EDITORIAL

GABRIEL A. SIVAN

Bible study, whether by individuals or groups, whether it is devoted to the weekly Torah portion or to specific books of the Tanakh, constitutes an ongoing worldwide pursuit. From Genesis to Second Chronicles, it is a tree of life to those who grasp it (Prov. 3:18), offering words of wisdom, moral guidance, a challenge to the intellect, and an unending source of questions and answers. Bible study appears to be undergoing a renaissance, evidenced by the popularity of Jewish periodicals in both Hebrew and English which include more and more biblical material. In Israel one finds regular advertisements for organized Bible-focused tours (tiyyulei Tanakh) that combine lectures on biblical topics with tours to the actual sites where the events took place. The Bible study days (Yemei Iyyun) held each summer at Yeshivat Har Etzion, which once drew only teachers and other professionals, now boast a robust attendance of laypeople as well.

Sadly, however, we live in times when truth is masked by falsehood, when fact is replaced by fiction, and when the Bible itself is under malign attack. This campaign, once led by militant atheists, is now spearheaded by Islamic fundamentalists who, as I pointed out in a JBQ editorial over ten years ago, have added religious zealotry and intolerance to the political onslaught on Israel. It is therefore not surprising that one such fanatic, Sheikh Ra'ed Salah (head of the Islamic movement's northern branch in Israel), who denounced the Tanakh as an "evil, heretical work," should have turned to anti-Jewish violence and incitement. Nor is it amazing that an official "study" by the Palestinian Authority in 2010 claimed that the Western Wall is an integral part of the Al-Aksa Mosque and was never connected with the Temple Mount; or that Rachel's Tomb and other Jewish holy sites have undergone the same Islamic transformation.

Ignorant and credulous people may fall for such nonsense, but truth springs up from the earth (Ps. 85:12). The evidence of history, of Biblical research, of other religious (including Muslim) literature, and of archeological discoveries in the Land of Israel will stand the test of time. We can play our part by studying, teaching, discussing and finding inspiration in the Book of Books.

Dr. Gabriel Sivan is Chairman of the Jewish Bible Association.