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# JEWISH JOURNAL (/)

## Sari Nusseibeh – Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life – A Must Read

BY Rabbi John Rosove (<https://jewishjournal.com/author/rabbi-john-rosove/>) | Mar 1, 2012 (<https://jewishjournal.com/news/israel/101610/sari-nusseibeh-once-upon-a-country-a-palestinian-life-a-must-read/>) | Blogs (<https://jewishjournal.com/category/commentary/blogs/>) **f** (<https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https://jewishjournal.com/news/israel/101610/sari-nusseibeh-once-upon-a-country-a-palestinian-life-a-must-read/>) **t** (<https://twitter.com/home?status=https://jewishjournal.com/news/israel/101610/sari-nusseibeh-once-upon-a-country-a-palestinian-life-a-must-read/>) **📧** (<https://jewishjournal.com/news/israel/101610/sari-nusseibeh-once-upon-a-country-a-palestinian-life-a-must-read/>) **📧**

It has taken me five years to read Sari Nusseibeh's autobiography since it was first published in 2007. I now recommend it to anyone interested in understanding the Palestinian experience during the past 45 years. That experience is brought to light by this brilliant and sensitive witness who celebrates Palestinian national life on the one hand and is a harsh critic of it on the other.

Sari Nusseibeh is President of Al Quds University in Jerusalem and Professor of Philosophy. Called the "Philosopher of the Revolution" by his friend and mentor Faisal Husseini, in the 1990s Nusseibeh emerged as the point person in Jerusalem before the consular corps for Yassir Arafat. Yet, Nusseibeh spares little in criticizing Arafat himself, the PA and Hamas charging that Arafat failed his people at Camp David in 2000 when he had the chance to close a deal for a Palestinian state.

Nusseibeh was arrested a number of times and imprisoned not for any violent act, but rather for his consistently peaceful and moderate advocacy of a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For this he was called by some Israeli security hawks as "the most dangerous Palestinian alive."

Though a witness and/or a victim to daily degradation, confiscation of land, imprisonment, deportation, threats, and violence, Nusseibeh has argued for decades that Israelis and Palestinians are, in truth, not enemies at all, but natural strategic allies. Respectful of the State of Israel and of Judaism itself, when others among his PLO colleagues sought to deny the historic roots of Judaism in Jerusalem, Nusseibeh called those Jewish roots "existential and umbilical."

None of this means, however, that Sari Nusseibeh is a "good Palestinian" by Israeli right-wing standards. He hates Israel's occupation of the West Bank, its military harshness, its security fence, and its ever-expanding settlements.

After the outbreak of the 2nd Intifada in 2001 when all seemed chaotic and going up in smoke, Dr. Nusseibeh was approached by former Israeli *Shin Bet* Chief, General Ami Ayalon, to craft a statement of principles. That statement would affirm the creation of two states for two peoples with the border running roughly along the 1967 lines, the capitals of each country based in Jerusalem and a just and reasonable solution to the refugee problem. It would be signed by 300,000 Israelis and 175,000 Palestinians.

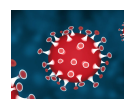
Nusseibeh is a pragmatist and he knew that the Palestinians would have to give up their right of return if there were ever to be a Palestinian state. He even engaged in a very public yelling match on this point with Machmud Abbas in the presence of Arafat where Nusseibeh screamed in frustration, "Either you want an independent state or a policy aimed at returning all the refugees to Israel. You can't have it both ways."

In addressing the heart of this conflict, Nusseibeh wrote the following:

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“Isn’t this inability to imagine the lives of the ‘other’ at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?...The average Israeli [seeks] security and a Jewish state, and the average Palestinian [seeks] freedom from occupation...Israelis need to know that for them to keep their Jewish state requires a free Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestinians need to know that to get their state requires acknowledging the moral right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. There can be no blanket right of return into Israel for the refugees...If both sides fail in this out of expediency or weakness, we’ll find ourselves one day in a hybrid state that fulfills neither the Israeli quest for a Jewish state, nor the national Palestinian quest for an Arab state.” (p. 446)

*Once Upon A Country – A Palestinian Life* is a great book because of the intelligence, passion and courage of its author. It is an essential read.

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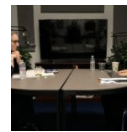
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(https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/blogs/311823/the-israeli-prosthetics-clinic-that-gives-people-and-animals-a-second-chance/)

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## JJ INSIDE THE PRINT (/PRINT)



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### EDITOR'S NOTE

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> David Suissa (<https://jewishjournal.com/author/david-suissa/>), March 6, 2020 (<https://jewishjournal.com/print/march-6-2020/>)



(<https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/columnist/editors-note/311626/purim-aipac-bernie-biden-bibi/>)

It was one of those weeks where every day brought another great idea for a column. First, I attended an insightful lecture by Rabbi Dr...

### COLUMNISTS

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He stood at the press conference on Feb. 24 and spoke about the coronavirus outbreak, visibly uncomfortable and sweating profusely. As he reassured the public...



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(<https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/columnist/311645/an-israeli-arab-votes-for-the-first-time/>)

My partner is from Jerusalem. He was born there. So were his parents. And his grandparents. He traces his roots in Jerusalem back to the...

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**Derailing the Bernie Express: Bernie Versus the Un-Bernies** (<https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/311325/derailing-the-bernie-express-bernie-versus-the-un-bernies/>)

> Dan Schnur (<https://jewishjournal.com/author/danschnur/>), March 6, 2020 (<https://jewishjournal.com/print/march-6-2020/>)



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Over the last several months, the contest for the Democratic presidential nomination has been characterized as a clash between progressives and moderates, between the party...

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A teenage girl confides to her parents she hears voices, but they laugh and tell her she's always been strange. At age 25, she is pregnant...

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> Steven Mirkin ([https://jewishjournal.com/author /stevenmirkin/](https://jewishjournal.com/author/stevenmirkin/)), March 6, 2020 (<https://jewishjournal.com/print/march-6-2020/>)

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> Eva Robbins (<https://jewishjournal.com/author/evarobbins/>),  
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Grab your groggers, your mask, your costume: Purim is March 10. Often misleading and misunderstood, this outrageously raucous holiday comes in the last month of...

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> Rabbi Abraham Cooper and Harold Brackman  
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**The Man Building the Galilee Culinary Institute**  
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> Natalie Solomon ([https://jewishjournal.com/author /natalie\\_solomon/](https://jewishjournal.com/author/natalie_solomon/)), March 6, 2020 (<https://jewishjournal.com/print/march-6-2020/>)



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Nathan Hoffman has been tapped to build and launch the Galilee Culinary Institute. "To me, food is fuel," Hoffman said. "You can literally give me..."

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