

NOT BORN YESTERDAY

Western Edition

October 2003



“Filmmaker Brings God and Allah Together”

“God and Allah Need to Talk” proclaimed a large billboard in Hollywood, and when Ruth Broyde-Sharone saw it, she literally stopped her car. A documentary filmmaker, she set about producing a film of the same name, as a vehicle for healing and reconciliation.

“God and Allah talking would be like God talking to Himself,” she says, “but after 9/11 it perfectly sums up how frustrated and fragmented we feel. We even view God as having multiple personalities.”

She explains. “The separation between God and Allah in the films title underscore how in our minds we have created a separation between the non-Muslim and Muslim communities, when in truth God and Allah are one. He is always talking to us,” she maintains, “but are we talking to one another?”

Her 18-minute documentary points out the new approach of the Islamic Center of Southern California to welcome individuals of other faiths to celebrate Muslim holidays with them in their center’s mosque. The film also documents a Muslim-Jewish “Seder of Reconciliation” held at Temple Kol Tikvah in Woodland Hills. It was jointly organized by Rabbi Steven Jacobs and Dr. Nazir Khaja, director of the Islamic Information Service, a local Muslim cable network. The Seder brought together some 150 participants, mostly Jews and Muslims, and some Christians, to symbolically reunite Isaac and Ishmael, the estranged sons of Abraham.

The Rev. Ed Bacon of All Saints Church in Pasadena agreed that the Passover Seder, with its retelling of the Exodus story, could provide a meaningful basis for interfaith discourse. “God and Allah Need to Talk” was screened to a sold-out

audience for its premiere in Hollywood last month, and additional showings are planned.

Ruth says that she does not want the film to be “just a feel-good day.” At the presentations, she challenges viewers to make a commitment for action. The audience is told to choose a course of action and then tell it to the person sitting next to them. It could be inviting some people of a different faith to your home for dialogue, for example. “But,” says Ruth, “contributing money is not enough. It merely gets you off the hook in your own mind.”

“I was making the film for my own frustration, but it touched a nerve,” she says. She reports that news about the film had been circulated by word of mouth and emails. There was no advertising, yet a Muslim woman here in California heard about it from a friend in Tel Aviv. Ruth has received calls from all over the world. “There’s enormous hunger in the community. People are being blamed for what someone else did who’s in the same religion,” she continues.

Ruth has produced, written, and directed documentaries for more than 25 years, including films for Encyclopedia Britannica, private foundations, and organizations. She worked for Israeli television for five years, and began her career as a freelance journalist in Latin America, Europe, and Israel. Ruth and her partner, Minister Delores (Ahuva) Gray were invited to serve as delegates to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in 1996.

The Anti-Defamation League of Los Angeles commissioned another of her films, “Children of the Dream...the Reality.” It documents the experience of Ethiopian teenagers who were brought from Israel to interface with inner city youths in a program to help break down racial and religious stereotypes.