

Attempted Murder Over the Right to Pray?

My friend, Rabbi Yehuda Glick, was shot in Jerusalem recently. This attempted murder was shocking on two levels.

First, personal violence and gun-related crimes that are far too common in much of the U.S. are relatively rare in Israel. That alone makes it headline news.

Additionally, the attack was shocking in that it took place after an event exploring the unbreakable Jewish connection to the Temple Mount. It was committed by someone who reportedly was offended by Rabbi Glick's advocating for Jews to be able to pray on the Temple Mount. He was approached by a Palestinian Arab and shot at close range four times. The fast response of Israel's national ambulance service, medical attention in the hospital, and about a dozen pints of blood required during surgery are credited with saving his life.

In recent months, violence has been simmering in Jerusalem over issues relating to non-Muslims praying on the Temple Mount. In fact, Jews and Christians are actually prohibited from praying there. When non-Muslims are permitted to ascend to the Temple Mount, they are followed by people from the Waqf, the religious authority overseeing Islamic religious issues there. Jews and Christians are not allowed to bring religious articles, written prayers or prayer books, nor are they allowed to utter a prayer verbally. If they do so, the offending items are confiscated and/or the people are often accosted.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, Christian friends of mine went to the Temple Mount and experienced the same closely guarded supervision. However, because anti-Jewish violence was taking place on another part of the Mount, their guards left

and they were able to pray openly. The answer to the prayers of one Christian group, enabling them to pray openly in one place, was due to the distraction of violent incitement against Jews in another.

Despite the fact that the Second Temple was destroyed in the year 70, the Temple Mount remains the most holy and sacred place in Judaism. Despite conquering, destruction, and defilement of the Temple Mount by successive invading forces over centuries, Jews have yearned for the opportunity to restore worship there for nearly 2,000 years. Because of the sanctity of the Temple Mount, conflicting rabbinic rulings exist on whether Jews can go up to the Mount at all out of concern for accidentally entering the space of the Holy of Holies, or doing so in a state of ritual impurity.

Yet in recent years, it's become much more common and accepted for Jews and Christians to ascend the Temple Mount. Rabbi Glick has been a leading advocate for this. It's noteworthy that he does not do so at the expense of Muslims worshipping there. He simply wants to see undone the injustice of Jews and Christians not being permitted to pray there.

In Islam, the Al Aqsa mosque is the third holiest site, following shrines in Mecca and Medina, located in the Hejaz, today's Saudi Arabia.

The Al Aqsa mosque was initially built in A.D. 746 at the southern end of the Temple Mount, seven centuries after the Romans destroyed the Temple. The mosque's Arabic name denotes the location on the periphery both of the center of Islam and on the Temple Mount itself. It is often confused with the more ornate, golden Dome of the Rock, which sits much closer to the center of where the Temple stood 2,000 years ago.

It's understandable that even despite Jerusalem not being mentioned even once in the Quran, the Al Aqsa is central to Islam. The challenge—or one of them at least—is that there's a

prevalent trend in Islam to deny the unbreakable connection that both the Temple Mount and Jerusalem in general have to Judaism, despite previous Islamic religious rulings that have affirmed the Temple's existence and the Jewish connection to the site. Ironically and offensively, it's increasingly common to hear cries among some today of the attempt to "Judaize Jerusalem."

The underpinning of the denial of Jews and Christians' rights to pray on the Temple Mount is a denial of biblical history. It's Bible denial. It is based on the ultimate replacement theology that suggests Jews and Christians are, at best, tolerated minorities but without equal rights.

Promoting this "theology" has inspired numerous terrorists to attack Jews in particular—including the recent murder of a 3-month-old baby girl—a proclivity for throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at people and vehicles, and the attempted murder of Rabbi Glick. Those who rile up average Arabs on the street, teach and instill violent hatred of Jews among their children, claiming that Jews have no legitimacy or historical bond to the land. They carry out violent acts, which are done purportedly as an expression of the dominance of Islam over Judaism, Christianity and all other religions, as well as with allegations that Palestinian Arabs are *the* indigenous people of the land who are being "occupied." Some even go so far as to say that Palestinian Arabs are the successors to God's covenant with Abraham.

While not denying the legitimate rights of anyone to worship according to his tradition, as long as it doesn't infringe upon the rights of others, there's one notable paradox depicted in the recent shooting of Rabbi Glick. The attacker's name was Mu'atz Ibrahim Khalil Hijazi. Like many other names (some common in English too), the shooter's name depicts his origins. His family hails from the Hejaz, the Arabian Peninsula.

At some point, likely decades ago in search of economic opportunities as Jews returned to and restored the Land, Hijazi's ancestors probably moved from the land where the two most holy Islamic shrines are to the land of the third. No doubt he believed he was somehow protecting Al Aqsa by shooting Rabbi Glick. But the theology that denies Jews and Christians the opportunity to pray openly on the Temple Mount promotes hatred and intolerance, and inspired this terrorist act. As long as this is tolerated, things will not get better.

In fact, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas added fuel to the fire in a letter to Hijazi's relatives, "With anger, we have received the news of the vicious assassination crime committed by the terrorists of the Israeli occupation army against [your] son Mu'taz Ibrahim Khalil Hijazi, who will go to heaven as a martyr defending the rights of our people and its holy places."

Let us add to our prayers *for* the peace of Jerusalem—that Jews and Christians be allowed to pray peacefully in the center of Jerusalem.

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