Textbooks widely used in New York’s Islamic schools contain passages that are blatantly anti-Semitic, condemning Jews as a people, repeating old canards about the Jews wanting to kill Christ and faking their Holy Scriptures to mock God.

The Islamic texts teach that “the Jews” killed their own prophets and betrayed the Prophet Muhammad through their inherent deceitfulness.

The books, obtained during a three-month *Daily News* investigation that included visits to private Muslim schools, are rife with inaccuracies, sweeping condemnations of Jews and Christians, and triumphalist declarations of Islam’s supremacy. In Long Island City, Queens, for example, fifth- and sixth-graders at the Ideal Islamic School on 12th St. learn that Allah has revealed that “the Jews killed their own prophets and disobeyed Allah.”

At the Muslim Center Elementary School on Geranium Ave. in Flushing, Queens, a textbook for grades 6 through 8 teaches that Jews “subscribe to a belief in racial superiority… Their religion even teaches them to call down curses upon the worship places of non-Jews whenever they pass by them! They arrogantly refer to anyone who is not Jewish as ‘gentiles,’ equating them with sin.”

The book “What Islam Is All About” states that, “The Christians also worship statues.”

One of the publishers, a Chicago-based firm called the IQRA International Educational Foundation Inc. - IQRA means “recite” or “proclaim” in Arabic - got financial support until recently from a Saudi Arabian foundation.

IQRA’s founder and director, Dr. Abidullah al-Ansari Ghazi, who wrote the books in question, acknowledged that they needed to be changed.

“Often you are pointing out, I agree, these passages need to be revised,” he said.

“I wrote these passages 10, 20 years ago,” said Ghazi. “And, to tell you the truth, I based it on the classical sources, which are much harsher than what I wrote here.”

Ghazi promised to revise parts of the text that condemn Jews as a people.

But the other publisher, Yahiya Emerick, who heads the Islamic Foundation of North America, a Queens-based nonprofit curriculum development project, stood by the language in his books, which are printed and distributed by International Books and Tapes Supply, or IBTS.

“Islam, like any belief system, believes its program is better than others. I don’t feel embarrassed to say that,” he said. His books, Emerick stressed, “are directed to kids in a Muslim educational environment. They must learn and appreciate there are differences between what they have and what other religions teach. It’s telling kids that we have our own tradition.” He denied the books were inflammatory.

The 3,000 to 4,000 children now attending New York’s 15 private Islamic schools are a small but growing part of the city’s Muslim student population of about 85,000. Many are from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan as well as the Middle East.

Many of their schools regularly outperform the public schools on state achievement tests. At al-Noor in Brooklyn, the largest Muslim school in the country with 650 students, more than 90 percent of high schoolers go on to college.

Emerick said his books were in “at least half” the city’s Muslim private schools.

Dr. Nidel Abasi, principal of Al-Noor, confirmed the purchase of the book, but said it was not used as part of the school’s regular curriculum.

Shamshad Husain, IQRA’s managing director, said his company has sold 3,000 copies of “Our Prophet,” a book for elementary school students, 1,800 copies of “Mercy to Mankind,” which is aimed at fifth- and sixth-graders and 900 copies of “Messenger of Allah,” targeting students age 12 to 14. He had no breakdowns for New York City distribution.

All three books contain accounts of Prophet Muhammad’s relations with Jews in 7th century Medina that appear to condemn or negatively characterize the conduct of Jews as a people.

Dr. Kurshid Khan, principal of the Ideal school, praised IQRA for its Islamic curriculum development, but stressed that his staff repeatedly warns students that “we can’t generalize” about people’s behavior because of their religion.

“When they hear on TV that a Muslim committed a terrorist act, we say, look, it’s a special group. They’re terrorists. That’s the main focus. … to inculcate in youth as they grow up a balanced mind.”

As for the books’ depictions of Jews, said Khan, “I’ve oriented my teachers that we must be very careful. We don’t want them to make generalizations. Of course, I’m not in class all the
time. But I keep bringing it up to the teachers.”

Muslim class teaches bitter, anti-Semitic lesson

At Ideal Islamic School’s new quarters in Long Island City, Queens, teacher Safia Sarkin’s sixth-grade class was busy studying relations between the first Muslim community and local Jewish tribes in 7th century Medina.

Sarkin, a convert to Islam from an Orthodox Jewish family in New Jersey, had the children take turns reading Chapter 9 of IQRA’s “Mercy to Mankind,” titled “Relations With the Jews Worsen.”

The text cited numerous failings and offenses by “the Jews,” a repeated formulation that blurred the distinction between Medina’s Jewish tribes and, say, the Jews of present-day Israel.

“The Muslims wanted to live in peace with the Jews, but the Jews did not like the Muslims,” recited Sarkin, who was wearing a long-sleeved gray robe and a tan hijab, or head covering. “They did not believe in Muhammed. They thought only a Jew could be a prophet.”

The majority of Sarkin’s 10 students, most of them girls, listened intently. The makeshift classroom was in a converted warehouse, with flimsy partitions separating the sixth-graders from a group of noisy kindergartners. In the back, a couple of boys’ minds seemed to wander.

“The Jews did not want to listen to any preaching from an Arab prophet,” Sarkin continued. “Allah had revealed to Muhammed that the Jews had changed their Book, the Torah, killed their own prophets and disobeyed Allah. And the Jews did not want the Arabs to know about these shameful things.”

“The Jews” in the passage had lived centuries before the Jews of Medina, but Sarkin didn’t miss a beat.

After citing other offenses by “the Jews,” she read, “Because of all this, the Muslims had to fight the Jews as well as other enemies of Islam.” But after winning the ensuing battles, the book noted: “Allah had now given the Muslims power over the Jews and Muhammed made a treaty with them.”

The chapter concluded: “Muslims must live in peace with all those who are willing to live in peace with them.”

Sarkin drove the point home emphatically. “Islam means peace,” she stressed, praising Muhammed’s treaty with the vanquished Jews. When a boy in the back of the classroom began to protest, Sarkin interrupted him to emphasize again the importance of peace in Islam. ▲