

Week 3: Christian Zionism Conservative and Liberal

CUFI Prayer: Does this prayer utilize more scripture from the Old or New Testament? Why might that be the case? Does the prayer mention Palestinians? If so, how are they characterized? What do the authors of this prayer believe about the character of God?

Conservative Christian Zionism: How Evangelicals Betray Christians in the Holy Land by AJ+

Key Questions	Notes
<p>What do [conservative] christian zionists believe? (1:00)</p> <p>Who is Sharon Sanders? What does she believe? About God, About Israel? (1:49)</p> <p>How do conservative christian Zionists understand the character of God?</p> <p>Why does Israel embrace conservative Christian Zionists despite their anti-semitism? (7:00 - 8:00)</p> <p>Reflect: SIT, What is something Surprising, Interesting, Troubling?</p>	

Excerpt: **Chosen? By Walter Brueggemann**

Brueggemann is a highly influential liberal theologian and old testament scholar. This excerpt is from his 2015 book Chosen? Reading the Bible Amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict written in the aftermath of the 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza. At the time, it was the most deadly assault for Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba. Before you begin it may be helpful to distinguish between three uses of the term "Israel": shorthand for biblical kingdom, theological concept, and modern settler colonial state.

In my own thinking, which is much influenced by my work as a Scripture scholar, I begin with a focus on the claim of Israel as God's chosen people. That conviction is not in doubt in the Bible. It is a theological claim, moreover, that fits with compelling persuasiveness with the reality of Jews in the wake of World War II and the Shoah [Holocaust]. Jews were indeed a vulnerable people whose requirement of a homeland was an overriding urgency. Like many Christians, progressive and evangelical, I was grateful (and continue to be so) for the founding and prospering of the state of Israel as an embodiment of God's chosen people. That much is expressed in my earlier book entitled The Land. I took "the holy land" to be the appropriate place for the chosen people of the Bible which anticipates the well-being of Israel that takes land and people together...

It is my further hope that U.S. Christians will become more vigorous advocates for human rights and will urge the U.S. government to back away from a one-dimensional ideology for the sake of political realism. It seems to many of us that the so-called two-state solution is a dead possibility, as Israel in its present stance will never permit a viable Palestinian state. We are required to do fresh thinking about human rights in the face of the capacity for power coupled with indifference and cynicism in the policies of the state of Israel, which is regularly immune to any concern for human rights.

I have not changed my mind an iota about the status of Israel as God's chosen people or about urgency for the security and well-being of the state of Israel. Certainly the Christian West continues to have much to answer for with its history of anti-Semitic attitudes and policies. None of that legacy, however, ought to cause blindness or indifference to political reality and the way in which uncriticized ideology does enormous damage to prospects for peace and for the hopes and historical possibilities of the vulnerable. The attempt to frame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of anti-Semitism is unpersuasive. More courage and honesty are required amid the realities of human domination and human suffering.

Excerpt: **Decolonizing Palestine** By **Mitri Raheb**

This excerpt is from Chapter 3 of Decolonizing Palestine. In the excerpt Raheb responds to Brueggemann.

Brueggemann unapologetically connects the biblical promise of the land with the notion of “God’s chosen people,” a theological phrase that is rooted in Christian-Zionist ideology rather than the Bible. Brueggemann then moves swiftly, perplexingly, and uncritically to connect these biblical topoi with modern Judaism and speaks about the State of Israel as “an embodiment of God’s chosen people.” [32] In his booklet, Brueggemann confuses Israel, meaning the Northern Kingdom, with Israel as a theological construct, and with the State of Israel of today. [33] Even when he appears to criticize the occupational policies of the State of Israel, Brueggemann immediately feels a need to express his unshakable support for it. He writes, “I have not changed my mind an iota about the status of Israel as God’s chosen people or about urgency for the security and well-being of the state of Israel.” [34] This is pure liberal Christian Zionism...

Based on his theological understanding of the biblical issue of the land, Brueggemann does not question Israel’s “biblical” and “unconditional” entitlement to the land; he is only troubled by the way Israel treats the Palestinians. To that end, Brueggemann finds the Israel of today to be in a similar context to that of biblical Israel at the time of Ezra. Those coming “back” to the land are developing exclusionist theologies about the other. As a result, Brueggemann sees “the question of the other” as “the interpretive key to how to read the Bible. The other can be perceived, as in the Zionist perspective, as a huge threat to the security of the state and the well-being of the holy seed. Conversely, the other can be perceived as a neighbor with whom to work at shalom.” ...

While [Brueggemann and his colleagues] are concerned about discrimination against Palestinians by the State of Israel, they discriminate against Palestinians theologically by calling them strangers despite the fact that Palestinians and their history, culture, and identity are deeply rooted in the land of Palestine. As a Palestinian whose roots are in this land, I hear the biblical call to be kind to the Israeli incomers, but I vehemently resist being called a stranger and being made an alien in my homeland or discriminated against politically by Israel or theologically by Christians or Jews. The othering of the indigenous people by calling them strangers is an important feature of settler colonialism in which the natives are extraneous and the settlers are cast as natives.

Liberal Christian Zionism: Brueggemann & Raheb

Instructions: First, read both excerpts. If comprehension questions are helpful, use the questions below. Then underline a passage that stands out to you. You will share this passage and why with your partner/group.

Optional Comprehension Questions:

- How is Brueggemann's theology different from CUFI/conservative Christian Zionists?
- Why does Brueggemann support the "founding and prospering of the state of Israel?" Does Brueggemann distinguish between Israel as a state, theological concept, and biblical entity?
- Why is it important for Raheb to distinguish between the nation state of Israel and theological concepts?
- Why does Raheb argue that Brueggemann is a "Liberal Christian Zionist?"

Underline a passage that seems the most important to help us understand liberal christian zionism. Explain why below.