

# ISRAELI MYTHS UNRAVELED

BY KAZI ZULKADER SIDDIQUI

**ISRAEL, ALSO CALLED JACOB** (Ya'qub, *'alayhi al-salam*), grandson of Abraham (*'alayhi al-salam*) had 12 children who, along with their descendants, are known in the Bible and the Qur'an as the Children of Israel. According to the Biblical tradition, the nation of Israel was born around 1650 BCE with the birth of these 12 sons. One of these sons was Joseph (Yusuf, *'alayhi al-salam*), who accommodated his brothers in Egypt, where they lived happily for some time. Later, the Egyptians enslaved the Children of Israel for almost 300 years, after which Moses (*'alayhi al-salam*) sent by Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* to emancipate them around 1290 BCE, led them out of Egypt and into Sinai.

Despite this grace, the Israelites disobeyed Him and worshipped the golden calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Torah and the Ten Commandments. Thus, Allah punished them by letting them wander in Sinai for 40 years. The sinful generation perished and the next generation, led by Joshua, moved into Palestine after Moses died (after 1250 BCE). For the next 200 years or so, these tribes roamed the territory as nomads, just like the Arab Bedouin tribes who wandered Arabia's deserts for centuries.

In 1020 BCE, a great man arose among the Israelites. Saul (Talut, *'alayhi al-salam*) united the 12 tribes, created a sovereign nation out of the tribal tradition, and ruled as a king for 20 years. His successors, King David (Da'ud, *'alayhi al-salam*) and Solomon (Sulayman, *'alayhi al-salam*) ruled the united Kingdom of Israel from 1000 to 961 BCE and from 961 to 922 BCE, respectively.

After Solomon's death, the kingdom split: the northern kingdom, home to 10 tribes, was known as Samaria (or Israel), while the southern kingdom, home to the other 2 tribes, was known as Judah. This marked the end of a united kingdom of Israel.

From 922 to 722 BCE, Samaria (whose capital was Samaria and *not* Jerusalem) fell into sin by worshipping the spring god Baal, as stated in the Tanach (Jewish Bible). Many prophets warned them, and in 722 BCE Allah's wrath fell on them: Assyria invaded and either massacred or enslaved Samaria's inhabitants. They have not been heard of during the past 2,722 years. They do not exist any more, and are known to history as the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel."

The southern Israelites, descendants of the tribe of Judah, are the Jews. This southern Kingdom of Judah, which appeared after Solomon's death and had its capital at Jerusalem, remained independent for 325 years. In 597 BCE, it was conquered by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. The people were enslaved and taken to Babylon (Iraq), where they

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remained in "Exile" until 538 BCE. In that year, Emperor Cyrus the Great allowed them to return to Judea (southern Palestine) but only as subjects. They were never to be a sovereign nation again.

From that time until the 20th century, Palestine and the Jews were ruled by others. For the last 2,600 years, the Jews had no real link with Palestine and never established a sovereign nation.

The Jews were allowed to remain in Palestine as slaves or subjects of different nations until 132 CE. Searching for the Messiah, the Jews first revolted

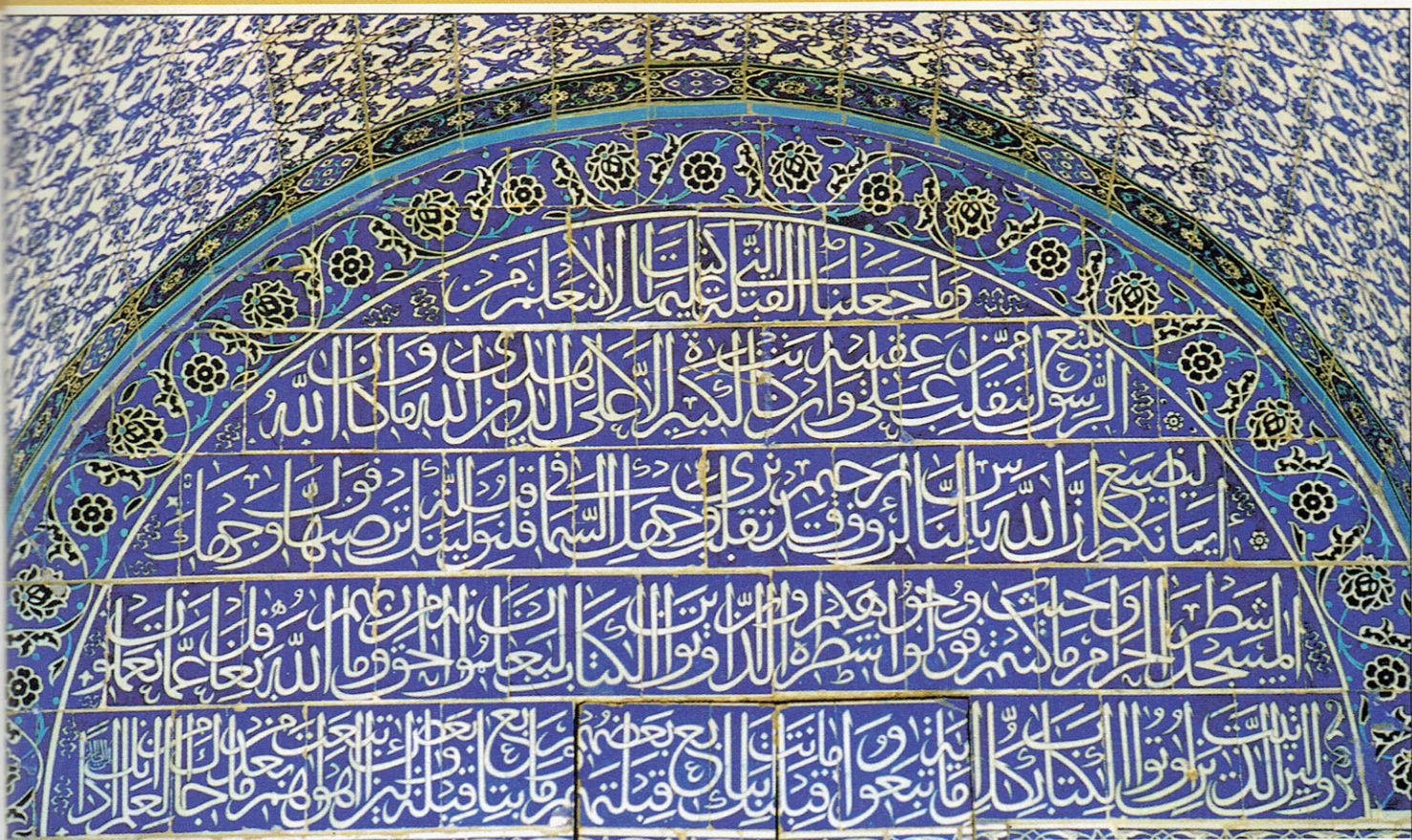
against Rome during Nero's (d. 68 CE) reign. They were defeated, and Titus finally ended their rebellion in 70 CE and expelled them from Jerusalem. Again, in 132 CE, the Jews were defeated and completely expelled from Palestine due to a second messianic revolt led by Bar Cochba. The Romans destroyed the temple, which Herod had built over the ruins of Solomon's Temple, and in 132 CE replaced it with a temple dedicated to the Roman god Jupiter.

The Jews were never allowed to return to Roman-ruled Palestine. The Muslims finally allowed them to settle in Palestine only after the eighth century CE.

The alleged "Jewish" conquest of Palestine around 1250 BCE was actually a conquest by all 12 Israelite tribes, not just the lone Jewish tribe descending from Judah. The Jews ruled the land only for 325 years, and did not have a continuous presence there for 3,300 years, as the Zionists claim. They were absent for 60 years during the Babylonian exile and for over 600 years during the Roman occupation. When the Muslims allowed them back, they had a nominal presence as a small religious community for 1,400 years. Thus, they have not really been present in Palestine for the past 2,000 years. It is the Muslims who resided there for nearly 1,500 years.

Muslim armies conquered Palestine (including Jerusalem) between 636-40 CE, and ruled it for 14 centuries, except for a brief occupation by the Crusaders during the 11th and 12th centuries, and the roughly 25-year British occupation after the First World War. In 1948, the British occupiers handed it over to the Zionist occupation forces.

**The Qur'anic View of History.** According to the Qur'an, all great people, Prophets, and Messengers of the Israelites were Muslims. These include Adam, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, King David, King Solomon, Jonah, Job, Elias, Elisha, Zacharias, Ezra, and many others. Their true followers among the Children of Israel and the Jews were all Muslims. Muslims celebrate the history of these great figures even more than the Jews do.



The Tanach rejects most of these great men as Prophets and recognized them merely as Patriarchs from whom they descended. The Jewish Bible is more concerned about ancestry than the truth taught by these great figures. The Qur'an celebrates and honors them, whereas the Tanach charges some of them with lying, adultery, incest, and other sins. For example, in Genesis Abraham is accused of lying about Sarah (20:1-18), Lot of incest and adultery with his daughters (19:30-38), Isaac of lying about his wife Rebekah (26:6-11), Jacob of lying and deceiving his father Isaac (27:1-40), Reuben of adultery and incest with his stepmother (Jacob's wife) (35:22), and Judah, son of Jacob and predecessor of the Jews, of adultery with his daughter-in-law Tamar (38:1-30).

The Qur'an rejects such false accusations, recognizes these Prophets as infallible and above sin, and glorifies them as role models for their people. Thus the heritage of Moses, David, and Solomon really belongs to Islamic and not to Jewish history. Solomon's Temple was a place of true worship of Allah, a Masjid built for His worship. The Jews lost their right over it because they rejected Allah and worshipped Baal and their own nationhood.

**Jerusalem and Israel.** Jerusalem was founded during the period of David after 1000 BCE, and the united Israelite kingdom was disbanded in 922 BCE. Thus, Jerusalem was the Israelite capital for less than 80 years. Later, it was the capital of the Judah for 325 years. After 597 BCE, there was no Jewish state, and after 132 CE, there were no Jews in Palestine. No Jewish state existed until 1948.

The Zionists claim that Jerusalem is mentioned over 700 times in the Tanach, but not even once in the Qur'an. Unlike the Tanach, the Qur'an is not a book of stories about the ancestors, but a manual of guidance that is not interested in places or dates. Even Makkah is mentioned only once and

Madinah twice, and in neither of these instances does it mention them as holy cities. In fact, the Qur'an gives very few place names at all. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Tanach mentions Jerusalem so many times.

The Jewish claim that David founded Jerusalem, but that Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allah 'alayhi wa sallam*) never visited the city is incorrect. First, Muslims consider David a Messenger, while the Jews consider him only a king. His true Israelite followers were Muslims, and he was a Muslim king and Prophet who founded Jerusalem. Thus, David is as much or more a part of the Islamic tradition.

Even though Prophet Muhammad was born in Makkah and lived almost his entire life in Makkah and Madinah, he revered Jerusalem. Historians report that as a child he visited Syria and Palestine with his uncle on trade missions. When he was 24, he carried trading goods of the merchant lady Khadija to Palestine. When prophethood was bestowed upon him, Allah told him to face Jerusalem in worship, which he did for over 15 years, until Allah told him to face the Ka'bah.

During the 10th year of his prophethood, he traveled on the heavenly mount Buraq from Makkah to Jerusalem and then to the Heavens. At Jerusalem, he led the Prophets in prayer at the location of Solomon's Temple, which had been destroyed by the Romans. He described the place in such detail that 20 years later, when the Muslims conquered Jerusalem and resurrected the Temple site (used by the Christian Romans as a garbage dump), they found everything as the Prophet had described it. If he had not been there, how would he have known such facts? Thus for Muslims, the place is sacred because of the heritage and teachings of Prophets David, Solomon, and Muhammad. ■

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