

Islam, an Arabic Religion

by Sha'i ben-Tekoa (July 2015)

And who are the Arabs?

Surely among the first written mentions of them since the invention of writing are the few found in the Bible. The first is Isaiah 13:20, which is a prophetic vision of a Babylonia so destroyed "not even an Arab would pitch his tent there." The second was written a century and a half later, Jeremiah 3:20, and lists the Jewish people's lust after other gods "...like an Arab in the desert...on the roads," by implication lying in wait to pounce upon and ambush innocent travelers. Their idolatry was compared to a temptation that had overcome them.

In II Chronicles 21:16, G-d inflames the spirit of the Arabs and Philistines against King Jehoram II of Judea. They are described as marauders who "attacked Judea and breached its defenses and seized all the wealth in the king's palace as well as his children and wives," very much like today's "holy warriors" in the Islamic State (ISIS) who capture Shiite and Yazidi girls and turn them into sex slaves.

The remaining six Biblical references also concern Arabs as they were about a thousand years before the advent of Islam. That the references are so few makes sense since the Hebrew canon was closed about a thousand years before Islam emerged and the Arabs overran the Promised Land. Until they swarmed out of the Arabian Peninsula – contrary to claims that today's so-called Palestinians have been in Palestine since the sixth day of Creation – they had no presence in the Land of Israel.

By Jewish tradition, the Arabs are descendants of Ishmael who lived a thousand years before Isaiah. The Biblical prophecy of his birth, Genesis 16:12, paints the picture of a "wild ass of a man, his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him, and over all his brothers he will dwell," i.e. someone given to aggressing against others, including his own brothers.

The next time we meet him, Ishmael is age 16 or 17 when attending his little half-brother Isaac's weaning celebration, after which he and his mother Hagar are expelled from the tents of Abraham and his hundreds of disciples. At that weaning party, Ishmael made fun of Isaac, the center of attention and honor, and Sarah, Abraham's wife observing him, resolved that he must go.

Sarah had watched this boy grow up, son of her handmaiden who was not a Semite like herself and her husband (from the name Shem, son of Noah) but a daughter of Egypt, also one of the four sons of Ham, Shem's brother. In that world-historical instant, Sarah saw Ishmael's violent envy and knowing his character feared the worst. Ishmael was capable of anything, including murdering her son after Abraham had passed from the world in order to have all of his inheritance.

Sarah told Abraham that Ishmael must go, but her husband recoiled at the request that his first-born son be sent away. But G-d intervened and advised the Patriarch that he should listen to his wife. In this matter, she was wiser than he.

And so Ishmael and his mother Hagar were given sufficient provisions including water to make the journey of a few days to her native Egypt. But Ishmael, hysterical over his fate, was profligate with the water and it ran out, at which point he began to dehydrate and suffer. His mother, distraught over their fate and incapable of dealing with her son's distress, pushed him under a tree and walked away to cry over herself. Ishmael, expelled by his father, now abandoned by his mother, was one bitter and angry teenager.

In the end, G-d ordered Hagar to open her eyes and see a well that she, in her self-pity, had not seen. The two survived. Later, she found a Hamitic Egyptian woman like herself to be a wife to Ishmael who took up residence not in settled and civilized Egypt but the Paran Desert. The Bible says he was armed with a bow and arrow, a weapon for killing animals for food, for self-defense against them and robbing wayfarers traveling in the desert. Leastwise, that is the scenario depicted by the greatest of Biblical commentators Rabbi Solomon Yitzhaki of France a.k.a. "Rashi" (1040-1105). Rashi said that after Ishmael's expulsion, he became a highwayman.

Rashi lived during the First Crusade and knew it was launched because Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem were being attacked. From time immemorial, the Arabs had been known as desert-dwelling nomads whose livelihood was following their flocks, raiding other tribesmen and ripping off pilgrims and merchants bound for or coming from Mecca.

Nine centuries later, when American novelist Mark Twain landed in Jaffa in 1867, the state of the Holy Land was unchanged. Wanting to travel up through the Judean hills to Jerusalem, Twain learned that a traveler to the Holy City had to hire not only beasts of burden to ride on and transport his luggage but armed guards, for the desolate countryside was a hunting ground for Arab highwaymen as it had been from time immemorial. Just as Rashi had written in his commentary, after Ishmael was expelled he preyed upon people in transit.

The trip inland from Jaffa took Twain two days. There was no public transportation. By this time, commercial railroads had been functioning in the West for more than a Biblical generation of forty years, but not yet in the Holy Land. On the cusp of its resurrection by Zionist Jews, Twain, in *Innocents Abroad*, the record of his travels, described a barren landscape lacking not only a modern railroad system but any roads.

Narrow animal tracks alone worn-by-the-ages crisscrossed the treeless wastes. What little traffic in merchandise and people existed in this bleak terrain, neglected by Islam for over a thousand years, moved about on the backs of animals as in the age of Ishmael.

Prior to the Muslim invasion in the 7th century, in the age of the Caesars, the Romans had provided their empire with a proto-Interstate system of artificial roadways made of crushed stones packed smooth to accommodate their chariots and wagons. But after Rome collapsed and the Muslims invaded, the roads were neglected and disappeared, for the Arabs had no need of them. They had yet to master the mystery and utility of the wheel.

Indeed, one living remnant of this culture remains on view in our time in the Arab *souk*/market in Jerusalem with its narrow alleyways that are common to Arab villages. With no wheeled traffic, streets wide enough to accommodate carts and wagons were never built. Such rigs require thoroughfares wide enough to be able to turn them around after picking up and/or delivering passengers and goods. When transport “vehicles” are beasts of burden, wide streets are not needed.

When Twain later traveled north, he was again accompanied by armed guards. Bushwhacking travelers had long been the Arabs’ specialty, for people are never so vulnerable and defenseless as when outside their homes and in transit.

Indeed, in the Midrash (Jewish homiletical commentaries, interpretations, illustrative fables and the like) the story is told of how G-d, before giving His *Torah*/Teaching (“Law” is a bad translation) to the Jews, He offered it to other nations first, all of whom asked what was in it. The Ammonites and Moabites heard that it contained the seventh commandment prohibiting adultery, and as the bastard offspring of incest who remained themselves licentiously unbridled, they said the *Torah* was not for them. Other nations responded in like fashion when they learned their favorite vice was prohibited. And when it came to the Ishmaelites, they rejected the *Torah* because the eighth commandment prohibits stealing. The Midrash, compiled before the rise of Islam, concluded, centuries before Rashi, that “Ishmael is a thief.”

In fact, into the 20th century and Age of Petroleum, the Arabs were still known primarily as

roving predators, not only against non-Muslims and non-Arabs but one another. The dilettante English Arabist who drew up the boundaries of the modern (now failed) state of Iraq, Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), liked to watch the Arab tribes that she accompanied, as an amateur anthropologist, raid one another. In this culture, there seems to be some lacuna in what passes for a conscience when it comes to theft. The raid/*razzia* is a way of life for them. Wealth is accumulated not by hard work and invention but guilt-free stealing.

Larceny is what motivated the late Iraqi tyrant Saddam Hussein when in 1990 he invaded neighboring Kuwait to loot it. He was reported to be \$90 billion in debt for trying to grab the oil fields in Iran (1980-1988) in a war that left a million dead. His army's later rape of Kuwait was nothing but an age-old *razzia* in modern dress.

Muhammad likewise, inventor of Islam, pilfered Jewish thought. A Muslim's appetite for what belongs to others is not limited to money and other possessions; ideas too can be stolen. In the Koran, there are some two dozen Biblical Jews whose stories are re-told and uniformly perverted. It is a form of copyright infringement or intellectual property theft. There is nothing in the Islamic religion that is original. The very name alludes to its primal plagiarism of the binding of Isaac by his father Abraham. Islam means "submission" and alludes to Abraham's submission to the command that he bind his son for a sacrifice, who, in Muslim tradition, was Ishmael, not Isaac.

Moreover, Islam claims that the Jewish version is also in error in the matter of the story's locale. The Jews say this world-historic event, portrayed countless times over the millennia in art and puzzled over in philosophical and religious essays, took place in Jerusalem on the future Temple Mount. Muslims say the Jews lie. It took place in Mecca, at the site of the Kaaba in the middle of the Grand Mosque, the destination of every Muslim on his *hajj* for fourteen centuries.

The Muslims thus stole Judaism, re-wrote it and worse. They claim that the discrepancies between the two versions are the result of the Jews' corruption of the Koran! And never mind that the G-d of Israel gave the Israelites the Five Books of Moses in the year 1313 B.C.E. while the Koran would not emerge for another almost two thousand years. When a Muslim is confronted with the contradictory narratives of the same incidents, he answers that *Musa* (the Arabic mispronunciation of the Hebrew name *Mosheh*) brought the Koran down from Mt. Sinai but the perfidious Jews then re-wrote it and called it their Torah until Muhammad came along and restored the original text. In Islam's moral universe, the Torah is a pilfered and plagiarized version of Muslim Holy Writ (which charge adumbrates the contemporary one that the Jews also stole Palestine from the "Palestinians.")

Likewise, the Bible of the Jews called for the dispossession of the Canaanites and related peoples from the Land of Canaan, all of them about as evil as any society before the Flood. The Jews were promised this land but on condition that they live by the word of G-d, who gave it to them in order to become a "light to the nations," an example of a splendid society because it lives by the Word of G-d.

Versus the Muslims who also claimed the command to dispossess, only instead of limiting themselves to one small country, the Islamic charge to Believers is to overrun and steal all the countries in the world and convert all their peoples on pain of death if necessary.

This is why Islam is the religion of Arabs, of the seed of Ishmael the Thief, and it is no accident that after the Koran, the only other book Muslims bequeathed to international culture was *A Thousand and One Nights*, which Hollywood turned into 1939's classic (then) state-of-the-art special effects movie called "The Thief of Baghdad."

Moreover, while the particulars of Sharia law are overwhelmingly unknown to the world, who does not know at least one Islamic law, viz. that thieves have their hands chopped off? The Arabs are world famous for this punishment for their apparently chronic temptation to steal, burglarize and rob.

In ancient times, the Ishmaelites were notorious for assaulting innocent travelers and remained so into the 19th century, a thousand years after the conquest of North Africa by Arabs, a region notorious for being home to the legendary and misnamed Barbary Pirates who in reality were not pirates but the official navies of the Muslim city-states that dotted the Barbary Shore from Morocco to "the shores of Tripoli" and justified their naval predations in the name of the *Jihad*.

In our time, that behavior morphed into Muslims becoming the world's No.1 sky pirates who skyjack commercial airliners, attack railroad stations and airport terminals. In Israel, they have sent hundreds of suicide bombers to explode themselves inside crowded buses, the target, as always, people in transit.

Indeed, when one travels by plane these days, the security check has become a nuisance worldwide thanks to Muslim practitioners of the Arabs' religion, which validates behaviors that really are thousands of years old.

So a case can be made that Islam is *not* the problem. Islam did not create the Arabs; the Arabs created Islam in order to perpetuate and justify their pre-Islamic culture of antediluvian violence known today as terrorism.

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