

Will Muslim Violence Against Israel End or Escalate With Close of Ramadan?

It's a great metaphor that Palestinian Arabs have been amassing rocks in Islam's third-holiest site, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and using them as weapons to attack Israelis (including security) on the Temple Mount, as well as throwing rocks at Israeli civilians and buses around Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, such things are not uncommon, especially during the Islamic holy month, Ramadan.

In recent years there's been a growing rapprochement between Israel and a number of Arab states, some with public peace treaties and normalization of relations, and some with budding relations under the radar. However, there are holdouts, specifically among Palestinian Arab society and their network of terror groups. Not to paint all Muslims as evil and against Israel, but ultimately the conflict between Palestinian Arabs in specific – and Islam in general – and Israel and its very existence comes down to a rock.

When thinking of Jerusalem, an image that comes to mind is a huge, gold-domed building located at the center of the Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock. Architecturally it's striking, but sadly it does not represent what Jerusalem is or should be. Jerusalem is mentioned several hundred times in the Bible, though not once in the Quran. The Dome of the Rock is beautiful, but it is not the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the actual third-holiest site in Islam. Not disputing the significance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Islam, which is older than the golden dome, it's part of a landscape that misrepresents history.

The Dome of the Rock sits at the center of the Temple Mount, built around a massive rock that's too big to imagine anyone

ever transporting there as a prop, certainly not in the seventh century when it was built. It's easy to see this in pictures, but I know firsthand, having actually been inside the Dome. While it's not something I'd do today as an Orthodox Jew understanding the sanctity of the site as exactly where the Temples stood, in the 1980s there was no problem with Jewish tourists (and presumably others) visiting all the Temple Mount, taking off our shoes and entering the massive building.

Why does it matter that I have actually been inside the Dome of the Rock? Because at some point since the early 1980s, Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims were banned from the site. Once, non-Muslims could freely access the most holy site in Judaism without people shouting and threatening violence, or requiring a military escort to do so. Once it could be done without the leader of the Palestinian Authority decrying the defilement of the whole Temple Mount with their "filthy feet."

According to biblical tradition, the rock is where Abraham was told to bring Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22. It's so clear it shouldn't have to be stated. Abraham was told to bring his "son, your only son, whom you love –Isaac" and to "sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you" (v. 2, NIV). Jews and Christians understand this as Abraham's supreme act of faith.

But that's also where Islam diverts from biblical tradition. According to Islam, Abraham was told to bring Ishmael as a sacrifice. So, if the sanctity of the rock's true significance can be disregarded and a new tradition spun off from that which goes against biblical narrative and historical fact, anything can be. Sadly, that's become the cornerstone of a form of replacement theology that undermines both Judaism and Christianity. Today, it's commonplace to hear of Palestinians and other Muslims denying any Jewish (and therefore Christian) history to the Temple Mount, Jerusalem and the Land of Israel in general. Why not? If Abraham didn't bring Isaac there, the

rest of the Bible cannot be real, so any new narrative preached loud enough and long enough can replace reality.

I want to say that from there, it's a slippery slope to the present situation where competing Palestinian Arab and other terror groups vie for dominion as to who is protecting Al-Aqsa the most. To "protect" Al-Aqsa they resort to firing rockets from Gaza and Lebanon, terror attacks on the streets of central Israel, and throwing Molotov cocktails and of course rocks at anything that moves, and even things that don't. But "slippery slope" suggests that it's avoidable. In this case, they have deliberately graded the slope and willfully doused it with gallons of flammable material.

All because of a rock in a mosque.

It's not new, but the current rhetoric is that not just Al-Aqsa but the entire Temple Mount is "sacred to Muslims." This of course undermines any right for Jews and Christians to be anywhere on the Mount, and flies in the face of the biblical allusion to the Temple, which makes the site sacred to begin with, as a house of prayer for all nations.

Not only do Palestinian Arabs and Muslims make a historical U-turn in Genesis 22, but they also willingly disregard their own history. In 1925, the Supreme Muslim Council that controlled the Islamic religious sites on the Temple Mount published a guide to the Arabic name "al-Haram al-Sharif." This was 23 years before Israel regained sovereignty, so the complete erasure of Jewish history in the Land of Israel was not yet fully internalized.

The guide clearly states that "the site is one of the oldest in the world. Its sanctity dates from the earliest (perhaps from pre-historic) times. Its identity with the site of Solomon's Temple is beyond dispute." Not only did they affirm a biblical history which they now have erased and want the world to believe is not true, but they published this guide

specifically for visitors, for non-Muslims. It's noteworthy that as Mufti in Jerusalem in 1925, the guide was published under the authority of Haj Amin al-Husseini, a notorious anti-Semite whose cries to defend Al-Aqsa would lead to the 1929 Arab riots in which dozens of Jews were slaughtered. Later, al-Husseini would partner with Hitler to complete the extermination of all the Jews, not just those in Israel.

It's reported that the 1950 edition of the guide still contained references to Solomon's Temple, but by 1954 these had been purged.

None of this is to say that Muslims should be denied access to and ability to pray at their holy sites. It's simply a slap in the face to any rational reading of history to assume that Jews and Christians have no connection to the Temple Mount and Jerusalem in general, and that our mere presence there is a threat to anything.

Ramadan is ending this week. Will the violence end, or have we just entered a new and more violent "resistance" against Israel, despite the fact that their facts are simply biblically and historically wrong, not to mention that the celebration of their holy month with violence is perverted?
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