



# Interwoven Congregations® Quarterly

Helping faith communities be agents for racial justice and healing.

Issue 10: March 2024

## From the Editor

The Hamas attack on October 7th and the Israeli response have been sources of outrage and despair. We considered issuing a statement, but then decided instead to use the Quarterly to probe the issues more deeply. To do so, we reached out to two people, Rev. Sari Ateek of St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church, a Palestinian native, and Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. We had interviewed Rabbi Abbi for an earlier Quarterly issue on [Anti-Bigotry](#). And I knew Rev. Sari from my time in Bethesda, MD and had a deep appreciation for his ministry. What I didn't realize is that Sari and Abbi also knew each other. So we sat down (over Zoom) on Feb. 6th for an intimate, challenging, painful but also inspiring conversation about what they *felt*, what they *thought*, what they *hope*, and *what role* they think people of faith should play today regarding Israel-Palestine. Thank you for reading with an open heart.

Peace, salaam, shalom,

- Pat Jackson

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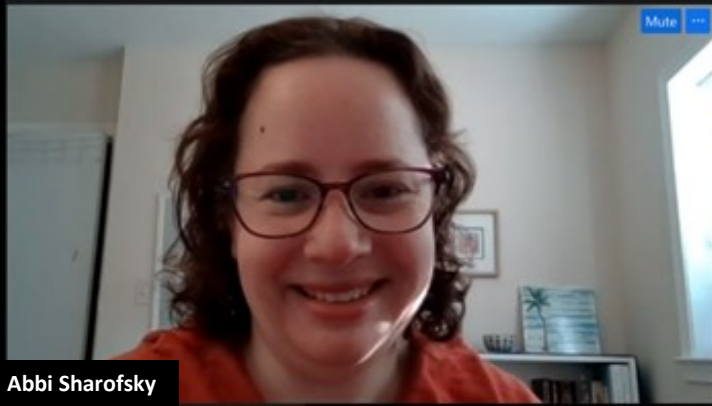
## Israel and Palestine: A conversation of anguish, reflection & hope



**Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky**  
*Jewish Community  
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Greater Washington*



**Rev. Sari Ateek**  
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Abbi Sharofsky



Sari Ateek



Pat Jackson

The Zoom conversation  
on February 6, 2024

**PART I: How did you FEEL?**

**Rev. Pat Jackson, Interwoven Congregations:** Rev. Sari Ateek and Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky, thank you for joining us for this conversation today (February 6<sup>th</sup>) about the recent events in Israel - Palestine. Sari, if I could start with you, how did you *feel* on October 7<sup>th</sup> and in the aftermath?

**Rev. Sari Ateek, [St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church](#):** Thank you, this is a beautiful [conversation] space. I was really sad when I heard the news of October 7<sup>th</sup>. I was shocked, actually, at the magnitude of it. There's never been in my lifetime any situation where Israelis were killed in those numbers. It is not uncommon for Palestinians to be killed in those numbers, but for Israelis to be killed in those numbers was truly a shocking thing. I was sad and I was also disturbed by my own lack of surprise that there would be such a reaction from Hamas to the state of oppression in Gaza. My theory about humans is that the human spirit has to thrive. It has to live. And so there's never a

situation where people are going to be okay living in confinement like that. So there's a lack of surprise that there would be some spillover from Gaza. Part of the sadness for me is that the cycle of violence continues. So the reaction to the events that came afterwards is also not a surprise. We see this everywhere: *"You attack us, we will make you pay."* I just wish humans weren't so predictable. So no surprise with Israel's response.

**Pat:** Abbi, how about for you? How did you feel?

**Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky, [Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington](#):** It happened on the end of the holiday of Sukkot, on these two holy days, Sh'mini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, when we celebrate the end of the Torah reading cycle for the whole year. There's a lot of joy and celebration. You wouldn't typically use electronics so I try to stay off my phones. I remember waking up that Saturday morning [of October 7<sup>th</sup>] and my phone was just buzzing. I saw that it was a group chat that I'm in with Jews and

Catholics. We had spent a week together in an emerging leadership program. A Catholic priest in a Hebrew-speaking church in Jerusalem was messaging, *"We're okay, I can't believe this is happening."* And I thought, *"What happened to Father Benny?"* And then I start looking through the feed and I'm like, *"Oh my God."* I just couldn't believe it. I'm sitting in bed and I tap my husband, *"David,*

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[on my phone] and I'm like,  
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— Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky

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*something's happened."* And I just start scrolling through -- 600 Israelis, 700 Israelis. And the number just kept going up. We didn't want to say anything to our two kids; they're 12 and 8. We went to synagogue that morning, and people were finding out. And everyone was saying, *"Are you okay? Is this person okay? Is that person okay?"* And then finally, we get to the part in the Torah service where you say a prayer for the State of Israel and a prayer for this country. Our rabbi broke the news from the bima. I remember saying the prayer for Israel. The rabbi recited the prayer for the soldiers, and our cantor sang a song for those who were captives. We had heard that the nephew of someone in our congregation had been taken hostage. I remember the cantor singing a beautiful song that I learned years ago. I was singing it and just crying; and I'm not a crier in synagogue. Afterwards, we were all saying *"How are you?" "Well, you know."* That became the greeting line for the next few weeks.

I remember this gut feeling upon seeing what happened -- Hamas had attacked these kibbutzim, there were rockets everywhere -- and my instinct was that the antisemitism is going to go *sky high*. Islamophobia is going to go sky high. This is going to be really bad for our kids.

Then in the days to come, I remember just holding my breath. Is there going to be a ground invasion? When is it going to happen? This is going to be bad. Two of my colleagues in the JCRC office have sons who are currently in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). They were among the first to go into Gaza. I remember this terrible feeling of *"I can't believe we're doing this, and I hope their sons come home. There's no way this is going to be good for anyone at all."* I hate that this is where we are.

**Pat:** Sari, I wonder if you might say a word about your own background and how you connect with this situation. How did you interact with your congregation following these events initially?

**Sari:** It was a weird space for me. Abbi, you're in a community full of Jewish people, right? So everyone is feeling that impact in a very personal way.

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*"I cried like I've  
never cried before."*

— Rev. Sari Ateek

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For me, I'm the only Palestinian around Americans in my church. So all of the focus of the situation in Gaza is put on me, like *"What's happening over there?"* So I actually retreated emotionally. I did not want to be around anyone. I didn't want to be the poster child for what's happening there. I couldn't take care of people's feelings while I

myself was grieving. I just couldn't be there for people in that way. I think October was probably the hardest month for me. I cried like I've never cried before. I wasn't just crying for the tremendous loss of life in Gaza; I was crying because now I can't even imagine there ever being peace in my lifetime. I wasn't planning on saying anything about it from the pulpit [on Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>]. I kept putting off writing the sermon, and then I realized that I couldn't preach on anything that was going to feel even remotely authentic unless I spoke about what was actually going on for me. And so I decided to just let the congregation in on how I was processing where God is in the midst of this. That was it. I don't have answers, just *"Here's how I'm processing it."*

I centered [my sermon](#) around a prayer that I've had in my Bible for a really long time. It's an anonymous prayer that is simply attributed with *"based on the prayer of a Palestinian Christian."* I've had it in my Bible since I was a kid, and it reads: *"Pray not for Palestinian or Jew, for Arab or Israeli, but rather pray for ourselves that we might not divide them in our prayers, but keep them together in our hearts."* The congregation found the sermon meaningful - particularly the ending where I said that when people say to me, *"I'm pro-Palestinian,"* I always respond by saying, *"Please don't be."* I know you're trying to tell me that you are in solidarity with my people, but the last thing we need is for people to be pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli. That's

where the problem is -- saying I am for one group of people. *We have to be pro-justice. We have to be pro-humanity.* Abbi, you have eyes and ears and you're looking at me, and your soul is so beautiful. There's nothing that's different between you and me. We're human beings with a desire for our people to thrive. We all have the right to nationhood and to self-determination. It doesn't have to be zero sum. And so I don't believe in saying, *"I am blindly supportive of this group or that."* I think if we could elevate ourselves and speak out about injustice when injustice happens, then we're going to be much better contributors to the human family.

I eventually emerged out of that depression. As a Palestinian who was born and raised in Israel-Palestine, I developed amazing skills for compartmentalization. So it wasn't even a conscious thing. My nervous system just made a switch in the beginning of November. Maybe it's not healthy, but I just compartmentalized it. But it is still emotionally very difficult for me.

## **Part II: What did you THINK?**

**Pat:** Stepping back from our feelings, how do you *think* we got here? How do you understand the reality that is Israel-Palestine today? I'm mindful that we could spend a week on this question.

**Sari:** Years.

**Abbi:** There are college courses on it.



**Pat:** Yes. But in this finite space, how are you thinking about this?

**Abbi:** I really appreciate how you put the compartmentalization out there Sari. Going through the world as a Jewish person, there's always a certain amount of intergenerational trauma that's carried. Any people that's been part of something, persecuted or exiled, experiences trauma. We're all carrying it. You carry it, I carry it. There's definitely been this, *"Well, how vulnerable can I be? How vulnerable should I be? Who is safe to talk to?"* I found that going to synagogue was even more work than usual because my job is to be in these conversations.

**Sari:** Yes. To show up.

**Abbi:** My job is to be with all the interfaith people, to do all the inter-group work, and be the Jew in the room. It was hard. And that first month, I was very guarded. I remember the first event I went to where I realized that the room was not predominantly Jewish. I remember sitting there thinking, *"How many Jews are here right now? Am I okay? What's going to be said? How on guard do I need to be?"* And it was terrifying. In the following weeks, when I was around big groups of Jewish people, there was this deep feeling of *we're all standing together with Israel*. It was beautiful to feel that connection, which had been so strained over the last year or so because of everything that was going on with the Israeli government. A real distrust and fracturing in Israeli society and in Jew-

ish communities had set in. To be pulled together again was nice — and yet so sad that this is what it took. November was the hard month for me. Those first weeks it was all vigils, rallies, vigils, rallies. It was just going nonstop, 12-hour days. But when a prayer service for peace that I was planning with a Presbyterian pastor and a Muslim Imam fell apart, shortly before Thanksgiving, I sat

in my office and thought, *"Why am I doing this? Why am I here? How is this ever going to work? What is the point of my job?"* The only slightly hopeful thing, as we talk about the future, is that in all of it, none of us hung up on each other. We didn't yell at each other. It was more of *"Can you see why this hurt me? Can you see why I spoke my truth? I need you to see my pain in this"* -- and actually hearing what the other person was saying. It was still terrible. I felt like this work that we were trying to do — how is this ever going to happen?

**Pat:** Sari, how do you think about the situation today

that is Israel-Palestine?

**Sari:** My daughter's school is doing a field trip to the Holocaust Museum. And the question came up this morning, *"Should she participate in that?"* First of all, it's up to her. But my feeling is, *"Absolutely!"* We have to understand human suffering. The suffering of the Jewish people has seemed to conflict with the suffering of my own people. This kind of zero sum way of thinking is awful. So my view is that it is so important for my

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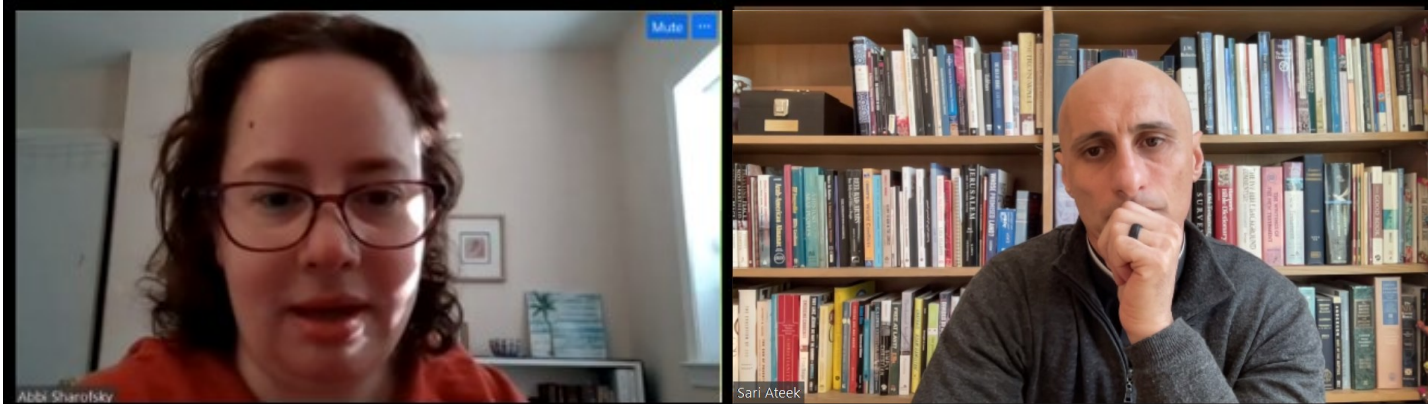
*"Any people that's been part of something, persecuted or exiled, experiences trauma. We're all carrying it. You carry it. I carry it."*

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*"As faith leaders, we have to be radically committed to nonviolence ... There can't be a time where we say, "Okay, we're going to suspend our beliefs because we think the only way to achieve what we need is to go in and kill people."*

— Rev. Sari Ateek

daughter to go and learn about the Holocaust. Because, as Abbi said, we're dealing with trauma. Israel's disproportionate response to what happened on October 7th is a trauma response. If security for one group of people depends on killing innocent men, women, and children - if that's what security means, then you've lost your soul. As faith leaders, we have to be radically committed to nonviolence. We must be. There can't be a time where we say, *"Okay, we're going to suspend our beliefs because we think that the only way to achieve what we need is to go in and kill people."* The cycle of violence is perpetuated by the lie that the only way to stop others from hurting you is to hurt them more. And so for me, I see major injustice from the very beginning with what's happened in Israel - Palestine. I do see very clearly that there's one plot of land and two groups of people that claim a right to that land. There's no scenario where that's going to be a simple solution. I don't think that Palestinians are better than Jews. I don't think that we're more evolved. I think that if Palestinians and Israelis were to switch places, it would be just as much of a catastrophe in my point of view. And so, again, this is not about one group being a victim and the other group being an oppressor. This is about all of us. We're stuck in this terrible cycle where we think that our people group deserves something that the other people group doesn't.



I'll say this, Abbi: My personal belief is that the world doesn't seem to take it seriously when people speak on their own behalf, when it comes to their own oppression. But when others speak on their behalf, for some reason, it's taken more seriously. I don't know why. So my hope is not in America. I know America could change the realities on the ground in Israel-Palestine very quickly if it changed its policies. But my hope is not in America. My hope is actually in Israelis themselves who decide that there has to be a better way, and who decide to humanize Palestinians. And I hope that Israelis can learn to trust that there are so many Palestinians who are done with this cycle of violence, and who want peace and coexistence. They want to live in a way where there's reconciliation. I think this is why this setback is so awful. Situations like this only serve to radicalize people even further. Jews have really suffered. I understand the desperate need to have a homeland where there's security and peace. I desperately understand that. And, I hope that one day, it will be understood that Palestinians also are humans and they deserve a homeland as well in which they can live with peace and security.

**Abbi:** Around 30 days after October 7, there was a program at Congregation Beth El (Montgomery County, MD) to mark Shloshim, the end of the first month of mourning. I stood on the bima and I said, *"I pray for the hostages. I pray for the families that are still finding out about their loved ones who were lost because they will be identifying people for a long time."* I said, *"And I pray for Palestinians. I pray for*

people who are being killed in Gaza. I pray for civilians and children. We can grieve their death as well. They are human. We can hold both and there's room in who we are as humans to grieve both of those losses." People came up to me afterwards and said "Thank you for saying that."

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*"The people in Gaza who survive are going to hate us and that's not going to help anything."*

— Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky

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A board member emailed me and said, "I feel like you gave me permission to actually feel something that I didn't know I was allowed to feel."

**Sari:** That's so powerful, so prophetic.

**Abbi:** I grew up in a generation in the 80s and 90s where we didn't learn about Palestinians in Hebrew school. We learned about Israel and how great Israel was, and that was it. I had to, over time, learn the bigger picture of history; to shape my own thinking and what it means for me as a progressive Zionist. I had to learn what it means to love this land and to feel this connection to Israel; to believe in the self-determination of Jews there; and to realize that there's a place for the self-determination of Palestinians also in this land. What does that mean to hold those two? I try to bring that view of my Zionism in many places to reclaim a word that's been used so negatively for a long time, and for people to know that I don't, as a Zionist, hate Palestinians.

**Pat:** Abbi, could you say a bit more about what it means to be a "progressive Zionist"?

**Abbi:** Progressive Zionism/Zionist is a broad term used to describe a person or group who believes

that Jewish people have a right to self-determination in the land of Israel, that Israel is an important part of Jewish faith, history, and current identity AND that Jews can have that self-determination alongside other faith and ethnic groups, including Palestinians. It's also a person who may feel a strong connection to Israel and have strong critiques of the Israeli government, and want the country to do a better job of being religiously pluralistic, improve conditions for Palestinians, address issues of racism and classism – ideas that are often considered more politically progressive.

Now I don't know what a solution looks like and thank God I'm not a politician in those spaces. Like you said Sari, there's one piece of land and continuing to fight over it doesn't make sense. None of that's healthy; none of that's good. Just as you think about the Israelis, I think about this generation of Palestinians. The people in Gaza who survive are going to hate us and that's not going to help anything. It just keeps the cycle going. I am also hearing from some Israeli colleagues and friends right now that the trauma is just so great

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*"As a Palestinian, there's no question for me. There's apartheid going on in Israel-Palestine."*

— Rev. Sari Ateek

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that they can't re-engage right now, which I also respect. Sitting here from my very safe American spot, I feel very helpless. I also don't want to push my American perspective onto a place where I'm not living. So I just sit here not knowing where to go next.

**Sari:** I love that humility, Abbi. We're sitting *here*, not *there*. And so there is a limitation there for us. You and I have a luxury of being able to sit and speak in a safe place here. The deception would be that we're more evolved because we're able to have this conversation, but we're not. We're just not in Gaza right now. I would feel less safe if I knew there was someone out there who hated me. I would feel much more safe if I knew that my neighbors loved me and looked out for me. I hope that Israel and Palestine wake up someday and realize that the only way for safety and peace is actually connection and love.

**Pat:** The public discourse around Israel-Palestine raises challenging questions as to whether it is appropriate to speak about Israel as an apartheid state or going even further to raise the question of genocide concerning the treatment of the

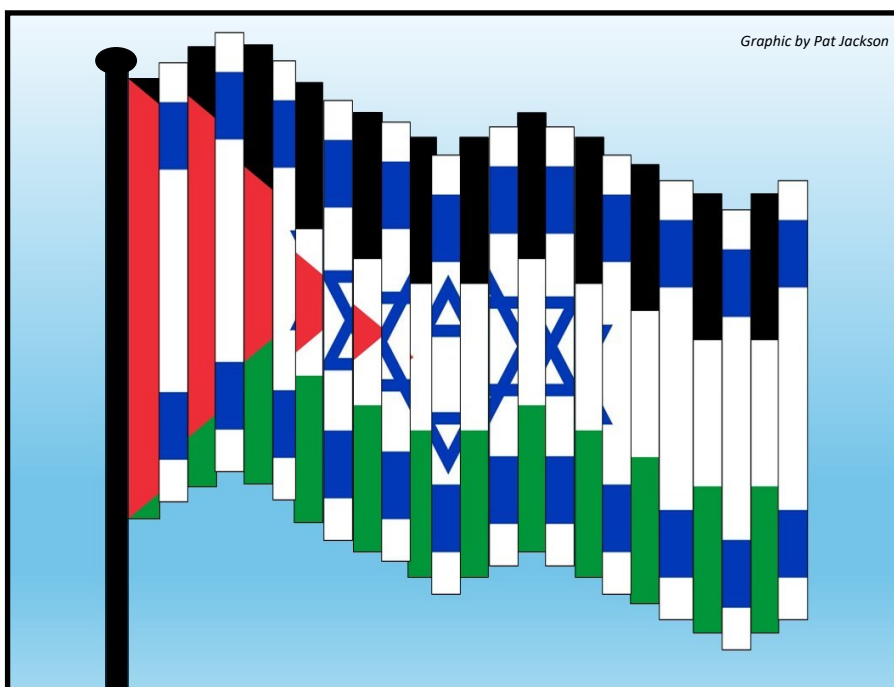
Palestinians. How do you think about those?

**Abbi:** Last night, we had a JCRC program on allyship, "Antisemitism for Allies." The presenter talked about was how these words are very loaded and suggested that the courts should determine what the different parameters are. The point she made was, "*What happens when those of us who don't fully understand those words use them and demonize people with them?*" So saying Israel is committing genocide then becomes "Jews are a genocidal people," because that leap is what happens, that's how antisemitism flows.

That's what scares me. To say "*Jews operate an apartheid state,*" that's what scares me.

**Sari:** As a Palestinian, there's no question for me. There's apartheid going on in Israel-Palestine. That term was coined in South Africa, and South African leaders like (Archbishop) Desmond Tutu, who personally experienced South African apartheid, was naming it in Israel-Palestine way before the most recent identifications were made by Amnesty International and others. I just look at the facts. Israel is a democratic state, right? But if you're in the West Bank, there's actually a different set of rules for you.

Palestinians in the West Bank are not under the same law that Israelis in Israel are under. They're under a military law and so they get tried in military courts. The whole legal system is different. You can say you have



democracy, but the only way to do that is by creating another set of rules for the people you're occupying. If Palestinians in the West Bank whose homes are being demolished, and whose children are being taken in night raids by the Israeli military—if their cases were brought before an Israeli court instead of a military court, like every other Israeli—those actions would never be tolerated. They would be seen as a violation of human rights. And so that, for me, demonstrates the unjust double standard that has been labeled apartheid. The facts on the grounds are the same.



**Sari:** The reason language is powerful is because it might wake the world up to what's happening over there. So I think that labeling things like this, if done in a healthy way - and not in a way that demonizes a group of people - is important. These labels play an important role. Genocide? Are there innocents being killed by the thousands in Gaza? Yes. I can tell you that. You want to call that genocide? Okay. You don't want to call that genocide? Okay. It doesn't change the fact that people are dying by the thousands, and the world is just letting it happen. It's being done in the name of security. There have been so many atrocities done in the name of security. So if you ask me as a Palestinian, the answer is "yes" to both the question of apartheid and genocide. But I do understand the nuance. At some point in time, forget the labels. We just need to work together to end the violence, the oppression, and the occupation. We need to secure peace and security for Israel, and we need to secure peace and security for Palestinians.

**Abbi:** Persecution of Jews has happened. How did Jews get to so many places around the world? We were forced out of many countries.

**Sari:** Exactly. No one here is virtuous.

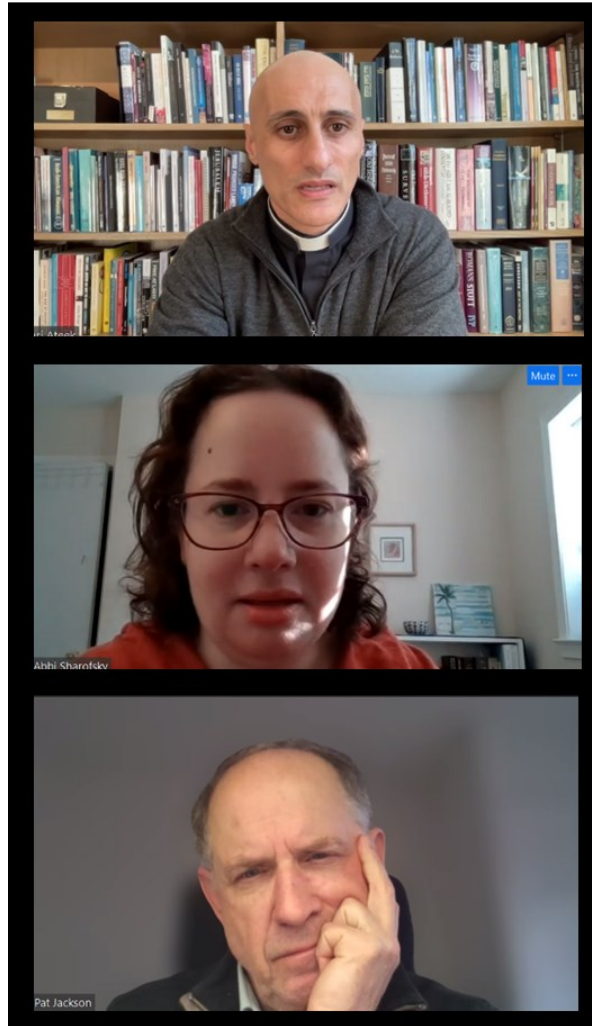
**Abbi:** I appreciate what you're saying about labels. I know that when I go talk about antisemitism or any kind of hate or bias, if I start with the words

that are going to trigger (and I don't like that term), but if I start there, no one is going to hear it, right?

**Sari:** Exactly.

**Abbi:** Our culture loves to give labels and create slogans that fit on a poster. And none of those actually get the job done. I note that because there are a bunch of ways Pat that you're trying to get these terms to be discussed [in this interview]. And I think that in a lot of ways, that is part of the problem. We want to delve into these terms so much and give things labels and boxes, that we forget about the humanity on the different sides that are truly impacted. Thousands of people have died over the last — I don't know how many hours — in Gaza. There are Israeli soldiers who are coming home in body bags, and their parents are burying their 19 and 20 year olds. All of those things are happening. They're all true. I don't want to be that mother on either side. That's what I come down to.

**Pat:** I appreciate that. I guess I think of these terms as a way to identify, describe and understand a reality with which we're confronted. Language is a tool, imperfect and sometimes blunt, and it can clearly be abused. But the reason I want to surface these issues is that our readers hear commentary about these ideas, and I want to give them an opportunity to hear from you about how else perhaps they ought to consider them.



So one other term or concept I want to engage with you is whether in discussing the issue of justice in Israel-Palestine, is it appropriate to frame that as a matter of *just justice*, or *racial justice*?

**Abbi:** I won't use a racial justice lens [on Israel-Palestine] because I think that has become a very American construct to use on a place that is dealing with issues that are way bigger than anti-racism. Sari, I imagine you've encountered Israelis who have the exact same skin tone as you, or darker or lighter. As an Ashkenazi, Eastern European Jew, who would visit Israel, yes, there would be a sense in some ways, of some dominance. But there are those in Israel who would respond to me with, *"Well, you're an American, and you're a woman, and you're a rabbi. You have zero standing here."* It's an issue of peoplehood justice. Who are the people that are here, and their stories and their legacies going back? It's far more complex than which race was there. I do think there are justice issues, definitely, both within Israel itself -- how refugees are treated, how the Mizrahi community (Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries) is treated versus the Ashkenazim versus the Ethiopians. There are many issues of social strata

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and socioeconomic factors. I've been to the bus station in South Tel Aviv and you can't tell me that there aren't issues within Israel. 100%. And what's happening between Israelis and Palestinians is even more complex than that.

**Sari:** I wouldn't say it's *only* one thing, as Abbi said. Even within Israeli society, within Israeli Jews, people do see color in a way that's not necessarily healthy. There are people who feel left out and marginalized because of the color of

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*"For the majority of history in Israel-Palestine, Jews and Arabs were living side by side. We are now losing the generation that remembers those days."*

— Rev. Sari Ateek

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their skin. But I would say, yes, you do have two races that are pitted against each other and they're fighting. Arabs and Jews tend to consider themselves racially different. I'm with you Abbi, it's a construct, this whole racial thing. 99.9% of our DNA is exactly the same.

**Abbi:** I wouldn't see you as a different race than me -- but a different ethnicity or religion? Yes.

**Sari:** I think the racial piece factors in from outside. I think about how the news talks about the 1,200 Israelis who were killed on October 7th and the alarm around that versus how many thousands of Palestinians have had to die in order for there to be a similar amount of concern. I think about how if you use the word "Palestinian" in America, many people first think of turbans and terrorists. It used to be the communists and now it's this war on Islam. And so I feel that it would be immature for any of us to say that race is not playing *some role* in all of this. I have racism in my own heart, I know I do. For me to say *"I am not racist,"* is not to be truthful. I *am* a part of the problem. All of us are. The sooner we all admit that, *"Yes, there are vestiges of racism still lingering within me,"* the sooner we can become a part of the solution, and

humbly work toward becoming anti-racist. Is racism the only factor in Israel-Palestine? Absolutely not. There are so many levels to this thing. And if you remember, Pat, for the majority of history in Israel-Palestine, Jews and Arabs were living side by side. We are now losing the generation that remembers those days. And the generations that are here now don't think it is possible, which is so sad because it was totally possible. And it will be again.

### **Part III: What is your HOPE?**

**Pat:** What's your vision for the future in Israel-Palestine? What's your hope?

**Sari:** I had this momentary, very fleeting image of Palestinians and Israelis living side by side, looking out for each other, keeping one another's children when someone was going to work. Trauma is perpetuated in generations. Something truly radical would need to happen for people to trust one another like that again. And so maybe this is like Moses -- all of us are standing on the outside of the Promised Land saying, *"It's not going to happen in my generation. But maybe it will someday."* I don't think it's going to happen in my generation. I don't think it's going to happen in my children's generation. I think the first step is going to be that people have to abide by some form of international law that forces them to treat one another with justice and equity. And then eventually the generations themselves will clear it. The hate will just have to work its way out. But it has to start with some clear boundaries that ensure justice and equity.

**Abbi:** My hope. I mentioned to my kids that I would travel over to Israel right now in a heartbeat. They said, *"No, we don't want you to go.*

*It's not safe."* I said, *"I'll be fine."* I want them to get back to the place where they want to travel there with me. And they do, but they also say, *"But what about the things on the news?"* Even with everything going on, if I knew that my older family members would be okay and I could secure a job over there, we'd be there. There's something about it that's still home for me. Really home. Even though I've only lived there for a few months at a time, there's still this home feeling.

**Sari:** Yes.

**Abbi:** So my hope is that more people can experience that sense of home and be there in a way that



is not at the expense of another people. My hope is that there is a government that respects Palestinians and sees them as people who have rights. I hope that they are able to

exist and live in a safe and healthy way. And I hope that there are Palestinians who recognize that Israelis can be there and not want to take them out. And that Palestinians realize Jews don't hate people who are not Jewish.

### **Part IV: What is the role of Faith Leaders and Congregations?**

**Pat:** Final question. What role do you see for faith leaders and congregations at this moment and in the months to come?

**Abbi:** The role for faith leaders and our congregations, as I've learned from several Christian pastors over the last few months, is to just keep showing up with a prophetic voice. And I think that's what we need to do. I look at my role right now, because I don't have a congregation, as being in as many 1-to-1 conversations, small conversations, as I can. Because the only way this work gets done is actually by sitting down and talking. There's no

magic program that's going to fix it. It's just continuing to show up and hear each other. And when the next big thing comes, maybe we'll all be a little less afraid to just knock on the door and say "Hey, how are you? I brought cookies and, well, we're all going to sit through this mess together."

**Sari:** The most prophetic thing that we can do as faith leaders is for all of us to say "Stop. Stop killing." Wherever it is, we have to say "Stop!" Some people call that a ceasefire, but apparently ceasefire is a term that no one wants to use. I see Jesus as having come and said "Cease fire! Stop launching things at each other. Stop." That is the most human thing that one can do - to stand shoulder to shoulder with someone else, even if we disagree politically, and say that the one thing we can agree on is no killing. We have to respect the dignity of every human being and the right to life. I am not saying "ceasefire" because I want Hamas to have a chance to rally and attack Israelis again. I'm saying "ceasefire" because that is the only place you can start with anything. So for me, I am not willing to engage with anyone – ANYONE -- even a Palestinian, who thinks that the right next step is to continue to attack. I will only engage if we can agree that killing needs to stop. Neither security nor freedom are good enough reasons to kill, because that's not how you ultimately get those things. So, that's the first step.

The other thing I think, is that we have to be unwavering in not teaching partisanship in terms of

humanity. I will talk about injustice, oppression, where there are victims, and where there are perpetrators. But I refuse to globalize. I'll never say "Therefore, this whole group is by nature a victim." We have to teach people how to think

critically about exactly what Abbi said -- you can hold both spaces at the same time. You can grieve here. And grieving here doesn't mean you're not grieving there. You can hold those two spaces, because the sooner we start humanizing, the closer we are to actually working towards something that is a little bit more constructive than what's happening now. The only reason for the escalation of violence in Israel-Palestine is because people are demonizing

one another. We need to humanize *radically*. And sometimes, just like with Black Lives Matter, you have to overemphasize the humanity of one group among your own constituents who are inclined to think of one group as more human than another. You have to go out of your way to overemphasize the humanity of the other, so that there can be some equity in the way that we see them. That's what I think our prophetic work is.

**Pat:** A closing thought for you Abbi?

**Abbi:** I just want to acknowledge that this is not an easy conversation. This personally was hard for me and this was good for me, to be in complex conversation this morning. So thank you.

**Sari:** Thank you Abbi. ☐

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*"The most prophetic thing that we can do as faith leaders is for all of us to say 'Stop. Stop killing.' Wherever it is, we have to say 'Stop!'"*

— Rev. Sari Ateek

*"My hope is that more people can experience that sense of home ... in a way that is not at the expense of another people."*

— Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky

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# A Land Asunder

## A Prayer of Lament, Intercession and Hope

Merciful God,

This land of promise, this land of blessing,  
cries under the rubble of homes, mosques, schools and bullet-pocked kibbutzim.

Echoes of screams of hostages taken, of fathers and mothers who hold the bundles wrapped in white which only an hour before were playing amidst the debris.

Thousands have perished - at last count nearly 1,500 Israelis and more than 30,000 Palestinians. At what point do the numbers lose meaning? And yet to save one life is to save the world.

And so we remember their names, offered in equal proportion:

Dana and Shlomo. (x 750)

Abdullah, Abeer, Ahmed, Aisha, Ali, Amal, Anwar, Basil, Bilal, Dania, Emamah, Fadwa, Fatima, Hafsa, Hamza, Hanaa, Heba, Hussein, Ibrahim, Jana, Khalil, Mahmoud, Marwa, Muhammad, Nadia, Medaa, Omar, Raafat, Rakan, Ramzi, Rushdi, Samar, Sarah, Shafiq, Suhair, Suleiman, Waela, Waba, Yousry and Zakaria. (x 750)

This land is no stranger to strife and struggle. The people bear deep scars that journey across generations from the Holocaust and the Nakba and beyond, scars that were opened afresh with carnage that October Saturday and the relentless bombardment that has followed. And so Lord we ask, how long?

STOP. Stop the killing, we pray.

So simple, but ah, do we understand the complexities involved -- not just Israeli and Palestinian, but Qatari, Iranian, Egyptian, Lebanese, Yemeni, American, Russian? How many U.N. resolutions? How many accords?

Peace waits on her tardy cousin, justice. Justice for the violence, justice for settlements, justice for dispossessions, justice for blockades and checkpoints, justice for all the humiliations. Justice for people held captive and justice for people on the margins.

How can there be peace when security is sought through mass killing? How can there be peace when groups cling to ideologies calling for the destruction of the other?

Yet is anything impossible for you, God?

And so call us anew to the painstaking, incremental, pragmatic, risky, audacious, bold work of weaving anew the social fabric that today flaps in tatters in the breeze. It's a task that is beyond us alone, so Lord grant those in the land and other stakeholders who look on from the outside:

humility and conviction,  
courage with trembling,  
wisdom and naiveté,  
urgency with patience,  
memory and forgetting,  
resolve with flexibility,  
vision and focus  
compassion and grace.

Lord, make space for his faith and her faith, her truth and his truth,  
their common needs, their common pain, their common hope —  
Hope for a land where Jew and Arab would once again leave their  
children with one another as they go to work or market.  
Hope for a land that Israeli and Palestinian can each call home,  
secure and at peace.  
Hope for the promise and blessing that you intend God.  
Hope for this land asunder, and for your children everywhere.  
Amen

- Rev. Pat Jackson

The **Interwoven Congregations' Series:**

# Doing **Racial Justice**

We are in the midst of our “Doing Racial Justice” series. [Part I, The Apology](#), examined the role of the apology as a first step on the road to racial justice and healing. [Part II, “Congregations Doing](#)



[Racial Justice](#),” profiled two congregations in Northern Virginia, the Reimagining America Project in Charlotte, NC and Topeka JUMP. These initiatives employ three different models for how people of faith can work to address systemic racism today. Then coming up this summer, **Part III** will focus on **“Reparations.”** Can and must reparations for African Americans be a path to racial justice in our nation? We weigh the cases for and against, and explore how reparations are actually happening today. We will then conclude the series with **Part IV, “What Does Racial Justice Look Like for Native Americans?”** We pick up our dialogue with Mark Charles and other Native American leaders to speak about the state of Native communities, what justice may look like for indigenous peoples, and the role people of faith can play. Follow the series, [subscribe](#) if you don’t already, and share in the conversation!

## Support the Work, Join the Work!

**Interwoven Congregations** is dedicated to helping faith communities be agents for racial justice and healing. We do that through [the Quarterly](#), our other media and online tools, [pilgrimages](#), and by providing consulting support with individual congregations and networks of congregations. **But we cannot do this work without your support!** So please make a tax deductible [donation](#) today! If you’re part of a congregation that wants to promote racial justice and healing, contact us! Join us, sign [the pledge](#), build bridges with us, teach us, learn with us — and together we can help usher in the Beloved Community that God intends.

*Thank you!*



## Appreciations

As we close this issue of the Quarterly, I’d like to again thank Rev. Sari Ateek and Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky for thoughtfully and courageously sharing in the conversation about Israel-Palestine. I also want to express my appreciation to Interwoven Governing Board members Brother John Anderson, Rev. Chuck Booker, Roxane Rucker and Nadia Subaran for engaging in the dialogues that shaped this Quarterly issue and all that we do. And last, I want to express my gratitude to our Advisory Board members for their valuable counsel and generous support: Rory Bahadur, Rev. Michael Brooks, Phyllis Lerner, Dr. Catherine Meeks, Dr. Myron McCoy, Steve Shindler, Rev. Cassandra Wainright, and Ambassador Andrew Young.

*— Rev. Pat Jackson*