

Gottfried Hutter

# 100 Years of Middle East Conflict

## **An Honorable Solution**

How can the Muslim world make peace with Israel?



## The author

The author studied Catholic theology, history and political science. Originally from Salzburg, Austria, he went to live in San Francisco for five years. There he gained a sense of human beings' potential, especially in terms of spirituality and civilization. This, in turn, motivated him to learn about other cultures and religions. He moved to Egypt and stayed for one year in Cairo, mainly experiencing the spiritual depth of Islam. Back in Europe, teaching Catholic religion in schools and studying Shamanism and native religions, he trained to become a psychotherapist. Working with psychiatric patients, he wrote his first book, *Resurrection – Before Death. How to Use Biblical Texts in Psychotherapy*. In his therapeutic practice he is now mainly working with severely traumatized Middle Eastern refugees.

In 2001, the shock of 9/11 caused him to reconnect with his intense experience of Islam. In his view, Al Qaeda's war against the West had grown out of the shock the Muslim world experienced when the Jewish State was implanted in ancient Biblical territory, because in the meantime the site of the former Jewish Temple had become one of Islam's holiest sites! Muslims felt threatened! The mere existence of the new State of Israel called into question many of Muslims' deep convictions, especially the belief that Islam is destined to become the last and only religion on earth. Muslims' honor was at stake. That insight prompted his search for an honorable solution to the conflict between Israel and its Muslim neighbors. His long and intensive personal experience of Islam, his knowledge of the Bible, of history, political science and psychotherapy have proven invaluable. Studying the facts and talking to specialists on the region, he has been able to view the question from many angles and, ultimately, to present an "honorable solution".

## The book

Only an honorable solution can bring true and lasting peace to the Middle East, because this conflict is about more than just land. The honor of Muslims was grossly violated when Israel was implanted next to one of the holiest places of Islam, al Haram ash Sharif in Jerusalem – which, in turn, occupies the site of the former Jewish Temple.

Jews now refused subordination as "dhimmis" under the rule of Islam – their status in Muslim territory throughout the previous thirteen

hundred years during which they had lived, mostly at peace, with their Muslim brothers and sisters, even attaining the highest positions under Caliphs and Sultans.

Now Jews felt that phase of dependency was over, it was time for them to build their own State.

Under such ignominious circumstances, what could be an “Honorable Solution”? Faced with the reality of the new Jewish State, how could the Muslims restore their honor? Only by heeding their Holy Qur’an which, in Sura 5:49, commands them to compete in virtue with the members of the other religions of the book. That in turn rigorously implies showing compassion for a people that had just escaped annihilation and was in dear need of a safe place of their own when, in 1947, the UN declared the partition of Palestine. Submitting, not to Israel but to that Qur’anic commandment, Muslims could show supreme virtue by welcoming the Jews retroactively in their independent Jewish State in Palestine.

Jews, for their part, can help them, not by demonstrating their military strength, but by insisting on their absolute need of that independent state while accompanying that incontrovertible plea by explicit gestures of humility.

Christians had their share in creating the preconditions for the conflict. They, too, must contribute to restoring one of their most fundamental values which is peace.

## Keynote

In contrast to failed power politics, this book builds on religion and human feelings, on compassion and humility, to arrive at an "Honorable Solution".

## Free Preview

There can be no question but that Palestinians too have suffered severe injury. After the UN divided their country, many were driven from their land and became refugees, and since the occupation of all Palestinian territory by Israel in 1967 Palestinians have been denied their right to self-rule. Still, there can be no comparison with the emotional trauma of the Jews. Palestinians are constantly harassed but not threatened

existentially for the sole reason that they are Palestinians. For the Jews of Israel on the other hand the existential threat is still present and even explicitly stated by the rulers of nations like Iran and by several terror groups. Jews will thus hardly be in a position to initiate the process of reconciliation. Therefore, the initiative for reconciliation will have to come from the ones who have not been threatened to such an extraordinary degree. The initiative must come from the Muslims.

I am thus founding my hope now in the first place on King Abdullah II of Jordan, who, as a descendant of the family of the Prophet and an immediate neighbor of Israel will be supremely interested in finding a peaceful solution.

One widely heeded peace initiative has already come from him.

Several years ago King Abdullah's Royal Court under the direction of HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal addressed a basic message of reconciliation to the Pope and the Christian Churches. In the letter entitled "A Common Word" its authors reach out in dialogue, saying that both Islam and Christianity are based on one common word, which is "love".

This was a very promising beginning, but in order to start a more comprehensive process of reconciliation King Abdullah would now have to prompt the authors to reword their letter and then to send it again, this time also to the Jewish rabbis, because the one common word they had been talking about has its origin in the Bible of the Jews.

Real peace, of course, depends essentially on one more condition: the sphere of politics. There, another elementary obstacle to peace needs to be addressed and resolved: it is the dogma of secularism, which has dominated – and distorted – all peace negotiations to date.

According to the view of the "enlightened" world, religious motives must be excluded from all political negotiations. Therefore, there is no room for the fact that Jews have a natural relationship to the land in which they resettled. Yet their relationship is ancient and unbroken, because the Bible originated in that land and with it, of course, Christianity and Islam. And the entire age of enlightenment – which has led to today's postulation of secularity – would be unthinkable had it not been seminally preconceived in the enlightened thinking of Biblical sages.

Moreover, Muslim resistance to the Jewish resettlement has always been, at least in part, motivated by religious factors, since Muslims feared, understandably – and today that fear is being repeated over and over again – that the Jewish claim regarding the Temple Mount threatens the Muslim sanctuaries built there 1300 years ago.

The Temple Mount, al Haram ash Sharif, “the Noble Sanctuary”, as Muslims call it, seems to be the symbolic and emotional core of the entire conflict.

For this reason, it has been excluded from all peace negotiations to date; the most difficult part was set aside to be resolved last. Here, too, is proof of the weight of religion in this conflict, proof that the conflict cannot be solved as long as the religious arguments and the feelings of the people concerned are excluded.

Thus, it is politically correct secularism that has itself delivered proof that exclusively secular political proceedings cannot work; in addition, all further political proceedings will – to put it in the language of secularism – need a therapeutic perspective. The emotional level will have to be taken fully into account; justice calls for acknowledgement of the traumas on both sides. Finally, it surely would be wise to include the problem-solving potential of the religions and their experience of thousands of years of initiating and facilitating processes of healing and reconciliation.

With that consideration, we come to the subject matter of this book, which tackles the question of how to attain reconciliation of the seemingly irreconcilable – or, otherwise expressed, who is capable of making peace between Israel and Palestine?

Israel does not seem able to achieve peace.

Ehud Barak (in 2000) and Ehud Olmert (in 2007) went to the limits beyond which the State of Israel would dissolve. Still, the Palestinians did not give their consent.

No Israeli concession whatsoever would be sufficient to create peace, because Israel’s existence itself, so it seems, is the problem.



Peace could, thus, come only from the Muslims. Solely through their compassion for the terrible predicament of Europe’s Jews after the Holocaust, when the UN, in 1947, proclaimed the division of Palestine. Only through such Muslim compassion could Israel be accorded the consent it needs to exist autonomously and in safety as a Jewish State in accordance with the UN’s intentions.

If one were to ask what, under such conditions, Israel could do to attain peace, the Bible provides a model: the reconciliation between the two enemy brothers, Esau and Jacob, with the decisive step being taken by the brother who had no power whatsoever: he placed himself at his brother’s mercy – and it was precisely this humble gesture that enabled his brother to show that mercy.

Thus, reconciliation and permanent peace were accomplished.

The one who relinquished power was able to achieve peace!

The implication for securing peace between Israel and Palestine is surely that such a submissive gesture is called for on the part of Israel. Such a brotherly gesture could enable the Muslims to show compassion.

Once that compassion comes to be a reality in the everyday life of Muslims – just as today, after centuries of deadly enmity, German-French friendship can be felt clearly in the everyday life of both peoples – true and lasting peace will be attained.

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# **Preface by Arun Gandhi, Grandson of Mahatma Gandhi**

Many problems in this world have remained mired in politics for decades and have been churned into a muddy consistency so that most people believe they are intractable.

The most vexing of these problems are the conflicts between Indian and Pakistan and Israel and Palestine. Both have their origins in the arbitrary division of a country and both date back to the 1940s. Both of these issues became a problem because the authorities at the time applied a political solution to what is an emotional problem.

Politics is cold blooded. There is no room for compassion, understanding or respect and, certainly, no room for honor or an honorable solution. Politicians approach problems the only way they know — with hammer and tongs! Hammer out a deal which is not always conducive to peace and stability.

It is, therefore, refreshing to read this book written by Gottfried Hutter, a theologian well versed in the religions and history of that land, and an experienced trauma therapist, who has outlined an honorable solution to the Israel Palestine problem. If this problem is to be solved the only way this can be achieved is through compassion, understanding and respect for the sentiments of people on both sides. It has to be a non-political solution and who better to do this than someone experienced in trauma therapy.

Nov. 9, 2017, Arun Gandhi, Peace Farmer, Let's be the Change We Wish To See In The World

**Some chapters of the book already appeared as blogs in „The Times of Israel“:**

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/religions-potential-to-contribute-to-peace-in-the-holy-land/>; <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/two-israels-two-tricks-two-offended-brothers-two-deadly-threats-two-reconciliations-peace-through-authenticity/>; <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/good-news-about-peace-in-the-holy-land/>; <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/why-did-the-imam-of-al-azhar-visit-the-pope/>; <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/naqba-how-a-new-interpretation-of-facts-on-both-sides-can-create-a-reality-in-which-both-sides-become-winners/>; <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-settlements-an-opportunity-for-peace/>