

(Free pdf) Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims

# Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims

*Reuven Firestone*

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**Reuven Firestone : Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. ... how much we have in commons to have a better worldBy Volkan KayaWell positioned in key points as true Muslim and Jewish relations and show how much we have in commons to have a better world12 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A 'must-read" for allBy Jeff SiddiquiHaving read its most unimpressive sister book, "Introduction to Islam for Jews" by Duran, I approached this book with trepidation but I was soon pleasantly proven wrong!Firestone's work clearly shows his grasp of Islam by liberal and appropriate use of quotes from the Quran; his compassionate and intellectual approach when making comparisons between the two faiths and his grasp of Hebrew and Arabic etymology, is refreshing and inspiring. He demonstrates that teaching Muslims about Judaism goes much further if one draws from both faiths and Firestone does this very well. Indeed, the parallels between the two faiths and their common origins are wonderful and instructive!Firestone's approach to faith, Judaism and Islam, showed a rare, admirable spirituality that is seldom found even in books about faith. He easily managed to expound on Judaism without going into the quagmire of Israel politics; this helped me study the subject without defensiveness.One issue I have with the book is the note on "The Pact of Umar". According to Firestone, this was a treaty between Caliph Umar and some unknown but presumably Jewish leaders. Apparently, this so-called "Pact" put Jews in a menial position, forcing them to be abjectly fawning towards Muslims as well as

banning them from holding any key public offices or even repairing their synagogues. In reality the earliest and only known example of this "Pact" is a translation of a supposed early letter from some unknown person who wrote a letter to some European figure. This unearthing came in the form of a hand-out by a Professor in Edinburgh in the 1970s; the origin of this letter still remains unknown. Even in this first exposure to the "Pact", it is a treaty between Caliph Umar and Christians of Syria...no mention of Jews at all. The "Pact" also fails the logic test. In Firestone's excellent book, Jews are described as holding many public offices even to the rank of Vizier (Prime Minister). The "Pact" also cannot explain why Muslim houses of worship were in the same state of repair or disrepair in the early 20th Century, as those of Judaism and Christianity. Nevertheless, mention of this "Pact" was the only distraction in an otherwise superb work. Throughout the book, Firestone teaches an immense amount about Judaism without preaching, a virtue that is a rare gift. He reserves the final section ("Chronology") on listing significant events in the history of Jews and Israelites. Regardless of how one may feel about the politics of Israel and Palestine, one cannot finish reading this book without developing a deep understanding and respect for the seemingly endless string of persecutions that Jews suffered and an admiration of how Judaism overcame all of it while maintaining a compassionate outlook towards the world. In any study of Judaism or comparisons of Judaism with Islam, this book has to be on the "must read" list. Even for Christians, this is most valuable. Very well done indeed!

Book by Firestone, Reuven

From Publishers Weekly To enhance mutual understanding between Jews and Muslims, Firestone, a rabbi and professor of medieval Judaism and Islam at Hebrew Union College, discusses the theological and moral similarities between the religions, underscores the gap between religion and politics, and emphasizes issues of concern to Muslims. He divides his introduction into three parts: a survey of Jewish history from biblical through modern times; God, Torah and Israel; and Jewish practice, including prayer, the calendar and the life cycle. Many of his explanations tiptoe around Arab sensibilities. "In Jewish tradition," he writes, "the term Israel does not refer to a land or a modern nation-state but to a people. The official name of the modern Jewish state is the state of Israel, meaning the state of the people of Israel...." The concept of the chosen people, he notes, was a survival tactic designed to preserve monotheism among idolatrous neighbors, not to promote elitism. Living in Israel is not simply an emotional desire, but a deeply religious and legal issue based on the substantial number of biblical commandments that cannot be fulfilled outside the land. Firestone explains the origins of Zionism, touches on the "vexed question" of who owns the land of Israel and concludes, unsatisfactorily, that the multifaceted conflict between Jew and Muslim is too complicated to discuss in detail here. This circumspect, middle-of-the-road approach presents a sensitive view that tries its best not to offend. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Most American readers will welcome the venture in interreligious dialog undertaken by these two books, copublished with the Harriet and Robert Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding of the American Jewish Committee. Written in a clear manner for a popular audience, both are arranged by key topics that address some of the great controversial issues of our times. Firestone (*Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*), a professor and the director of the Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Hebrew Union-College Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, offers a thoughtful introduction to Jewish religion, history, and thought. He stresses how both Jews and Muslims have greatly benefited from peaceful relationships through the ages. Dur n, the author of five books on Islam and the editor of *TransIslam*, a journal devoted to an analysis of Islamic developments, has the more difficult task, as few would argue that Islam is viewed in a distorted way by Americans. He presents a critical, historical, and religious overview, devoting much of his book to the tensions and challenges found today, such as how Islam is perceived by different national leaders. He also writes about the role of women, for whom he believes "a change for the better is underway." Even before publication, Dur n's book has raised a firestorm among scholars. Many feel that he does not offer a balanced view of his subject, pointing out, for instance, that Dur n equates fundamentalism with fanaticism. The book does read like a polemic in many ways and is far less suitable as a basic introduction than Firestone's. As a result of the controversy, readers will ask for these books, and Dur n's will certainly stimulate discussion. Ultimately, however, American readers are likely to come away from these books with a more positive view of both religions. Libraries should make sure to consult "Bridging the Gap: Islam in America" (LJ 10/1/98) when building a collection. Paul Kaplan, Lake Villa Dist. Lib., IL Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.