

# Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

And I am going to invite Doctor Mitri Alraheb to take us into the area of liberation theology in Palestine. Doctor Vincent, please welcome.

00:00:10 Speaker 2

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you, Professor Eugene, for making this.

00:00:16 Speaker 2

Reality of this meeting and I admire all of you. Actually, you have been sitting.

00:00:21 Speaker 2

Here for four hours.

00:00:23 Speaker 2

But I tell you the end is near. Not not that end.

00:00:28 Speaker 1

Liberation theology.

00:00:32 Speaker 2

So, I mean, you know that this last topic seems to be actually out of place. I mean, why talk about theology when we are talking about the history and archaeology of Palestine? But remember.

00:00:50 Speaker 2

Western historiography and archaeology.

00:00:55 Speaker 2

Saw the Bible as a book of history and then archaeology wanted to prove this history.

00:01:06 Speaker 2

And therefore actually history as well as archaeology were subordinated to the biblical accord.

00:01:18 Speaker 2

In this context, Palestine became the land of the Bible.

00:01:24 Speaker 2

A mythical land and imagined land and a land of 1 singular people and one singular religion.

00:01:34 Speaker 2

Which means actually Palestine has been always, always a pluralistic society.

00:01:41 Speaker 2

Very diverse, but through this lens, through this narrow theological evangelical lens.

00:01:50 Speaker 2

Palestine became the land of one religion, namely.

00:01:55 Speaker 2

Jewish religion.

00:01:57 Speaker 2

And the land was seen as empty. A land without a people.

00:02:02 Speaker 2

But the land was not empty.

00:02:06 Speaker 2

But the land was made empty by silencing the indigenous people of Palestine.

00:02:13 Speaker 2

Even when they saw us, they thought we don't belong there because this is the land of another people.

00:02:22 Speaker 2

And so Palestine was perceived as a mono religious country and no place for ethnic plurality or religious diversity.

00:02:34 Speaker 2

And then after the establishment of the State of Israel, the Israelites of the Bible were confused with the Israeli of today and the jihadists. The people in southern Palestine were confused with the Jewish people of today.

00:02:52 Speaker 2

And an ethno national and religious state was then projected into the Bible.

00:03:01 Speaker 2

This is the theory of Keith Whitlam.

00:03:06 Speaker 2

Now this theology was in no way an innocent theology because this was an integral part of an Anglo-Saxon. Sorry for the British. You have to deal with us today, you know? So this was part of an Anglo-Saxon colonial project.

00:03:19 Speaker 1

It's OK.

00:03:26 Speaker 2

Aiming at sending European Jews to Palestine as subcontractors to the British Empire.

00:03:34 Speaker 2

And in this context, the Bible actually was weaponized against us to make this a reality.

00:03:43 Speaker 2

Now the problem that we are dealing with here is.

00:03:46 Speaker 2

That.

00:03:49 Speaker 2

If we look at the academia, we see two different actually disciplines that developed and these two disciplines have nothing to do with each other. On the one hand.

00:04:06 Speaker 2

You have and. Each one has its own tools, rationale, convictions, and so on. The one.

00:04:13 Speaker 2

Hand you have biblical.

00:04:15 Speaker 2

History of Israel and and and biblical archaeology, and on the other hand, you have Middle Eastern studies. These are two disciplines. They have nothing to do with each other. The 1st is House and the Theology Department, the other in the Middle East and near East Studies Department.

00:04:36 Speaker 2

The first deal with ancient history of Palestine, the other with modern history.

00:04:43 Speaker 2

Between them there is no connection but an unbridgeable gap.

00:04:49 Speaker 2

While my colleagues we help them are basically decolonizing history and archaeology.

00:04:57 Speaker 2

I am busy trying to decolonize theology. That's what we're doing. So while historians are trying to rewrite the history of Palestine from indigenous perspective and archaeologists busy to reinterpret archaeological findings, and while Western theology had been supporting Israel.

00:05:18 Speaker 2

Claim. Theologically, we as Palestinians, Christian theologians, have been struggling to make sense of it all.

00:05:29 Speaker 2

So this is what we are.

00:05:33 Speaker 2

What what I'm doing actually, as a contextual theology.

00:05:37 Speaker 2

Now let me now tell you the theory that I have been developing and that will be in this in this last chapter.

00:05:46 Speaker 2

Of the book.

00:05:48 Speaker 2

First of all, the Bible did not originate in the Bible belt, right? It came out of Palestine.

00:05:59 Speaker 2

The biblical stories are connected to Palestine geography.

00:06:04 Speaker 2

To its people and to its culture.

00:06:07 Speaker 2

This is fact. Now I believe that Israel did not confiscate only our land.

00:06:16 Speaker 2

But it's confiscated our stories.

00:06:19 Speaker 2

The stories of our four fathers and four mothers, which is for me the Bible and then this Bible was weaponized against us Palestinians. So is there a way to redeem the Bible from its Zionist hijacking? This is the question that we are struggling with now the theological.

00:06:40 Speaker 2

Amniotic that I'm trying.

00:06:45 Speaker 2

To develop, use. Actually what Professor Jean just mentioned before the length of long jury.

00:06:56 Speaker 2

Which means I have to look at the history of Palestine through.

00:07:01 Speaker 2

Long period of time. I cannot just look at the 20th century separate from the 1st century or whatever. I have to look them as one.

00:07:11 Speaker 2

Continuous history and this is actually where the Bible come in, and the second I use a geopolitical lens for reading the Bible. Nobody I have to say, nobody else tried that before. So this is really in yours. So what do I mean by that?

00:07:32 Speaker 2

If we look through a long durey approach.

00:07:37 Speaker 2

We realised that, unfortunately, Palestine.

00:07:41 Speaker 2

It's a small country surrounded by 5 regional powers.

00:07:46 Speaker 2

You have Egypt, you have Europe.

00:07:49 Speaker 2

You have Turkey, the Hittites, others you have Mesopotamia, Syria, Iraq and you have Iran.

00:07:57 Speaker 2

These five regional powers, they.

00:08:02 Speaker 2

Influenced.

00:08:03 Speaker 2

Our history at different stages often actually occupied Palestine.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

So over the period of right of time, Palestine has been occupied, occupied by one of these regional powers.

00:08:22 Speaker 2

And.

00:08:24 Speaker 2

The Bible.

00:08:26 Speaker 2

I believe has to do with this reality.

00:08:30 Speaker 2

If we look historically ethical at the at the Bible as the book, the oldest sections of the Bible goes back to the 10th century BC.

00:08:41 Speaker 2

That's almost the same century when the first real empire, the Syrian empire, emerged. Now for me, this tells me that the question about God is very much connected to the question about the empire.

00:08:56 Speaker 2

Why? Because the empire behaves like God.

00:09:01 Speaker 2

They have all the power. They can do whatever they want and nobody can stop them.

00:09:08 Speaker 2

Now, if you live in Palestine and you feel the heat of the empire, you keep asking yourself God, where are you?

00:09:17 Speaker 2

I mean, why don't you come?

00:09:20 Speaker 2

We believe in you, but why can't you come and deliver us from?

00:09:26 Speaker 2

The empire.

00:09:28 Speaker 2

And I believe that actually the entire Bible has to do with this question.

00:09:35

Does he answer you?

00:09:35 Speaker 1

And.

00:09:36 Speaker 2

Sorry.

00:09:37

Does God answer?

00:09:38 Speaker 1

You.

00:09:38 Speaker 2

That's that's the question I will.

00:09:40 Speaker 1

Come to that now.

00:09:42 Speaker 2

So, so empire, they they they they triggered the question about God.

00:09:50 Speaker 2

And uh.

00:09:53 Speaker 2

So.

00:09:57 Speaker 2

But, but it's not only that they they ask the question. Our people under Imperial rule do not remain passive. We were talking about agency. I think a lot today. They long for liberation and revolt and resist.

00:10:14 Speaker 2

Wherever there is occupation, there is resistance. Imperial oppression inevitably begets a yearning for freedom.

00:10:23 Speaker 2

So through this geopolitical lens, we come to see the Bible as a form of resistance literature. That's. That's the idea. OK, resistance literature refers to written works that challenge system of oppression, whether colonial imperial.

00:10:43 Speaker 2

Or militaristic.

00:10:46 Speaker 2

Emerging from context of domination, it gives voice to a marginalised communities affirming their identity, culture and humanity in the face of empire.

00:10:58 Speaker 2

Actually, the term resistance literature was first coined by the Palestinian writer pasangan.

00:11:07 Speaker 2

In his work 1966 resistance literature in occupied Palestine. So basically what I'm saying, we need to read the Bible as a book of resistance literature because it corresponds to the reality of the people of Palestine who have endured 1 occupation after the other.

00:11:27 Speaker 2

From the Assyrian to the Babylonian to the to the Persian, to the Greek, to the Romans, all the way to Israeli. So through a long jury process we see them in one continue.

00:11:40 Speaker 2

So it is no coincidence that the biblical texts were not composed in the centre of power.



00:11:49 Speaker 2

They were not written.

00:11:51 Speaker 2

In any of these empires, but in occupied Palestine, Palestine is thus the whole context.

00:11:59 Speaker 2

Of the Bible.

00:12:01 Speaker 2

Our Palestinian ancestors, irrespective of what religious.

00:12:08 Speaker 2

They belong to our Palestinian ancestors, resisted empire by telling stories, stories of survival, struggle and faithfulness, and by faithfully passing them from one generation to the next. And each generation reinterpret these stories in light of its own.

00:12:29 Speaker 2

Historical moment, ensuring their continuity continued relevance. The Palestinian poets actually.

00:12:40 Speaker 2

Continue this today. If you look at how, for example, Mahmoud Ruiz has employing biblical stories in the Palestinian struggle, you can see that the Bible is not closed. It continues actually through different means today. So from that, yeah, 2 minutes. Yeah, I'm.

00:13:00 Speaker 2

I'm always done so from the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, to the revelation, actually all of them. They are narratives that confront empire. This is what these.

00:13:17 Speaker 2

Do not emerge from positions of power, but from communities under siege communities longing for freedom.

00:13:25 Speaker 2

At its heart, the Bible is about liberation. It is the central thread that runs throughout it.

00:13:32 Speaker 2

The people of God living under the shadow of Empire have always longed for and fought for liberation. This is the story of the historical Jesus who came to proclaim the reign of God. That was his mission, an alternative reign.

00:13:49 Speaker 2

Alternative vision based on justice rather than the packs Romana, which was based on Dominion yet and this is the last question I would like to leave with you. What happened when the text of oppressed?

00:14:04 Speaker 2

Which is the Bible become tools in the hand?

00:14:07 Speaker 2

Of the oppressor.

00:14:10 Speaker 2

This is why any faithful Christian harmonic must be grounded in a rigorous sociopolitical analysis and clear understanding of power dynamics.

00:14:21 Speaker 2

When the stories of the oppressed are Co opted by empire, when these stories as are read as factual history, the Bible can repent, weaponize, transforming liberation narratives into genocide theologies. And this is exactly what we are experiencing today.

00:14:41 Speaker 2

The Book of Joshua unfortunately has been used.

00:14:47 Speaker 2

By European colonisers in, in, in North America and South America and South Africa and Australia against their indigenous people. And Israel is using these texts against us as genocidal text.

00:15:06 Speaker 2

And you heard Netanyahu as one example, on October 27th, when he announced that the Israeli army are getting into Gaza, he is.

00:15:16 Speaker 2

It quoted the Bible saying do not forget what Amalek did for.

00:15:22 Speaker 2

You remember the.

00:15:24 Speaker 2

Prema exactly. And basically asking and calling for a genocide.

00:15:29 Speaker 2

So this is what is unfolding today in in Gaza, the God in vogue today by by Netanyahu is no longer the God of the oppressed, but the God of the empire, a God who crushes rather than the.

00:15:46 Speaker 2

Rivers, this is the God of the occupier, not the God of the Bible, the God of empire is militaristic, the God of the people, however, is found in survival, suffering and steadfast hope.

00:16:01 Speaker 2

And I conclude so.

00:16:05 Speaker 2

The faith in God has sustained the people of Palestine through every wave of occupation displacement.

00:16:14 Speaker 2

Empire cannot rejoice in their conquest for why they may destroy lives and homes. And we heard about it from Doctor Mohammad today. They cannot crush the spirit of the people. This is the resilience that the apostle Paul experienced when he wrote to the church in Korean.

00:16:35 Speaker 2

We are hard and this is our reality. As Palestinians, we are hard pressed on every side.

00:16:42 Speaker 2

But not crushed.

00:16:44 Speaker 2

But next but not in despair.

00:16:48 Speaker 2

Persecuted but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed. It is precisely these biblical and Koranic stories that have enabled generation after generation of Palestinian to endure. They provide not only the strength to resist.

00:17:08 Speaker 2

But the spiritual stamina to remain resilient even in the darkest time.

00:17:15

BB.