Nesya Rubinstein-Shemer

"If the Scorpion Comes back, We will Wait for it with a Shoe": Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's Theo-Political Response to Trump's Jerusalem Declaration

Introduction

Trump's announcement on December 6, 2017, that the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and that he had decided to transfer the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem led to a wave of condemnation from the Arab world. One of the most prominent figures denouncing Trump's statement was Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. Al-Qaraḍāwī posted on Facebook, Twitter, and in a number of publications on his official website where he called on Muslims to fight for the liberation of Jerusalem through resistance and *jihad*. Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī also uploaded a series of publications dealing with the characteristics of the Jews and their right to the land onto his website. This article will discuss al-Qaraḍāwī's view on the legitimacy of Jewish rule in Palestine in light of the publications and statements issued after Trump's declaration. This article will focus on an analysis of a theological article written by al-Qaraḍāwī entitled, "The Verses of the Corruption of the Children of Israel and their Interpretation," which sheds light on his deep motivation to fight Israel's existence.

After Trump's Declaration: Jews and Zionists in al-Qaraḍāwī's Writings

Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b. 1926) is an extremely popular Egyptian-Qatari Muslim legal authority who wields great influence upon large segments of the Muslim public. Many scholars regard him as the most influential Muslim scholar and preacher of our time. Al-Qaraḍāwī owes his popularity and influence mainly to the successful use of the media, namely television, internet, and the circulation of his books. His weekly program on the *Al-Jazeera* network, "Islamic Law and

¹ See, for example, B. Gräf and J. Skovgaard-Petersen, eds., *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), ix.

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Life" (*Al-Sharī'a wal-Ḥayāt*), attracts approximately sixty million Muslims world-wide.² Al-Qaraḍāwī has thus become the topic of numerous studies by Western scholars.³

Al-Qaraḍāwī often discusses the subject of the Jews and Israel in his writings. This is for two major reasons: The first reason is that the Islamic sources themselves, namely the Qur'ān and the Hadīth, deal with the Jews. About two-thirds of the Qur'ān deals with biblical stories and the relations between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina. Al-Qaraḍāwī, as a Muslim scholar, refers to the stories about the Jews as part of the holy sources of Islam. A second reason is al-Qaraḍāwī's view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Al-Qaraḍāwī is considered the spiritual leader of the Hamas movement, and he categorically denies Israel's existence as a legitimate state. Due to his dedication to the Palestinian struggle against Israel and by virtue of being the spiritual leader of the Hamas movement, al-Qaraḍāwī has devoted many sermons, articles, and television programs to this topic.

Al-Qaraḍāwi's writings on the Jews are characterized by his failure to distinguish between Jews and Zionists. As far as he is concerned, the children of Israel, the Jews of Medina, and the Israelis are all one large Jewish tribe. One of his favorite examples in this regard is the story of the first president of the State of Israel, which, from his viewpoint, proves that in every Jew hides a concealed Zionist: Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), the great chemist discovered a method for producing acetone from corn flour during World War I. Acetone was used for the production of explosives in bullets and cannon balls. Weizmann sold his patent to the Allied forces that desperately needed it. When asked what he wanted in exchange, Weitzman did not request anything for himself but asked

² On al-Qaraḍāwi's successful use of the media, see B. Gräf, *Medien-Fatwas@Yusuf al-Qaradawi: Die Popularisierung des islamischen Rechts* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 177–374.

³ For an updated state of research on al-Qaraḍāwī, see Sh. Bartal and N. Rubinstein-Shemer, *Hamas and Ideology: Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī on the Jews, Zionism and Israel* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1–6.

⁴ Ibid., for Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's view on Israel and his role as the spiritual leader of Hamas.

⁵ The following are some of the titles of al-Qaraḍāwī's major works on *jihad* in Palestine: *Fiqh al-Jihād* ("Laws of Jihad"); *Al-Quds Qaḍiyyat kull Muslim* ("Jerusalem: The Problem of Every Muslim"); *A'dā' al-Ḥall al-Islāmi* ("Enemies of the Islamic Solution"); *Dars al-Nakba al-Thāniya* ("Lessons about the Second Nakba"), the fifth volume of his series of sermons entitled, *Khuṭab al-Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī* ("Sermons of Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī"); *Fatāwā min ajli filastīn* ("Religious Rulings for Palestine"), and additional writings.

Britain for the Balfour Declaration regarding a Jewish National Home in Palestine.⁶

In light of the confusion in Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī's writing on Judaism and Zionism, an important question is to be asked here: what are the characteristics of his writing on the line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism? In another article of mine, which examined exactly this question, I discussed the characteristics of modern antisemitism and whether they are to be found in the writing of Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī. While the twentieth century was characterized by classic antisemitism—hating Jews as individuals, the twenty-first century is characterized by the "New Antisemitism" where it is the State of Israel which is turned into an object of hate. My research has revealed that of the nine characteristics of modern antisemitism, the writing of Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī is characterized by eight. According to Western definitions of modern antisemitism, al-Qaraḍāwī is, without a doubt, antisemitic.⁷

Sheikh al-Qaraḍāwī's view, that Zionism is based on Judaism and that there is no difference between a Jew and a Zionist, is a common feature of Islamist thought. According to the Islamists, even though the leaders of the Zionist movement such as Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, and Moshe Dayan were not religious, their writings are saturated with references to the Jewish religion and its principles. If the Jewish religion is the axis upon which the Zionist movement is based, then the Arab-Israeli conflict becomes a Jewish-Muslim conflict. The Islamization of the conflict is a pretext for religious recruitment of Muslims around the world. An example of this is the book written by al-Qaraḍāwī on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, called "Jerusalem: The Problem of Every Muslim" (Al-Quds Qaḍiyyat kull Muslim). The title of the book shows its purpose: Presenting the conflict as a religious war between Judaism and Islam and not as a national territorial struggle between Israelis and Palestinians. The issue of Jerusalem is an Islamic problem that is to be addressed to every Muslim throughout the world, not just to the Palestinians.

On December 6, 2017, the day that Trump declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel, al-Qaradāwī tweeted:

⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Quds Qaḍiyyat kull Muslim*, 93–94; K. Al-Sa'd, *Khutab al-Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2003), 5:178.

⁷ N. Rubinstein-Shemer, "Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī: anti-Zionist or anti-Semite?" *Israel Affairs* 23, no. 5 (2017): 794–807.

⁸ U. Shavit and O. Winter, *Zionism in Arab Discourses* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 94.

What is the meaning of Palestine without Jerusalem, where are the Muslims, where is the Islamic world, where is the Islamic nation all over the world? There is no other choice than to resist this matter and to say "no" unequivocally.⁹

In an article entitled, "We Will Not Accept Any Concessions on Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa," al-Qaraḍāwī stressed that the issue of Jerusalem is an issue that concerns all Muslims in the world and not only the Palestinians:

It is a sin to think that concessions will advance us toward a just solution.... Since the Arabs began to negotiate with the Zionists, they have only given up and given up. And in the end, they will have to give up everything. It is a mistake to think that peace is the only solution and we are in great error if we think that Israel is an invincible force, a pillar that cannot be broken and therefore we must surrender to it and to fawn upon it.¹⁰

The following day (December 7, 2017), al-Qaraḍāwī tweeted again, calling for *jihad* by the Muslims for the sake of Jerusalem and implicitly criticized Arabs who were not fighting for Jerusalem or who were working for normalization with Israel. He wrote:

Jerusalem is in danger from the Zionist enemy who has perfectly executed its plan to swallow and Judaize it, so I want to draw the attention of the people who do not pay attention, to the people who are afraid, to strengthen those who hesitate, to expose the traitors, to strengthen the hands of the *jihad* fighters and liberate the nation from [the situation of] weakness. May we live strong or we will die as martyrs!

At the bottom of the post appeared the cover photo of al-Qaraḍāwī's book, "Jerusalem: The Problem of Every Muslim." ¹¹

On December 10, 2017, he tweeted:

I wish I could respond to the call of the first prayer direction [i.e., Jerusalem] and participate in some form in the *jihad* for Jerusalem and the beloved Al-Aqsa Mosque and to receive the honor of martyrdom on the blessed land.¹²

⁹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "What is the meaning of Palestine without Jerusalem? [Arabic]," Twitter, December 6, 2017, https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/938407697975824384.

^{10 &}quot;Al-Qaraḍāwī: lā nuqbil tanāzulan 'an al-Quds wa-'lmasjīd al-Aqsā," https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/42, accessed January 1, 2018.

¹¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "Jerusalem is in danger from the Zionist enemy [Arabic]," Twitter, December 7, 2017, https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/938754976901300232.

¹² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "I wish I could respond to the call [Arabic]," Twitter, December 10, 2017, https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/939918929882779648.

He also published a video in which he appeared giving the Friday sermon. In the middle of his speech, he began to cry and shouted out several times, "Al-Agsa!" Then he added that he wished they could take him even in a wheelchair to fight in Palestine so that his head would separate from his body and he would be a martyr.13

On December 13, the president of Turkey, Tayvip Erdogan, convened an Islamic Leadership Conference to discuss Trump's announcement. The conference was attended by Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas, Hamas' representative Khaled Mashal, Iranian President Rohani, and presidents of other countries as well. Although al-Qaraḍāwī did not attend the conference personally, he uploaded a letter to his official site from the International Union of Muslim Scholars (where he serves as president) to representatives of the countries participating in the conference. In the letter, he called on the leaders of the Muslim countries to work for the unification of the Islamic nation as a necessary condition for the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He also called on the Muslim countries to contribute funds to continue the jihad in Palestine and to strengthen the organizations that fight Israel, such as Hamas and the *Murabiṭūn*. He emphasized the importance of the struggle for Jerusalem:

Jerusalem and Palestine are places where the prophets lived. They are a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the Arab states. Our nation cannot liberate Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian and Arab lands without first consolidating and strengthening our own countries and without God being pleased with them. It is already 70 years since the occupation of Palestine and half a century since the loss of Jerusalem and a quarter of a century of failed negotiations in order to achieve peace with the occupation state, clearly indicating the failure of the Arab concession policy on the issue of Palestine.¹⁴

On December 20, 2017, al-Qaraḍāwī wrote on his Twitter account that jihad for the sake of liberating Jerusalem was a religious duty imposed on all Muslims:

The jihad [to protect the land] is a personal [religious] obligation on its inhabitants. Islam does not allow Muslims to give up [even] a piece of the land of Islam, and if this land is Jerusalem, then the *jihad* for its liberation is the most glorious and honorable.¹⁵

The day after, he tweeted again stating that the only solution is to fight Israel, because this is the only language Israelis know:

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ https://www.al-garadawi.net/node/40 m, accessed January 1, 2018.

¹⁵ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "The jihad [Arabic]," Twitter, December 20, 2017, https:// twitter.com/algaradawy/status/943390513238966273.

Reality has taught us that our enemies do not know the power of logic but only the logic of power because they took the land from its owners and by force they fulfilled the dream of their national homeland, by force they established their state and by force they annexed new lands to this country.¹⁶

Al-Qaraḍāwī presents here the familiar argument that the Israel-Palestine conflict stems from Israel's occupation of Palestine, which is part of the lands of Islam ($D\bar{a}r$ al-Isl $\bar{a}m$). According to al-Qaraḍāwī, "The war between us and the Jews is due to one reason and no other: They have conquered our land—the land of Islam—Palestine."

Al-Qaradawi's Hostility to the Jews

In addition to the texts which are hostile to the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the posts calling on Muslims to fight to liberate Palestine by force, al-Qaraḍāwī has emphasized his hostility toward the Jews. On the December 11, 2017, he tweeted:

The Qur'ān does not tell us about the Persians or the Romans at length as it tells us about the Jews whose crimes and shameful acts it revealed. The Jews are the greatest liars in their speech, the most malicious when they quarrel [with someone] and the most treacherous when they make an alliance [with someone].¹⁸

In one of his books, al-Qaraḍāwī elaborated on this point and explained why the Qur'ān tells us so much about the Jews and not about other nations. He wrote:

It is only because Allāh knows that there will be a war between us and them in the future. Therefore, we must know them well in order to know how to contest them on the basis of reality and not on the basis of imagination.¹⁹

One can clearly see here al-Qaraḍāwī's lack of distinction between the Jews of the Qur'ān and contemporary Jews. According to him, God in the Qur'ān bothered to warn the Muslims against the eternal evil qualities of the Jews because

¹⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "Reality has taught us [Arabic]," Twitter, December 21, 2017, https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/943888811343433729.

¹⁷ Al-Qaradāwī, Al-Quds Qadiyyat kull Muslim, 41.

¹⁸ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "The Qur'ān does not tell us [Arabic]," Twitter, December 11, 2017, https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/940280031347011584.

¹⁹ K. Al-Sa'd, Khutab al-Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, 5:112.

he knew that in the future, there would be a war between the Muslims and the Jews in Palestine. Therefore, the Qur'ān deals with the children of Israel and Jews of Medina in such a substantial way.

What war does al-Qaraḍāwī mean? In the Islamic tradition, there is a famous μ adīth that states that the land will be conquered by the enemies of the Muslims, the Jews. It also predicts that eventually the Muslims will triumph—when all of creation, including trees and stones, will be conscripted to help them. Al-Qaraḍāwī hints at this μ adīth, known as The μ adīth of the Trees and Stones, when he writes about the future war with the Jews. The Hadith states as follows:

The hour [of resurrection] will not arrive until you fight the Jews. The Jew will hide behind stones or trees and the stones and trees will cry out: "O Muslim! O servant of God! There is a Jew behind me, come and kill him." ²¹

On December 14, 2017, al-Qaradāwī tweeted:

We will not be able to liberate our land if we do not free ourselves and our ideas.... What is really remarkable is that we are hostile to the Jews but at the same time we find that among us are those who learn from their ideas. And there is no need to mention names because they are known.²²

Al-Qaraḍāwī stressed his hostility to the Jews in a book he published in 1999 and uploaded it to his official website after Trump's declaration. The book is called *The Doctrinal Position of Islam on the Heresy of Jews and Christians*. This book was written in response to an article in the Qatari newspaper, *Al-Watan*, which claimed that the Christians were not heretics. In the book, al-Qaraḍāwī discusses the variety of Islamic sources on the issue and deduces from them the opposite meaning to the conclusion of the article. Al-Qaraḍāwī's conclusion is as follows:

The Jews and the Christians are infidels, for they have distorted their books, changed their religion, talked about Allah without knowledge, distorted the truths of God, described Allah with descriptions that are not appropriate to his perfection and greatness ... and also reduced the value of the prophets who were sent to serve as role models.²³

²⁰ Al-Qaraḍāwī, Al-Quds Qaḍiyyat kull Muslim, 13-14.

²¹ Ibid. This tradition is also cited in Article 7 of the Hamas Charter.

²² Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (@alqaradawy), "We will not be able to liberate our land [Arabic]," Twitter, December 14, 2017, https://twitter.com/alqaradawy/status/941336997620203521.

²³ Y. Al-Qaraḍāwī, Mawqif al-Islām al-'Aqadi min Kufr al-Yahūd wa-'lnaṣārā (Doḥā: Mu'asasat al-Risāla, 1999), 36.

According to al-Qaraḍāwī, the Jews and the Christians are infidels, even though they belong to the monotheistic religions, because they deny Muhammad's prophecy. According to him, it is not enough to believe in God to be considered a believer, for "all the apostles should be believed … and every apostate in one of the apostles is as if he is denying them all."²⁴ Therefore, those who nullify Muhammad's mission are infidels, for belief in him is one of the requirements of faith.

At the end of the book, al-Qaraḍāwī limits his previous words: "The heresy of the people of the book is not an atheist heresy," since the faith of the People of the Book in God, in the Prophets, and in the hereafter is valid, even if there are some changes and errors. This is why the People of the Book have a special status in Islam, and therefore it is permissible for a Muslim to eat their food and to marry their women. He then devoted a few pages to dealing with the tolerance of Islam for the People of the Book. He also called for: "A dialogue between the religions of the book in order to find common ground for all of them and to create a common bloc that would fight atheism." He then concluded his book by bringing four "meanings of Islamic tolerance" toward the People of the Book. "Every Muslim believes in human dignity, regardless of religion, race, color."

Aware of the ambivalence in his words, al-Qaraḍāwī asks: "How can we reconcile our determination that the People of the Book are heretics and the tolerance to be displayed towards them?" And he answers:

Every religion claims that the other religions are infidels, and they do not mean that they are atheists, rather they believe that the other believers deny their own beliefs. Indeed, it is true. If the Christians did not think that the Muslims were heretics, they were liars, or they would join the Muslims themselves.²⁸

When al-Qaraḍāwī writes about tolerance toward the Jews, as being part of the People of the Book, he does not mean Jews living in Israel. As far as he is concerned, they are defined as "People of Death" because they conquered Muslim land. Therefore, the only treatment for them is *jihad* until they are expelled from Palestine. The presentation of the Jews as unbelievers in the religion of truth—Islam—is the basis for the conclusion that they are not worthy of inheriting Palestine. Even when he calls for dialogue between the Peoples of the Book,

²⁴ Al-Qaraḍāwī, Mawqif al-Islām, 28.

²⁵ Ibid., 54.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Ibid., 57.

²⁸ Ibid., 55 – 56.

he refers mainly to Christians. When an interfaith conference was held in Doha in 2013, al-Qaraḍāwī canceled his participation in the conference, because the conference was attended by a Reform Jewish rabbi from New York, Rabbi Reuven Firestone. He said he was willing to attend interfaith conferences only with Christians and that he would not "filthy his hand by shaking hands with a Jewish murderer and criminal whose hands are covered with Palestinian blood." In fact, the only Jews al-Qaraḍāwī is willing to meet with are the rabbis of Neturei Karta, who are openly anti-Zionist and call for the destruction of Israel.³⁰

The Legitimacy of Jewish Rule in the Land of Israel according to the Qur'an and al-Qaraḍāwī's Interpretation

In his many books, al-Qaraḍāwī deals with the challenge of the Jewish claim to Israel by rewriting various verses in the Bible and in the Qur'ān and by creating a new narrative aligned to his political agenda. I have shown elsewhere his discussion and interpretation of various chapters of the Bible.³¹ Now I will present his interpretation of Chapter 17 of the Qur'ān verses 4-8 according to a religious ruling ($fatw\bar{a}$) he recently uploaded to his website named: "Verses of the Corruption of the Children of Israel and their Interpretation" ["Ayāt Ifsād Banī Isrā'īl wa-Tafsīrihā"].

Our'an Chapter 17, verses 4-8 state as follows:

And We conveyed to the Children of Israel in the Scripture that: "You will surely cause corruption on the earth *twice*, [author emphasis] and you will surely reach [a degree of] great haughtiness. So, when the [time of] promise came for the first of them, We sent against you slaves of Ours—those of great military might, and they probed [even] into the homes, and it was a promise fulfilled." Then We gave back to you a return victory over them and We reinforced you with wealth and sons and made you more numerous in manpower. [And said], "If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, [you do it] to yourselves." Then, when the final promise came, [We sent your enemies] to sadden your faces and to enter the Jerusalem temple as they entered it the first time, and to destroy what they had taken over with [total] destruction. [Then Allāh said], "It is expected, [if you repent], that your Lord will have mercy upon you. But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]. And We have made Hell, for the disbelievers, a prison bed."

²⁹ Bartal and Rubinstein-Shemer, Hamas and Ideology, 189.

³⁰ Ibid., 188

³¹ See N. Rubinstein-Shemer, "Qaradawi's View on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 20 (2016): 81–102.

The questions that the classical commentators of the Qur'ān dealt with regarding these verses were: In which book and in the wake of what corruption did God decree for the children of Israel to be exiled from the land? When did these two times of corruption by the children of Israel take place and what was their punishment? Why does the last verse allude to the words: "But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]?"

The commentators of the Qur'ān claim that the reason for the exile of the Israelites from the land is that they did not observe the commandments of God. The Torah says that God made a covenant with the Children of Israel—if they did not observe His covenant and His commandments, as punishment He would send other nations to fight them. In addition, the Israelites killed the prophets that God sent to them to cause them to repent.³²

The idea that the other nations are a whip in the hands of God to punish the Children of Israel is a biblical idea that has been rolled into the Our'an. The hatred of the Israelite enemies is presented as a result of divine intent. This is for two reasons. The first one is to save the Israelites from their enemies and to show God's superiority over the enemies. An example of this is the story of how God hardened Pharaoh's heart and then punished the Egyptians as a result. A second reason is to punish the Israelites when they have too many sins. Examples of this idea can be seen in the recurring motif in the book of Judges when the children of Israel sin. God brings their enemies to fight them and then establishes a judge from among them to fight the enemies and save the Israelites. In the book of Jeremiah, Chapter 25, we see a combination of these two motifs—Jeremiah rebukes the people of Israel who worshipped idols and did not listen to the admonition of the prophets that God sent to them. This is why God said that he would send "his servant Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon" (Jer 25:9), in order to punish the Israelites, to turn their land into a barren area and to exile them. The chapter further states that after the end of the seventy years of exile, God decreed against the Children of Israel that he would turn his wrath toward his servant, the king of Babylon, and turn his land and the lands of the rest of the nations into barren areas.

The common opinion among the commentators of the Qur'ān is that the two times where God punished the Israelites and expelled them from their land were at the time of the destruction of the first and second temples.³³ The Qur'ān ends with the words: "But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]" (wa-In

³² H. Busse, "The Destruction of the Temple and its Reconstruction in the Light of Muslim Exegesis of Sūra 17:2–8," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 7–10.

³³ Ibid., 2.

'udtum- 'udnā). This last verse may refer to other possible punishments by other powerful rulers, the "servants of God." It opens up the possibility of bringing Islam onto the scene.

Modern scholars such as the Egyptian scholar Sheikh Al-Sha'raawi (1911–1998), Sheikh Ahmad Yāsīn (1937–2004), the founder of Hamas movement, and Egyptian scholar Sheikh 'Abd al-Sitār (b. 1931) suggested a new commentary for the two punishments: The first corruption of the Jews was when they declared the prophet Muhammad a liar and tried to kill him. Muhammad fought and subdued them. This was their first punishment. The second corruption of the Jews was when they occupied Palestine and established the State of Israel. Therefore, the second punishment will be in the future, when the Muslims will fight the Jews in Palestine. These Qur'ānic verses that were revealed to Muhammad in Medina predict the future, one that is taking place in our day. This is also the accepted commentary to these verses by Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.³⁴

Al-Qaraḍāwī rejects this modern interpretation and argues that it is weak because the words of the verses themselves contradict it: The Qur'an states that it is written in the Torah that these events will occur, meaning that they occurred in the past and are not predicting the future. The first punishment cannot be attributed to the Jews of al-Medina because they were a small group of Jewish tribes who were exiled from Arabia and do not represent the kingdom and the rule of the Israelites in the land as the verses describe. The prophet did not fight them in the Land of Israel, rather he fought them in Arabia. The words in the verse: "After this we renewed your power" cannot relate to the Jews of Medina, since they were defeated by Muhammad. The Muslims never entered houses of prayer by the sword, they did not break or destroy, as the verses describe. This was the custom of the Babylonians and the Romans who completely destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem. The final argument is that the verses indicate that after the first punishment the Israelites behaved well and therefore God renewed their power to rule for the second time. Therefore, it cannot be said that the first time refers to the Jews of Arabia because we did not see that afterwards God renewed their power to rule again. On the contrary, God only punished them through powerful rulers such as Hitler. Since the Holocaust, the Jews have not behaved well but the opposite: for the past one hundred years, the Jews have not only been deceiving the Muslims but also have been controlling them in order to steal their land.35

³⁴ Sh. Bartal, "Reading the Qur'ān: How Hamas and the Islamic Jihad explain Sura al-Isra (17)," *Politics, Religion and Ideology* 17, no. 4 (2016): 392–408.

³⁵ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, "Verses of the Corruption of the Children of Israel and their Interpretation" [Ayāt Ifsād Banī Isrā'īl wa-Tafsīrihā].

Al-Qaraḍāwī therefore argues that in his view, the correct interpretation of these verses is that they relate to the two destructions of Jerusalem—the destruction of the first and second temples. But what about the situation today? Israel controls Palestine, and its capital is Jerusalem. How can one integrate this situation into the theological history? Al-Qaraḍāwī explains the situation of Jewish rule in Israel as a temporary situation. Jewish history is governed by the rule mentioned in the last verse: "But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]" [wa-In 'udtum- 'udnā]. If the Israelites return to sin, God will punish them again. To illustrate this idea, he uses a popular saying: "If the scorpion comes back, we will wait for it with a shoe, and that shoe will be ready for it." The idea that the divine punishment of the Jews is endless is supported by another Qur'ānic verse (7:167): "Your Lord has announced that until the Day of Resurrection he will not cease to send men to them to crush them and torture them."

In one of his YouTube videos, al-Qaraḍāwī makes it clear that the "faithful servants of God" who will break the rule of the Jews for the third time will be the Muslims:

But Allāh lies in wait for them and he will not forsake this nation. He will not allow these people to continue to spread corruption in this land. We wait for the revenge of Allāh to descend upon them. And, Allāh willing, it will be by our own hands: "Fight them, Allāh will torment them by your hands, and bring them to disgrace, and will assist you against them, and will heal the hearts of the believers, and will still the anger of your hearts." 36

Conclusions

Al-Qaraḍāwī's view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its developments is a theological approach that underlies a Jewish-Christian idea that has been adopted by the Qur'ān. The right of the people of Israel over the land is derived from their obedience to the commandments of God. When they violated them, God sent "his servants"—other nations to punish them by the destruction of Jerusalem and their exile. Jewish history continued to operate according to the rule of "But if you return [to sin], We will return [to punishment]." Whenever the Jews did evil in the eyes of God, he sent a tyrant ruler to punish them. This is the theological explanation for the Holocaust, according to al-Qaraḍāwī. Al-Qaraḍāwī sees Jewish rule in Israel as illegitimate because Muslims are the true representatives of God, and they are the heirs of Judaism. Therefore, they are the religion

³⁶ Yūsuf Al-Qaraḍāwī, "Allama Yusuf Al Qardhawi About Yahood," Islamic Media Centre, September 23, 2014, YouTube video, 10:43, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRiwshIzHu8.

that should govern Jerusalem, the first direction of Islamic prayer and the third most important city for Islam. The Jews lost their Temple and their land, because of their sins and because they murdered the prophets. According to the Islamic theological view, it is significant that Muslims and not Jews built a place of worship for God on the Temple Mount instead of the Temple that was destroyed as the Jews failed in building the Third Temple. In order to prevent such a possibility and to expel the Zionists from the land of Islam, al-Qaraḍāwī assigns Muslims the historical divine mission of punishing the heretical Jews and expelling them from the land. That is why he calls for *jihad* against the State of Israel.

Based on this theological background, we must understand al-Qaraḍāwi's deep shock over Trump's declaration. Apart from the political interest in recognizing the Israeli occupation and the loss of Palestinian rights, there is a theological-religious problem here for the Muslims since control over Jerusalem symbolizes the validity of Judaism as a relevant religion.

The theological idea of cyclicality in Jewish history, which results from the unchanging nature of the Jews, who were meant to violate their covenant with God over and over, stems from the negative way in which the image of the Jew was portrayed in classical Muslim sources, first and foremost, the Qur'ān. According to historian Jane Gerber: "[T]he Muslim is continually influenced by the theological threads of antisemitism embedded in the earliest chapters of Islamic history." In the Middle Ages, religious-theological antisemitism developed when Muslims felt that some Jews had overstepped the boundary of humiliation prescribed to them by the Islamic law. In the modern era, the establishment and prosperity of the State of Israel is the reason for the development of modern antisemitic theological ideas. The focus of hatred is mainly the State of Israel and not only the individual Jew.

Nesya Rubinstein-Shemer is a senior lecturer at the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel. Dr. Shemer's areas of specialization are: Islamic law, Relations between Judaism and Islam and political Islam. She has published articles on these issues. Her book Hamas and Ideology: Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi on the Jews, Judaism and Israel, was published in 2018 by Routledge.

³⁷ J. Gerber, "Antisemitism and the Muslim World," in *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Antisemitism*, ed. D. Berger (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1997), 82.

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