

Title of the podcast series: Life, death, and afterlife in Israel's society

Title of the podcast episode: Roman Catholic Christians and Their Life in Israel

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Submitted to Prof. Rami Zeedan

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Duration: 8 minutes

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Introduction:

1. General introduction: 1 minute

- Introduce your podcast episode: This episode is focusing on Roman Catholic Christians as a Social Group in Israel.

Welcome to *Life, Death, and Afterlife in Israel's Society*, where we delve into the unique and diverse aspects of life, religious practices, and beliefs in Israel. In this episode, we'll focus on the Roman Catholic Christian community in Israel, exploring their experiences, customs surrounding death, and beliefs regarding the afterlife. Roman Catholics in Israel, though a minority, represent an essential piece of the multicultural mosaic that defines the region. Their community life revolves around a blend of spiritual devotion, cultural preservation, and adapting to the challenges of living in a diverse and sometimes divided society. Many Roman Catholics observe traditional holidays like Christmas and Easter with vibrant celebrations that bring families and local parishes together. These festivities often include Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, processions, and feasts that blend Western Christian traditions with Middle Eastern flavors, such as cookies filled with dates or nuts, alongside roasted lamb. Everyday life for Roman Catholics in Israel often involves participation in Church-led events, which serve as a hub for social and spiritual life. Weddings, baptisms, and confirmations are celebrated with joyful gatherings, where traditional attire, such as embroidered dresses or modern adaptations with regional influences, is often worn. Additionally, Roman Catholics observe days of fasting and abstinence, particularly during Lent, when meals might consist of simple vegetarian dishes inspired by local ingredients. In the next few minutes, we'll unpack the daily life challenges they face, the importance of death rituals to their community, and the way their beliefs about the afterlife provide hope and resilience amidst the complexities of Israeli society. To briefly introduce myself, my name is Cecilia Doyle, and I'm a freshman at the University of Kansas studying English. I was a dancer for 12 years, and I love to do crafts and binge-watch my comfort TV shows. This episode was created as part of my First-Year Seminar, *Life, Death, and Afterlife in Israel's Society*, with Professor Rami Zeedan. Now, let's get into this interesting and complex topic.

2. Music /sound effects: 5 seconds

3. Topic introduction- introduce the structure of the podcast episode: 2 minutes

This episode is about some beliefs and practices regarding death and the afterlife among the Roman Catholics in Israel. This is important since it helps us understand the multicultural society in Israel. The information here is based on a survey of the existing literature about the topic and I will be posting my sources online for anyone who wants to do more research. We will cover three main points: 1) the daily lives of Roman Catholics in Israel, 2) their practices and beliefs regarding death, and 3) their views on the afterlife. Understanding these topics can help us appreciate Israel's multicultural fabric and the unique challenges that Christian minorities face.

4. Music /sound effects: 5 seconds

Central Section (about 3-6 minutes):

5. Item 1: Life of the Roman Catholic Christians in Israel- 2 minutes

Roman Catholics, like other Christian minorities in Israel, face the dual challenge of living within a Jewish-majority state and navigating their role within the broader Arab-Palestinian community. Many belong to the Palestinian Christian minority. As discussed in *Christianity in Modern Israel* by Leon Menzies Racionzer, published in 2005, these communities balance their religious identity with pressures from both Israeli policies and the Palestinian Muslim majority. The Roman Catholic community is small but strives to preserve its religious heritage despite socio political challenges. Similarly, Una McGahern's 2011 book, *Palestinian Christians in Israel: State Attitudes Towards Non-Muslims in a Jewish State*, highlights the unique position of Palestinian Christians in this context. As a minority within both the Palestinian population and the Jewish state, Roman Catholics face complex identity struggles shaped by Israeli state policies and the larger Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Additionally, *Faith and Politics in the Middle East* by James R. Stockdale (2012) underscores the role of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in helping Roman Catholics navigate their identity and preserve their traditions in a region shaped by political and religious tensions. According to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem's Annual Report on Catholic Communities in Israel from 2023, the Church plays a central role in the lives of Roman Catholics, providing a support system and helping them navigate the political challenges of the region. Many members turn to the Church not only for spiritual guidance but also as a safe space to preserve their cultural identity amidst external pressures.

6. Music /sound effects: 5 seconds (suggested 5 seconds)

7. Item 2: Practices and beliefs regarding death among the Roman Catholics in Israel - 2 minutes

Catholic practices regarding death in Israel reflect a deep reverence for traditional Christian rituals, such as burial rites, prayers for the dead, and memorial services. These rituals hold significant meaning, acting as a means of honoring the deceased while reinforcing the collective

identity of the community. In a society marked by conflict and uncertainty, these rites become more than religious observances—they are symbols of resilience and continuity. Many Roman Catholics adhere closely to the doctrines of the Church, which emphasize the importance of the afterlife and the soul's journey after death. Being a minority, the Roman Catholic community in Israel often holds onto these traditions as a way to strengthen religious identity in a region marked by political and religious tensions. They maintain a close-knit community where rituals and prayers for the deceased are communal, ensuring that cultural practices endure despite external pressures. The *Vatican Press Office* has consistently reaffirmed the importance of these death rituals for Roman Catholics living in Israel, with a statement from *Pope Francis in 2014* emphasizing the role of traditional practices as a source of hope and continuity for Christians facing political uncertainty in the region.

8. Music /sound effects: 5 seconds (suggested 5 seconds)

9. **Item 3:** Beliefs regarding the afterlife among the Roman Catholics in Israel - 2 minutes

The Roman Catholic belief in the afterlife aligns with broader Christian doctrines of heaven, purgatory, and hell. The afterlife is viewed as the final stage of the soul's journey, where faithfulness to the teachings of the Church determines one's eternal destination. In Israel, maintaining this belief system is not just a matter of faith but also of cultural preservation. Amid political uncertainty, these beliefs offer comfort and a sense of continuity, connecting Roman Catholics to a global religious tradition while navigating the unique social and political landscape of Israel. Testimonies from Palestinian Catholics, as documented in *Latin Patriarchate reports*, emphasize how beliefs about the afterlife serve as a form of resistance, allowing communities to hold on to hope and faith while dealing with societal and political challenges. They see the promise of eternal life as a source of strength, allowing them to withstand societal and political hardships. The book *The Christians of Palestine: Strengthening Identity and Resilience in a Turbulent Region* by Betty Jane Bailey and J. Martin Bailey (2010) discusses how the concept of the afterlife reinforces resilience in Christian communities, providing strength and hope amid adversities. The Church's teachings on the afterlife resonate deeply, reinforcing faith and hope amid daily struggles.

10. Music /sound effects: 5 seconds (suggested 5 seconds)

Wrap up and closing remarks (about 1-3 minutes):

11. Outro: Summarize theme, topics, and segments with conclusion- 1 minute

In today's episode, we explored the lives of Roman Catholic Christians in Israel, their practices regarding death, and their beliefs about the afterlife. This group, though small, plays an important role in the religious and social fabric of Israel, balancing their faith with complex identity negotiations within a majority Jewish and Muslim society. Thank you for tuning in! Be sure to check out the other episodes in this series, and I'll be posting my sources online.

12. Closing music /sound effects: repeat intro music: 5 seconds (suggested 5 seconds)

Bibliography

Primary sources

Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. *Annual Report on Catholic Communities in Israel*. 2023.

Vatican Press Office. *Address by Pope Francis on the Situation of Christians in the Middle East*.
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