

15. Kurt Fischer-Werth, *Amin al-Husaini, Grossmufti von Palästina* (Berlin: Titz, 1943) (German).
16. Amin al-Husaini, *Muzakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husaini* (The Memoirs of al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husaini), ed. Abd al-Karim al-Umar (Damascus: Al-Ahali, 1999) (Arabic).
17. Volker Koop, *Hitlers Muslime. Die Geschichte einer unheiligen Allianz* (Berlin: Be.Bra, 2012), 201 (German).

PROF. WOLFGANG G. SCHWANITZ is a historian of the Middle East and German Middle East policy. He is the author of four books and the editor of ten others, including *Germany and the Middle East, 1871–1945* (Markus Wiener, 2004). His upcoming book deals with *Islam in Europe, Revolts in the Middle East* (Weist).



## FROM MODERN HATRED TO BIBLICAL PROPHECY

*Israël peut-il survivre? La nouvelle règle du jeu* (Can Israel Survive? The New Rules of the Game), by Michel Gurfinkiel, Editions Hugo & Cie, 2011, 304 pp.

Reviewed by MICHELLE MAZEL

Following the 2008–2009 Cast Lead operation in Gaza, French bookstores were suddenly flooded with books about Israel, most of them accusing and condemning the Jewish state. This prompted Jewish writers, both newcomers and seasoned authors, to pen essays and books defending Israel. They bemoaned the perils threatening the country and hinted at a catastrophic future for it.

Thus, in *A State Too Many*,<sup>1</sup> Fabien Ghez notes that today it is more and more widely believed that, if Israel were to disappear, the world would be a better place and peace would break out. In *Israel: A Future Compromised*, Olivier Burochowitch and Richard Laub openly ask whether the demise of the Jewish state is inevitable.<sup>2</sup> In *A Name Too Many: Is Israel Illegitimate?*, with a foreword by Pierre Andre Taguieff, Jacques Tarnero wonders why so many people want not only the elimination of Israel but even of its very name.<sup>3</sup> Taguieff himself recently published *Israel and the New Jewish Issue*.<sup>4</sup> These and other books highlight the miracle of Israel's renewal and accomplishments as well as the mendacious and virulent campaign against its very existence.

Even in this context, a new book by Michel Gurfinkiel, his seventh, is of special

## Jewish Political Studies Review

interest. A former editor of the French weekly *Valeurs Actuelles* and an occasional contributor to the *Wall Street Journal* and *Commentary*, Gurfinkiel is the founder and chairman of the Jean Jacques Rousseau Institute, a conservative French think tank on political issues. As he said in an interview to a Jewish website, he had been asked so many times whether Israel could survive that he decided to write down his thoughts about it.<sup>5</sup> He also said in the interview that he believed in Israel's ultimate survival. The book itself, however, is not totally optimistic. Indeed, the opening paragraph is gloomy enough: "The twelfth war of Israel will not happen. Such is the hope of the Israelis. They are preparing for it. They know that, should it break out, it will be difficult. And murderous."<sup>6</sup>

Gurfinkiel discerns two main themes in the accusations against Israel. First, Israel is indicted for being

a colonial state; an artificial state that came into being through arbitrary decisions...having been founded...at the expense of another state—a natural one—Palestine; having expelled the Palestinians in order to settle a new people, the Israelis; persisting in tricks and illegality while pretending to maintain at all costs a Jewish national identity. The Shoah would be the one extenuating circumstance. It cannot, however, excuse everything. Nor can its value last forever. (31)

One by one, using lengthy historical arguments, Gurfinkiel refutes these charges in what is by far the most persuasive part of the book. He then turns to the second theme and to his main thesis. The real reason, he contends, behind the implacable hatred directed at the Jewish state "is not so much the Middle East state called Israel...as a transcendental and metaphysical Israel, that of the Bible, of which the state, whether it wants it or not, whether it assumes it or not, is the heir and the last carrier to date" (153). The emphasis here is less on Christianity—though it is significant as there are still some Christians who view Israelis (Jews) as a people of Christ-killers—than on Islam. The latter religion, Gurfinkiel suggests, rejects the very notion of a Jewish state because, first, there is an inherent theological conflict between Islam and Judaism, and second, there can be no infidel state on what was once a territory under Islamic rule.

Gurfinkiel elaborates on Arab hostility and its manifestations, the help it receives from international institutions that should know better. He devotes, in fact, almost a third of his book to the United States and its ambivalent attitude toward Israel. He has harsh words for President Barack Obama, to whom he devotes a whole chapter. He discusses Obama's resolutely pro-Islamic 2009 Cairo speech and his doomed efforts to bring a new harmony to the relations between the United States and the world of Islam.

"For Israel," Gurfinkiel asserts, "Obama's rise constitutes a major danger" (154).

In a May 2011 interview with prominent French publicist Guy Millière, he went so far as to say that “Obama is an absolute enemy of Israel.”<sup>7</sup>

Toward the end of his lucid, if bleak essay, Gurfinkiel turns to the biblical prophet Zechariah to find grounds for hope. “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh...I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken....” But as the following verses say: “Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations...and it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up to worship the King, the Lord of hosts....”<sup>8</sup>

In his conclusion, having asked again whether Israel can survive, Gurfinkiel declines to answer by a simple yes or no. “Israel can perish by assassination,” he writes. “Yet there is still time to prevent the crime and the disaster today, by adopting a new rule of the game and keeping to it” (302).

This extremely well-researched and thought-provoking book has not benefited from any significant media exposure outside the narrow circle of French Jewish media, mainly the community’s many blogs and radio programs. Yet it should be required reading for those who want to understand the complexities of the issue. It should be noted, however, that recent events including the so-called Arab Spring have somewhat changed the equation. More and more people are coming reluctantly to the conclusion that Israel—and the Palestinian question—is not really the one issue preventing peace in the Middle East. The brazen slaughter of thousands of Syrian civilians while the world looks on, the electoral victories of Islamic parties throughout the region, and perhaps the growing awareness of the looming Iranian threat have opened many eyes.

NOTES

1. Fabien Ghez, *L'Etat de Trop* (Paris: Editions David Reinharc, 2010).
2. Olivier Boruchowitch and Richard Laub, *Israël: un avenir compromis* (Paris: Berg, 2009).
3. Jacques Tarnero, *Le nom de trop: Israël illegitime?* (Paris: Editions Armand Colin, 2011).
4. Pierre Andre Taguieff, *Israel et la nouvelle question juive* (Paris: Les Provinciales, 2011).
5. <http://www.aschkel.info/article-interview-de-michel-gurfinkiel-par-guitel-ben-ishay-73706900.html>.
6. “La douzième guerre d’Israël n’aura pas lieu. C’est ce au’espèrent les Israéliens. Tous s’y préparent. Ils savent que si elle éclate elle sera meurtrière” (9).
7. <http://www.terredisrael.com/infos/?p=35696>.
8. Zechariah 14 (King James Version).

MICHELLE MAZEL is a graduate of Sciences Po (the Institute for Political Science) and the Paris Faculte de Droit. She is a writer of both fictional and non-fictional works and currently resides in Jerusalem.

