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DEIR YASSIN: A MYTHICAL MASSACRE

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

Hank Hanegraaff is an advocate of Christian Palestinianism!¹ Hanegraaff's pro-Palestinianism has been advanced at the expense of the modern state of Israel. When I stated in an article that, "Hanegraaff is no lover of Israel,"² he responded by saying that my statement "is flatly false."³ Hanegraaff cited from his book, *The Apocalypse Code*⁴ his most positive statement about Israel in defense, which merely says, "the modern state of Israel has a definitive right to exist."⁵ If that is all he said it might have been acceptable. However, when compared to what he says about and against the modern state of Israel, his answer does nothing to rebut my statement that Hanegraaff is no lover of Israel.

TRASHING ISRAEL

For years Hanegraaff has had on his "Bible Answer Man" radio program guests that have essentially an anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian viewpoint such as Gary Burge, Brother Andrew, Stephen Sizer, and Colin Chapman.⁶ I am not aware of any pro-Israel guests that he has hosted on his program. Thus, it was not surprising when *The Apocalypse Code* came out, Hanegraaff's non-fiction book on eschatology, that he articulated an anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian narrative.

Hanegraaff argues that Israel has gained her land through unlawful tactics, like massacres and ethnic cleansing, and presently oppresses the poor, downtrodden Palestinians.⁷ The clear implication throughout is that those of us who support modern Israel out of biblical conviction are enabling an injustice to take place in the Middle East. Hanegraaff has sought out evidence to support his notion that Israel has come into existence through immoral means. He presents the Arabs, who have only in the last 35 years come to be known as Palestinians, as all indigenous to the land and victims of Israel's aggression. Hanegraaff is apparently either unaware of or not interested to read the account of former pro-Palestinian Joan Peters' documentation of the fact that most Arab immigration to Israel came after the returning Jews founded prosperous communities that provided economic opportunity for Arabs as well.⁸ Further, Hanegraaff and his cadre of Christian Palestinians ignore the real cause of Palestinian Christian oppression, which is Islamic, not Israeli based.⁹

THE BATTLE OF DEIR YASSIN

In his book *The Apocalypse Code*, Hanegraaff cites a battle that took place in an Arab town West of Jerusalem in 1948. He says, "Brother Andrew . . . recalls the well-known 1948 massacre of Deir Yassin in which an entire village of two hundred fifty men, women, children, and babies were brutally slaughtered by the Israeli paramilitary."¹⁰ Hanegraaff then quotes Brother Andrew's account as follows: "A few men were left alive and driven around to other villages to tell the story; then those men were killed too. The result was a panic. That's why so many Palestinians fled. Entire villages were emptied, which is exactly what the Israelis wanted. They just took over those people's homes."¹¹ What really happened during this battle?

Virtually nothing in the above description of the battle of Deir Yassin is correct. First of all, it was a military campaign not a massacre. Even before Israel's declaration of national independence on May 14, 1948, Arabs were already attacking Jewish communities in the land and were blockading Jerusalem, since it was made up of

primarily Jewish residents. Furthermore, six Arab nations also attacked Israel in their stated goal to drive all Jews into the Mediterranean Sea. The town of "Deir Yassin was strategically situated on a hill overlooking the main highway entering Jerusalem."¹² It has been documented that by March, 1948 that about 150 soldiers from Syria, but mainly from Iraq had taken up posts in Deir Yassin. A series of attacks on Jewish convoys to Jerusalem were launched by Arab soldiers disguised as villagers from Deir Yassin. The Arabs began to regularly shell Jewish convoys and parts of West Jerusalem from Deir Yassin.¹³ It is not surprising that Jewish military leadership decided in April that year that they must take over Deir Yassin for obvious strategic reasons. Since the Israeli army was not formed until after statehood was declared, it was decided that Menachem Begin's Irgun forces, aided by the Haganah, would attack Deir Yassin. Begin helped plan but did not take part in the battle.

As the Jews approached the village to attack it, they were led by a truck with a loudspeaker that warned civilians to flee via the rear of the village that the Jews kept open during the entire battle "and more than 200 residents left unharmed."¹⁴ "It is unclear if the civilians had chosen to stay of their own free will, or were held hostage by Arab soldiers who thought that their presence would deter the Jewish forces."¹⁵ If the intent was to perpetrate a massacre then no one would have been warned or allowed to leave. Before the battle, the Arab's had fortified the houses in Deir Yassin and placed Iraqi soldiers in the houses. The homes had doors made of iron, which replaced the more common wood doors. The battle was a difficult one for the Jews lasting hours. Because the houses were fortified, the Jews had to dynamite open most of the doors, which caused a higher than expected number of casualties among the Arabs, and accounts for most of the civilians who were injured or killed.

"After the remaining Arabs feigned surrender and then fired on the Jewish troops, some Jews killed Arab soldiers and civilians indiscriminately."¹⁶ Some of the Arab soldiers dressed up like women with the veils that covered their faces. The Jews began to search each individual they had captured to insure that they were unarmed. "One of the people being checked realized he had been caught, took out a pistol and shot the Jewish commander. His friends, crazed with anger, shot in all directions and killed the Arabs in the area."¹⁷ "The Irgun suffered 41 casualties, including four dead."¹⁸ Instead, of 250 as stated above, the current consensus of both Arab and Israeli investigation agree that Arab casualties were 107 killed and 12 wounded.¹⁹ "Contrary to claims from Arab propagandists at the time and some since, no evidence has ever been produced that any women were raped. On the contrary, every villager ever interviewed has denied these allegations."²⁰

There is no evidence to support the notion that a few of the remaining survivors of the so-called "massacre" were taken to other Arab villages causing them to flee. Instead, those captured were taken to Jerusalem and later released.²¹ Initial news reports, like one in the *New York Times*, simply reported about the battle with no hint of a massacre. The day after the battle, "the Irgun escorted a representative of the Red Cross through the town and held a press conference."²² There was no hint of a massacre, that myth was developed later. What came did come just a few days after the battle of Deir Yassin was an Arab ambush of "a Jewish convoy on the way to Hadassah Hospital, killing 77 Jews, including doctors, nurses, patients, and the director of the hospital. Another 23 people were injured. This massacre attracted little attention and is never mentioned by those who are quick to bring up Deir Yassin. Moreover, despite attacks such as this against the Jewish community in Palestine, in which more than 500

Jews were killed in the first four months after the partition decision alone, Jews did not flee.”²³ The Jews had nowhere to go.

CONCLUSION

It is true that upon occasion there were a few Jews that committed some atrocities against Arabs during Israel’s War for Independence, which can be classified as war crimes. However, they were few and far between and were not indicative of the leadership of the new Jewish state. Peters contradicts another of Hanegraaff’s false claims when she notes: “According to a research report by the Arab-sponsored Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut, however, ‘the majority’ of the Arab refugees in 1948 were not expelled, and ‘68%’ left without seeing an Israeli soldier.”²⁴ While Arabs had the option of fleeing to many different Arab nations, most of the 800,000 Jewish refugees expelled from Arab nations in the late 40s had nowhere to go but Israel. I doubt Christian Zionists had much to do with such events. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ A term coined by British scholar Paul Wilkinson of those who reject biblical Zionism and champion the Palestinian cause against Israel. Paul Richard Wilkinson, “John Nelson Darby and the Origins of Christian Zionism” (PhD thesis, Univ. of Manchester, 2006), pp. 88–121.

² Thomas Ice, “Hanegraaff Calls Tim LaHaye a Racist and Blasphemer,” *National Liberty Journal* (April 2007).

³ Hank Hanegraaff, “Response to *National Liberty Journal* Article on *The Apocalypse Code*,” www.equip.org.

⁴ Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007).

⁵ Hanegraaff, “Response.”

⁶ Their views are documented in the following books: Gary M. Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003); Brother Andrew and Al Janssen, *Light Force: A Stirring Account of the Church Caught in the Middle East Crossfire* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004); Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004); Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002).

⁷ See Hanegraaff, *Apocalypse Code*, pp. xxii–xxiv, 162–69, 189, 196, 223–26, 241n34, 261n3, n8, 268n65.

⁸ Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* (New York: J. KAP Publishing, 1984).

⁹ The Islamic and not Israeli oppression of Christians in the Holy Land has been documented by the scholar Justus Reid Weiner, “Palestinian Christians: Silent Victims of a Zero-Sum Game?” *Mediterranean Journal of Human Rights*, 2004.

¹⁰ Hanegraaff, *Apocalypse Code*, p. xxiv.

¹¹ Brother Andrew, *Light Force*, p. 110 as cited in Hanegraaff, *Apocalypse Code*, p. xxiv. The source for Brother Andrew’s account is from an Arab.

¹² Morton A. Klein, *Deir Yassin: History of a Lie* (New York: Zionist Organization of America, n.d.), p. 5.

¹³ Klein, *Deir Yassin*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Mitchell G. Bard, *Myths and Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chevy Chase, MD: American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2001), p. 174.

¹⁵ Klein, *Deir Yassin*, p. 12.

¹⁶ Bard, *Myths and Facts*, p. 174.

¹⁷ Bard, *Myths and Facts*, p. 174.

¹⁸ Bard, *Myths and Facts*, p. 173.

¹⁹ Klein, *Deir Yassin*, p. 22. Hanegraaff even admits to the lower total in a footnote, *Apocalypse Code*, p. 241n34.

²⁰ Bard, *Myths and Facts*, p. 174.

²¹ Klein, *Deir Yassin*, pp. 13–15.

²² Bard, *Myths and Facts*, p. 173.

²³ Bard, *Myths and Facts*, p. 175.

²⁴ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, p. 13.