

## Bostom's legacy

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### The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism

By Andrew Bostom

Prometheus

768 pages; \$39.95

Following the recent publication of his massive compendium *The Legacy of Jihad* - a breakthrough inasmuch as the enormous task of assembling together all the major sources which govern the holy war in Islam had never been attempted before - this amazingly prolific writer has completed another, no less imposing, collection of sources, Islamic and others, which testify to the long and sorry history of anti-Semitism in Islam. This too had never been undertaken before on such a scale, mainly due to the constrictions of political correctness that posited that Islam, unlike Christianity, had not entertained a systematic persecution of the Jews.

This apologetic for Islam has now been shattered by Andrew Bostom, who painstakingly but thoughtfully collected and collated this documentation that would have been a stunning and innovative undertaking for any scholar of Islam to pursue, let alone for a professional in medicine whose research on Islam has been merely a secondary career.

Appropriately, Bostom begins his volume with a well-tailored survey of the theological, historical and juridical origins of Islamic anti-Semitism, including the Koran, the Hadith and the Sirah, then proceeds to an insightful description of the dhimmis in the main lands of Islam, to test the theory of the cited sources against the practice of Muslim rulers in the entire area spanning the Middle East, North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula (Andalusia) and the Ottoman Empire.

The picture these documents give reverses in a dramatic way many of the ill-conceived and misjudged information that had attempted in the past to ascribe to the lands of Islam a much more benign and idyllic image of their (mis)treatment of the Jews. The coalition between the Palestinian mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis during World War II is conjured up to conclude this introduction.

Secondly, the author delves in considerable detail into the main sources of Islamic jurisprudence - the Koran and the Hadith, complemented by the Sirah (the earliest pious Muslim biographies of Muhammad), where an abundance of references, usually not complimentary but rather derogatory, are made to Jews, collectively known as *Isra'liyyat* (Israelites' stories). This is a trove of anti-Jewish stereotypes that have become the Shari'a-based uncontested "truth" about the People of the Book. Those accounts are invariably cited in sermons during Friday prayers, thus assuring their universal diffusion among Muslim constituents and the constant poisoning of the souls of young and adult Muslims alike, something that renders their fundamentally negative attitudes to Jews and Israel unchangeable.

This extremely important collection from the holy sources is supplemented by the thinking and judgment of the most authoritative jurists whose every word has been awaited and avidly digested by Muslim constituencies the world over. The great medieval masters, such as Tabari and Jahiz, are reinforced by more recent ones such as the Egyptian Tantawi and Egyptian-in exile Qaradawi, who represent the two poles of established Islam and popular Islam in our contemporary world.

An impressive selection of observations made by prominent Western scholars, complemented by the eyewitness

reports of travelers, consular representatives and journalists and writers about the condition of the Jews in Arab lands, are adduced to support the basic and well-documented thesis of the author, that the anti-Semitic record of the Islamic world leaves much to be desired.

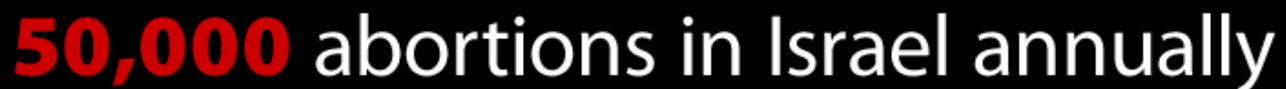
Bostom provides the first full English translation and detailed analysis of a seminal, if repellent 1942 essay ("Judaism and Islam as Opposites") by Johannes von Leers, the infamous Nazi propagandist of extermination. The essay (and its explication by Bostom) demonstrates Leers's thorough, reverential understanding of the sacralized Islamic sources. Leers's personal career trajectory - as a favored contributor in Goebbels's propaganda ministry, to his eventual adoption of Islam (as Omar Amin von Leers, in 1956) while working as an anti-Western and anti-Semitic propagandist under Nasser's regime from the mid-1950s until his death in 1965 - epitomizes the modern convergence of Islamic anti-Semitism, and racist, Nazi anti-Semitism.

It is worth noting that the blood libel, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the world Jewish conspiracy, which were borrowed by Muslims from classic European anti-Semitism since the 19th century and the infamous Damascus blood libel (1840), are still recurrent and popular themes in books, posters, cartoons, sermons in mosques, TV series and radio programs produced throughout the Islamic world, including in countries that concluded peace with Israel (Jordan and Egypt). Moreover, the fortunes of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the escalation of latter years, have by themselves occasioned an unprecedented campaign of demonization of Israel in the Islamic media and public discourse. The main argument being, of course, that Israel, being a Nazi accursed regime, draws its inspiration from the traditional Jewish sources and from the more recent colonialist, oppressive and imperialist nature of Zionism. The nation of Israel and its movement of national liberation, according to this rationale, cannot be better than the sum total of its members.

One can hardly exaggerate the vast importance of this volume, which will henceforth become indispensable for any student of Islam, of Judeo-Islamic relations, of anti-Semitism in particular and of hate-literature in general. The variety of materials assembled here, which makes a fascinating, if disagreeable, reading, for all the splendid and insightful overview offered by this incredibly energetic and imaginative author, will continue for times to come to constitute a mainstay of Muslim sources which will have to be referred to by future researchers, scholars and the general educated public which aspires to comprehend the significance of the new outburst of anti-Semitism, clearly articulated by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, among Muslims worldwide.

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**50,000** abortions in Israel annually

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