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Op-Ed: Fantasy Islam comes to the Knesset

The writer would be pleased to see peace between Muslims and Jews, but rebuts the bases for the rejection of anti-Jewish hadiths.

Published: Wednesday, February 17, 2016 12:25 PM G+1 0 2

Fantasy Islam: A game in which an audience of non-Muslims wish with all their hearts that Islam was a "Religion of Peace," and a Muslim strives to fulfill that wish by presenting a personal version of Islam that has little foundation in Islamic Doctrine.

Ms. Rebecca Abrahamson recently provided a brief report about the Knesset conference titled "Building a Culture of Peace in the Middle East and the Global Arena" (OpEd: Putting UN resolutions to work). She noted that

Dr. Cihat Gündoğdu, goodwill ambassador from Turkey, brandished a new book called, "Bigotry, the Dark Danger" which goes right to the sources in rebutting those who manipulate the Qur'an and hadith, taking them out of context to malign Jews. "The Qur'an should be taken as a whole, as Muslims, we see this as our duty to clarify the message of Islam. Indeed there are Muslims speaking of hatred and endless death penalties, instead of the love and gratitude that Islam commands."

Ms. Abrahamson provided a link to Bigotry, the Dark Danger, so I downloaded it to see what kind of contribution it might make to building a culture of peace. The book was written by Adnan Oktar (aka Harun Yahya), a prolific Turkish writer and publicist in the Muslim world, and the subject of one of my earlier Artuz Sheva 7 articles, "Fantasy Islam."

The premise of Oktar's book is that a "fanatical faith produced by peddlers of superstition has appeared in the name of Islam" (p. 16). He explained the source of this "fanatical faith":

The religion of the fanatics lies in traditions and superstition spread by word of mouth, but mainly in fabricated hadiths, which have been invented but presented as the words of our Prophet (pbuh). (p. 81)

Focusing on Hadiths

Hadiths are stories about the teachings and examples of Muhammad originally related by those who witnessed them. They were generally passed on orally for over 200 years after Muhammad died, and it was not until the 9th Century that they were collected in different written volumes. During that time period many hadiths had been fabricated for various reasons, and the Muslim scholars collecting the hadiths had to determine which hadiths were legitimate and which had been fabricated. Factors involved in making this determination included the reliability of individuals in the chain of narration, and praying over each hadith.

By around the end of the 9th Century there were six, multi-volume collections of what each of the six Muslim scholars considered to be legitimate hadiths; these collections are referred to as "The Sound Six," or "The Six Books of Hadiths." The most authoritative of these is considered to be Sahih Al-Bukhari; the second most authoritative is Sahih Muslim. For over a thousand years Muslim scholars, and Muslims seeking to understand their faith, have relied on these collections to help them understand the Koran and Islam. The English translations of these six collections total 39 volumes.

For Oktar, it was not enough that a hadith was included in "The Sound Six." He wrote on p. 81:

...we need to look to the Qur'an to see whether a hadith really represents



Dr. Stephen M. Kirby

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the words or actions of our Prophet (pbuh). If a hadith is in agreement with the Qur'an, then it is true. If a hadith that refers to the future has already come about, then it is also true. If, however, the hadith in question conflicts with the Qur'an, then there is no room for doubt; that hadith cannot be regarded as true.

But as you read through Oktar's book, you find that for him to consider a hadith legitimate, it has to be not only in agreement with the Koran, but the subject matter of that hadith needs to be specifically mentioned in the Koran. Oktar wrote that, "none of the superstition we shall be examining here actually appears in the Qur'an" (p. 104), and

Our Prophet (pbuh) governed on the basis of the Qur'an and lived by the Qur'an alone. Our Prophet (pbuh) has absolutely no authority to make anything lawful or unlawful outside the Qur'an, and because of his prophethood and powerful fear of God, he would in any case never do such a thing. (p. 102)

But there are things required of Muslims that are not specifically mentioned in the Koran. A prime example of this is what a Muslim is expected to do during each cycle of prayer. For that one must turn to the teachings and examples of Muhammad. Muhammad said,

.....” offer your Salat (prayers) in the way you saw me offering my Salat (prayer). [2]

Oktar has decided that if the subject of a particular hadith is not specifically mentioned in the Koran, then that hadith is fabricated.

“ And in terms of what is to be done during Hajj, Muslims are expected to following the teachings and examples of Muhammad (Hajj Mabruur), which is not in the Koran either. Adding in the procedures for ablution, again demonstrated by Muhammad and not in the Koran, we can see that there is a lot about Islam that is not in the Koran. That is why in the Koran Allah specifically commands Muslims to obey and follow the teachings and

example of Muhammad:

He who obeys the Messenger (Muhammad), has indeed obeyed Allah... (4:80)

Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much. (33:21)

...And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it). And fear Allah; verily, Allah is Severe in punishment. (59:7)

The message of these three Koran verses, and of 59:7 in particular, was aptly summed up in the following authoritative hadith in which a lady, Umm Ya'qub, asked a Muslim man named 'Abdullah why he had cursed some women for doing certain things. 'Abdullah replied:

"Why should I not curse these whom Allah's Messenger has cursed and who are (cursed) in Allah's Book!" Umm Ya'qub said, "I have read the whole Qur'an, but I did not find in it what you say." He said, "Verily, if you have read it (i.e., the Qur'an), you have found it. Didn't you read: '...And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you take and whatsoever he forbids you, you abstain (from it) ...'[3]

And Oktar's prophet Muhammad even said there was more to Islam than just the Koran:

Yahya related to me from Malik that he heard that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I have left two things with you. As long as you hold fast to them, you will not go astray. They are the Book of Allah and the sunna [sic] of His Prophet. [4]

In spite of this, Oktar has decided that if the subject of a particular hadith is not specifically mentioned in the Koran, then that hadith is fabricated. This allows him in his book to dismiss the following authoritative hadiths regarding Jews:

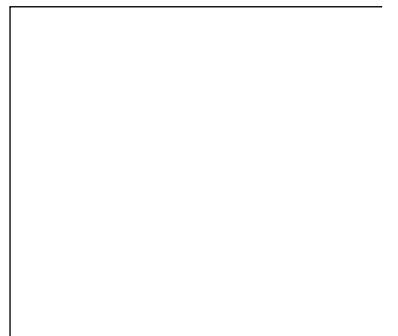
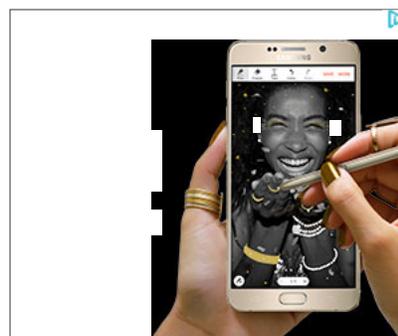
It was narrated from Sufyan: "Abdul-Malik bin 'Umair narrated to us; 'Atiyah Al-Qurazi narrated to me, he said: I was among the captives of Banu Quraizah, and they examined (us). Those whose pubes had started to grow were executed, and those whose pubes had not started to grow were not executed. I was among those whose pubes had not started to grow." [5] (p. 365)

The above hadith is referring to the fact, reported in multiple Muslim sources, that after the Muslims defeated the Jewish Banu Quraizah tribe, Muhammad supervised the beheading of 600-900 captured Jewish males, combatants and non-combatants. The only prerequisite for execution was that they had reached puberty.

Narrated Abu Musa: Allah's Messenger said: On the Day of Resurrection, my Ummah (nation) will be gathered into three groups...Yet another sort



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will come bearing on their backs heaps of sins like great mountains. Allah will ask the angels though He knows best about them: Who are these people? They will reply: They are humble slaves of yours. He will say: Unload the sins from them and put the same over the Jews and Christians; then let the humble slaves get into Paradise by virtue of My Mercy. [6] (p. 366)

It has been narrated by 'Umar b. Al-Khattab that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) saying: I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslims. [7] (p. 370)

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had said: Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it. [8] (p. 373)

Even though the above *hadith* was reported in *Sahih Muslim*, Oktar has decided it was fabricated. But it was also reported in two others of "The Sound Six": *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Vol. 5, No. 5205, p. 458; and *Jami' At-Tirmidhi*, where the Muslim scholar At-Tirmidhi wrote the following explanation for this *hadith*:

"Do not precede the Jews and the Christians [in greeting]": Some of the people of knowledge said that it only means that it is disliked because it would be honoring them, and the Muslims were only ordered to humiliate them. For this reason, when one of them is met on the path, then the path is not yielded for him, because doing so would amount to honoring them. [9]

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had said: The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them will [sic] the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him; but the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews. [10] (p. 374)

In spite of Oktar's claim that the above *hadith* is fabricated, a variation of it was also reported in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*:

Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'" [11]

Conclusion

According to Rebecca Abrahamson, Adnan Oktar's book *Bigotry, the Dark Danger* appears to make a significant contribution to the idea of "Building a Culture of Peace in the Middle East and the Global Arena." This is because Oktar's book

goes right to the sources in rebutting those who manipulate the Qur'an and hadith, taking them out of context to malign Jews.

But in terms of the *hadiths*, we must remember that in his book Oktar is the sole source for determining whether or not a *hadith* has been fabricated. And as we have seen, his main criterion for making this determination flies in the face of commands of Allah in the Koran, statements of his prophet Mohammad, and general consensus among Muslim scholars for over one thousand years. Nevertheless, there are those who appear to view Oktar's book as a Muslim contribution to building a culture of peace. Such is the ease, and the lure of playing Fantasy Islam.

And how did Oktar address verses in the Koran that were supposedly manipulated "to malign Jews"? A topic for another occasion.

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[3] *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 6, Book 65, No. 4886, pp. 340-341.

[4] Malik ibn Anas ibn Malik ibn Abi 'Amir al-Asbahi, *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*, trans. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley (Inverness, Scotland: Madinah Press, 2004), 46.3. *Sunnah*: The Way of Muhammad, consisting of the examples, ways, and teachings of Muhammad that have become rules to be followed by Muslims. Sources for the *Sunnah* are *hadiths* and the *Sira*, the authoritative biography of Muhammad.

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Darussalam, 2008), Vol. 5, No. 4404, p. 45. Oktar referred to this as *Hadith* No. 4390.

[6] *110 Ahadith Qudsi: Sayings of the Prophet Having Allahs Statements*, 3rd ed., trans. Syed Masood-ul-Hasan (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2006), No. 8, titled *Superiority of the believers in the Oneness of Allah and the punishment of Jews and Christians*, pp. 19-20.

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[8] *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 6, No. 2167, p. 439. Oktar referred to this as *Hadith* No. 5389.

[9] Abu 'Eisa Mohammad ibn 'Eisa at-Tirmidhi, *Jami' At-Tirmidhi*, trans. Abu Khaliyl (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2007), Vol. 3, No. 1602, p. 365.

[10] *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. 8, No. 2922, p. 349.

[11] *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Vol. 4, Book 56, No. 2926, p. 113.

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