

EDITORIAL

According to an article published in Ha'aretz (August 14, 2000), Sheikh Ra'ad Sallah, head of the Islamic movement's radical wing in Israel, has discovered that the Bible and the Talmud are packed with statements that "conflict with God's perfection and the essence of true faith." Jewish "religious literature" asserts that God rested from His labors on the seventh day of Creation, that Adam managed to hide from Him in the garden of Eden, and that Jacob even wrestled with the Almighty!

Having skimmed through Genesis and collected well-known examples of anthropomorphism, the learned sheikh triumphantly denounces Jewish "heresy." His tirade against the Bible is simply a pretext for vilifying Judaism and those Jews who claim an equal right to worship God on Har ha-Bayit, the Temple Mount. "Their real aim" is to build a new Temple in place of the Dome of the Rock and the El-Aksa mosque on Haram esh-Sharif.

Until recent years, for the most part, Arab leaders confined their anti-Israel declarations to the political sphere, avoiding religious polemics. Although synagogues and cemeteries were often destroyed (particularly in Jordanian-occupied territory after 1948), Muslims never disputed the Jewish people's ancient ties with the Holy Land. How could they when the Arabic names of many towns and villages scarcely disguise their biblical Hebrew origin?

Following the Six-Day War, anti-Israel propagandists (Christian as well as Muslim) endowed the Arabs living in what had formerly been Palestine with "Canaanite" or "Philistine" ancestors. When this unhistorical nonsense failed to arouse worldwide enthusiasm for the Palestinian Arab cause, "revisionists" turned their attention to the Land and People of the Bible. Father Ibrahim, Musa the Lawgiver, and King Daoud were Muslims; Falastin was never a Jewish land; those who now call themselves Jews are descended from proselytes; and no Jewish Temple ever existed on Haram esh-Sharif.

If a genuine peace agreement is ever to be signed, Palestinian leaders (and those Israeli Arabs who embrace their cause) will have to accept a number of facts: (1) that Eretz Yisrael has a longer history than Falastin; (2) that Judaism preceded Christianity and Islam; (3) that Muslims should treat Jewish sacred literature with respect; (4) that the People of the Book have returned to the Land of the Bible; and (5) that Arab intransigence will strengthen, not weaken, Jewish unity.

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