

At It Again

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If you've been paying attention to the news over the past few days—and for us down here, it has been a little difficult with all the activities we've been doing—and have been able to gather anything beyond the Democrat sniping at Trump—you may have heard that the Palestinians are at it again. It has not yet been dubbed a resurrection of the Intifada (not that I've heard, anyway), but there have been several killings and protests, all instigated by the Palestinian side. The current dispute is over the Temple Mount. The Arabs call it the *Haram al-Sharif*, which, according to Muslims, the Israelis are trying to expand their control over. I don't know if you are aware of it, but the only place in Jerusalem that the Jews do not have control over is the Temple Mount itself, and that is run by the Palestinian Authority.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves here. We have to ask, what has really led to these murders and protests? It began last week when Arab gunmen fired from the shrine, killing two Israeli policemen down below. As a response—and to protect Jews and tourists who were coming to the Temple Mount area—the Israelis installed metal detectors at the gates of the *Haram al-Sharif*, explaining that the devices were a needed security measure to prevent further attacks. To me, that sounds like a pretty good, common-sense measure they should take.

Well, not to the Muslims. They then launched mass protests because of these metal detectors. They call them “prayer protests,” because they occur after one of the five times Muslims pray toward Mecca each day. But in reality, these “prayer protests” are huge, unruly marches that descend quickly into chaotic street fighting. On Friday, which is their holy day, their anger was stoked enough that several thousand Palestinians clashed with Israeli security forces in the West Bank and in Jerusalem after their noon prayers, which is not only on their holy day but also the climax of the Muslim religious week.

Three Palestinians were killed and several dozen were wounded because Israeli forces used live rounds. These ended up being some of the worst street clashes in two years.

Then, on Friday evening, a Palestinian named Omar al-Abed, armed with a knife, jumped a fence of an Israeli settlement in the West Bank and entered a home, surprising a family during their Sabbath dinner. Before he was done, al-Abed had killed a man and two of his adult children, and wounded a woman. I don't know if it was his wife or not. It may have been worse had not a neighbor, hearing the screams from next door, rushed to the home and opened fire, wounding the Palestinian man, who was taken to an Israeli hospital. From there, once his wounds are healed, he will end up in jail and who knows what will happen after that.

Evidently, he committed this massacre (his family says) to protect the honor of the *Haram al-Sharif*. So, he kills three people and wounds another to protect the honor of this place. I don't see the logic in it—how the two are really connected. To me, it sounds like an excuse to kill Israelis. Evidently, he was on a suicide mission because he left a Facebook post saying that he wanted his body to be covered by the banner of Hamas, and also a photo of Yasser Arafat, founder of Fatah, placed upon his coffin. That's a pretty clear indication of terrorism, but no group has officially claimed that it was committed by them.

Is this the beginning of a new intifada? I don't know. No one can say for sure. Only time will tell.

What is clear is that the Palestinians are becoming frustrated and they are trying to make something happen.

Their “plight” (as you might have heard it called) has been taken off the front pages of the newspapers and off the evening news. It has been replaced by news about climate change, ISIS, Trump, North Korea, Putin, Islamic terrorism in Europe, the meltdown in Venezuela, and all kinds of other things. They no longer have the leaders like Yasser Arafat to push their cause before the media and world leaders. Their present headman, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who presides over autonomous enclaves in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, is—many feel—just a puppet of

the Israeli government. He has done nothing for them in the years he has been ruling. In fact, they've lost a great deal of ground. So they are striking back to put themselves in the limelight, as it were.

Both sides expect the violence to escalate over the next days and weeks. It probably will, especially since the focal point is the Temple Mount, the *Haram al-Sharif*, about which both sides become quite rabid at the slightest provocation. So, strap in for a violent summer in Jerusalem.

Jesus speaks of "wars and rumors of wars." Zechariah writes about the governors of Judah being "like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves." That sounds like violence to me. Obadiah speaks of Palestinian-like people as "violent," even using the Hebrew word *chamas* to describe them. That is the Hebrew word that means "violence."

As always, it is a volatile situation and bears watching, and we have been told that we should be watching that area. But, as Jesus also says, "The end is not yet."