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MYTHS ABOUT ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

by Thomas Ice

Next to the U. S. elections, the top story the last year (2000) in the American media has been the ongoing saga of the so-called “peace process” between Israel and the Arabs, popularly known as “Palestinians.” This, of course, is not surprising to those of us who take a literal view of Bible prophecy, since Israel is at the center of imminent future events. However, I am constantly annoyed by the steady stream of myths and propaganda that streams from the global media, often misinforming the world about the modern land of Israel. This month I want to demythologize a number of popular notions about the Land of Israel, so that prophecy-loving believers may not be taken in by what they hear and see in today’s media.

THE ANCIENT PALESTINIANS

Perhaps the most maddening term that I hear today is related to the term “Palestinian.” Let me start by providing a history of that word. It was a term invented by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135 after he had destroyed Jerusalem during a campaign to put down a Jewish uprising known as the Bar Kokhba revolt. Hadrian was tired of the constant revolts by the Jews in the land of Israel so he set out to “de-Judaize” Israel. This he did by renaming Jerusalem Aelia Capitolina and he renamed the Land of Israel Palestine from the word Philistine, a reference to the ancient Canaanites. Palestine became the common term that many used to refer to the biblical land of Israel. During the early 1900s and before 1948, a Palestinian was always thought to be a Jew who lived in the land of Israel, of course, popularly known as Palestine. When Israel became a nation in 1948, the Jews took the biblical term Israel to refer to the reborn nation. Some time between 1948 and 1963, the Egyptian, Yasser Arafat took the term Palestine to refer to the Arab claim of the land of Israel. Thus, it was only around 1963 that the term Palestinian began to be used of Arabs. There is no such thing as the ancient land of Palestine. It is the ancient land of Israel.

Because of the contemporary use of the term “Palestine,” I think it is best that Christians refrain from using it to refer to the land of Israel. This is how Israel is usually referred to, even in biblical maps from the time of Christ and before, when the term was not invented until 100 years after the time of Christ. This is why in our newly produced *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible* we insisted upon using the term “Israel” when referencing the land of Israel. We did not call it Palestine. The only real Palestine I know of is a town in East Texas with that name.

THE PALESTINIAN RIGHT OF RETURN

In light of what I noted in the previous section, it follows that the so-called Palestinian “right of return” is a key element in Arafat’s position in the Oslo Peace Process. This is one of the few issues that current Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak has not caved in on, . . . at least not yet. Arafat claims that there are about four million Arabs and their descendants who were displaced by Israel in 1948. This is a most ridiculous claim. First of all, only about 200,000 Arabs left their homes in the land of Israel.¹ Few, if any,

of these Arabs “refugees” were forced out by the Israelis. Instead, “The Arab refugees were not driven from Palestine by anyone,” notes Samuel Katz. “The vast majority left, whether of their own free will or at the orders or exhortations of their leaders, always with the same reassurance—that their departure would help in the war against Israel.”²

After the 1948 war, Arab leaders refused to settle these refugees, even though hundreds of thousands of Jews were expelled from Arab lands with only the shirt on their backs.³ In fact, based upon conservative estimates, at least two times more Jews were made refugees from the countries in which they lived and have now been settled in the land of Israel without the need for refugee camps that the Arabs are so famous for constructing for their people. Lately, Arafat has been demanding four to five billion dollars as reparations for the so-called “Palestinian refugees,” while no one has brought up the fact that the Jews left behind in their country of origin billions of dollars worth of property. Where is the outcry for Jewish compensation?

Instead of settling Arabs who left Israel in 1948 in other Arab countries, Arab leaders have consistently insisted that they remain huddled together in the squalor of refugee camps in various locations throughout the Middle East. Joan Peters noted in 1984:

Over the last thirty-odd year, numerous projects have been proposed, international funds provided, studies undertaken, all indicating the benefits that could be derived by the Arab refugee from their absorption into the brethren cultures of the Arab host countries.⁴

Yet Arab leaders always reject any solution that might serve to solve the problem. Even though the Arab refugees number only in the hundreds of thousands, others have successfully exchanged many times that number. Peters notes that, “The exchange between India and Pakistan in the 1950s was overwhelming in magnitude: 8,500,000 Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan fled to India, and roughly 6,500,000 Muslims moved from India to Pakistan.”⁵ The fact that “from 1933 to 1945, a total of 79,200,000 souls were displaced,” is staggering. But all but the Arab refugees from Israel have not been able to find a place of settlement. Why? Because the long-term Arab goal is not peaceful co-existence with Israel, but a total annihilation of every Jew and the modern nation of Israel. This reality is why it is foolish for Israel to continue the Oslo Peace Process.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

During the so-called “Temple Mount Intifada” we have seen a blatant example of Arab manipulation of the media in the incident of the death of the twelve-year old Arab boy named Mohammed. The world’s media captured the sad death of Mohammed in a crossfire between Arabs and Israelis. The video footage revealed the boy being shot and dying in his father’s arms. The immediate outcry from the global media was how the evil Israelis (the bully Goliath) were picking on the poor defenseless Arabs (David). The media assumed and then reported that Mohammed was shot by the Israeli army. Few asked what the boy was doing there in the first place. Few noted that Mohammed’s father had come to get him because he had gone to throw rocks at the

Israeli army. But, most significantly, it was reported in the alternative media that there were questions about whether the Israelis were even in position to have shot the boy. A later investigation has proved that it was impossible for the Israeli soldiers to have shot him since they could not have hit him since they were not in position to have the right angle to get to him. It is now clear that the Arabs shot one of their own, apparently for propaganda purposes. They cared more about sending out to the global media a certain image than they did about the life of that twelve-year old boy.

This kind of thing is all too common in the battle for truth in the propaganda wars coming out of Israel in our day. In fact, established reports have revealed that the Saudi Arabian government is paying \$2,000.00 to the family members of each Arab killed in the current Intifada and \$300.00 for each non-fatal wound. This is most revealing when one realizes that Muslims believe that they are guaranteed to go to heaven if they die during the current conflict. Boy are they in for an immediate surprise. This is probably the most blatant propaganda piece of the entire conflict.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT

Another classic instance of Arab lying that has come out in the media recently is their widely held belief that there has never been a Jewish Temple upon the Temple Mount (Arabs call it Al-Qods-Al-Sharif) in Jerusalem. Randall Price and I noted this in our book, *Ready To Rebuild*, in the early 1990s. This belief, coupled with the equally errant lie, that the place of Mohammed's supposed ascent into heaven occurred on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This was a later myth added to the lore of Islam as time went on and they became engaged in a rivalry with Christianity and Judaism, both of whom had a rich history of events that transpired in Jerusalem. Islam had none.

The question arises that if there never was a Jewish Temple upon the Temple Mount, then where did Jesus walk in New Testament times? What a crook! There is more historical and archaeological evidence supporting the historicity of the Bible's report that there were two Jewish Temples upon the Temple Mount in Jerusalem than is needed to accept any fact of antiquity. Yet, this does not seem to phase the Muslim faithful. If there was no Temple upon the Temple Mount then what did Josephus write about when he records the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70. This kind of outright lying is revealing about the whole Islamic religion: It does not care about the truth, only propaganda. Thus, we should not be surprised, I am not, at the lengths to which too many Arabs will go in our own day as they spin Middle Eastern events to the global media. But, as lovers of the truth, Christians should not fall for these Arab distortions.

CONCLUSION

As believers in God and His Word, we should not be surprised that Satan and the world system is anti-Israel. We should also not be surprised that in spite of the justness of Israel's cause that the international media echoes Satan's voice, instead of God's. Israel is God's elect nation and He works out a major aspect of His plan for history through them. Therefore, the least that believers should do is not be taken in by the myths and propaganda from the world's media. To help towards this end I want to

recommend some excellent books that will provide an interested person with factual information.

There are a number of good works out there that can provide accurate information about the history of this situation. First, I want to recommend a good internet site or two that specializes in setting the record straight. One is called HonestReporting at <http://www.honestreporting.com/>. Another site is CAMERA at <http://world.std.com/~camera/>. I would recommend Zola Levitt's monthly publication, *Levitt Letter*, as a good way to keep up on Israel. They can be reached at P. O. Box 12268, Dallas, TX 75225-0268; www.levitt.com. Three excellent books on these issues are: Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Place Among The Nations: Israel and The World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); Samuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine*, 4th edition (New York: Steimatzky and Shaplolsky, 1985); Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* (New York: J. KAP Publishing, 1984). If I could read just one, I would recommend the Joan Peters book.

In spite of all the current bias against Israel we know what the end of the matter will be. Yes, Israel will exist for all eternity, while he enemies will be judged at Armageddon. It helps in the present time to know the God who has told us the end from the beginning. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ Samuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine*, 4th edition (New York: Steimatzky and Shaplolsky, 1985), p. 14.

² Katz, *Battleground*, p. 13.

³ Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* (New York: J. KAP Publishing, 1984), pp. 11-32,

⁴ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, p. 19.

⁵ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, p. 26.