

EDITORIAL

On August 9, 2003, the Cairo weekly *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi* reported that Nabil Hilmi, dean of the law faculty at Al-Zaqaziq University, and Egyptian expatriates in Switzerland are preparing a mammoth lawsuit against "all the Jews of the world and the Jews of Israel in particular."

Arab propagandists normally concentrate on Israeli "aggression" in 1948 and on the "right of return" that would allow millions of "Palestinian refugees" to flood and destroy the Jewish State. In this instance, however, an attempt is being made to extort billions of dollars from Jews all over the world by quoting the Hebrew Bible against them. The lawsuit claims that at the time of the Exodus departing "Jews" stole gold, jewelry, clothing, and utensils from their Egyptian hosts. According to the *Jerusalem Post* (August 22), Dr. Hilmi suggests that the value of these "stolen goods" be repaid, with interest, over the next 1,000 years.

On the one hand, it is most gratifying that a legal expert in Egypt – unlike spokesmen for the Islamic movement in Israel – should place such reliance on the Bible. On the other hand, the absurd nature of this lawsuit will be apparent to anyone familiar with the relevant biblical texts and commentaries. Whatever the newly liberated Hebrews or Israelites received when they left Egypt hardly compensated for the torments and slavery that they had endured there.

If they argue that the Bible provides us with a historically accurate record, Nabil Hilmi and his Egyptian backers could face a massive counter-claim. This would involve compensation for: slave labor by 600,000 able-bodied Israelites working seven days a week for the best part of 430 years (Ex. 1:11-14; 12:40); the decreed slaughter of Hebrew male infants (Ex. 1:22); and other forms of Egyptian brutality (Ex. 2:23; 5:6-15).

Nabil Hilmi's insidious aim is to discredit ancient and modern Israel, by branding the Hebrews, Jews, and Israelis as thieves and exploiters. Let there be no mistake: this is simply one more aspect of the worldwide Islamic campaign against infidel "Zionists" and "Crusaders." Whether Hilmi really intends to file suit in a European court remains to be seen, but there will be no lack of expert witnesses to cut the ground from under his feet if he does so.

Dr. Gabriel Sivan

Chairman, Jewish Bible Association