

*Israel into Palestine.* Gwyn Rowley. London and New York: Mansell, 1984.

**Reviewer:** *Roger Mark Selya*

This book, based on the author's previously published works as well as on a variety of scholarly and popular materials, seeks to provide background for understanding the complexities of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition, Rowley wants the reader ultimately to understand why the Middle East is covered so extensively by the news media. Finally, he would replace despair about the future of the Middle East with hope based on rational analysis of the forces involved in the conflict. By his

own admission the book is opinionated but not intentionally biased. None of Rowley's goals is satisfactorily achieved because the book is uneven and unbalanced. In addition, its entire approach to centuries-old differences is unrealistic in this reviewer's opinion.

The potential for providing a new perspective on the Arab-Israeli conflict is found in materials spread across seven chapters. Rowley correctly points out that the British have much to answer for in their administration of the mandate. They were inconsistent, they permitted a dual economy to develop, and they did not provide the necessary training to allow conflicting Jewish and Arab interests to develop suitable educational and political institutions to deal with partition. In addition, Rowley cites and elaborates upon what has become a set of standard premises for anyone suggesting solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, to wit, any durable and lasting settlement must resolve or involve four basic elements: Israel's right to exist, the Palestinians and their rights, peaceful relations among all Middle Eastern Countries, and the problem of territory. Rowley goes beyond these basic premises by proposing a set of six possible scenarios, ranging from the destruction of Israel and the establishment of a secular, democratic state, to the establishment of a Greater Israel. Yet the more material Rowley brings to his analysis, the more pessimistic the situation appears.

Rowley seems to view the sparring factions as if they were bickering children and he the peacemaking, adjudicating parent. When children fight over candy bars, toys, or other possessions, no amount of parental argument, bribery, name-calling, or cajoling is usually effective. Nor does it help to use irrelevant or incorrect information or to focus on side issues. What usually does bring about a resolution of the problem at hand is physical separation and a clear message that although parents understand and appreciate the emotions being displayed, the ultimate responsibility for solving the problem is with the kids. By not minimizing or belittling the validity of the emotion, and by ignoring the kids, the problem often is resolved. So, too, for the Arab-Israeli problem.

In several ways Rowley treats the problem, and especially the Israeli side of it, as we commonly treat children who are fighting. By citing passages from the Hebrew Bible and quoting the memoirs of Zionist pioneers, he attempts to show us just how the Israelis relate to their land on an emotional basis. The biblical verses are presented with no commentary, and the memoirs are cited with commentary that paint Zionists as racists. Why this inconsistency? Can it be that we, too, as readers have an emotional problem? If we reject the claims to the land based on the Hebrew Bible, are we not denying part of the basis of Western civilization and values? So, too, for the Palestinians: if they

accept the biblical sources, they must question or reject the validity of their Arab and/or Muslim worldview. None of these issues is dealt with by Rowley.

Rowley acts the partial parent when he criticizes the Israelis for ignoring and/or not accepting UN resolutions, for annexing land, for building settlements, for Judaizing Jerusalem. But we can ask what of Arab rejections of UN resolutions? What of past Arab annexations of the West Bank and Gaza? What of the de-Judaization policies, desecration, and actions of the Jordanians when they controlled Jerusalem? Do we not need to know this side of the argument, too, if we are to appreciate the validity of both sides in this emotional turmoil? Rowley also name-calls and brings in irrelevant issues: he equates Zionism with colonialism; he calls Zionists Nazi collaborators. But, again, where are the equivalents for the Arab side? Were not the Hashimites imposed on their kingdom by colonial powers? What of the Mufti of Jerusalem and his blatant, pro-Nazi actions? And what if all these "facts" and labels are true? It is not clear how even knowing them will help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Finally, like any parent, Rowley is at times inconsistent. One example will suffice. He terms the program of Jewish settlement and cultivation the "myth of making the desert bloom." Why is it a myth? Because tenth-century sources say that Palestine was fertile and productive! But Rowley also quotes Mandate documents that state that early twentieth-century Palestinian agriculture was primitive. And what of the voluminous memoirs of Jewish settlers who drained swamps, built reservoirs, reestablished citrus groves? Are these to be discounted by blandly stating that the undocumented history of modern Palestinian agriculture proves the myth to be such? What of the truth in myths?

Rowley would be well advised to envision a seventh scenario: one where benign neglect by all outsiders would be compulsory. There are enough examples of low-level, one-to-one Arab-Israeli contacts to show that, like fighting siblings, once left alone the parties to the Palestinian conflict can work out their own problems. For those readers who meanwhile would like to understand better the complexities of the conflict, they will be better served by reading Cohen's *Jerusalem, Bridging the Four Walls*, and Peters's *From Time Immemorial*.