

Session Four

4th Principle:

A Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

Finding the Real Stories

- Myths and Facts
- Water Disparities

Prereadings and movie

Trailer from *Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land* 4:45 minutes (no cost), or entire video online: 7-day deadline to view, \$50, or DVD by mail, \$19.95 from <http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=117>

Religious leaders to Congress:

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2012/10/5/religious-leaders-ask-congress-condition-israel-mi/>

Fact Sheet from Grassroots International, “Troubled Waters” at

http://grassrootsonline.org/sites/default/files/water_fact_sheet_final.pdf

Noted Israeli reporter Amira Haas reports in *Ha’aretz*, Feb. 2014, on “The Israeli Watergate Scandal: The Facts About Palestinian Water”

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.574554>

Infographics about water disparities:

Gaza water: <http://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/gaza-water-confined-and-contaminated>

West Bank water: <http://visualizingpalestine.com/infographic/wb-water>

+972 Magazine water series: <http://972mag.com/visualizing-occupation-distribution-of-water/49925/>

Opening Reading and Discussion

Discussion

The Struggle for Water; Al Jazeera English video interview, Dec. 2014, with Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Tamimi, of the Association of Palestinian Hydrologists, about the impact of Oslo accords on water access, 4 minutes,

http://youtu.be/cssuF0c_yrU and

<http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/PalestineRemix/area-c.html#/2>

Discussion

Principle 4: A Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning

Session Four looks at obstacles that obstruct a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning.”

Pre-reading and movie trailer

It is often bewildering to sort through the media for facts about Israel and Palestine. There is a bias in many materials. It is important for UUs to understand the scope of imbalance in the coverage of Israel and Palestine. One important aspect that adds to this imbalance is the long-standing anti-Arab bias in the media and the entertainment industry. This session will place a special focus on understanding the oppression experienced by Palestinians via a study of disparities in water access comparing Israelis and Palestinians. First, you can view either the trailer to a movie about media disparities between portrayal of Israel and Palestinians, or consider viewing the entire movie.

View the trailer to *Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land*, 4:45 minutes, at <http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=117> or consider purchasing and viewing the entire movie.

Read the Fact Sheet from Grassroots International, “Troubled Waters” at http://grassrootsonline.org/sites/default/files/water_fact_sheet_final.pdf.

“While Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories are portrayed as a region where water is scarce and where innovation has enabled Israelis to “turn the desert green,” the truth is far more troubling. A new fact sheet from Grassroots International outlines elements of the 60-year water grab by Israel of area water resources, from the Jordan River to the Western Mountain Aquifer.” — Carol Schachet

Noted Israeli reporter Amira Haas reports in *Ha’aretz*, Feb. 2014, on “The Israeli Watergate Scandal: The Facts About Palestinian Water,” <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.574554>.

View the infographics about water disparities at the links listed in the overview

Water disparity infographics:

Gaza water: <http://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/gaza-water-confined-and-contaminated>

West Bank water: <http://visualizingpalestine.com/infographic/wb-water>

+972 Magazine water series: <http://972mag.com/visualizing-occupation-distribution-of-water/49925/>

+972 Magazine is run by a collective of Israelis and Palestinians; its name is the telephone area code for both peoples.

Opening Reading: Elaboration on the 4th Principle

“As responsible religious seekers, we recognize that we are **privileged to be free**, to have resources to pursue life beyond mere survival, to continually search for truth and meaning, **to exist beyond bonds of dogma and oppression**, and to wrestle freely with truth and meaning as they evolve.

“This privilege calls us not to be isolated and self-centered, believing that our single perspective trumps all others, but rather to be humble, to be open to the great mysteries of truth and meaning that life offers. And those mysteries may speak to us through our own intuition and experience—but also through tradition, community, conflict, nature, and relationships.

“As a faith tradition, Unitarian Universalism makes sacred the **right and responsibility** to engage in this free and responsible quest as an act of religious devotion. Institutionally, we have left open the questions of what truth and meaning are, acknowledging that mindful people will, in every age, discover new insights.”

—Rev. Paige Getty, UU Congregation of Columbia, Maryland (read more from Paige in *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship*, ed. Ellen Brandenburg)

Grounding Questions and Discussion

1. If we are **privileged to be free**, what is our **responsibility** to hear all testimonies and see all sides?
2. How do we find good sources of information toward uncovering truth?
3. For UUs, what are the **bonds of dogma and oppression** in this debate? How can we free ourselves from bonds?

Activities

There are several myths around the Israel-Palestine conflict. One was the concept that the Israelis “made the desert bloom.” While there has been some experimentation with development of highly arid land in Israel and Palestine, the fact is that Palestinians had been farming fertile land for generations. The Jaffa orange was legendary, and many groves were taken over from Palestinian families by Jewish settlers. How do we scan the media coverage of Israel-Palestine with a more critical view?

Discuss the prereadings and *Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land*.

View the video. *The Struggle for Water*: Al Jazeera English video interview, Dec. 2014, with Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Tamimi, of the Association of Palestinian Hydrologists, about the impact of Oslo accords on water access, http://youtu.be/cssuF0c_yrU. A longer, more complete picture is available at <http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/PalestineRemix/area-c.html#/2>. Discuss reactions.

Call to Action Ideas. To take action on water disparities, sign the petition to ask TIAA-CREF to divest from companies that profit from the Israeli occupation, spread the word with those you know, and/or join the UJME email list to receive e-mail action alerts regarding water and other issues.

Closing

Each person in the group can share what they learned, found most notable, or a question that arose from the session.