Jews live in Israel. Any Jews in the world have the right to return to Israel. The Duaybis family, however, is a citizen of Israel, but does not have a right to return to its home in Haifa.
2. The Communities of Palestine. What are they?

Twenty percent of Palestinians live within the State of Israel as citizens.

The people of the West Bank constitute 38% of the population. They are governed by the Palestinian Authority.

The Muslims in Jerusalem are a third group. They constitute 36% of the population of Jerusalem. They are isolated by dividing walls, and they have experienced the demolition of homes and are threatened with the withdrawal of residency rights.

Muslims in Gaza. They are another group of Palestinian refugees who live in poverty.

Refugees are a fifth and final group of Palestinians in the diaspora.

* + - 1. The Theological Nakba.

1. Finding Good News for Palestinians.
   * + 1. When Palestinians needed hope after 1948, at first they could not find it in the Bible. It seemed to them as if the Bible favored what the Israelis did to them. It was as if God approved of their catastrophe. Duaybis herself for a time threw away her faith.
       2. *Justice, and only Justice, a Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (published by Orbis in 1989) by Naim Stifan Ateek. Ateek studied in the USA and returned to discover that Palestinian Christians were abandoning their faith. He began to question whether God really approved of what had happened to Palestinians.
2. Palestine and Latin America.
   * + 1. In the Palestinian case, the same paradigms (with S. America, Africa, or Ireland) did not work. The paradigm was not the Exodus from Egypt.
       2. The story of 1948 is a story of liberation for the Jewish people. It is their Exodus. But their liberation enslaved another people.
       3. The story of Naboth’s Field in First Kings. This, said Duaybis, is a paradigm. Jezebel wanted Naboth’s vineyard. She persuaded her husband, King Ahab, to steal it. Elijah rebuked King Ahab.
3. The Liberation of Palestinians.
   * + 1. [Sabeel](http://www.sabeel.org/) is an ecumenical liberation theology center in Jerusalem. It has been established for 26 years, and has developed departments of youth, of women, and of clergy. Only 2% of people living in Israel are Christians, but they need to learn that God has a plan different than the Israeli narrative.
       2. The [Kairos Document](http://www.kairospalestine.ps/content/kairos-document), subtitled “A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of [Palestinian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Palestine) suffering,” is a call by a number of [Palestinian Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_Christians) to [Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) around the world to help fight the [Israeli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel) occupation. Kairos Palestine issued the document in December 2009 and now promotes it.
       3. Kairos and Sabeel are trying to unify 13 different Christian churches.
       4. The Kairos Document and Sabeel.
4. Western Theology, said Duaybis, is colonial theology and has promoted Western colonialism. In the theological community today, theologians are “importing” the theology of Palestine.
5. English Theologies.
   * + 1. The Church of England recently issued “[Land of Promise?](http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/media/18907/land_of_promise.pdf)” a document about Christian Zionism. It is moving away from Zionism toward a more just, merciful theology.
       2. The Church of Scotland. “[The Inheritance of Abraham?](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/14050/the_Inheritance_of_Abraham.pdf)” The promised land is not a geographical locale.
       3. Walter Brueggeman has written, “Chosen? Reading the Bible amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” (Westminster/John Knox, 2015). He was pro-Zionist in his writings, but has now changed his mind.
6. Sabeel.
   * + 1. Definition.

It means “way” in Arabic.

The “mother churches” emphasize the divinity of Jesus, but Sabeel focuses on the humanity: he was born in a time of occupation.

* + - 1. The Four Aspects of Sabeel.

Stand up for justice and truth without picking up the sword. Sabeel is nonviolent.

Rise above the ways of the world without abandoning the poor and the oppressed.

Seek the humanity of the oppressor without losing integrity to appeasement and collaboration.

Be loyal to your God without adhering to strict and narrow religion.

* + - 1. Efforts of Sabeel.

It has published a new book in Arabic about nonviolence.

“The Bible and the Palestine-Israelite Conflict” and “Challenging Christian Zionism.”

The forgotten people: Christians in Palestine.

* + - 1. Toward the Future.

1. Demographics. Jews are 51% of the population, and Palestinians are 49% and growing.
   * + 1. The Jews want a Jewish state that will not be a minority. We have to find a way for Palestians and Jews to live together.
       2. A Jewish and Democratic state will mean the end of Palestinians as a second group.
2. Israel cannot call itself a democracy, asserted Duaybis, if a large portion of its citizens who are not Jewish cannot have human rights. Today, Netanyahu is meeting with President Obama, and nothing will be done about the Israel-Palestine problem.