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FROM WND'S JERUSALEM BUREAU

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Palestinian prof: Arab denial of Temples is baloney

Before Israel founded, 'Muslims would not have disputed connection Jews have'

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By Aaron Klein

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JERUSALEM – A prestigious Palestinian professor told WND that the Muslim denial of a Jewish connection to the Temple Mount is political and that historically Muslims did not dispute Jewish ties to the site.

"If you went back a couple of hundred years, before the advent of the political form of Zionism, I think you will find that many Muslims would not have disputed the connection that Jews have toward [the Mount]," said Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Quds University in eastern Jerusalem.

"The problem began arising with the advent of Zionism, when people started connecting a kind of feeling that Jews have toward the area with the political project of Zionism," Nusseibeh stated.



Prof. Sari Nusseibeh

Zionism refers to the political movement that supports the reestablishment of the Jewish state in the land of Israel.

According to sources inside the Palestinian Authority, Nusseibeh has come under some PA pressure for writing in a recent study that Jews historically revered the Temple Mount before the time of Muhammad and Islam.

The PA sources denied any security threats against Nusseibeh but conceded that PA President Mahmoud Abbas' office had asked the professor to issue a clarification acknowledging the Palestinian line denying Jewish ties to the Mount.

The sources indicated that if Nusseibeh did not issue a clarification his position as Al-Quds' president could be in jeopardy.

Nusseibeh, however, denied that he has received any threats over the matter.

"I am surprised that people are surprised by what I wrote. There is nothing in Islam that denies the fact that Judaism is one of the religions of the book," he said.

(Story continues below)

Nusseibeh contributed to an Israeli-Palestinian study about the Temple Mount entitled, "Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade." In the study, Nusseibeh does not affirm the existence of the Jewish Temples on the site but writes the Mount was revered by Jews before the time of Muhammad.

The PA long has denied any Jewish historic connection to the Temple Mount or Jerusalem.

Israel's Maariv daily newspaper reported Nusseibeh was threatened by Palestinians regarding his participation in the study.

Chief Palestinian justice: Temples never existed

In a previous WND interview, Chief Palestinian Justice Sheik Taysir Tamimi declared the Jewish temples never existed and Jews have no historic connection to Jerusalem. He also claimed the Western Wall really was a tying post for Muhammad's horse, the Al Aqsa Mosque was built by angels, and Abraham, Moses and Jesus were prophets for Islam.

Tamimi is considered the second most important Palestinian cleric after Muhammad Hussein, the grand mufti of Jerusalem.

"Israel started since 1967 making archeological digs to show Jewish signs to prove the relationship between Judaism and the city, and they found nothing. There is no Jewish connection to Israel before the Jews invaded in the 1880s," said Tamimi.

"About these so-called two temples, they never existed, certainly not at the [Temple Mount]," Tamimi said during a sit-down interview in his eastern Jerusalem office.

The Palestinian cleric denied the validity of dozens of digs verified by experts worldwide revealing Jewish artifacts from the First and Second Temples throughout Jerusalem, including on the Temple Mount itself; excavations revealing Jewish homes and a synagogue in a site in Jerusalem called the City of David; or even the recent discovery of a Second Temple Jewish city in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Tamimi said descriptions of the Jewish Temples in the Hebrew Tanach, in the Talmud and in Byzantine and Roman writings from the Temple periods were forged, and that the Torah was falsified to claim biblical patriarchs and matriarchs were Jewish, when they were prophets for Islam.

"All this is not real. We don't believe in all your versions. Your Torah was falsified. The text as given to the Muslim prophet Moses never mentions Jerusalem. Maybe Jerusalem was mentioned in the rest of the Torah, which was falsified by the Jews," said Tamimi.

He said Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus were "prophets for the Israelites sent by Allah as to usher in Islam."

Asked about the Western Wall, Tamimi said the structure was a tying post for Muhammad's horse and that it is part of the Al Aqsa Mosque, even though the Wall predates the mosque by more than 1,000 years.

"The Western Wall is the western wall of the Al Aqsa Mosque. It's where Prophet Muhammad tied his animal, which took him from Mecca to Jerusalem to receive the revelations of Allah."

The Kotel, or Western Wall, is an outer retaining wall of the Temple Mount that survived the destruction of the Second Temple and still stands today in Jerusalem.

Tamimi went on to claim to WND the Al Aqsa Mosque, which has sprung multiple leaks and has had to be repainted several times, was built by angels.

"Al Aqsa was built by the angels 40 years after the building of Al-Haram in Mecca. This we have no doubt is true," he said.

The First Temple was built by King Solomon in the 10th century B.C. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Second Temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C. after Jerusalem was freed from Babylonian captivity. That temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire in A.D. 70. Each temple stood for a period of about four centuries.

The Temple was the center of religious worship for ancient Israelites. It housed the Holy of Holies, which contained the Ark of the Covenant and was said to be the area upon which God's presence dwelt. All biblical holidays centered on worship at the Temple. The Temples served as the primary location for the offering of sacrifices and were the main gathering place for Israelites.

According to the Talmud, the world was created from the foundation stone of the Temple Mount. It's believed to be the biblical Mount Moriah, the location where Abraham fulfilled God's test to see if he would be willing to sacrifice his son Isaac.

The Temple Mount has remained a focal point for Jewish services for thousands of years. Prayers for a return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple have been uttered by Jews since the Second Temple was destroyed, according to Jewish tradition.

The Al Aqsa Mosque was constructed in about A.D. 709 to serve as a shrine near another shrine, the Dome of the Rock, which was built by an Islamic caliph. Al Aqsa was meant to mark what Muslims came to believe was the place at which Muhammad, the founder of Islam, ascended to heaven to receive revelations from Allah.

Jerusalem is not mentioned in the Quran. It is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible 656 times.

Islamic tradition states Muhammad took a journey in a single night on a horse from "a sacred mosque" – believed to be in Mecca in southern Saudi Arabia – to "the farthest mosque" and from a rock there ascended to heaven. The farthest mosque became associated with Jerusalem about 120 years ago.

According to research by Israeli Author Shmuel Berkovits, Islam historically disregarded Jerusalem as being holy. Berkovits points out in his new book, "How Dreadful Is this Place!" that Muhammad was said to loathe Jerusalem and what it stood for. He wrote Muhammad made a point of eliminating pagan sites of worship and sanctifying only one place – the Kaaba in Mecca – to signify the unity of God.

As late as the 14th century, Islamic scholar Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya, whose writings influenced the Wahhabi movement in Arabia, ruled that sacred Islamic sites are to be found only in the Arabian Peninsula and that "in Jerusalem, there is not a place one calls sacred, and the same holds true for the tombs of Hebron."

A guide to the Temple Mount by the Supreme Muslim Council in Jerusalem published in 1925 listed the Mount as Jewish and as the site of Solomon's Temple. The Temple Institute acquired a copy of the official 1925 "Guide Book to Al-Haram Al-Sharif," which states on page 4, "Its identity with the site of Solomon's Temple is beyond dispute. This, too, is the spot, according to universal belief, on which 'David built there an altar unto the Lord.'"

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