

Ronald Kronish
***The Other Peace Process:
Interreligious Dialogue,
a View from Jerusalem***

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Following his *Coexistence and Reconciliation in Israel* (2015), in *The Other Peace Process: Interreligious Dialogue, a View from Jerusalem* Rabbi Dr. Ronald Kronish has brought together the distillation and summation of his life's commitment to interreligious dialogue in service of peace in Israel / Palestine. While his earlier edited volume assembled an impressive lineup of scholars and interreligious participants in Israel / Palestine, in his new book Kronish himself describes dimensions of peacemaking in that beautiful but distressed region.

Kronish writes with accuracy and evenhandedness. He brings to his narrative an American belief in religious freedom, pragmatism, respect for every person, and hopefulness. Beginning with his biography, Kronish describes his optimistic, Reform-Judaism Zionism. He learned much from his well-known father, Rabbi Leon Kronish, as well as from his well-rounded education at Brandeis University. His text shows that he is aware of, and sensitive to, the varieties of Jewish life in Israel today, including those Jews who are secular, traditional, Reform, Conservative, Mizrachi, Sephardi, Ashkenazi, recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and ultra-Orthodox. (While Kronish writes with care, non-Jews may find such a diverse array bewildering.) Furthermore, Kronish is well aware of the different expressions of Christianity and Islam in Israel. His nuanced awareness helped him to inform various dialogue partners who may not be aware of such differences themselves (pp. 85ff.). Finally, Kronish very succinctly and accurately explains the Palestinian Arab identity for those who have not had the benefit of living in Israel. As he notes, it is "impossible to understand Palestinian Arabs merely in ethnic or national terms" (p. 56). (One distinctive group of Palestinian Arabs that deserve fuller coverage are the Druze.) This multifaceted and complicated mosaic of religious communities in Israel provide the rich background for the heart of Kronish's story: how people from different ethnic, religious, and

national backgrounds were able to join together in order both to speak their truths and to listen to those of others.

After describing these various communities, Kronish then discusses the programs which he personally designed and directed through the organization he founded, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI). Kronish situates these programs within a short review of the Arab-Israeli "peace process," focusing primarily on the political process. This is a good primer for those who have not studied the process. Within the political context, Kronish proposes a very important distinction between peacemaking and peacebuilding: "Peacemaking is the work of the lawyers, politicians and diplomats. The goal of [this] is to create peace treaties...Peacebuilding, on the other hand, is the work of rabbis, imams, priests, educators...[who] bring people together to enter into dialogical and educational processes that are aimed at helping people figure out how to live in peace with each other" (p. 44). It is toward this latter goal that Kronish and the ICCI have devoted decades of work. In particular, Kronish makes a singular contribution to thoughtful consideration of the place of dialogue and religion in the Arab-Israeli conflict in "Lessons Learned" (pp. 109-60). In a very real sense, then, *The Other Peace Process* is a learner's manual about how to conduct interreligious, intercultural, and intergroup engagement.

While I wholeheartedly recommend *The Other Peace Process*, I do offer a few critical comments. First, while a small issue, Kronish repeatedly writes of "the Pope's apology" to the Jews (e.g., p. 102). Neither the Vatican nor John Paul II has ever used that word in such a context. Rather, the Pope has said he "regrets" past instances of Catholic hostility toward Jews. Secondly, I believe that Kronish underestimates the importance of a common language. While recognizing that dialogue would be enhanced if both sides spoke Arabic or Hebrew, often the recourse to English necessarily limits the participation on either side of the conversation. Some of the programs which the ICCI ran were most successful when they took place in the north of Israel among religious leaders (alas, all men) because they could speak a common language (in this case, Hebrew). In this regard, the Kedem program on interreligious dialogue offers a fascinating example. Third, I would have liked to have seen Kronish pay attention to the historical and intercultural contributions to the concept of "dialogue" itself. For some dialogue partners—both in Israel and the West Bank—living in, or coming from, cultures that do not necessarily share Western values and norms, a barrier emerges. This makes it all the more difficult, for it is always a challenge to appreciate how different groups and cultures approach topics such as identity, self-disclosure, self-criticism, and collective (the current word is "tribal") personality.

These caveats aside, in his work Kronish models the kind of humble and self-critical self-understanding so crucial to interreligious dialogue. His story, and especially his discussions of many quite interesting ICCI programs, oscillates between learning and teaching, between listening and speaking, and between acting for justice and speaking one's truth. For those interested in conducting interreligious or intercultural dialogue, Kronish offers a very useful handbook.