

# INCORPORATING RELIGION INTO ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACEMAKING: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

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## *Summary*

The United States government recently endorsed a plan of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip, believing it to be a positive development that can help break the ongoing violent stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian relations. To this end, the US also seeks to promote a revamped Palestinian Authority that can provide security and good governance, and will eventually be able to return to the negotiating table with Israel. This paper argues that it will also be necessary to change hearts and minds if the two sides are to ever reach a final status agreement. As such, it examines how to use religion-based means of conflict resolution to augment official diplomacy and peacemaking in order to achieve this goal. The study highlights three avenues of religion-based conflict resolution that are currently being employed in the Israeli-Palestinian context – albeit separately and in a largely uncoordinated manner – and then recommends how to integrate them in order to achieve significantly greater peacemaking results, as a complement to the Israeli withdrawal plan.

### *Unilateral Withdrawal*

In April 2004, President George W. Bush announced that the US would support Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's unilateral plans to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. The president hailed the initiative, noting that, "if all parties choose to embrace this moment, they can open the door to progress and put an end to one of the world's longest-running conflicts."<sup>1</sup> But Bush's endorsement had a qualification that will significantly affect Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. First, the US president endorsed Israel's wish to annex the largest settlement blocs in the West Bank: "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949, and all previous efforts to negotiate a two-state solution have reached the same conclusion."<sup>2</sup> In a second move that caused even greater consternation in the Arab world, Bush largely dismissed a matter of tremendous import to Palestinians, the right of return of refugees to lands now inside Israel. The president remarked, "It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state and the settling of Palestinian refugees there rather than Israel."<sup>3</sup> No previous US administration has ever pre-empted the final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in such a manner.

Bush administration officials maintain they are not prejudging final status negotiations.<sup>4</sup> They point out that the president simply articulated what most informed observers have long expected to be the content of an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. Indeed, Bush rightly stated that all previous attempts to negotiate a two-state

solution (i.e. the Clinton Parameters of December 2001 and even unofficial/“track two” efforts such as the “Geneva Accord”) have made very similar recommendations.<sup>5</sup> But unlike the earlier efforts that the president mentioned, the Palestinians have been completely excluded from these latest negotiations. The US-Israeli understandings were worked out without any parallel talks with the Palestinians. From the Palestinian point of view, the US has significantly undermined future negotiations because it has denied two of their key demands before these discussions have even begun. A Palestinian negotiator can no longer expect to gain concessions in exchange for renouncing the right of return, for example, because he knows that the US is already committed to opposing this principle.

American allies in the Arab world have pressed the US to begin parallel talks with the Palestinians as a counterweight to its support for the Sharon plan. At the urging of King Abdullah of Jordan, President Bush sent a letter to the Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister, Ahmed Qureia, assuring that Palestinian hopes for statehood can still be achieved through negotiations.<sup>6</sup> The diplomatic implications of the President’s letter are significant and can be used to reassure the Palestinians. While he continues to back Israel’s wish to annex the largest Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank, the president did remark that final borders cannot be drawn without Palestinian consent.<sup>7</sup> This means, for example, that the Palestinians can request compensation for their territorial losses, perhaps in the form of a land swap, before signing a final status agreement. A similar situation exists with regard to the Palestinian refugee issue. Although he offered an opinion that refugees should be settled in a future Palestinian state rather than Israel, the president never suggested that there could not be negotiations on the subject. The

Palestinians are still free to demand alternative satisfiers as part of a final status agreement, including financial compensation and even symbolic arrangements that acknowledge the refugees' suffering and losses.

The US must also take an active role in ensuring that a responsible Palestinian leadership takes control after the Israeli withdrawal. Indeed, the withdrawal seems increasingly likely. Despite the fact that his Likud party rejected the plan in a non-binding referendum, Sharon is determined to find another way to win its approval.<sup>8</sup> He is likely to succeed as a majority of the Israeli public supports a pullout. (More than 150,000 people recently attended a demonstration in Tel Aviv under the banner "Get out of Gaza and start talking."<sup>9</sup>) But it is not entirely certain if those Palestinians who believe in peaceful coexistence and a return to negotiations with Israel will assume responsibility for security and government in Gaza in the coming months. The Israeli withdrawal could lead to the emergence of a Palestinian faction or entity in the Gaza Strip separate from the PA. The PA is in a fragile state, having been repeatedly pounded by Israeli retaliatory measures during the last three years and further plagued by corruption and internal divisions. This state of affairs has led to the rise of nationalist warlords and Islamist organizations such as Hamas, who will attempt to fill the vacuum left behind after the Israeli pullout. US Secretary of State Colin Powell met with PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia on May 15 in Jordan to discuss how the Sharon plan can be an "opportunity" to move forward on the peace process.<sup>10</sup> US National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice met Qureia shortly thereafter on May 17 in Germany, to consult on measures the PA can take to combat terrorism, including reorganizing its disparate security forces into an effective unit.<sup>11</sup> Building on this approach of reaching out to leaders such as Qureia, it is

necessary for the US to begin actively shaping the arrangements that will ensure a complete Israeli pullout from Gaza and the handover of authority to the Palestinians. Such a response is crucial to promote an atmosphere in which negotiations between the two sides can eventually resume.

#### *Additional Considerations*

An important counterpart to the promotion of responsible leadership is the changing of hearts and minds. The US can help empower leaders who intend to return to the negotiating table, but these figures will not be able to succeed without popular support. It is definitely true that leaders must have the resolve to make peace, but peacemaking is not dependent on leadership alone. In this regard, it is helpful to cite Saeb Erekat, the senior-most Palestinian negotiator, who was asked to comment on the failure of the Israelis and Palestinians to reach a final status agreement in 2000-01. Although the Palestinian negotiator played the “blame game” at first, he soon changed tune and made a rather telling remark:

#### *Saeb Erekat*

...I believe we did not prepare our public for what it takes to make a comprehensive peace on all issues of negotiations - a lesson learned.

#### *BBC News Moderator*

That’s an interesting omission, if I may say so. What could you have done to do that?

#### *Saeb Erekat*

When you speak about issues of Permanent Status negotiations, to me, as a Palestinian or to my colleagues the Israelis when it comes to Jerusalem - settlements, borders and refugees - these are the issues that make us breathe and was a product of our religions, history, geography, ancient times and the process of handling 3,000 years of complexities is not as easy as we thought. So when I say that preparing the public - Palestinian public - to what it takes, I really mean it and at the same time the Israeli colleagues need to prepare their public because we often look at our constituencies and say the things they like to hear without saying the things that they should hear.<sup>12</sup>

Erekat's observation raises an important question: If the Israelis and Palestinians were inadequately prepared to accept coexistence and compromise when there was a peace process, how then is it possible to get this message across after nearly four years of fighting and bloodshed? The answer seems to be to try to introduce new, overriding forms of conflict resolution into the equation, something powerful enough to foster the kinds of changes in attitudes and relationships that will be necessary to make a future final status agreement successful. Accordingly, this study will follow in the path of Gopin (2002), who maintains that religion can be an integral component of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.<sup>13</sup> Religion, both in thought and practice, will interface with the concrete policy recommendations offered herein.

#### *Why Religion?*

Many argue that religion is not a primary factor in Israeli-Palestinian relations. While acknowledging a religious dimension is at play, the conflict is still seen mainly in terms of competing nationalist claims over land.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the diplomatic correlation of this perspective became the leaving of religion out of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process altogether. For example, in 1994, Rabbi Michael Melchior, at the time a political activist, spoke to Marwan Kanafani, special adviser to Yasser Arafat, about the need for a religious dialogue to accompany the peace process. Kanafani replied, "The way to take care of religion in the dispute is to put the sheikhs in mosques, the rabbis in synagogues and priests in churches, and then lock the doors behind them and throw the keys away in the sea - they can only interfere with the process."<sup>15</sup> (Melchior would once again propose the idea for a Jewish-Muslim dialogue, this time directly to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, but at the time Barak rejected the idea, arguing that confronting

religious issues would only worsen the situation.<sup>16</sup>) Indeed, if religion is addressed in an Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking context at all, it tends to be viewed in a negative light. This is undoubtedly because of the uncompromising positions and support for violence by religious actors long opposed to the peace process, such as Hamas or, to a different extent, Gush Emunim (the main religious settlement movement among Israeli Jews).<sup>17</sup> This study does not defend or justify the stances of such groups. But it does caution against viewing the religious persons who are often drawn to these movements as being automatically prone to extremism or simply opposed to peace in principle. It is just as possible that many of these individuals saw no avenue of expression in Oslo because it was an entirely *secular* phenomenon. The possibility therefore exists that a number of these same people would readily support a peace agreement – if there were means of conflict resolution that seemed natural to them or resonated with their religious worldview.

Religion-based conflict resolution efforts might also powerfully impact, even transform, a number of secular people. Religion often relates to complex notions of identity and self-perception. Indeed, in a number of international conflicts the primordial identities of the groups involved are largely rooted in religion. There are many peoples in the world, including Israelis and Palestinians, who presently frame their identities in ethno-nationalist terms but whose ancestors, with whom they identify deeply, had a different conception of group identity that was very much grounded in religion.<sup>18</sup> A secular person from this kind of society is much closer to a religious worldview than he is aware of. On a deeper level, even the most secular individual can potentially be transformed (for good or bad) by religious symbols and ideas that speak to his sense of



collective origin and self. It is therefore possible to envision a scenario in which some religiously based conflict resolution efforts could be even more successful in appealing to the hearts and minds of secular people than conventional, rational arguments for peace have been.

This study highlights three avenues of religion-based conflict resolution that are currently being employed in the Israeli-Palestinian context – albeit separately and in a largely uncoordinated manner – and then recommends how to integrate them in order to achieve significantly greater peacemaking results, as a complement to the Israeli withdrawal plan. These three avenues are:

- ***Interfaith Dialogues***, discussions between differing religious/spiritual leaders and their respective followers, with the intention of discovering common ground in beliefs and possible means to foster new relationships with each other;
- ***Focused Innovation***, re-reading and reinterpreting religious texts and traditions in a manner promoting peaceful co-existence; and
- ***Participatory Transformation***, the use of positive ritual and the honoring of traditions to build bridges between differing religious communities.

### *Interfaith Dialogues*

In a sense, an interfaith dialogue occurs any time people from differing religious backgrounds meet to discuss and compare aspects of their faiths. But in the Middle East, particularly in the context of Israeli-Palestinian relations, these kinds of encounters tend to occur in one of two types of settings: 1) between small, non-mainstream religious actors (including Sufis or Muslim mystics, liberal orthodox Jewish peace groups, various Christian clergy – often with pacifist orientations, lone rabbis and sheikhs); and 2) between senior/authoritative religious figures and a select representation of their followers. While in no way discouraging interfaith dialogues of a grass-roots nature, it is more likely that the latter type of encounter can have a greater peacemaking impact in

the immediate-term. Accordingly, this study focuses on an example of meetings between senior religious figures, what has been dubbed “the Alexandria Process.”

On 20-21 January 2002 an interfaith summit convened in Alexandria, Egypt at the initiative of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey. About twenty religious scholars from Egypt, Israel, and the PA came together for an exchange about peace and coexistence. Sheikh Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, the head of Al Azhar, led the Egyptian delegation. (Al Azhar, based in Cairo, is the oldest and most highly respected center of scholarly learning in the Islamic world.) Israeli representatives included former Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, then Deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchior and Rabbi Menachem Frohman of the Tekoa settlement in the West Bank.<sup>19</sup> Palestinian Muslim participants included Chief Justice of the Palestinian Sharia courts Sheikh Taysir al-Tamimi, former PA Minister of State Sheikh Talal Sidr, and Mufti of the Palestinian police forces Sheikh Abdulsalam Abu Shkedem.<sup>20</sup> Palestinian Christian representatives included Latin Patriarch Michel Sabah, Melchite Archbishop Boutros Muallem and the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, the Rt. Reverend Riah Abu El-Assal.<sup>21</sup>

The Alexandria summit represented an important beginning. The discussions were reportedly tumultuous at times, particularly when it came to highly sensitive topics such as the future status of Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the meeting culminated in the release of a seven-point common statement entitled “The First Declaration of Alexandria of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land.” Its main clause stated:

According to our faith traditions, killing innocents in the name of God is a desecration of his Holy Name, and defames religion in the world. The violence in the Holy Land is an evil which must be opposed by all people of good faith.<sup>23</sup>

The statement then called upon Israelis and Palestinians to shun violence and live together as neighbors who respect each other's religious and historical rights. It also noted that freedom of worship and protection of holy sites must be assured.

The interfaith summit did not go unnoticed by the international community. Both British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak recognized the conference and pledged their countries official support. Moreover, a number of subcommittees continued to engage in planning and outreach after the Alexandria conference. The initiative's representatives later met with Pope John Paul II, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, as well as leaders of Russia and the European Union. Even more significantly, the Alexandria group has since received the full support of the United States. American diplomats, including US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer, have begun to liaise with key participants from the initiative. The Alexandria group in turn has endorsed the US-backed "Road map" peace plan and called for the official peace process to get back on track.<sup>24</sup>

There was negative fallout for some of the Muslim organizers of the conference. Sheikh Tantawi in particular was subject to verbal attacks and even received death threats. As Egypt's senior religious figure and a respected international authority on Sunni Islam, Tantawi has long faced down opposition from extremist Muslims. Indeed under his leadership, Al Azhar has moved away from radical influences and became firmly committed to a moderate conception of Islam.<sup>25</sup> But the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a highly emotive issue in Egypt and the Arab world, especially given the hostile climate of the last four years, and the verbal attacks and death threats that followed his participation in the Alexandria conference likely caused Sheikh Tantawi to

jockey for Islamic support by making some objectionable comments. For example, in April 2002, three months after the Alexandria declaration was made, Tantawi spoke disparagingly of Jews in a weekly sermon.<sup>26</sup> In another instance, Tantawi's name was affixed to an expression of support for Palestinian suicide bombing.<sup>27</sup> These incidents were reported in the Western and Israeli media and understandably offended people. But it is important to realize the delicate context in which these statements were made and that Tantawi did not truly renege on his commitment to the Alexandria process. In fact, the experience seems to have impressed upon Tantawi and the other organizers of the interfaith initiative of the need to redouble their efforts to harness Muslim support for the idea of peaceful coexistence.

On 12-15 January 2004, the Alexandria process held an important subcommittee meeting, which had a largely Islamic orientation. Some 35 Palestinian Muslim leaders from the West Bank and Gaza strip attended this second gathering, which took place in Cairo. Sheikh Tantawi officially invited the attendees, through the auspices of al Azhar, and assured them that they had "the full legitimacy of the Sunni world."<sup>28</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, sent a special representative, Canon Andrew White, to participate in the meeting on his behalf. Rabbi Michael Melchior and Rabbi Menachem Frohman, who attended the first Alexandria conference, were also present as observers. The main group of attendees represented a broad spectrum of Palestinian Muslim society. In addition to figures who had attended the first Alexandria conference, such as Sheikh Taysir al-Tamimi and Sheikh Talal Sidr, a number of mid-level clerics joined the discussions for the first time. Participants also included persons

such as Imad al-Falouji, an independent-minded editor of the Hamas-affiliated newspaper *al Watan* and a former Minister of Communications in the PA.

The participants in the January 2004 Cairo meeting engaged in an extensive discussion on the nature and character of Islam. At the end of the meeting, they expressed a desire to become a “force for peace.”<sup>29</sup> Apparently the participation of the two rabbis in the talks had a dramatic impact on several of the Palestinian mid-level clerics, the majority of whom had never participated in any kind of interfaith dialogue before. Canon White observed that these muftis and sheikhs were stunned that there were Jewish religious figures that sympathized with their suffering and were willing to cooperate with them for a “just peace.”<sup>30</sup> Rabbi Melchior engaged a number of these Palestinian participants at length, including some who have rather substantial links to Hamas and Islamic Jihad.<sup>31</sup> He believed them to be pragmatic individuals who both accepted the existence of Israel and would endorse a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>32</sup> But their desire to contribute to peace was tempered by their fears of, and inability to change, the political realities on the ground. Most of the Palestinian Islamic leaders were critical of suicide bombings and other forms of terrorism, but were absolutely unwilling to sign a declaration saying so. They were even hesitant to be photographed with the Jewish religious figures. Despite this reticence, the organizers of the Cairo meeting felt it had been successful. Canon White noted that the number of Palestinian Muslim participants was the highest that had ever attended – some 30 more people than the usual seven, a major development that could be further cultivated.<sup>33</sup>

The Alexandria process will require augmentation in order to become a more effective peacemaking tool. The reluctance of the Palestinian clerics to publicly make

statements or gestures of peace is unlikely to change as the interfaith dialogues continue. This is not merely a communications issue or a need to get the message out. Even if the number of Palestinian Muslim participants in the talks were doubled, or tripled, there would be a similar outcome. Because of the lawlessness in the Palestinian territories, these muftis and sheikhs would risk their lives by openly speaking out against violence and in favor of peace. The good will of the rabbis they meet is simply not enough of an assurance to make them do otherwise. Another element has to be brought into the discussions, something that will allow the Palestinian clerics to repackage the ideas that they are currently reluctant or afraid to say.

### *Focused Innovation*

All religious traditions are broad and fluid and can be re-read or reinterpreted in response to changing circumstances in the world. This adaptive nature of religion can take a progressive or a reactionary form. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which was instrumental in bringing about the modern Catholic Church, is an example of the progressive variety.<sup>34</sup> Basic doctrines of faith do not change, but there is a greater sense of openness and flexibility in religious interpretation. Religious fundamentalism, irrespective of faith, exemplifies the other, reactionary form of this phenomenon. (Ironically, what fundamentalists tout as “back to the basics” is in fact a rather rigid reinterpretation of their faith.) In both instances, there is a driving element that is engaged in a focused innovation of religious tradition and that actively seeks to advance its message. In the context of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, the key therefore is to empower religious figures that are intensely engaged in an effort to make the idea of peaceful coexistence a resonating and preeminent aspect of faith.

A focused innovation of religious peacemaking will also take place against the backdrop of a religious-secular divide affecting both Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, internal divisions along these lines greatly affect the ability to produce religious constituencies for peace. As was briefly mentioned earlier, many religious people will reject peace if it is presented to them in wholly secular terms. (An individual with an intensely religious worldview will not be moved by an argument for peace based solely on appeals to economic gain, national interest, or security concerns.) This does not mean, however, that issues such as control over land or holy sites cannot be negotiated from a religious point of view. But what is of crucial importance is the religious context surrounding the negotiations. For example, the late Rabbi Eliezer Shach, who had a sizeable following in Israel, once commented that while he had no religious objections to returning the occupied territories, he nonetheless opposed the Oslo peace process because it was an initiative that had been undertaken by “rabbit eaters.”<sup>35</sup> Rabbit is not a kosher animal, so Shach meant that he would only support, and be reassured by, a peace agreement in which religious people had played an important consultative role. A similar dynamic exists on the Palestinian side. Many devout Palestinians have come to dismissingly associate the idea of peace with the “corrupt and decadent” lifestyle of the secular PA leadership.<sup>36</sup> A focused innovation effort must therefore cast its arguments for peace in terms that profoundly speak to the souls, the sense of order and meaning, of religious people.

It is now helpful to discuss some related activities of two participants in the Alexandria process, Rabbi Menachem Frohman and Sheikh Talal Sidr, who began working jointly to promote shared religious understandings of identity and territory as

means of peacemaking. It should be said that both men defy stereotypes. Frohman, one of the founders of Gush Emunim and rabbi of the Tekoa settlement in the West Bank, has been holding dialogues with Palestinian Muslim religious figures for several years. Despite the fact that the rabbi is a settler leader, Palestinian clerics respect and respond positively to him.<sup>37</sup> Sheikh Sidr, who had been an activist in Hamas in the West Bank city of Hebron, was so moved by his encounters with Rabbi Frohman that he eventually felt compelled to leave the Islamist movement altogether.<sup>38</sup> (He would later become a Minister for inter-religious affairs in the PA.) The rabbi and the sheikh believed that powerful, core aspects of religious identity shared by Jews and Muslims – such as belief in descent from the Patriarch Abraham or belief in the sanctity of the land, especially places where beloved Prophets lived and are buried – could act as a bridge between the two communities.<sup>39</sup> Instead of presenting these central beliefs in exclusivist terms, as is done in times of tension and conflict, the idea is to stress the commonality of faith in order to produce a shift in perception and outlook towards the differing group. In other words, the honoring of shared facets of religious belief would simultaneously serve as an acknowledgement of the worth and respect of both peoples. A peaceful bond could be established through the idea of “Abrahamic communities of faith.” By thinking along these lines and re-reading their traditions in shared terms, Frohman and Sidr were able to come up with some creative solutions for some of the most contentious issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, they worked out the details of a plan to give “Divine sovereignty” to the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem, as opposed to placing the disputed holy site under either Israeli or Palestinian national control.<sup>40</sup>



The theme of “Abrahamic communities of faith” will have to be given a tangible aspect before it can be successfully incorporated into the Alexandria process. The Palestinian clerics who participated in the January 2004 subcommittee meeting could likely be persuaded that advancing the “Abrahamic communities” idea is a relatively non-threatening first step they can take to be a “force for peace.” They will probably agree to share this message with their followers, for example, as part of weekly sermons. (A similar effort could easily begin on the Israeli side as well.) But many lay people, Palestinians and Israelis alike, will be skeptical of the notion of “Abrahamic communities” when it is first presented to them. The idea will seem too distant. Accordingly, there has to be a real-life counterpart, something the clerics can inaugurate or sanction that will allow their followers to personally experience the message of coexistence.

### *Participatory Transformation*

Every religious tradition uses ritual and symbolic activity to help convey its main beliefs. Indeed, lived aspects of faith (performing rites of worship, observing holidays, pilgrimage) are often the most meaningful. Ritual places people in a special setting and so is especially effective in communicating a particular message. Individuals come away from these experiences transformed. It is also the case that participation in these activities heightens awareness of self and greatly affects perceptions of differing people.<sup>41</sup> Yet it is important to ensure that this new sense of self and others is positive and accepting, and not of a scornful nature. For example, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina has long been known to produce feelings of racial and ethnic brotherhood, but militants are increasingly using the hajj to spread anti-American messages as well.<sup>42</sup> In this light, the

participatory element of the “Abrahamic communities” idea should be set up to communicate an overriding sense of kinship. It is not recommended, however, to try to combine Jewish and Islamic rituals into a single form designed to impact both sides. Such a step would take away from the uniqueness of each tradition and thus be rejected by many people. But it is possible for Jews and Muslims to observe and respectfully participate in each other’s rituals in ways that can stimulate feelings of reconciliation.

Judaism and Islam have similar rituals of apology, forgiveness, and grieving. For members of both faiths, these customs have traditionally been used to help bring about emotional renewal during angry and traumatic times. If willing, Muslims and Jews can also take part in each other’s healing rituals with relative ease. Moreover, doing so often greatly moves the injured and contributes to new feelings of human fellowship. This type of activity was successfully used to resolve a diplomatic crisis that ensued in March 1997, after a Jordanian soldier shot and killed several Israeli schoolgirls visiting a nature reserve on the Jordan River. The Jordanian government expressed official regret and offered condolences, but the outraged Israelis were not satisfied with this initial response. Indeed, the Israeli Foreign Minister at the time, David Levy, replied that, “there can be no forgiveness, no absolution,” using language associated with the Day of Atonement.<sup>43</sup> Levy meant that there are some actions that only God could forgive. In order to calm the situation, the late King Hussein and his brother Prince Hassan thoughtfully made use of shared practices in Judaism and Islam in which a repentant individual can ask those he has harmed as well as God for forgiveness.<sup>44</sup> First, Prince Hassan flew to the site of the massacre, in a symbolic acknowledgment of responsibility. Standing alongside the Israeli Defense Minister, he expressed his deep personal shame for what had been done. Judaism

and Islam also have similar mourning customs, where visitors comfort grieving relatives. In this vein, King Hussein cut short a state visit to Spain in order to meet with bereaved parents in Israel. The King visited every grieving home and even knelt next to families seated on the floor in ritual mourning. He told them that he was a father as well as a king, and so could personally identify with their loss. These gestures, which were televised and widely reported on, touched many people in Israel and helped bring closure to this terrible episode.

The honoring of differing religious traditions is an important component of participatory transformation. These sorts of gestures can help to address historical sensibilities that are often borne out in Israeli-Palestinian relations. For the most part, Jews in Israel and elsewhere have responded positively to religious overtures of respect meant to help redress past wrongdoings. For example, in 1986 Pope John Paul II became the first pontiff to ever visit a synagogue. The Pope told the congregation of the Great Synagogue of Rome, “You are our dearly beloved brothers, and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers.”<sup>45</sup> For Islam, there is no historical precedent for non-sovereign minority status and it is particularly humiliating for many Palestinian Muslims to have been conquered by Jews in modern times. Against this backdrop, pious Muslims are also especially sensitive to insult from Israelis. Conversely, gestures of honor and respect are particularly reassuring. For instance, in 1997 an Israeli extremist circulated a flyer in the West Bank city of Hebron that depicted the prophet Muhammad as a pig. The Muslim inhabitants of the city became outraged and the incident threatened to snowball throughout the Palestinian territories. Because political leaders at the time were unable to calm the situation, the former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Eliyahu

Bakshi-Doron, was brought to meet with the Mufti of Hebron. Bakshi-Doron explained to him that the message of the flyer was against the teachings of Judaism, and “a desecration of the Divine Name.”<sup>46</sup> The Mufti was very moved by the gesture of respect and so went to every Muslim preacher in the city to urge them to calm their parishioners, citing the Chief Rabbi’s remarks.

Interfaith associations in Israel have successfully undertaken honor-based ritual peacemaking efforts. These are positive actions that are meant to build bridges and are not necessarily taken in response to negative occurrences, as was the case in the examples recounted above. For instance, in one recent large-scale event held in the Galilee area of Israel, Jews, Christians, and Druze shared the meal breaking the Ramadan fast with their Muslim neighbors.<sup>47</sup> A highlight of the celebration was when religious leaders representing the visiting groups addressed the gathering and spoke of respect for Islam and its traditions. But an equally important reason that this kind of event is successful is because it includes an element that everyone involved naturally understands, in this case eating a meal. One community in particular is honored, but all participants bond through the shared meal. The message of the gathering is experienced as part of the everyday and thus comes to be seen as legitimate and normal. A similar phenomenon often occurs in diplomacy. “Many successful international efforts at mediation have had major breakthroughs when the people in conflict were eating dinner, smoking a cigarette, dancing to music, or were in some location other than a negotiating room.”<sup>48</sup> The Galilee event can be replicated in an Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking context. It is true that the situation between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel is different from that of Israelis and

Palestinians from the occupied territories. However, these kinds of honor-based activities can be still employed, if there is a safe and permitting environment.

The next meetings of the Alexandria process should bring together the “Abrahamic communities of faith” theme with means of participatory transformation such as the use of positive ritual and the honoring of traditions. The participants from the January 2004 subcommittee meeting must be invited to return for a series of follow-up talks on becoming “forces for peace” in their communities. *It is intended that these sessions evolve into the core of a religion-based conflict resolution program that can complement official peacemaking initiatives and the eventual return to the negotiation process.*

### ***Phase I***

The initial phase of this program is meant to correspond with US-led efforts to oversee the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the handover of authority to the Palestinians. As part of this process, it will be necessary to reconvene the Quartet sponsoring the “Road Map” (US, EU, UN and Russia) in order to raise the emergency funds needed to strengthen the PA and enable it to resume governing responsibilities. Similarly, the US, Egypt, and Jordan must play a role in reconstructing and training the Palestinian security forces. There has to be discernible signs of progress in this regard because the overall political situation of the Palestinians serves as the backdrop to the clerics’ continued participation in the Alexandria meetings.

It is recommended that Sheikh Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi of Al Azhar lead the follow-up meetings with the Palestinian clerics. As a precursor, Sheikh Talal Sidr and Rabbi Menachem Frohman, the primary developers of the “Abrahamic communities of

faith” message, will have to meet separately with Tantawi in order to receive his endorsement and to persuade him to speak with the mid-level clerics on the idea. It will be recalled that in the January 2004 meeting, the Palestinian clerics had an extensive exchange on the peaceful character of Islam. Tantawi can thus build on this theme and then present the “Abrahamic communities” message to them. Because of his scholarly authority, Tantawi is most capable of impressing upon the visiting Palestinian clerics the understanding that honoring shared facets of faith is both an act of peace as well as an authentic and legitimate Islamic practice.

Working with Sheikh Tantawi will be complicated. As was stated earlier, Tantawi is committed to the Alexandria process, but at the same time faces opposition and potential dangers to his life. It is likely that Tantawi will readily cooperate and successfully lead the discussions with the Palestinian clerics. It is equally possible that he will again receive death threats from extremist Muslims because of his participation in the endeavor. As was the case in 2002, Tantawi may feel it necessary to placate these elements by making a statement supporting Palestinian suicide bombings. If this were to happen, some in Israel and elsewhere would no doubt believe Tantawi to be duplicitous and, by extension, become distrustful of any effort that he is part of. A key challenge of the sponsors of the Alexandria process will be to try to allay these concerns, by explaining the context in which Tantawi is operating and by stressing the potential gains to be had if the initiative succeeds.

Special facilitators who can brief the clerics on means of participatory transformation must be selected for the follow-up meetings. In effect, these are people already involved in similar efforts, mostly between Arabs and Jews inside Israel, but to a

smaller extent between Israelis and Palestinians. The facilitators should be Muslim, and of a mainstream religious background. The role of the facilitators will be to explain or give an overview to the clerics of the joint ritual and honor-based activities that reflect the “Abrahamic communities” theme. The clerics will not have to be trained to conduct these activities, but they will have to become familiar with them. The clerics will also have to indicate which of these events they would be willing to accompany their congregations to participate in. The clerics will further be tasked with approaching influential members of their communities and appealing to them to partake in these activities, once they begin.

#### *Criteria for Success*

Support from a number of parties is crucial for the follow-up meetings to take place. The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury has been the primary moving force behind the Alexandria process. In particular, it has been Canon White and his staff who have prevailed upon Sheikh Tantawi to go along with the interfaith initiative. The government of the UK, which enjoys a special relationship with the Anglican Church and supports the Alexandria process, should strongly encourage the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury to push this latest effort. In a similar vein, the government of Egypt can give pledges of support and security to Tantawi for leading the sessions. Lastly, Israel and the PA must give their assent for the clerics to attend the meetings.

It is necessary to begin identifying and organizing the Israeli Jewish clergy and religious actors who will serve as counterparts to the Palestinian participants in the program. This task should be somewhat easier than is the case on the Palestinian side. Although affected by the last four years of violence, Israel is still a place of law and order

in which there is a peaceful civil society and even a religious peace camp. Like the Palestinian clerics, those Israelis eventually selected will need to share the “Abrahamic communities of faith” message with their communities and agree to join in participatory transformation activities. However, great care will have to go into the process deciding whom to approach on the Israeli side. For example, there is a small circle of Israeli Jews who are already quite experienced in interfaith activities and so initially it seems quite prudent to incorporate them into this latest effort. But a number of these same people would be considered too unusual by the Israel public at large, and so perhaps should not feature prominently in a highly visible public campaign designed to affect hearts and minds. There is bound to be an element of diversity in any sampling of religious Israeli Jews, but it is nonetheless advised that people of a mainstream religious orientation be selected, individuals and groups who are generally believed to reflect religious society as a whole.

It is important to form working groups that will organize key events. The working groups will first need to decide what kinds of joint participatory activities will be held (apology/mourning, which holidays and events best reflect the “Abrahamic communities of faith” theme, etc). They will also need to engage in planning, i.e. pairing Israeli and Palestinian groups together, generating publicity and media coverage. It may be fruitful if senior figures with influence, for example Rabbi Michael Melchior, are involved in some capacity in these efforts.

#### *Expected Outcomes*

There is likely to be some quiet enthusiasm for the program, a sense that it has real potential to transform a number of people. The Israelis will agree to participate in all



aspects, but will have queries about personal security. After hearing Tantawi's endorsement, most (but possibly not all) of the Palestinian clerics will agree to share the "Abrahamic communities of faith" message with their home communities. They will tentatively agree to accompany select groups to joint ritual/reconciliation activities at future dates. But their consent will be equivocal and their continued participation will remain contingent upon Israel actually implementing the withdrawal and ongoing progress in negotiations with the PA.

### ***Phase II***

The second phase of the program is meant to occur after the assumption of full Palestinian control of the Gaza Strip and designated areas of the West Bank. This period will be the "moment of truth" for the Palestinians. They will have to demonstrate to Israel and the international community that, once and for all, they can establish the rule of law and are willing to combat terrorism. It may be fruitful to organize new elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council as part of this process.<sup>49</sup> In any event, reconstruction and reform in the Palestinian territories is absolutely pivotal for a religion-based conflict resolution program to succeed. As was stated earlier, the Palestinian clerics cannot begin to disseminate a positive, hopeful message and help prepare the ground for shared reconciliation activities in an environment of fear and lawlessness.

The structure of the joint ritual activities is fairly straightforward. The typical session will likely include about 40-50 people from each side and last a few hours. It will either be some kind of reconciliation activity that has concurrent themes in Judaism in Islam or a celebration of a major Islamic or Jewish holiday that has some sort of resonance with the "Abrahamic communities of faith" theme (Id al Adha, Rosh

HaShanah, etc.). The groups, which will include core members and periodic new participants, will meet every four to six weeks, alternating between locations in Israel and the Palestinian territories. The activities will be well publicized and will eventually generate some local and international media coverage.

#### *Criteria for Success*

Security concerns can make or break the project. It is certainly true that a revamped PA will have to provide adequate protection for all participants when the events are held in Palestinian towns and cities. But the Israeli response is just as important. It is possible to envisage a situation where Palestinians intend to travel to Israel to participate in a joint-ritual activity, but are forced to wait for hours at a checkpoint while the Israeli authorities confirm their identities and permission to enter the country. (Some may be denied entrance altogether.) Such an experience would sour the goodwill of the Palestinian participants and definitely hamper the overall success of the program. While Israel does have a legitimate right to police its borders, special measures should be considered to ensure that this conflict resolution effort proceeds with as few snags as possible.

#### *Expected Outcomes*

The joint-rituals will help to change perceptions, not just between the actual participants, but also in their larger communities. They will help to encourage a moderate Islamic discourse to take hold in Palestinian civil society and will provide a tangible, observable demonstration of the peaceful message that the Palestinian government will be promoting in public media, schools, state-supported mosques, etc. A similar dynamic will occur on the Israeli side. The activities will generate debates amongst religious Jews,

blunting support for spiritual-based arguments against further withdrawal from occupied territories. These same events will also have an effect on a number of secular Israelis, serving as a form of cognitive dissonance, positive contrary evidence, for those who believe that coexistence with the Palestinians is not possible or that a final status agreement can never be reached.

### ***Phase III***

The final phase of the project is meant to take place at the commencement of final status negotiations. It will be a challenge to arrive at this stage. There are forces in the Israeli government that will seek to make the withdrawal from Gaza and the security barrier being constructed in the West Bank a *de facto* permanent border. Palestinian hard-line nationalists and Islamists will also attempt to thwart an agreement from taking hold. The US and the other members of the Quartet will thus have to assume a kind of midwife role, consistently nudging the two sides forward. It will be at this point in time that the “Abrahamic communities” activities must have the greatest impact on hearts and minds, and so will have to move beyond civil society and begin involving official leaders and negotiators.

As the final status negotiations begin, senior religious and political leaders from both sides should be prepared to participate in a nationally televised ritual of reconciliation. This event will essentially be a more dramatic version of the joint-rituals that will have been held on a grass-roots level. Facilitators and a select group of participants from the “Abrahamic communities” programs will conduct this special undertaking, with the senior religious and political leaders simply joining in and playing a symbolic, highly visible role. The televised joint-ritual is meant to convey to the Israeli

and Palestinian populations that a sense of trust has been restored and that the final status negotiations will take place in an environment of good faith.

### *Criteria for Success*

Political leaders and senior religious figures must be successfully courted. Political leaders will have to agree to be seen with individuals from the other side that they may dislike on a personal level. They must refrain from making denigrating statements about the other side and understand that their appearance in this nationally televised event will strengthen public support for a peace agreement. These same criteria apply to the senior religious figures. However, the religious figures must be especially mindful about avoiding insensitive comments that go against the spirit of the ritual of reconciliation. In the past, senior religious authorities such as Israeli Chief Rabbis and the PA Mufti of Jerusalem have made remarks of this very sort. It would be highly unfortunate, indeed a great embarrassment, if such behavior were to recur in the immediate prelude to final status negotiations.

### *Expected Outcome*

The nationally televised event will translate into political support for peace. The sight of senior religious leaders prominently engaged in reconciliation, perhaps physically embracing, will move a number of people. This event may have an even greater impact on hearts and minds than the preceding, grass-roots joint rituals precisely because it involves senior-level religious leaders. As a gesture of healing that appeals to the cultural and spiritual sensibilities of both peoples, it will help to address some of the deeper aspects of the conflict that have been heightened during the last four years of fighting. Some (but not all) of the senior religious leaders will also be profoundly

affected by the experience, and will afterwards become important lobbying forces for peace. Lastly, the symbolic appearance of the political leaders in the ceremony will be appreciated and respected by the populace on both sides, but some people will remain skeptical about their sincerity.



### *Final Thoughts*

A resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is possible. Strong and determined leadership by the United States and the Quartet, and most certainly on the part of the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves, is required to attain this goal. But it is equally as important to augment official peacemaking measures with new forms of conflict resolution that are capable of overriding hatreds and divisions, of changing disillusioned people into constituents of peace. The strategy identified in this study – building upon the interfaith initiative of the Alexandria process, advancing the “Abrahamic communities of faith” message with accompanying means of participatory transformation – provides a viable and immediate means of accomplishing this end. These religion-based measures can help ensure that the Israeli plan to withdraw from Gaza will develop into a final status agreement and thus a lasting peace.

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### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the President’s speech, see <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/31418.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Leyne, “Bush pre-empts Mideast negotiations” BBC News Online, 14 April 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3627465.stm>.

<sup>5</sup> After the failure of the Camp David Summit in July 2000 to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian final status agreement, negotiations between the two sides continued. Progress was made, but no comprehensive

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agreement was reached. In a last ditch effort, US President Bill Clinton offered proposals or “Parameters” to Israeli and Palestinian negotiators at a meeting in the White House in December 2000. Clinton’s “Parameters” were not the terms of a final status agreement, but guidelines for final accelerated negotiations that he hoped could be reached in the following weeks. Clinton announced that his proposals would not be binding on his successor when he would leave office in January 2001. The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat eventually accepted the Clinton parameters, but with reservations. Ehud Barak, the Israeli Prime Minister, accepted the parameters too, but with questions and concerns. The parameters laid the foundation for the Final Status negotiations that took place in January 2001 at Taba, Egypt just before the election of Ariel Sharon. See “Clinton Parameters” and “Taba Agreement” at [http://www.fmep.org/documents/clinton\\_parameters12-23-00.html](http://www.fmep.org/documents/clinton_parameters12-23-00.html). Since the Clinton plan, there have been two major “track two” initiatives to produce a Final Status agreement. In September 2002 Palestinian academic Sari Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon, a former head of the Israeli domestic security service, released a set of points for an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Since this time, 100,000 Israelis and 70,000 Palestinians have signed petitions supporting these understandings. Nusseibeh and Ayalon have visited the US to promote their plan, also known as “The Peoples’ Voice.” For background and text of the agreement, see <http://www.fmep.org/analysis/nusseibeh-ayalon-agreement.html>. In December 2003, teams led by former Israel Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and former PA Information Minister Yasser Abed Raboo also released a draft Final Status agreement as the basis of an Israeli-Palestinian permanent status arrangement. The proposal, known as the “Geneva Accord,” was the topic of much international publicity and fanfare. Its supporters continue to seek local and international support for its adoption as the official peace agreement. For text as well as maps of the agreement, see <http://www.geneva-accord.org>.

<sup>6</sup> “US seeks to reassure Palestinians” BBC News Online, 11 May 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/3705695.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3705695.stm)

<sup>7</sup> Glenn Kessler, “Talks with Palestinian Officials to Resume: Bush Commits US to a ‘Just Peace’ ” Washington Post 13 May 2004, , <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A6856-2004May6?> For similar language expressed to the Israelis, see also Letter from President Bush to Israeli Prime Minister Sharon, <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/31490.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Kessler, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A6856-2004May6?>.

<sup>9</sup> Lili Galili, Mazal Mualem, and Tsahar Rotem, “Over 150,000 attend rally calling for Gaza withdrawal” *Ha’aretz* 15 May 2004, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/427546.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Colin L. Powell, “Remarks With Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei”, US Department of State website, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/32500.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> “Qurei urged to back Sharon plan” BBC News Online, 17 May 2004 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3720973.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3720973.stm).

<sup>12</sup> Transcript of on-line video interview “Ask Saeb Erekat,” BBC Talking Point with Paul Reynolds, 18 June 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking\\_point/2993434.stm#1](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/2993434.stm#1).

<sup>13</sup> Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Danny Rubinstein, “For some, a secular quick fix could never work” *Ha’aretz* 25 January 2004 <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/386473.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>17</sup> “Gush Emunim” means “Bloc of the Faithful.”

<sup>18</sup> The literature on nationalism and the social construction of identities is voluminous. The reader is first directed to the work of Anthony D. Smith, particularly his concept of ethnicity or *ethnie*, which is both primordial and malleable. See Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Blackwell, 1998). For a different view arguing that the decline of religion in the West in modern times made it possible to “imagine” or invent the nation, see Benedict Anderson’s seminal work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Verso Press, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> “Sephardi” refers to Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin.

<sup>20</sup> “Sharia” is Islamic law.

<sup>21</sup> “Melchite” refers to Eastern Christians adhering to Chalcedonian orthodoxy.

<sup>22</sup> Reuven Paz, “Religion and Politics in Alexandria” Policy Watch # 599, February 1, 2002 Washington Institute for Near East Policy, [http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/winep/policy\\_2002/2002\\_599.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/winep/policy_2002/2002_599.html).

<sup>23</sup> For a full text of the Declaration see Appendix II in Yehezkel Landau, “Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine” Peaceworks No. 51 (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, September 2003): 51-2.

<sup>24</sup> For full text of the plan, “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” See US Department of State website, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Paz, [http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/winep/policy\\_2002/2002\\_599.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/pbei/winep/policy_2002/2002_599.html).

<sup>26</sup> Julie Stahl, “Palestinian Leaders Want to Be a Force for Peace” CNS News Service 14 January 2004, <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/1241056.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Rubinstein, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/386473.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Yoav Stern, “Israeli rabbis participate in Muslim peace conference in Cairo” *Ha’aretz* 16 January 2004, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/383155.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Stahl, <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/1241056.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Rubinstein, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/386473.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Stahl, <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/1241056.html>.

<sup>34</sup> The decisions of the Council, especially those regarding the liturgy, affected the lives of Catholics around the world. After Vatican II, the use of the vernacular language was permitted in the celebration of the Mass and in 1970 the new Sacramentary and *Novus Ordo* (New Order of Mass) were established. Increased participation by the laity also distinguishes Catholic life after the Second Vatican Council.

<sup>35</sup> Rubinstein, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/386473.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>37</sup> Gopin, 43. Frohman has also met with high-level political actors, including former Israeli Prime Ministers Shimon Peres and Benjamin Netanyahu, PA Chairman Yasser Arafat and the late Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder and spiritual head of Hamas.

<sup>38</sup> Eliyahu McLean, “Harnessing the Power of the Human Spirit for Peace in the Middle East” *Ahimsa Newsletter: A Quarterly for the Promotion of Universal Values* Vol. 10, No. 3 & 4, <http://www.ahimsaberkeley.org/newsletter/Oct03/content/mclean.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. “Haram al Sharif” means “Noble Sanctuary.” The area contains the Al Aqsa mosque or Dome of the Rock, the third holiest site in Islam, which commemorates the place where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to Heaven. At the same time, the site lies above the Western Wall of the Second Temple, the holiest site in Judaism. It should also be said that the late King Hussein of Jordan occasionally floated the idea of “Divine sovereignty” for the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount, but his suggestion was never as well developed as the Frohman-Sidr plan.

<sup>41</sup> Lisa Schirch, *Ritual Peacebuilding: Creating Contexts Conducive to Conflict Transformation* PhD Thesis (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University, 1999): 47.

<sup>42</sup> The Saudi government both officially bans and attempts to curtail political activity during the hajj. Such events occur nonetheless. It should also be said that anti-Shiite and anti-Israeli messages are increasingly common too. For a telling example of the positive value of the hajj in erasing racial animosity, see Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 339-342.

<sup>43</sup> Raymond Cohen, “Language and Conflict Resolution” *International Studies Review* Vol. 3 Issue 1 2001: 50.

<sup>44</sup> The practice is known as “afwa” in Islam and “slicha” in Judaism.

<sup>45</sup> Papal address to the Great Synagogue of Rome, April 13, 1986, [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/research/cjl/Documents/John\\_Paul\\_II/romesynagogue.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/research/cjl/Documents/John_Paul_II/romesynagogue.htm).

<sup>46</sup> Landau, 22.

<sup>47</sup> See Eliyahu McLean, “Ramadan Celebration in Rama, Galilee” *IFOR In Action* Newsletter Winter 2003: 7 at [http://www.ifor.org/docs\\_updates/iforaction%20Dec%2003.pdf](http://www.ifor.org/docs_updates/iforaction%20Dec%2003.pdf). The Druze are a religious sect that is an offshoot of Islam.

<sup>48</sup> Lisa Schirch, “Ritual Reconciliation: Transforming Identity/Reframing Conflict” in Muhammad Abu-Nimer ed., *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001): 136.

<sup>49</sup> For an outline of how this process can proceed, see Khalil Shikaki, “Stop Hamas with a Vote” *New York Times* 26 March 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/26/opinion/26SHIK.html?ex=1080882000&>.