

completely, uprooting all the Israelis in colonialist Israel beyond the Green Line, or we will call you names.

As an Israeli, I'm tempted to ask, "So what?" At the same time, one should not completely dismiss this simplistic and shallow book. Peter is playing with fire but seems to ignore what George Orwell observed years ago: that fire is hot. In general, *The Crisis of Zionism* reflects a deterioration of American political writing, and Peter has good company. See Thomas Friedman's angry columns in the *New York Times*. In Israel we say, after Meir Ariel's great verse, "We outlived Pharaoh; we will outlive this one as well." It is this reviewer's considered judgment that Peter Beinart's book will not stand the test of time.

NOTE

1. Aaron David Miller, "Bibi and Barack," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2012.

AMNON LORD is a senior editor and columnist of the national daily, *Makor Rishon*. He recently published *Retzah Bein Yedidim (Murder between Friends: Uri Avnery: A Story of Political Warfare)* (Dani Books, 2010).



THE MUSLIM LEGAL DILEMMA OF PEACE WITH ISRAEL

War, Peace and International Relations in Islam: Muslim Scholars on Peace Accords with Israel, by Yitzhak Reiter, Sussex Academic Press, 2011, 236 pp.

Reviewed by ARNON GROISS

It is always useful to have God on your side whenever you become engaged in a meaningful enterprise, especially when cardinal decisions related to peace and war are involved. In a religiously devoted society like the Muslim one, God's support is especially essential as well in political controversies such as the debate over the issue of peace with Israel. The present book unfolds a wonderful array of Islamic rulings (*fatawa*, singular *fatwa*) for and against such a move and analyzes their background and significance within the wider context of Islam and international relations.

Fatwa is a tool of guidance for the ordinary Muslim individual, especially in times of inner conflicts as a result of political and social changes. Since Islam, like Judaism, is an all-encompassing religion, it has relevance to most aspects of daily life and, therefore, a word of guidance from a respected religious authority (termed

mufti) is often needed. Over time, this institution has become more established and, as might have been expected, developed into a bone of contention between the state and dissident factions, as is well manifested in the present book.

Prof. Yitzhak Reiter is a senior fellow of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies. He teaches in the Conflict Studies Program of the Hebrew University and at the Department of Political Science of Ashkelon Academic College. From 1978 to 1986 he served as deputy adviser to the Israeli prime minister on Arab affairs. Prof. Reiter's expertise is in the fields of the politics of Israeli Arabs, and Jerusalem and the holy places in the context of the conflict, on which he has written several books and articles. In addition, he has been active in various initiatives related to Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, as well as to the Jewish-Arab dialogue within Israel.

The book starts with three theoretical chapters discussing the attitudes of Islamic legal sources (that is, the Koran and the Prophetic Tradition – *Sunnah*) toward peace and war; the interpretation of such attitudes throughout history from the days of the early caliphs to our own times against the background of historical developments regarding the Muslim state; and the debate among Muslim scholars throughout the ages—especially nowadays in the context of the conflict with Israel—regarding Prophet Muhammad's treaty with his archenemy, the Meccan tribe of Quraysh.

Then follow several chapters that analyze the legal debate and the various fatwas issued in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979, the Oslo Accords of 1993 between Israel and the PLO, the Israeli-Hizbullah conflict of 2006, and the issue of Israel-Hamas armistice (*hudnah*). Toward the end, the author also examines the agreements made in the 1830s between the French and the Algerian resistance leader Abd al-Qader and discusses their significance to the case of Arab-Israeli peace.

One important aspect of the book is the provision of the source material in its original language. Thus, the Arabic reader can have a firsthand impression of the rulings and discern the nuances related to the debate, which the author conveys to the English reader.

Reiter skillfully handles the source material, which consists of fatwas of renowned Muslim clerics, mostly Sunni, both state-employed and independent, who wield considerable moral influence over vast constituencies and whose fatwas should be taken seriously. The bottom line is that a long-term peaceful coexistence between a Muslim country and Israel is definitely possible as long as the Muslims' interests dictate that. This conclusion is undoubtedly encouraging. Thus Israel, for its part, should always see to it that peace remain in the Muslims' best interest in terms of gain and loss.

Two main examples of propeace fatwas are those of Jad al-Haqq Ali Jad al-

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Haqq, mufti of Egypt, and Abd al-Aziz Abdullah ibn Baz, mufti of Saudi Arabia. As chief legal authorities in their respective countries, with a large number of fatwas on record, they enjoyed the esteem of vast audiences both within and outside the boundaries of their respective states. The former legalized the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty from a religious viewpoint presenting several arguments such as the religious obligation to respond to an enemy's peace offer, especially if it meets the Muslims' interest, as had been done by the Prophet himself vis-à-vis his pagan enemies (while Jews have a higher status in Muslim eyes). He further explained that the peace treaty had followed earlier agreements made by Arab-Muslim states with Israel, thus emphasizing the latter's being regarded as an established fact.

Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz defended the 1993 Oslo Accords and thereby challenged fatwas issued against them by radical muftis such as the renowned Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Ibn Baz's arguments, expounded in three fatwas, did mention the Prophetic precedence but focused mainly on the right of discretion of each Muslim ruler (in this case PLO chairman Yasser Arafat) to determine whether peace with the enemy is beneficial to his people.

All in all, this book is highly recommended for anyone interested in the issue of peace in the Middle East, as well as for anyone enchanted by the endless twists and turns between religious ideologies and worldly political necessities.

ARNON GROISS has followed Middle Eastern politics during his four-decade career at Israel's Arabic Radio and has specialized since 2000 in Middle East schoolbook research. Initially a graduate of the Hebrew University, he earned his MA and PhD from Princeton University's Department of Near Eastern Studies and holds an MPA from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.



THE FIRST GLOBAL GRAND MUFTI

Through the Eyes of the Mufti: The Essays of Haj Amin, by Zvi Elpeleg,
translated and annotated by Rachel Kessel, Vallentine Mitchell, 2009,
240 pp.

Reviewed by WOLFGANG G. SCHWANITZ

At times—notes Zvi Elpeleg, editor of al-Hajj Amin al-Husaini's texts as published in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Misri* in 1954, and in three book editions