

# *The Link*

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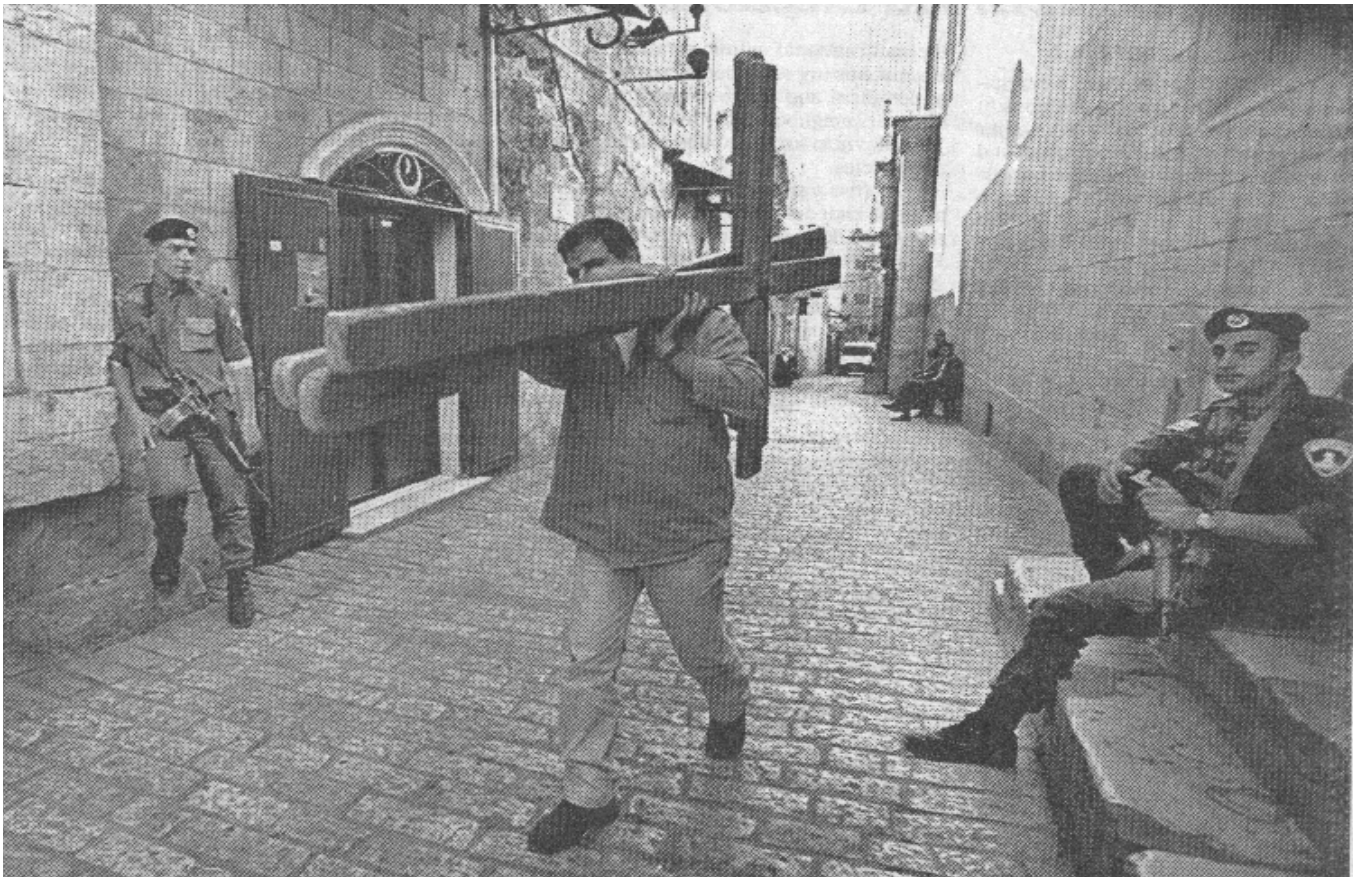
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## Today's Via Dolorosa

by

Edward J. Dillon



*Rima Castelnuovo for The New York Times, Nov. 11, 2000*

On the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, a Palestinian carries wooden crosses used by pilgrims.

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**About This  
Issue**

A parable is a short, simple story illustrating a moral or spiritual truth.

This issue, in a way, is a parable, one based on a 2,000-year-old story. Like all parables, its ultimate meaning is left up to the reader.

Our author is Edward Dillon, pastor of two country parishes in upstate New York, professor of biblical studies, prison chaplain, and, I would add, having known him for nearly half a century, a bit of a poet.

We would like to make this issue available to as many church leaders as possible.

To that end, we will mail complimentary copies to any names that are sent to us. These may be pastors, teachers, administrators, heads of special ministries, such as religious publications or television stations, etc.

You may send us the names and addresses by email ([ameu@aol.com](mailto:ameu@aol.com)), fax (212-870-2050), or phone (212-870-2053).

This is Ed's second *Link* article. In 1983, he went to the Middle East on assignment to report on the situation of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

How has the situation changed since then?

Sometimes it takes a parable to tell the truth.

John F. Mahoney  
Executive Director

**D**uring Lent, the young people in my parish prepare to reenact the Stations of the Cross. We do it on the Friday before Holy Week.

Tracing the Stations of the Cross has been a pious custom, especially for Latin Catholics, since the time of the Crusades. On walls inside most Catholic churches hang 14 iconic depictions of events that took place along the Via Dolorosa, that meandering, cobble-stone street in the walled city of Jerusalem; they are:

Pilate condemns Jesus to death (the First Station), Jesus is made to carry his cross (2<sup>nd</sup>), Jesus falls the first time (3<sup>rd</sup>), Jesus meets his sorrowful mother (4<sup>th</sup>), Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross (5<sup>th</sup>), Veronica wipes the face of Jesus (6<sup>th</sup>), Jesus falls the second time (7<sup>th</sup>), Jesus meets the sorrowing women of Jerusalem (8<sup>th</sup>), Jesus falls the third time (9<sup>th</sup>), the soldiers strip Jesus of his garments (10<sup>th</sup>), the soldiers nail Jesus to the cross (11<sup>th</sup>), Jesus dies on the cross (12<sup>th</sup>), Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and the disciple John take Jesus down from the cross (13<sup>th</sup>), Jesus is laid in the tomb (14<sup>th</sup>).

It's always interesting to see who in our parish will be Jesus, who will portray Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers, who will be Simon of Cyrene, the two Marys, and John, who will be the women of Jerusalem who weep over Jesus?

One *dramatis persona* not found in the bible but beloved by tradition is Veronica, the woman who works her way to the front of the crowd to wipe the face of Jesus free of blood and spittle.

All these roles must be filled every year and parishioners must be selected to play them.

Now I have been invited by this publication to walk along the original Via Dolorosa and to write about people I meet who remind me of those figures who found themselves on this Via Dolorosa 2,000 years ago.

## Who will be Jesus?

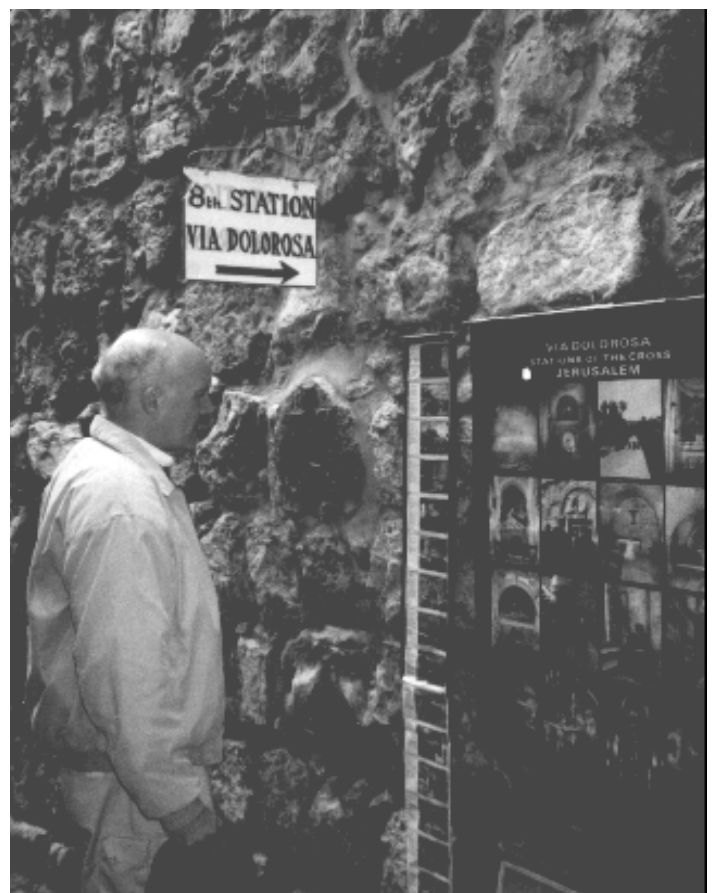
For those who come to the Holy Land with eyes to see and ears to hear, the answer is the Palestinian people.

It is the Palestinian we see stripped of his land (80% of historic Palestine has been taken from him, with the remainder still under military occupation); scourged with whips (Jewish-only roads crisscross the occupied territo-

ries creating apartheid-like prisons); emaciated (the International Red Cross reported in March 2001 that families across the West Bank are on the verge of starvation due to Israel's siege); destitute (unemployment in the occupied territories has more than tripled since last October, and poverty has risen by about 50%, according to U.N. figures); and abandoned (the major powers and the mass media dismiss Palestinians as terrorists when they legally protest against the longest military occupation in modern history.)

There are problems with identifying the Palestinian people with the suffering Jesus. I was telling a friend recently of the oppression of the Palestinians, and he said: "No matter how much they suffer, it can't compare with what the Jewish people have suffered in the last century alone."

That should give us pause. Think how many peoples have suffered beyond imagining: Jews, Poles and Gypsies under Nazi terror; Russians under Hitler and Stalinist terror; Ukrainians and Armenians. More recently, the victims of Serbian ethnic cleansing, the people of East Timor



Father Ed Dillon, at the Eighth Station on the Via Dolorosa

trapped in Indonesia; Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. And so many others in Africa and elsewhere.

Another problem with singling out the Palestinians for the role of Jesus is the corollary of casting the Israelis and Jews in the role of the villain.

We Christians have done this in the story of the crucifixion from the beginning. The blood-curdling refrain from Matthew's gospel rings through the ages: *His blood be upon us and on our children!*

The Second Vatican Council repudiated the idea that the Jewish people as a whole, either then or at any time, were guilty of the blood of Jesus. In fact the odious phrase "the Jews," which occurs in hostile usage on the lips of Jesus in the fourth gospel, is thought to have referred in original usage to the Herodian clique of Roman collaborators in Jerusalem. A better translation might be "the leaders of Jerusalem." Sadly, the scriptural translations still in use refer to "the Jews."

It is doubtful that any Christian tradition has more than barely begun to undo the historical injustice done to the Jews in the first tellings of the Jesus Story. We should at least try not to repeat the injustice in our retelling.

Indeed, our casting the Palestinian people as the victim should prompt us to recall those Jews, Israelis and non-Israelis, who have long confronted the oppression of the Palestinians, such as Israel Shahak, founder of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights; Alfred Lilienthal, author of "The Zionist Connection," one of the classic works on the madness of Zionism; and Marc Ellis, whose books should be must reading for anyone unaware of Zionism's threat to Judaism.

There is one final caveat in presenting the Palestinian people as the innocent victim. Be aware of the battered child syndrome. The victim can become a victimizer if he or she does not deal in a healthy way with the experience of oppression and abuse. Left unattended, the wound can impel a person or a people to "do unto others what was done unto them." Sadly, there is anecdotal evidence that some officials of the Palestinian Authority violate the human rights of other Palestinians, not unlike the way Israelis have treated Palestinians.

I first saw the phrase "battered child syndrome" used to describe an entire people in an 1982 article by Jacobo Timmerman in *The New Yorker*. Israel had just launched a massive pre-emptive strike into Lebanon, killing tens of thousands of civilians, making hundreds of thousands homeless, with thousands taken prisoner. Timmerman, a

journalist, who had survived torture in an Argentine prison and migrated to Israel, wrote that Jews were now doing to others what the Nazis had done to them, much as a battered child may grow up to batter his children. Timmerman later left Israel with his family because he did not want his children to have to go into the Israeli army and occupy another people.

Understanding, then, that nothing about oppression ennobles, that it is as likely to cripple through fear as through rage, I see the Palestinian as today's cross-bearer.

## Who will be Simon of Cyrene?

In Mark's gospel we read in chapter 15, verse 21: "They pressed into service a passerby, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross."

Cyrene was a major city of Cyrenaica, a heavily Greek-speaking Roman colony on the coast of North Africa. Simon may have been one of the numerous Hellenistic Jews who lived there, and who was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Mention of his sons may mean he was known to the Christian community to whom this gospel was addressed.

I picture Simon, minding his own business, eager to take part in the great Passover celebration in Jerusalem. He was one of thousands pouring into the city on the eve of the festival. The Roman army of occupation could routinely requisition the property of the people under occupation or conscript persons for forced labor. Remember Jesus saying: "Should they press you into service for one mile, go with them for two." (Mt 5:41)

Simon is one of those people whose timing leaves something to be desired, someone who has a knack for finding himself in the wrong place at the wrong time.

My candidate for Simon is a French Dominican scholar, Father Raymond Jacques Tournay.

When I returned to Jerusalem in February of this year, the first thing I did on the first morning of my arrival was to go to the *École Biblique* to see Father Tournay. I had met him in 1983, when I was investigating the conditions of the thousands of prisoners taken from Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in the wake of Israel's invasion. And I had seen him on my last visit in 1996, when at age 84, he was noticeably more frail.

As I passed through the gate onto the grounds of the *École Biblique* — which is located in East Jerusalem, not

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far from the Damascus Gate – I recalled Fr. Tournay telling me of that day in 1967 when the Israeli army occupied the city. All of the staff and students had been ordered to stand outside the building for most of the day under a June sun.

This was not Raymond Tournay's first taste of military occupation. He first came to Palestine in 1938, when it was under the British Protectorate. He was in Jaffa in 1939, when Arab militants sealed off the Old City, and snipers fired at passersby from walls and minarets. Three days later the British Army forced the gates and killed whomever they found in the streets. Next morning Father Tournay, watching from the window in the monastery, saw a mass grave in a cemetery being filled with the corpses of hundreds of Arabs slain in the fighting.

In May 1940, he went to Rome to complete his degree in Sacred Scripture. But when he learned that Mussolini was about to join Germany in the war and that French nationals such as himself should leave Italy immediately or risk internment, he went to Paris where he taught scripture and Hebrew at Etoiles just outside Paris.

Here he began a collaborative effort at translating Hebrew poetry, enlisting the help of a Jewish poet, Joseph Leibowitz – until Leibowitz was taken by the Gestapo and died in Leipzig. For the rest of the war, Fr. Tournay became part of an underground network that saved many Jews, including the Egyptologist George Posener.

After the war he returned to Palestine and was in Jerusalem on November 28, 1947, the date of the United Nations vote recommending the partition of Palestine. From that day on, Palestinians began knocking on his door, as the word spread that he was considered something of a hero to Israeli leaders because of his involvement with the

Resistance. And Fr. Tournay never hesitated to use his contacts. He helped form a group of Israeli lawyers who aided Palestinian prisoners indefinitely detained on malicious charges; he helped establish children's clinics in the Palestinian refugee camps; he found safe houses for Palestinian women threatened with death because of family "honor."

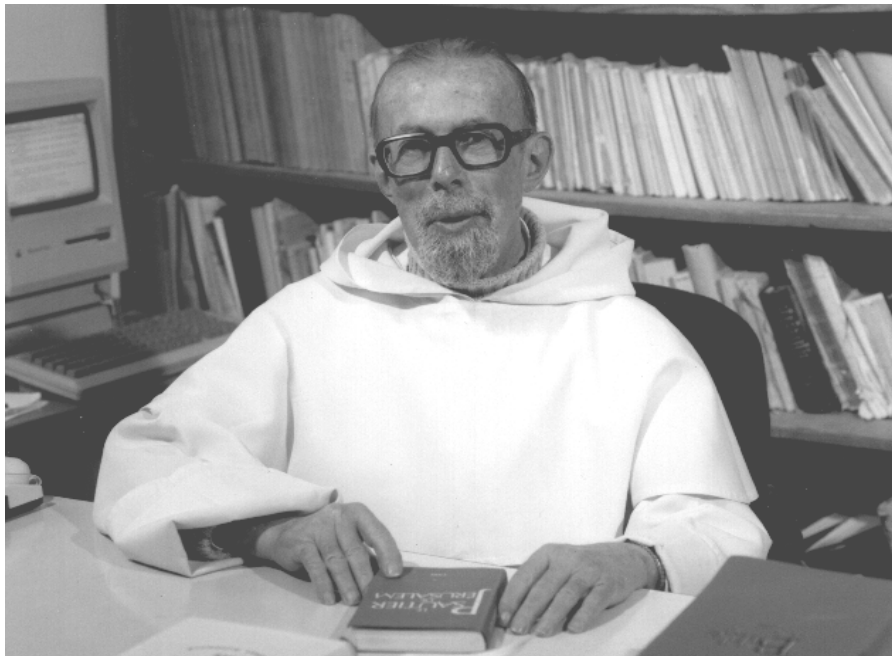
In 1983, when I was looking for sources for my article on Palestinian prisoners, I went to the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, a Vatican-sponsored organization in Jerusalem. While waiting to talk with someone, a woman came in and whispered to one of the officials. She was in great distress.

The official told her: "Go to Father Tournay. He will find out where he is and will help get him released." Instinctively, I knew I had to see this Father Tournay.

When we met we talked for some time. He told me he did have an 'in' with the early Israeli leaders. Now, he noted, a new breed is in charge. Now, when I inquire about prisoners, they are apt to say, "What are you, some kind of terrorist sympathizer?" And I reply, "I do what I've always done, following the advice of St. Paul and thinking of those in prison as though bound up with them!"

This time, when I asked to see Fr. Tournay, it was Fr. Jean-Michel de Tarragon, the prior of the École Biblique, who came down to see me. He was sad, he said, to tell me that Fr. Tournay had died in November 1999. The 87-year-old priest had collapsed at breakfast, surrounded by his learned colleagues and aspiring scholars. The ambulance brought him to Israel's famous Hadassah hospital where he was pronounced dead.

He was the greatest French biblical scholar of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, said the prior. I suspect many scholars would



Father Raymond Jacques Tournay

*Courtesy L'École Biblique*

agree. Certainly, his work on translating Hebrew poetry is universally acclaimed.

Then the prior smiled, "And some will remember him for his service to the "people of the land," as he called the suffering Palestinians.

## Who will be the Women of Jerusalem?

Only in the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Luke's gospel do we find that "a large crowd of people followed Jesus, including many women who mourned and lamented him."

This is memorialized in the eighth station, which is located at a crossroad in the Old City.

At another crossroad in Israeli West Jerusalem, I met today's Women of Jerusalem. They are the Women in Black. They are Israeli Jews. They stand silently in the middle of a perpetual swirl of traffic, holding signs in Hebrew and English that say simply, "Stop the Occupation."

Most drivers glance at them and look away. Some ges-



Rochelle and the Women in Black

AMEU Photo

ture obscenely. Some shout. What are they saying, I asked one woman. You don't want to know, she said. Occasionally they are spat upon. Inevitably, there are counter-demonstrations by young, ultra-orthodox men who heckle the women, calling them Nazis and whores.

What percentage of the Israeli public do you think you represent, I asked Samuel, a Jewish Israeli in his thirties who stands in solidarity with the Women. His answer: about one-fourth of one percent.

Rochelle, a Jewish woman in her 40s from Massachusetts, married an Israeli and now lives in Jerusalem. She is gracious and good-humored, and demonstrates with the Women in Black every week. I stood with her for a while, holding one of the signs.

Why do you do this? I asked.

I worry about my son, she said. He's now a teenager, and starting to act up.

The words of Jesus seemed to echo down the centuries: "Weep not for me but for yourselves and for your children."

Women in Black is a world-wide network which opposes war and other forms of violence. The Women in Black in Jerusalem stand (literally) for an end to the occupation; establishment of the state of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders; recognition of Jerusalem as the shared capital of two states; acknowledgement by Israel of its actions in the 1948 war; the right of return for Palestinian refugees; opposition to the militarism that permeates Israeli society; equality, inclusion, and justice for Palestinian citizens of Israel; and equal rights for women and for all residents of Israel.

## Who will be the Sorrowing Mother of Jesus?

So many women come to mind, including all the Palestinian mothers who fear for their children or who mourn over them. I will choose two.

One evening, as it grew dark, I hailed a young man who was taking off in a van from a cultural center in Jerusalem. He was on his cell phone to his mother. As he sat in the driver's seat, having stopped to listen to my question, his words would be directed alternately to the cell phone in Arabic, then to me in English. It seemed I had missed a children's theater program that had just finished. He was on his way to a nearby village to check out the possibility

of putting the program on there. His mother, he explained with chagrin, was worried about him and wanted to hear him promise he would be off the streets before dark. He rolled his eyes in mild frustration at the way mothers worry.

Let her represent all Palestinian mothers who worry that their children may not come home at the end of the day.

The mother of Muhammad Ibrahim knows. Her son did not come home. Muhammad, age 6, was running away from one of the street clashes when an Israeli military jeep hit him.

I talked to Oussamma, the headmaster at the school where Muhammad lived during the week, because the boy's single-parent mother had to work. "She told me she had urged her son to stay away from the clashes," the headmaster said. "We've kept his room just as it was. Now she comes in every week to change the sheets on his bed. I'm not a psychologist," he said apologetically. "I suspect it isn't good to let her go on like this. It's just so sad."

Some journalists and commentators in the U.S. blame Palestinian mothers for letting their children go to stone-throwing clashes. Some have even suggested these mothers hope their children get killed so the family can collect the "martyr's money."

Who among us would have been so crass as to say to the mother of Jesus as she stood at the foot of the cross: "It's all your fault for letting him get into trouble."

For that matter, who among us would go up to any mother who has ever lost a child and say, "You wanted this to happen."

Palestinian mothers are not some sub-human species, willing to see their children killed.

To have to refute such charges itself seems obscene. Still, for those who need refutation, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem looked into the allegations and "found no evidence" of Palestinians exploiting their children during the intifada.

That, I suspect, will be small comfort for the mother of little Muhammad Ibrahim.

And a voice was heard in Ramah...

Rachel is weeping for her children;

She refused to be comforted,

Because they are not. Je. 31, 15.

## Who will be Veronica?

Her name means "true image." She is enshrined forever in the sixth station of the cross. According to legend she elbowed her way to the front of the crowd and with her towel wiped the face of Jesus free of spittle, sweat and blood, leaving on the towel the image of his face.

My image of her is of one wanting to restore his face to its human dignity in the midst of such torment and seeming abandonment.

I have no hesitation in choosing my modern-day Veronica:

Grace Halsell.

More than anyone else, she made me aware of the human face of Palestine.

In her 1981 book, "Journey to Jerusalem," she became the first mainstream reporter to break through the journalistic crowd to tell of the humiliations that are inflicted every day on Palestinians living under military occupation.

Grace died last year, but her spirit surfaced in conversations I had with so many Palestinians.

Ibrahim Matar, a Christian Palestinian, told me that Grace's efforts to pressure travel agencies to bring U.S. Christians into contact with Palestinians has had a profound effect. Ibrahim knows. He works for Educational Opportunities, the largest U.S. carrier of Christians to the Holy Land, and his full-time job is to give these Christians some understanding of what it means today to be a Palestinian in the land where Jesus walked.

Issa, a Muslim Palestinian, met Grace when she was writing "Journey." Informed that she had died, he reflected, "She had the gift of entering your heart. And when you entered *her* heart you stayed there."

Oussamma, the headmaster at 6-year-old Muhammad Ibrahim's school, also knew Grace. I met Oussamma at the Ecce Homo convent on the Via Dolorosa, where Grace had first met him over 20 years ago. She had written a whole chapter about his being a Muslim and growing up in a convent run by the French Sisters of Zion, where his father was the custodian. Now he is married with children of his own.

Muhammad's death clearly weighed heavily on him. Do you know, he said, the other children take his empty chair with them from classroom to classroom. Then he



Grace Halsell

*AMEU Photo*

changed the subject. "I have a copy of Grace's book at home," he said proudly. "She sent it to me. She wrote a nice note inside."

I first met Grace Halsell in 1987, when we traveled together to the Middle East. We visited mayors and ambassadors in Palestine and Jordan. We interviewed patriarchs and bishops and members of the Knesset. I felt the respect they had for her. Many in the embassies had read her books.

In particular, she had concern for the Muslim people. It disturbed her when their mosques and other institutions were molested, and she wrote often of Jewish extremist attempts to undermine or outright destroy the magnificent Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Grace had this in common with Veronica: she didn't hesitate to buck the crowd in order to reach the sufferer. Before she wrote "Journey" she was welcomed by the major publishing houses; afterwards it was different. If anything, it made her more determined to wipe the spittle off the image of Palestinians.

Grace often identified herself as an evangelical Christian. My impression of her was of one who had grave reservations about organized religion, especially in the Christian world of America which she knew best. But her drive to uncover the lovely faces of people despised and ex-

ploited showed me she had broken through to the heart of the gospel.

She will be my updated Veronica.

## Who will be the Soldiers?

In the bible story soldiers are on hand for the dramatic climax.

Soldiers arrest Jesus, bring him to the high priest, bring him to Pilate and to Herod, mock him and scourge him. They carry out the ritual of state terrorism called crucifixion. They throw dice for his garments. One of them pierces his side with a lance, and then ...

One of them says, "Truly, this man was the Son of God." (Mk. 15:39)

A soldier, it seems, became the first to grasp the power of the death of Jesus.

That's quite a reversal.

So who will play the soldiers in our modern version?

The soldiers are everywhere now. Generally they travel in threes. Often, several jeep-loads of them control checkpoints that prevent Palestinians and other non-Israelis from traveling between towns and villages.

When I first visited Israel in 1965, I lived in a kibbutz in the north (Dan) and then in the south (Beersheba). It was a chance to experience a utopian socialist experiment. Everyone shared just about everything, including care of the children. There was a spirit of optimism and idealism. (I've met friends since who have become disillusioned with the kibbutz and Israel and have returned to the States. Mostly, they were upset with the racism towards the Palestinians.)

Back in those early days, I don't remember seeing any soldiers, except as hitchhikers. They seemed to hitchhike as their normal means of transportation. And people didn't hesitate to pick them up.

In 1983 there were noticeably more soldiers in the occupied territories. Still there were hitchhikers. A Palestinian friend and I picked up one on the Sabbath toward sundown. He was an impressive young man from the States. He and the Palestinian spoke animatedly in Arabic and Hebrew. When he got out of the car and we drove on, my friend said to me, "He wasn't sure of you. He doesn't know where Americans are coming from. Us Palestinians he knows."

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Since then I don't remember soldiers hitchhiking. But I see them everywhere. Israel is a full-blown police state.

It is not unheard of to read of young people in Israel dreading to take part in the brutality of occupation. The Israeli paper *Yediot Aharonot*, in its March 16, 2001 edition, quoted one Israeli female conscript whose job is to frisk Palestinian women and children who come to visit their relatives in Israeli jails:

My job is to search and frisk some 500 Arab women and their children. I have to wear a bullet-proof vest and plastic gloves. I search their personal belongings, their garments, shoes, and sensitive parts of the bodies. I notice their sullen hostility toward us. I see how tormented, how exhausted, how humiliated they are, and I'm supposed to make no regret or remorse about it. I guess I sometimes feel we are Nazis.

I fear, however, that many more Israeli men and women have grown used to oppressing another people.

Now it is difficult to attain eye contact with soldiers.

The myth of "purity of arms" isn't even spoken of anymore. The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 seems to have been a turning point. Since then, Israeli historians have revisited the Jewish State's earlier wars and have found them far from honorable.

Israel's image as the victim of aggression now appears ludicrous - which may help explain a March 20, 2001 New York Times report that the Israeli Foreign Ministry has hired two New York City public relations firms, Rubenstein Associates Inc., and Morris, Carrick and Guma, to burnish Israel's image in the United States.

It's important to know that the role of soldiers is not where evil lies. As long as there have been empires, soldiering is a distinct form of servitude. In Jesus's time they were a special kind of slave, dragooned off the streets of one province to do forced service in another.

I thought of that when I spoke with the head of the Emergency Room at Jerusalem's Al Makassed hospital, a Palestinian facility located on the Mount of Olives. His name is Jamal and he lives in Beit Jala, the village near Bethlehem that suffers repeated night-time shelling attacks. Every day he has to get past the Israeli military checkpoint in order to get to work.

A day or so before my interview with him at the hospital, he told me he had the following encounter at the roadblock with an Israeli guard. From the guard's accent, Ja-

mal concluded he was from Russia.

Guard: Where are you going?

Jamal: I work in Jerusalem.

Guard: You can't go there.

Jamal: I work in the hospital.

Guard: That doesn't matter.

Jamal: I work in the Emergency Room.

Guard: That doesn't matter. You can't go there.

Jamal: I'm in charge of the Emergency Room. I need to be there.

Guard: You can't pass.

Jamal: Look. You're a human being. I'm a human being. On the basis of our shared humanity, let me do my work.

Guard: I do not accept your humanity.

Jamal: Why do you say that?

Guard: You are not a human being.

The evil behind the army is what the bible calls "the beast." One beast succeeded the other from Assyria to Rome, each more terrifying than the other. What all the beasts had in common was their zest for devouring the earth, trampling on the little people, polluting and destroying everything in their path. That's the vision of history from the book of Daniel to the book of Revelation. Soldiers, like the Israeli guard from Russia, are the instruments of the beast. In a way, they are the beast's first victims.

They are also, often enough, the first to try to safeguard their integrity. I heard whisper of one during my recent visit and finally caught up with him.

He will be my updated Roman centurion.

He is Retired U.S. Army Colonel Pat Lang.

Lang had been *the* U.S. Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East from 1985 to 1992. He happened to be visiting Beit Jala the same day I was.

As I inspected the recently shelled homes I heard from time to time of a retired American general who had been there just before me. The families in the ravaged homes told me with amazement that the general was outraged at

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the weaponry being used against civilians. He acknowledged what many had been saying, that tank shells, made in America and designed to be used against other tanks, were being used against civilian dwellings.

Back home, I was able to locate and speak with this general. He is a retired army colonel whose rank is officially that of Defense Department Senior Executive, which is the equivalent of a general. He speaks Arabic and has trained officers for work in the Arab world.

He was able to tour the shelled villages because of long standing contacts in the Israeli military. They had assured him Israel was using restraint in quelling this latest intifada, and he believed them.

What he saw, however, stunned him. Far from restraint, the Israeli shelling by tanks and Apache helicopters impressed him as more hard-hearted (his word) than anything he had seen in three American wars, including Vietnam. America's strategy, he said, had never been so overtly cruel to people who were in no way able to defend against such weaponry. Lang was able to take one piece of evidence back with him, a 40 mm anti-aircraft round, made in America.

More importantly, he is now using his connections to make the Bush administration aware of the implications of his findings.

And as an active Catholic layman, he is creating a special Emergency Relief Fund for Palestine to help the victims of our made-in-America shells. The Fund also will support Project Creche, a Bethlehem project run by the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul for orphaned children, and to help Bethlehem University overcome its \$1 million shortfall caused by Israel's refusal to transfer \$75 million in collected taxes due the Palestinian Authority.

## Who will be Magdalene?

Parishioners often smile, if not snicker, when Magdalene is selected. Tradition has limned her with the reputation of being something of a loose woman.

And, yet, tradition has also sainted her. Not that she left us any words to live by; Magdalene, it seems, preferred doing things, such as washing feet, taking the crucified body down from the cross, preparing it for burial, then returning to the tomb very early that first Easter morning.

I hope her husband will understand her selection in this saintly way, when I say that my nomination for Mary

Magdalene is Betsy Barlow.

One talent any effective pastor needs is the ability to find those rare people in a parish — and God seems to have spread one or two in each one — who, no matter how busy they are, can always find time to do that one extra thing asked of them, and do it well. That's Betsy.

It's no surprise to me that she is the coordinator for the North American branch of the Friends of Sabeel. Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots movement among Palestinian Christians which, among other things, encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace, one informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action. It is the action part I particularly associate with Betsy.

This February marked Sabeel's fourth international gathering, held this year at the Notre Dame Center in Jerusalem. I called Betsy before leaving for the conference to ask if she could help shepherd me around to people and places I should see for writing this article. I had asked the right person. Despite her conference chores — over 300 people attended the sessions — she took the time to come with me to Bethlehem and Beit Jala to meet the victims of the shelling and to see the destruction.

It was Betsy who introduced me to Jamal and Fida from Bethlehem's small TV station. Later it was 24-year-old Fida who made me a copy of their "martyrs' tape," a gruesome collection of charred bodies being moved to make-shift hospitals, young wounded men being dragged through the streets by Israeli soldiers, ambulances being fired on even as the wounded were being transported. One particular scene that will be hard to forget is the one of Dr. Fisher. A Norwegian who married a Palestinian woman, he and his wife lived in Beit Jala. When a young man was seriously injured in front of his home, the doctor rushed out to help him and was blown apart. His charred remains were given a martyr's burial.

It was Betsy who introduced me to Marina, a grandmother in Beit Jala, in charge of a children's theater that had been shelled by Israeli tanks the night before. Her crew was in the process of dismantling what could be salvaged and moving on. They weren't sure where they'd go. Maybe the local Catholic seminary would give them space. Marina kept saying how the theater was more essential now than ever to the mental health of the children living under siege. Through theater they can express their anxieties and hopefully get beyond the violent images. So many parents, she said, speak of their children's nightmares, and bedwetting, and fascination with weapons. In-

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deed, it was the children of Beit Jala who most expertly showed me which damage had been done by Apache helicopters and which by tanks.

For years Betsy was outreach director of the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Michigan. Her distinguished career began as a secondary school teacher in Lebanon at the National College of Chouiefat. Her Magdalene-like, can-do attitude served her well as project coordinator for three editions of the



Betsy Barlow

AMEU Photo

“Evaluation of Secondary-Level Text Books for Coverage of the Middle East and North Africa,” published by the Middle East Outreach Center and the Middle East Studies Association.

Along with other participants at the Sabeel conference, I traveled by bus with Betsy to Ramallah and its suburb Al-Bireh, about 30 minutes from Jerusalem. At the checkpoint going into Ramallah we were stopped by the Israeli guards for 90 minutes. As we stood outside the bus in front of the checkpoint, I watched Betsy moving from group to group, stoking our morale. We can do it. And we did.

Inside Ramallah, we formed a procession and marched down the main street to the center of the city where a speakers platform had been erected. A Muslim and Christian cleric spoke. And Betsy. It was raining hard — a good sign in this rain-parched area — and we huddled under

umbrellas to hear Betsy pledge to the people of Ramallah that we would return to our respective countries and work for an end to Israel’s illegal occupation and its despicable imposition of collective punishment.

I mention the waiting and the marching and the rain because Betsy is asthmatic; it was not unusual for her to have to pause at times to catch her breath. But she never missed a beat.

Betsy, I’m sure, would be the first to protest that there are more competent and generous candidates out there for the Magdalene role. And she may be right.

But she’s my choice.

## Who will be Pilate?

We end our casting with the First Station, which traditionally depicts Pontius Pilate washing his hands. The station itself is often worded in the passive voice: “Jesus is condemned to death,” without ascribing the act of condemning to any human agency.

It is interesting that the Christian creeds from the beginning only mention one human person in connection with the suffering of Christ: “He suffered under Pontius Pilate.”

The gospels seem to struggle to soften the culpability of the Roman authority. Mathew’s gospel describes the ritual of Pilate having water brought to him so he can wash his hands of the deed: “...he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.’”

This theatrical act of hypocrisy captures the imagination in the telling of the story.

Who will play Pilate washing his hands of guilt for the Palestinian bloodshed?

My choice would be the imperial tradition, starting with the British from 1917, secretly pretending to favor both Jewish and Arab leaders as likely successors to British rule.

Then the United States, under Truman in 1947, pressuring and threatening U.N. nations to go along with the partitioning of Palestine at a time when many nations desperately needed American aid to recover from World War II.

My hero at this juncture is the leader of Ireland, Eamon de Valera. He refused to change his negative vote, saying,

"I don't know much about the bible, but I remember in that story about the wise king, it was the real mother who refused to have the baby cut in two."

Today, it is the United States and Israel together who play out the imperial hypocrisy.

The U.S. takes the position of letting the parties to the struggle work their differences out among themselves. Then it gives billion dollar grants year after year to the one side that already dominates the other side's towns, homes, economy, water resources, and infrastructure. Then it insists on an activist role in facilitating the "peace process" in order to sabotage any negotiations that are based on U.N. resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, the cessation of new settlements and withdrawal from existing ones established on Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the return of Palestinian refugees or just compensation for what has been taken from them.

Having done that, we stand before Palestinians, a million of them in Israel, 2.6-million in the Israeli-occupied territories, and five million scattered around the world, and we say, as we wash our political hands: We are innocent of your blood. Look to it yourself.

Speaking as an American, Pilate is us.

## **In the Footsteps of Jesus**

A friend who visited Jerusalem with me in 1987 told her parish priest before she left that she was so excited to be going to the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

On her return home, he asked her if she had done so.

"Yes," she said, "But I did it by walking in the footsteps of the Palestinians."

That's the fundamental insight behind this updated Via Dolorosa.

The original Stations of the Cross, created back in the twelfth century, were designed for Christians in Europe who never expected to travel to the Holy Land.

Now travel is relatively easy.

I have no ties to any travel agency, but do yourself a favor and go to the Holy Land.

And when you go, don't just walk along the cobblestones of the old Via Dolorosa.

In their Year 2000 Christmas letter, the Latin Catholic and the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchs urged pilgrims to meet the "living stones" of the Holy Land. They wrote:

Returning here as pilgrims in these distressing times might be difficult for you. But in so doing, you will be sharing with us in our own difficulties as much as sharing our efforts toward justice and peace. Do come ... Add to your program an encounter with some of our communities. Visit our parishes for a communal prayer or an exchange in order to comfort your brothers and sisters in faith here... We believe it is important for you to come to the Holy Land at this critical moment in our history in order to stand both with the Christian communities here as much as with the Mystery of God in this land...

Along the way, you will meet many Simons, and sorrowful mothers, and helpful Magdalenes. There were so many people I had hoped to meet but didn't have the time. If you're looking for today's Women of Jerusalem, one priest told me, visit the wife of the Lutheran bishop, Munib Youran, who runs the Helen Keller School for the blind near the checkpoint outside Ramallah. Or the sisters of St. Dorothy who run Ephpheta, the school for the deaf in Bethlehem. Or the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul who minister to the severely handicapped in Ein Kerem. Or Sister Rose of Beit Sahour who cares for children emotionally scarred by this most recent intifada.

Oftentimes, the heroic figure is right there in the group you're traveling with. I think of Johnnie Luecker, who was traveling with her husband George. A retired nurse, Johnnie had suffered a stroke and had to use a walker to get around, assembling it and disassembling it every time she got into a taxi or bus. Still she came with us to Al Makass hospital. And it was only after we mentioned she had been an Emergency Room nurse that we got to see the ER rooms and personnel at the hospital. Surely, here was a Veronica, buffeting the crowd in order to see the suffering face of Jesus.

To help plan your visit I suggest that you obtain a copy of AMEU's Alternative Holy Land Tour, listed in the catalog at the end of this issue.

I also suggest that you contact Sabeel and visit their office in Jerusalem. You can reach my designated Magdalene, Betsy Barlow, in Ann Arbor, Michigan at 734-665-5773, or email her at fos-na-admin@umich.edu. Sabeel's website is [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org).

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I would be remiss in not acknowledging that the idea for this *Link* issue came from Sabeel's "Contemporary Way of the Cross." This is a program for visitors and pilgrims to actually experience the reality of military occupation. The "stations" include visits to a home in a Palestinian refugee camp, to a demolished home, to property confiscated by the Israeli government, to a destroyed village. At each "station" a short history of the site is given followed by a prayer. It is very moving.

And for those of you who will not be traveling to the Holy Land any time soon, I am reminded of the apostle Thomas who had to see and touch the wounds of Jesus to believe, after which the Risen Jesus said: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (Jn. 20, 29)

Here in the U.S. is where Pilate resides. It is time for good people to tell our government it has to stop providing Israel with the instruments of crucifixion.

A perceptive editorial in the March 5, 2001 issue of the Jesuit magazine *America* notes that although a recent memorandum of understanding between Israel and the U.S. will gradually end economic assistance by the year 2008, half of the savings will be converted into increased military aid to Israel.

The total annual aid package to Israel is obscured by such accounting gimmicks and special arrangements, says the editorial. (A 1997 *Link* article by Richard Curtiss of the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs puts the figure at around \$10 billion annually, including \$2.2 billion to Egypt for having made peace with Israel.) The *America* editorial concludes:

It is time for the U.S. to stop funding the Israeli war against the Palestinians. No one can condone terrorist attacks against Israelis. But neither should we condone or fund the Israeli war on the Palestinians. The helicopter gun ships used to fire on Palestinian civilians and their neighborhoods are part of the arsenal provided Israel by U.S. aid. Merkava tanks were used to shell Palestinian towns, including the Christian centers of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour. U.S.-made ammunition also rained down on Palestinian neighborhoods. A reasonable place to begin would be the suspension of the sale of Apache and Blackhawk helicopters announced last October.

Unfortunately, the sale of the Apache and Blackhawk helicopters has passed Congress since that editorial was written.

Still, we can protest the sale – and all future sales.

To that end, I recommend a new website called The Electronic Intifada, whose address is [www.electronicintifada.net](http://www.electronicintifada.net). It provides information to assist activists in responding to the media. Signing up is simple and free. Action alerts are sent to subscribers by email. The alerts contain the original material (Source), a careful analysis (Problem), and what you can do about it (Solution).

All this will make it much easier to write to members of Congress as well as to the media.

Time is a factor.

When I first visited East Jerusalem in 1965, it was a Palestinian city under Jordanian rule. Now Palestinians in the Via Dolorosa City are a shrinking minority amid 211,000 illegal Israeli settlers.

We are fast approaching the Fourteenth Station. ▲

## In Memoriam

### Harriet Karchmer 1925 - 2000

Within our small band of New York City, pro-Palestinian supporters, Harriet was everyone's friend and wise consultant. When she phoned me, I knew it had to be about a demonstration, or a new book, or a new lecturer in town.

I never knew she was a Tulane University graduate, or that she had translated Russian documents for the U.S. Government, or that she had an extensive archive that she made available to writers and researchers advancing a humanitarian agenda.

I did know she worked for Neturei Karta, an anti-Zionist Orthodox Jewish group, and that she supported the efforts of Rabbi Elmer Berger, historian Michael Palumbo, and author Naeim Giladi – all of whom have written for *The Link*.

Harriet's obituary did not list family survivors. I suspect, in a real way, we were family. And in a real way, we will miss her as such. Even more than a friend and consultant, she was grandmother to us all.

—John F. Mahoney

To Order, Put Check Mark in Left  
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## AM EU 's Book Selections (See Videos on

Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Aburish, S.	<b>Arafat: From Defender to Dictator</b>	1998	360	\$15.90	\$12.50	Good biography of Palestinian leader.
A.M.E.U.	<b>Holy Land Travel Directory</b>	1999	18	\$10.00	\$5.00	Recommends travel agents, inns, guides, shops.
Amove, A., ed.	<b>Iraq Under Siege</b>	2000	216	\$16.00	\$13.50	Articles by Aruri, Chomsky, Kelly, Abunimah.
Armstrong, K	<b>Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths</b>	1999	474	\$17.50	\$16.95	Well written; critically acclaimed.
Ateek, N. ed.	<b>Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee</b>	1999	314	\$25.00	\$24.50	Includes articles by Edward Said & Michael Prior.
Bailey & Hillard	<b>Living Stones Pilgrimage</b>	1999	132	\$15.00	\$14.50	Guide to Holy Land's Christian communities.
Beit-Hallahmi, B.	<b>Original Sins</b>	1993	227	\$19.95	\$12.50	Reflections on Zionism and Israel.
Benvenisti, M.	<b>Sacred Landscape</b>	2000	417	\$35.00	\$25.95	Traces Israel's 50 years of altering Palestinian lands.
Bilkadi, Zayn	<b>Babylon to Baku</b>	1998	224	\$75.00	\$59.00	Richly illustrated 40,000-year history of oil.
Borne, J.	<b>The USS Liberty</b>	1995	318	\$20.00	\$19.50	Author challenges official US-Israeli accounts.
CAABU	<b>The Arab World</b>	1998	40	\$17.00	\$15.50	Excellent study guide for teachers.
Chacour, E.	<b>Blood Brothers</b>	1984	223	\$7.95	\$7.50	Author is prominent Palestinian Christian leader.
Chapman, C.	<b>Whose Promised land</b>	1992	286	\$10.95	\$5.50	Examines meaning of biblical promises.
Christison, K.	<b>Perceptions of Palestine</b>	1999	380	\$40.00	\$29.95	How US media has influenced US policy.
Dallal, S.	<b>Scattered Like Seeds</b>	1998	335	\$26.95	\$19.95	Novel about Palestinian exile and return.
David, R.	<b>Arabs &amp; Israel for Beginners</b>	1993	218	\$9.95	\$8.95	Illustrated history of Palestine & Israel.
Eady & Mast	<b>Sahmatah</b>	1998	40	\$10.00	\$10.00	One act play for two actors; see <i>Link</i> , Feb. 1999.
Ellis, M.	<b>O Jerusalem</b>	1999	187	\$17.50	\$16.95	The contested future of the Jewish Covenant.
Esposito, J., ed.	<b>The Oxford History of Islam</b>	1999	749	\$49.95	\$47.95	Richly illustrated history of Islam's faith and culture.
Fayez, J., ed.	<b>The Colonization of Palestine</b>	1992	48	\$9.95	\$3.00	Description of destroyed cities, towns & villages.
Findley, P.	<b>Deliberate Deceptions</b>	1993	326	\$14.95	\$6.95	Facing the facts about the US-Israeli relationship.
Finkelstein, N.	<b>A Nation on Trial</b>	1998	176	\$22.95	\$18.50	A critique of the Goldhagen thesis.
Finkelstein, N.	<b>The Holocaust Industry</b>	2000	150	\$23.00	\$16.50	Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering.
Finkelstein, N.	<b>The Rise and Fall of Palestine</b>	1996	152	\$18.95	\$15.50	A critical assessment of the peace process.
Fromkin, D.	<b>A Peace to End All Peace</b>	1989	635	\$15.95	\$14.95	Fall of Ottoman Empire & rise of modern Mid-East.
Giladi, N.	<b>Ben Gurion's Scandals</b>	1992	261	\$19.50	\$14.95	How the Haganah & Mossad eliminated Jews.
Haddad, Y.	<b>The Muslims of America</b>	1991	240	\$17.95	\$15.95	Articles by J. Esposito, G. Ahmed, B. Haines, J. Voll.
Halsell, G.	<b>Forcing God's Hand</b>	1999	100	\$14.95	\$9.95	Israel, the Rapture and Planet Earth's destruction.
Halsell, G.	<b>In Their Shoes</b>	1996	200	\$14.95	\$9.50	A memoir.
Halsell, G.	<b>Journey to Jerusalem</b>	1981	193	\$7.95	\$4.00	Moving expose of life under Israeli occupation.
Halsell, G.	<b>Prophecy and Politics</b>	1986	210	\$14.95	\$8.95	Militant evangelists on the road to nuclear war.
Hass, A.	<b>Drinking the Sea at Gaza</b>	1999	400	\$16.00	\$12.95	Israel's bureaucratic terrorism in the Gaza Strip.

Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Hiro, D.	Sharing the Promised Land	1999	372	\$18.95	\$16.95	Well documented and well written.
Hunter, S.	The Future of Islam and the West	1998	208	\$17.95	\$15.50	Clash of civilizations vs. peaceful coexistence.
Jayyusi, S.	Anthology	1996	754	\$22.00	\$17.50	Modern Palestinian literature.
Khalidi, W.	Before their Diaspora	1991	351	\$29.00	\$24.95	Illustrated history of Palestine from 1876-1948.
Koestler, A.	The Thirteenth Tribe	1976	255	\$15.00	\$11.50	The Khaza ancestry of Jews who settled Israel.
Mallison, W. T. & S.	Palestine Problem in Inter. Law	1986	564	\$49.50	\$19.50	An authoritative work; few copies available.
Masalha, N.	Expulsion of the Palestinians	1993	235	\$11.95	\$9.50	Examines Zionist notion of 'Transfer', 1882-1948.
McCormick, J.	Jerusalem and the Holy Land	1997	206	\$12.95	\$10.95	An ecumenical pilgrim's guide.
McGowan-Hogan	The Saga of Deir Yassin	1999	78	\$10.00	\$10.00	Response to Zionist revisionism.
Morris, B.	Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem	1987	380	\$25.95	\$19.95	Pivotal work on expulsion of Palestinians, 1947-49.
Neff, D.	Warriors at Suez	1981	480	\$9.95	\$4.00	Eisenhower takes US into Middle East in 1967.
Neff, D.	Warriors for Jerusalem	1987	384	\$9.95	\$4.00	The six days that changed the Middle East in 1967.
Neff, D.	Warriors Against Israel	1988	371	\$19.95	\$6.00	How Israel became America's ally in 1973.
Novick, P.	The Holocaust in American Life	1999	380	\$27.00	\$21.95	How Holocaust influences US support of Israel.
Prior, M.	The Bible and Colonialism	1997	342	\$28.50	\$27.50	A moral critique by author of December 2000 Link.
Prior, M., ed.	They Came and They Saw	2000	302	\$22.00	\$19.50	Western Christian experiences in the Holy Land.
Prior, M.	Zionism and the State of Israel	1999	304	\$75.00	\$59.50	A moral inquiry.
Raheb & Strickert	Bethlehem 2000: Past and Present	1999	160	\$34.95	\$32.50	Coffee-table history book with 130 color photos.
Rantisi & Beebe	Blessed Are the Peacemakers	1990	172	\$8.95	\$7.95	Personal account of the Lydda Death March.
Said, E.	Out of Place	1999	295	\$26.99	\$15.95	A memoir.
Said, E.	The End of the Peace Process	2000	345	\$27.50	\$19.50	Author questions foundations of Oslo accords.
Shahak & Mezvinsky	Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel	1999	160	\$17.95	\$15.50	Focuses on roots of Jewish fundamentalism.
Shahak, I.	Jewish History, Jewish Religion	1994	127	\$17.95	\$15.50	Talmud morality and the peace process.
Shahak, I.	Open Secrets	1997	192	\$18.95	\$15.50	Examines Israel's weapons of mass destruction.
Shlaim, A.	The Iron Wall: Israel & Arab World	1999	448	\$17.95	\$14.95	Israeli historian reevaluates traditional Israeli history.
Simons, G.	Imposing Economic Sanctions	1999	212	\$19.95	\$9.95	A legal remedy vs. a genocidal tool.
Simons, G.	Iraq	1996	444	\$17.95	\$15.50	History of Iraq from Sumer to present.
Suleiman, M., ed.	Arabs in America	2000	360	\$22.95	\$19.95	21 scholars report on Arabs of North America.
Thomas, G.	Gideon's Spies	1999	354	\$25.95	\$21.50	The secret history of Israel's Mossad.
Wagner, D.	Anxious for Armageddon	1995	354	\$12.95	\$9.95	Christian Evangelicals and Israel.
Whitelam, K.	The Invention of Ancient Israel	1997	281	\$20.00	\$16.50	Biblical scholarship and Palestinian dispossession.
Zed Publ.	The Spirit of Palestine	1994	244	\$50.00	\$50.00	Richly illustrated history; coffee-table size.

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## Video-Cassettes (VHS)

- ▶ DMZ, **People & the Land** (1997, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- ▶ IRA, **Children of the Cradle** (1996, 30-minute report on embargo of Iraq). **AMEU: \$3.00.**
- ▶ Kelley, R., **The Bedouin of Israel** (1998, 2 hours). Never-before-seen film of how Israel has treated its Bedouin citizens, including interview with the notorious Green Patrol. **AMEU: \$30.00.**
- ▶ Masri, M., **Children of Shatila** (1999, 58 minutes). The children 17 years after the massacre. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$39.50.**
- ▶ Masri, M., **Hanan Ashrawi: A Woman of Her Time** (1995, 51 minutes). One of Palestine's most articulate representatives shows that Israel's occupation is far from over – and far from benign. List: \$65.00; **AMEU: \$35.00.**
- ▶ Middle East Council of Churches, **Disabled for Palestine** (1993, 21 minutes). A Palestinian doctor shows cases of Palestinian civilians who have been maimed for life by Israeli bullets, beatings and tear gas. List: \$25.00; **AMEU: \$10.00.**
- ▶ Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, 38 minutes). A rare collection of Palestinian dresses with accessories modeled against the background of Palestinian music, with commentary tracing the designs back to Canaanite times. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$12.50.**
- ▶ Studio 52 Production, **Checkpoint: The Palestinians After Oslo** (1997, 58 minutes). Documents the post-Oslo situation with off-beat humor and historical insights provided by Palestinian and Israeli activists like Naseer Arad and Hanan Ashrawi. **AMEU: \$27.00.**

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