

Three Faiths Summer School 2006
Ammerdown Centre

Jerusalem in the three Faiths

Muslim Perspectives

Faith – Interfaith – Conflict



Praying in the *Haram al-Sharif* ("The Noble Sanctuary") in Jerusalem

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Turning the *Qibla* – Facing Jerusalem or Mecca in prayer

Jerusalem as a city and a place of holiness was known by all Arabs, even in pre-Islamic times.

How did Arabs and Muslims refer to Jerusalem?

- *Iliya madinat bayt al-makdis*, "Aelia [Capitolina], the City of the Temple", in early Islam
- *Al-Bait al-Muqaddas*, "The Holy House"
- *Al-Bait al-Maqdis*, "The House of the Sanctuary"
- *Al-Quds*, "The Holy One", since 10. century

In the Qur'an Jerusalem is never mentioned by name although the Qur'an reports or alludes repeatedly to certain events of biblical times, also to the building of the first and second Temple.

In the first years of Islam in Mecca Muslims faced Jerusalem in prayer, or both Jerusalem and the Kaaba, when praying in front of the southern wall of the Kaaba.

After the *hijra* (emigration) to Medina, which is situated north of Mecca, the Prophet and the Muslims faced only Jerusalem in their prayers, when turning to the north. 16 month after the arrival in Medina the Prophet received a revelation, which changed the *qibla* (direction of prayer).

"The weak-minded among people will say, "What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have hitherto observed?" Say: "God's is the east and the west; He guides whom He wills onto a straight way." (Qur'an 2:142)

"And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed [for this community] the direction of prayer which thou [O Prophet] hast formerly observed: for this was indeed a hard test for all but those whom God has guided aright." (Qur'an 2:143)

The changing of the *qibla* aroused mischief in the community of Medina. Especially the Jews, which formed a great part of the population, seemed to be concerned. Facing the Kaaba means facing a place where also pagan deities were worshipped. But for the Muslims it was the place, where Abraham had built the first temple of the One God.

"Behold, the first Temple ever set up for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah [i.e. Mecca]: rich in blessing and a source of guidance unto all the worlds." (Qur'an 3:96)

"And lo! We made the Temple [lit. house, i.e. Kaaba] a goal to which people might repair again and again, and a sanctuary: take then the place whereon Abraham once stood as your place of prayer. And thus We command Abraham and Ishmael: 'Purify My Temple for those who will walk around it, and those who will abide near it in meditation, and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves [in prayer].'" (Qur'an 2:125)

The Journey to the Farthest Mosque

The 17. Sura, called *Al-Isra*, "The Night Journey", due to references to the Children of Israel this Sura is also called *Banu Israil*, mentions a mystic experience of the prophet Muhammad in Mecca, when at night he was taken away from Mecca to another place. There the journey led to an ascension (*miraaj*) to heaven, where Muhammad communicated with the ancient prophets and was instructed by the angels about the right way of praying and worship.

"Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship to the Remote House of Worship – the environs of which We have blessed – so that We might show him some of Our symbols: for verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing." (Qur'an 17:1)

The "Inviolable" – or forbidden, or restricted – "House of Worship" – *al-masdjid al-haram* – is Mecca and the "Remote House of Worship", *al-masdjid al-aqsa*, is the temple site of Jerusalem. In this all Muslims agree, despite scepticism of some western scholars, who argue that identification with Jerusalem was done long after Jerusalem had become part of the Islamic world. But all traditions concerning this Sura report that the Prophet himself identified the place with Jerusalem when describing his journey to the people of Mecca or Medina. The following verses mentioning the destroying of the two Jewish temples also may justify this identification.

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Jerusalem as a Holy Place in Muslim Traditions and Lore

According to certain events mentioned in the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet and his companions, which were widely expanded with legendary material from Jewish *midrash* and Christian legends, Jerusalem is the place

- where God accepted the repentance of David and Solomon,
- where God sent *jins* and angels to Solomon to assist him with the building of the temple,
- where God announced glad tidings to Zacharias and John.

It is also the place

- where Mary lived in recluse before giving birth to Jesus,
- where Jesus spoke in the cradle,
- where Jesus ascended to heaven when his enemies tried to crucify him,
- and where Jesus will return at the end of times and join the Muslim congregation in prayer.

On the *yaum al-qiyama*, the "Day of Resurrection", it is the place

- where the angel *Israfil* will blow the horn to mark the end of the world and the following resurrection,
- where judgement will take place and the gates of paradise and hell will be opened.

A often cited but also being doubted *hadith* (Tradition of the Prophet) illustrates the importance of Jerusalem for pious Muslims. "*Narated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "Do not set out on a journey except for three Mosques i.e. Al-Masjid-Al-Haram (i.e. Mecca), the Mosque of Allah's Apostle (in Medina), and the Mosque of Al-Aqsa (i.e. Jerusalem)" (Sahih Bukhari)*

Another *hadith*: "*Narrated Abu Dhar: I said, 'O Allah's Apostle! Which mosque was first built on the surface of the earth?' He said, 'Al-Masjid-al-Haram.' I said, 'Which was built next?' He replied 'The mosque of Al-Aqsa.'*" (Sahih Bukhari)

The Dome of the Rock - A Unique Building and its Mission.

A tradition from the conquest of Jerusalem tells us, that when entering the city of Jerusalem after its capitulation the caliph Umar requested to be taken to the temple site. What he saw was a desolate dump yard, which he instantly began to clear with his own hands and he commanded his followers to do likewise. By dawn the area was cleared.

While the Christian churches were safeguarded in the city the unoccupied temple area could now serve as a place of prayer for the Muslims who build a rough wooden mosque at the place where now the Al-Aqsa Mosque is standing. The whole area of the mount was later called *Bayt al-Maqdis al-Haram al-Sharif*, "House of Sanctuary, the Noble Inviolable District".

Another tradition reports that Umar asked Ka'ab al-Ahbar, a Yemenite Jew converted to Islam, "'Where do you think we should establish the place of prayer?' 'Ka'ab said, 'Towards the Rock' (Meaning, to stand in such a place facing the Ka'ba so that the Rock lay in front of them). 'O Ka'ab, you are imitating the Jewish religion! Take care of your own affairs, we were not commanded to venerate the Rock, but we were commanded to venerate the Ka'ba,' replied Umar.

Sixty years later the *Qubbat al-Sakhra*, the "Dome of the Rock", was erected here and completed in 691/692 by the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. The architecture is a Byzantine octagon, just like the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of Ascension and the Nativity at Bethlehem, which also glorified a sacred spot, tomb, rock or grotto.

The building was not a mosque and it could not serve for ritual prayer. It had no precedent in Islamic architecture. Muslim historians and western scholarship presented diverging answers:

- The building was erected in commemoration of Prophet Muhammad's ascension.
- Abd al-Malik sought to divert the Pilgrimage from Mecca to Jerusalem, replacing Mecca and the Ka'aba, which was under the control of a counter-Caliph Abdallah Ibn al-Zubayr.
- Abd al-Malik wanted to demonstrate Islam's victory over Judaism and Christianity and to win converts.
- The symbolic messages of Paradise, Judgement Day and Resurrection present in architecture and decoration is a Muslim equivalent of the similar symbolic contexts represented in the Holy Sepulchre.

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The Inscriptions in the Dome do not mention the Night Journey or the Jewish Temple. They quote from the Qur'an:

- There is no god but God alone, without partner.
- Muhammad is God's messenger.
- The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only God's messenger.
- Blessings on Muhammad and Jesus.

The Geographer Al-Muqaddasi (945 - ~1000), born in Jerusalem, presents his uncle's opinion about the motive for building the Dome of the Rock.

"Al-Walid was right and he undertook a worthy project. He saw that Syria had been occupied for a long time by the Christians, and he noticed the beautiful churches that still belonged to them, so fair and so renowned for their splendor, especially the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem and the churches of Lydda and Edessa. So he built a mosque for the Muslims [in Damascus] that would divert them from looking at these Christian buildings, one what would be unique and a wonder to the world. In a like manner, is it not apparent how the Caliph Abd al-Malik, seeing the greatness and magnificence of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was afraid that it would dazzle the Muslims and so erected the dome above the rock which is now seen there?"

In the early times the Dome was open for public only on Mondays and Thursdays, proposed days of fasting for both Jewish and Muslim ascetics. On other days it was cleansed and incense was burnt. There seemed to have been no restrictions concerning the faith of its visitors in the first centuries. During *haj*, the season of pilgrimage to the Kaaba in Mecca, some of its ritual ceremonies were also held in the Haram, like the *al-tar'af*, the "standing in prayer at Mountain Arafat", or the sacrifice of an animal at the end of *haj*. In these rituals only Muslims took part.

Jews were employed in different services on the building and its environment in the first years. Contribution of oil or incense seems to have been regarded by both Christian and Jews as a pious deed up to the 9. century. A Muslim law manual on *waqf* (endowments) of the 9. century states: "If a Christian or Jew dedicates his land or house to the repairs of the *bayt al-maqdis* or for the purchase of oil for its illumination, it is permissible to accept this from him, for this is an act of piety both with regards to Muslims and to them."

The *Haram al-Sharif* and Other Holy Places

Two years after the construction of the Dome of Rock was completed the work at the *Al-Aqsa* Mosque started, perpetuating the name of the place of worship mentioned in the Qur'an. The *Al-Aqsa* Mosque saw much damage by earthquakes and demolition and was redone several times. In the 10. century the first verse of the Sura *Al-Isra* remembering the Prophet's Night Journey was inscribed on top of the entrance.

During centuries smaller buildings were added to the area, commemorating David, Solomon, Zacharias, Mary, Jesus and naturally the Prophet himself and his Night Journey. Muslim travellers to Jerusalem made their tour along this places and offered prayers. But it was always stressed that this was no *haj* (pilgrimage) only a *ziyara* (visit).

Muslim prayers at the dome and worship at the mosque was interrupted during hundred years in which crusaders held the city.

Since the beginning of Ottoman reign in Jerusalem in the 16. century the two main buildings and their surroundings on the elevated platform overlooking much of the old city were called *Haram al-Sharif*, "the Noble Sanctuary".

Other places of Muslim worship or veneration in Jerusalem are: the Umar mosque opposite the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the mosque of the Prophet David on Mount Sion and the Buraq mosque at the Western Wall. The place at the Western wall was an Islamic *waqf* (religious endowment) known as the *waqf* of Abu Madyan (Morrocan Sufi sheikh). After the war of 1967 this area, also called the Maghrebian Quarter, was levelled down.

A city with high religious importance for Muslims second after Jerusalem is Hebron (called *al-Khalil*, or *Khalil al-Rahman*, abbreviated from "The City of the Friend of God", the friend of God being Abraham. Hebron is the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives, as well as of Joseph. The mosque at the side of the tombs known as *haram Ibrahim* (sanctuary of Abraham) or *al-haram al-*

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Ibrahimi, is supposed to be originally a crusaders' Church. After the conquest of the crusaders Ayyubid and Mamluk authorities restricted the access to the tombs for non-Muslims. In 1912, there were among 22.000 Muslim Arabs only 2.000 Jews, which had moved here yearning to be near the tomb of their forefathers. During the 1929 riots many lost their lives and the massacre of Muslim worshippers in 1994 again heightened tensions in this place.

Muslims and the People of the Book

It is significant and tragic that Abraham's resting place has been the place of bloodshed between Jews and Muslims during the last hundred years. It is *Ibrahim* (Abraham) to whom Muslim refer, when asked to explain their relationship to Jews and Christians, the *ahl al-kitab* (the People of the Book).

The Qur'an emphasizes permanently that Muhammad is only a messenger in the same line of messengers like Abraham, Noah, Moses and even Jesus. His Message is only a remembrance and correction of the abrogation, misunderstandings and dilutions of the eternal message of the One God to mankind: to worship the merciful creator, sustainer of life and judge on the day of resurrection. The outstanding example for this message is the creed of Abraham.

"And they say, 'Be Jews' – or, 'Christians' – and you shall be on the right path.' Say: 'Nay but [ours is] the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God.' Say: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them. And it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves." (Qur'an 2:135)

Following the revelations and being obedient to God's will secures acceptance by Him.

"Verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds - shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve." (Qur'an 2:62)

Christians and Jews are invited to testify together with Muslims the truth of monotheistic faith.

"Say: 'O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God.' And if they turn away, then say: 'Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him." (Qur'an 3:64)

The *ahl al-kitab* and the Muslims form different communities of faith, which according to God's plan will not unite but will stay side by side in competition.

"And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ." (Qur'an 5:48)

Muslims and Jews

In an apologetic essay about Christendom Al-Jahiz of Basra (780-869), an Arab writer always inclined to irony and rational analysis, makes a pessimistic statement concerning the early relations of Jews and Muslims: Hostility between neighbours is stronger than between relatives. Man becomes easily hostile to those he is acquainted to and to those he meets often. He quarrels with those with whom he has something in common. The errors of those, who live by our side immediately become apparent. In short: Affection and vicinity will also lead to hate and alienation.

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The Muslims of the lifetime of the Prophet had a closer contact with Jews than with Christians, especially at Medina. Jews were incorporated in the community of faith in Medina at the side of the Muslims but there developed a severe confrontation between Jews and Muslims which in the end led to expulsion of two and the annihilation of a whole Jewish tribe. Jews are asked by the Qur'an to live according to the Torah but were also continually invited to accept Islam while they persisted in their customs, faith and rejection of Muhammad as a messenger. On religious level the relation remained somehow ambiguous but Jewish religious and cultural autonomy was respected. For a long time up to the 19. century Islamic rulers in Andalusia and Egypt and the Ottomans in certain affairs often preferred the service of Jewish instead of Christians subjects. In the course of religious-ethnic riots against Christians Jews sometimes took part on the Muslim side.

In Qur'an and traditions one can find harsh and severe accusations against the Jews of early Islam together with positive and appreciating reports of the faith, practise and devotion of the *Banu Israil*.

There have been outbreaks of anti-Jewish riots or forced persecution in the Islamic world but these were the exception to the rule. The Arab world nowadays is far from being free from anti-semitism. But its main root are ideas and conceptions which came from the west, especially French missionaries and Christian authors, who by example translated the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in Arabic at the beginning of the 20. century. The fierce propagation of anti-semitic conceptions is fostered not by Jewish-Muslim but an Israeli-Arab conflict. Under its influence traditions reporting of early Jewish-Muslim struggles and supposed Jewish conspiracy with the idolaters of Mecca undergo a re-lecture by certain Muslim writers and are presented as a proof of a constant desire of Jews to fight and destroy Islam.

Muslims and Christians

Muslims were on good terms with Christians at the beginning of the Qur'anic revelation. Muhammad was encouraged by an uncle of his first wife Khadija, who had read Christian scriptures. Muslim refugees from oppression in Mecca found asylum in Christian Ethiopia, whose ruler showed much sympathy for them. In the final years of Muhammad's life Christian Arab tribes near Yemen and the border of Syria were incorporated into the Muslim reign by signing contracts of trust and submission.

It is Jesus on whom the two communities agree and finally disagree.

"O followers of the Gospel! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs, and do not say of God anything but the truth. The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was but God's Apostle - [the fulfilment of] His promise which He had conveyed unto Mary - and a soul created by Him. Believe, then, in God and His apostles, and do not say, "[God is] a trinity". Desist [from this assertion] for your own good. God is but One God; utterly remote is He, in His glory, from having a son: unto Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth; and none is as worthy of trust as God."
(Quran 4:171)

Muslim perspectives of Christendom were shaped by the Qur'an in four aspects.

High esteem of Christian spiritual and ascetic practises.

Acceptance and approving of Christian doctrines like the birth of Jesus, his mission, certain teachings and miracles also found in the gospel and apocrypha.

Refutation of Christian doctrines which contradict Qur'anic revelations like Jesus being "the Son", trinitarian doctrines (seen as tritheism) and death on the cross.

Irritation about Christians refusing to accept Muhammad as a messenger and his message as continuation of former revelations.

For the patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem, who had to turn over his city to Muslims, Islam represented the satanic trumpet blast of the Apocalypse, the army of the Anti-Christ and their caliph Umar the "Awful Horror" mentioned in the Book of Daniel. At his time Muslims were sometimes described as a Jewish denomination. The first full rendering of Islam into a Christian worldview was done by John of Damascus (ca. 670-749) who was well acquainted with the Qur'an and Islamic culture. He calls Muslims "Ishmaelites" and emphasizes a polarity between the spiritual descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, thus excluding Muslims from the covenant offered to Christians, the spiritual children of Israel. Till the end of medieval times Islam seldom was recognized by Christians as a religion of its own but as a Jewish-Christian heresy.

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Muslims regarded their own religion as superior, so there was little need to refute Christianity. The history of the extension of Islam and everyday life gave proof to the conviction, that it was them who got the upper hand and whom God favoured most. What Muslims feared was the influence of certain theological ideas from Christian doctrine and certain social practises which might corrupt the hearts of their fellow Muslims and the body of the society.

With regard to this fears and the permanent conflicts with Christian Byzantium, the crusaders and later the European powers Muslims remembered verses in the 9. Sura, which called to arms in a campaign against Christian Arab tribes at the border to Syria, confederates of Byzantium, which threatened the Muslims in the Arabian peninsula.

"[And] fight against those who - despite having been vouchsafed revelation [aforetime] - do not [truly] believe either in God or the Last Day, and do not consider forbidden that which God and His Apostle have forbidden, and do not follow the religion of truth [which God has enjoined upon them] till they [agree to] pay the exemption tax with a willing hand, after having been humbled [in war]." (Qur'an 9:29)

Such "Verses of the Sword" were presented as a final argument for fight and subordination of non-Muslims under Islamic rule, excluding all other verses promoting coexistence. During the times of the Mongol threat and facing European imperialism in the 20. century some commentaries of the Qur'an argued that these verses from the last years of revelation abrogate about 125 other verses calling for dialogue.

The Covenant of Omar - Jews and Christians in Jerusalem under Muslim Rule

In the reign of the first caliph Abu Bakr Muslim forces began in 634 to raid the outskirts of Syria and Egypt. Palestine and Jerusalem remained under Roman and Byzantine rule until it was taken by advancing Muslim forces. Not everyone in Egypt and Syria was eager to resist the Muslim invasion. Torn by religious disputes and tired of Byzantine rule and taxation they sometimes preferred an expected milder rule of Muslims.

After the capitulation of Jerusalem in 639, which was arranged by a minor Muslim tribal commander, the second caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab allowed the reestablishment of a Jewish community in Jerusalem.

The incident at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Umar refused to pray inside the church to avoid future claims by Muslims, often serves in Muslim apologetics as an example of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths. We should bear in mind, that we ultimately cannot prove the historicity of the event, and that the story was probably first related by Christian sources which would report it not to emphasize Muslim tolerance but Christian rights on maintaining their revered place of worship.

The rights of non-Muslims under Islam were guaranteed by the Covenant of Umar. Christians and Jews living in the city were granted various rights and protections in exchange for their acceptance of Muslim political and social domination. The covenant enumerates in detail many of the conditions of their subjugation, and served as a key foundational text in the legal elaboration of *dhimmi* ("subjected and protected person") status during the classical period of Islamic jurisprudence.

Modern scholars have questioned the authenticity of this agreement which exists in several different textual forms. Although the texts reflected the policies and attitudes towards the conquered population from the beginning of Muslim reign, they were collected in the form, in which they exist today, at least 200 years after the Muslim victory. There were even Christian communities who preserved the pact as a proof for their rights, sometimes adding a ruling, in reality never accepted, that Jews should not be allowed in their city.

Among the rights granted to *dhimmis* by the covenant are the protection of their persons, property, and the freedom to practice their own religious rites, provided they do so inconspicuously. In exchange they must pledge loyalty to their Muslim rulers, pay a special tax (the *jizya*) for adult males, which was regarded as an exchange for exemption from military service, and in general show deference and humility to Muslims in social interactions.

"In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate. This is a letter to the servant of God Umar [ibn al-Khattab], Commander of the Faithful, from the Christians of such-and-such a city. When you came against us, we asked you for safe-conduct (aman) for ourselves, our descendants, our property, and the people of our community, and we undertook the following obligations toward you:

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We shall not build, in our cities or in their neighbourhood, new monasteries, Churches, convents, or monks' cells, nor shall we repair, by day or by night, such of them as fall in ruins or are situated in the quarters of the Muslims.

...

We shall not manifest our religion publicly nor convert anyone to it. We shall not prevent any of our kin from entering Islam if they wish it.

...

We shall not seek to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments, the qalansuwa [skullcap], the turban, footwear, or the parting of the hair. We shall not speak as they do, nor shall we adopt their kunyas [names of respect, like "father of ..."].

...

We shall not display our crosses or our books in the roads or markets of the Muslims. We shall use only clappers in our churches very softly. We shall not raise our voices when following our dead. We shall not show lights on any of the roads of the Muslims or in their markets. We shall not bury our dead near the Muslims."

Most of the restrictions seemed to have been developed and imposed one by one during the first 250 years of Muslim reign. It is also important to note, however, that while the conditions of the covenant were authoritative, the level of enforcement varied, as shown by the existence of churches constructed long after the Muslim conquests. And every Muslim complaint and every enforcement of the covenant by Muslim rulers bears witness to the fact that reality often differed obviously in contrast to its regulations.

In 1772 Shaikh Hasan Al Kafrawi, a Muslim scholar in Cairo received a complaint concerning the behaviour of Jews and Christians.

"What do you say, O scholars of Islam, shining luminaries who dispel the darkness (may God lengthen your days!)? What do you say of the innovations introduced by the cursed unbelievers into Cairo, into the city of al-Muizz which by its splendour in legal and philosophic studies sparkles in the first rank of Muslim cities? What is your opinion concerning these deplorable innovations which are, moreover, contrary to the Pact of Umar which prescribed the expulsion of the unbelievers from Muslim territory?

...

They have become the owners of houses and build new ones of a solidity, durability, and height possessed by neither the houses nor mosques of the Muslims themselves. This state of affairs is spreading and is extending beyond all proportions. They contribute for the extension of their churches and convents; they seek to raise them higher and to give them a strength and a durability which even the mosques and the monasteries themselves do not have."

The restrictions in social life are clear discriminations with regard to human rights and they were sometimes imposed and enforced not to set apart but to humiliate another community. But it is not appropriate to call them discriminations with regard to medieval legal thinking and consciousness.

"The group consciousness of the members of the various religions was similar to that of modern nations. The adherents of another faith were not necessarily enemies, but certainly foreigners. ... In view of these facts, the modern term 'discrimination' can be applied to the Middle Ages only in a qualified sense. When an alien today is treated differently from a citizen, for example, if he is not permitted to be gainfully employed, he is not being discriminated against, but is so treated because he does not share the financial and other responsibilities of citizens or permanent residents. Similarly, Christians and Jews under Islam regarded it as natural, albeit burdensome, that certain restrictions were imposed on them by the Muslim community in the midst of which they lived, but to which they did not belong. They too discriminated against the Muslims. Thus, as a rule, they would certainly not feel themselves obliged to provide for the poor of the Muslims or to ransom their captives." (S.D. Goitein. A Mediterranean Society. p 274)

Living and Praying Side by Side - How to Share Common and Holy Space

Everyday Life

Jews and Christians had the freedom of choosing a suitable profession or place of dwelling. *Shari'a* (Islamic Law) guaranteed security of life and property and freedom in cult but restricted its public exercise. Severe restrictions and persecutions are mentioned but on the other hand we have detailed reports about close social interaction in everyday life and cooperation in business affairs between

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various groups. Ideal concepts of Muslim superiority and seclusion favoured by a conservative *ulama* (scholars of Islam) were counteracted by this and often led to a more tolerant attitude.

In regard to economy, during long times of Jerusalem's Muslim dominated history Christian pilgrims were a major part of customers in Jerusalem. Christian and Jewish travellers sometimes tried to do some business to counterweight travel expenses with commercial profits.

As far as we know, seldom did members of one group speak detractively about specific members of another group whom they were acquainted with, set aside repeated religious formulas denoting the group as a whole. Even renegades, converts to Islam, in some cases were not cut off entirely from their former community.

Festivities and Rituals of other Faith Communities

In literature and personal correspondence until the 19. century there is little reference and less interest in the inner spiritual life of other faiths. Often their practises and rituals could not be observed from outside or were guarded against hostile eyes. But the religious communities were not always confined to the houses of worship or even the walls of the city.

In the countryside some festivities of Christians were also attended by Muslims, even of high status: For example the "Saint Georges Day" in spring, which had a pagan and ancient tradition of fertility cult but also a Muslim interpretation as being the "Day of Khidr", a venerated but somehow ambiguous prophetic figure in the Qur'an often identified with Elias. The reading of the Esther Scroll on Purim sometimes had Muslims as guests who took part in the merry atmosphere. On the other hand funerals of a minority, a public display of faith that could not be avoided, were a constant aim of molestations by youth and bystanders.

In Jerusalem and its vicinity, the festival of *nabi Musa* (Prophet Moses) which begins on the Friday before the Orthodox Good Friday caused a lot of fears in 19. and 20. century. Muslims came from Hebron and Nablus and gathered in Jerusalem in large numbers, sometimes starting trouble and trying to molest orthodox pilgrims during the Easter week. But authorities were eager to suppress the outbreak of violence and an English traveller in 1875 had to admit "*It speaks well for the Turks that with all the elements of a bloody riot thus ready to hand, with crowds of fanatics, Christian and Moslem, in direct contact, still no disturbances occurred.*"

Open Debate and Apologetics

Even in the best circumstances it was difficult for Jews, Christians and Muslims to engage as equals in dialogue. Open discussions were restricted to the private and found no place in the public area. Each community had its own polemic and apologetic writings which circulated undisturbed among themselves. With few exceptions Islamic apologetic focuses more on Christianity than on Judaism. The major accusations were: altering the divine revelation, propagating errant doctrine and grievous mistakes in religious practices which would open the frontiers to polytheism and pagan practises.

Worship

It was not unusual in the early period and even later for Muslims to visit and even pray in Christian churches in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Palestine and Syria. During the first century of the conquest it was a constant practice to require a quarter or a half of a church in settled districts and to use it as a mosque. During the Umayyad period one frequently reads of joint Muslim-Christian gatherings and even discussions held in churches.

Muslim scholars came to different views in regard with using existing churches as places of temporary Muslim worship. Those who forbid prayer argued, that these were places of heresy and idolatry. Those who permitted it, often made the distinction, that a Muslim could pray here but should not face painted figures. And when it was declared permitted some scholars even thought it obligatory to ask Christians' permission and consent for this act, while others regarded this to be not obligatory for under Umar's covenant all churches should be regarded as Muslim property lent to Christians.

There were several sites in Jerusalem revered by Christians, especially in the Kidron Valey and the Mount of Olives, which also attracted Muslims. Both communities expected the Judgement Day to

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take place here. One of the sites visited was the Church of Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which was considered to enclose her tomb. The caliph Umar is said to have prayed here two *rak'a* (prostrations) "at one of the gates of Hell". In the following centuries Muslims continued to pray here and on the Mount of Olives, although there were severe reservations. A Tradition of one of the successors (the first generation of Muslims after Muhammad) states: "*Do not come to the Church of Mary ... nor go into the two pillars in the church of the Mount of Olives, for they are both idols and whoever enters there in a spirit of devotion, his act shall be annulled.*"

Pilgrims, Hermits and Sufis

The native historian Al-Muqaddasi informs in the 10. century about the most characteristic trait of life in Jerusalem: "*No day passed without foreigners.*" Pilgrims of all faiths populated the city and sometimes decided to stay. Pilgrims in their religious fervour often lacked the more tolerant or precautionary attitude of the inhabitants concerning members of other faith and were a constant danger to social peace. Christian pilgrims were repeatedly instructed by Christian residents of Jerusalem and their guides not to offend Muslims by demonstrating too much pious vigour or zeal.

Jerusalem in her Muslim history has always been a provincial town with no political significance, which was governed from Damascus or Ramla. For Muslims, whether pious or persecuted because of their unorthodox views and ways of life, she was a most favoured place for banishment, exile, retirement or recluse. And also a good choice for burial, because the Day of Resurrection and the Final Judgement would take place here. It was a proper place for Christian hermits and sufis, followers in the path of Islam mysticism. The Hermits, populating the mountains in the environment of Jerusalem probably had some contact with pious Muslims. There are too many parallels in the teachings and practise of Christian ascetism and Islamic *tasawwuf* (mystic teaching) in the first centuries of Islam.

According to local legend Rabi'a Adhawiyya from Basra (717-801), one of the greatest Sufi women visited and lived in Jerusalem in her last years. She is said to have been buried at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Since Ayyubid and Mamluk times, when Sufism began to flourish in Jerusalem, more than 20 Sufi convents (*zawiya* or *takkiya*) and guesthouses in Jerusalem were the home of Rifai, Mevlevi, Bistami, Shadhili, Adhamiya, Kadiri and Naqshbandi sufis coming from all over the Islamic world. A place for preaching or demonstrating their practises of meditation, prayer and *dhikr* (remembrance of God) was the Haram, where each group had its favourite place.

Charity

Jerusalem was a city of the pious and the poor. Expecting charity in a spiritual elevated place like this people of all kind gathered in the city. Pilgrims often stayed in Jerusalem, once they had reached the holy city and had to live on alms. Each faith community could hardly manage its own flock.

According to Muslim belief and traditions *sadaqa* (charity or alms) must be given to everyone in need, regardless of faith. Charity was provided by guesthouses, hospitals and kitchens. Some soup kitchens could serve up to 600 meals a day for the needy and the poor.

Antoine Morison, a French traveller, gives an example of the way Muslim charity was recognized by Christians. He reports in 1705 about the charity of an Ottoman *imaret* (kitchen), endowed by Hurrem Sultan, the wife of Sulayman the Magnificent in 16. century. He does not mention Hurrem but assigns her building and the original impulse of charity to Jerusalem's most famous Christian patroness, the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine. He does not deny Muslim charity but makes clear he understands it as inferior to Christian.

"The Hospital, which Saint Helena had built and founded in Jerusalem, still exists, not in the good conditions which she established there to ease the pain of the poor, but in those which mark the disproportion between Christian charity and Turkish compassion. Each day, approximately one pound of bread and one bowl of soup, made with olive oil and some vegetables, are given to each poor person who shows up ... The Turkish recognize, according to a continues tradition among them, that they owe this hospital and the assets allocated for it to a powerful Christian woman. They are just enough not to deprive poor Christians who come there, and these later receive the same amount as the Muslims, but as they go there only rarely the director of the place is not bothered by them."

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Fighting the Infidels from the West

From a pessimistic view misunderstanding and disinterest not sympathy seems to be the constant in interfaith relations in Jerusalem. There is one episode in history which was to shape relations in a most specific and negative way.

"In the long sequence of interaction and fusion between Orient and Occident out of which our civilization has grown, the Crusades were a tragic and destructive episode". (Stephen Runciman: The Crusades)

There was a gruesome bloodbath in Jerusalem in 1066 but not as all-embracing as the reports of chroniclers make us believe. Still it left the Muslims in stupor, because they were totally unaware of the power of the Christian attack.

It is an astonishing fact, that the conquest of Jerusalem and its conversion into an exclusively Christian city did not arouse strong Muslim reactions for decades. It took some time to adjust to this new peril and challenge. Europeans were regarded as inferior - especially their lack of culture and science, their rudeness and their lax attitude towards women gave proof to this opinion. But their vigorous fighting and their uncompromising warfare began to bother the Muslims. A century later the city was taken by Salah al-Din and reintegrated in the Islam world. The ceding of the city into the hands of the Christian emperor Frederick thirty years later immediately aroused widely diffused protests in the Muslim world. Another century and all of the Christian dominions, ports and fortresses returned to Muslim control.

The revitalisation of *jihad* (fighting for defence of Islam) by Salah al-Din and his predecessor Nur al-Din was the key factor in regaining lost territory. Jihad propaganda now served as a rallying-cry, as a force for unification and commitment in Muslim society at large..

There was another and even more catastrophic experience for Muslims in the century to follow - the Mongol Invasion - which devastated and struck Central Asia, Persia, Mesopotamia and Syria with yet unknown vigour and brutality and intensified Muslim horror of barbarian invasion. The historian Ibn al-Athir states in the 13. century: *"O would that my mother had not born me or that I had died and become a forgotten thing ere this befell! ... Nay, it is unlikely that mankind will see the like of this calamity, until the world comes to an end and perishes, except the final outbreak of Gog and Magog. ... For even Deccal (Antichrist) will spare such as follow him, though he destroy those who oppose him, but these Tatars spared none, slaying women and men and children, ripping open pregnant women and killing unborn babes."*

The Shade of the Crusades

The religious and cultural halo of the crusades affected the Muslims attitude towards dangerous and at first sight underestimated infidels and uncivilized barbarians. In the context of the Crusades, Jerusalem, once lost, had become the focus of intense religious yearning on the part of Muslims. The veneration of the holy city developed a new dimension. In centuries when Islam was at stake *Al-Quds* was to develop into a symbol of Islamic unity, zeal and vulnerability.

In the 19. and 20. centuries, when European superiority found access to the Near East, the idea of crusades was still present in western political rhetoric. General Maurice Paul Emmanuel Sarrail, the French High Commissioner in Syria, went on his first visit to Damascus in 1924 to see the tomb of Salah al-Din, where he exclaimed: *'Saladin, nous sommes ici!' - 'Saladin, we are here!'*

The Crusades shaped western European perceptions of the Muslim world just as decisively as they formed Muslims views of the West. Some contemporary Arab and Muslim scholars evaluate the crusading phenomenon in the light of recent experiences such as colonialism, Arab nationalism and the establishment of the state of Israel.

A strange kind of holiness can also develop as a side-effect, or as an offshoot, of nationalism. This particular case applies to Palestine. Although Palestine as a whole was not regarded by Muslims in the early period of Islam as particularly holy, it became so as a result of the crusades which introduced to Muslims the idea of its holiness by extension. The Jewish immigration, in bulk after 1918, reinforced the idea further. Now the whole country was regarded as a *waqf*, a trust given only to the Muslims. The Dome of the Rock in particular has become a potent symbol, almost a logo, for this holiness, not only in the Arab but in the whole Islamic world for Palestinian-Arab-Muslim struggle.

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Indeed, the idea of the Crusades permeates many aspects of modern life in the Arab and the wider Islamic world. For some, the concept of the Crusades is seen as a manifestation of the continuing struggle between Islam and Christianity. For some even Zionism is just another sort of crusading and the terms "European Crusading" and "Jewish Crusading" become interchangeable. Up to this day, parallels are frequently drawn in the Arabic media, works of literature and academic books between the rise and fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the current situation in the state of Israel. As long as Israel with a Western orientation and a militarised society continues to occupy the same geographical space as the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem did in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is all too easy for such parallels to be made.

Ottoman indifference and the Rise of European Powers

After years of stagnation and at the beginning of Ottoman reign in 1512 Jerusalem only had 4.000 inhabitants, which tripled during the first thirty years. Sultan Sulayman's gigantic wall revealed, that the government was not able to guarantee the safety of Jerusalem's environment. Bedouins in their raids not only pressed Christians or Jews but also murdered Muslims, burnt even copies of the Qur'an and taxed Muslim pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a holy city which lived on the care lavished on it from outside. Her political, administrative or cultural, set aside religious, significance was low. In economic respect she was too far away from the main lines of international traffic. She often lacked the absence of a strong central government and her population was often tormented by earthquakes, famines, excessive taxation and plundering in her neighbourhood.

Napoleon's military expedition to Egypt in 1798 was a alarming signal to the Islamic world that European nations were trying to gain power in its homelands. During the following century till the end of World War I nearly every Muslim country was invaded, colonized or controlled by Great Britain, France, Russia, The Netherlands, Spain, Austria-Hungary or Italy.

The modern history of Jerusalem begins with Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt in 1831. His reforms were continued by the Ottomans. Both, the pashas in Cairo and the Ottomans were convinced that reforms of ancient institutions, regulations and social and cultural barriers had to be performed, should their countries not become the prey of foreign nations.

Among Ibrahim Pasha's and the Ottomans' endeavours were the disarming of civil population, enforced recruitment for a standing army, appointment of local people to administrative posts, relieving restrictions on non-Muslim religious communities and the formation of consultative bodies where Christians and Jews could participate.

Christian institutions were allowed more freedom of activities. The Latin patriarchate of Jerusalem was revived in 1847, the Greek patriarch moved from Istanbul to Jerusalem and in 1841 an Anglican bishopric was established. New synagogues and *yeshivas* (religious schools), churches, Christian convents, missionary institutes and schools opened.

The composition of Jerusalem's population totally changed from 1870 to 1930. A predominant Muslim and Eastern Christian city had turned into a Jewish dominated. The census of 1931 counted 50.000 Jews, 20.000 Christians and 20.000 Muslims. After World War I Jerusalem had become the place of the British Mandatory Government, the executives of several Jewish world organisations, the National Council of Jews of Palestine and the Muslim Supreme Council.

Eretz Israel or Palestine - Jewish Settlement, British Rule and Arab Resistance

First bloody clashes between Arabs and Jews occurred in 1920 which were followed by a general uprising of Arabs in 1936. In this year the Peel Royal Commission recommended the creation of an Arab and a Jewish state with the exclusion of Jerusalem, which should remain under British mandate.

The ceasefire of 1948 left Jerusalem divided. In the following year Israel proclaimed Jerusalem its capital. In 1967 the Eastern part of Jerusalem was conquered by Israeli forces.

The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa Mosque were administered by a *waqf* (endowment or trust) that enjoyed autonomy since the times of the Muslim conquest. The State of Israel allowed Muslims access to the Haram platform. Only Muslims not Jews are allowed to pray here. But since the Intifada conflict the access for Muslims under the age of 45 has been restricted. The access of non-Muslims to the mosque compound is now also disputed between Israel and the *waqf* which objects to it.

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Since the beginning of the 20. century Palestinians consider the Haram site to be in constant danger of the activities of fundamentalist Christians and Jews, who threaten to wipe out any track of Muslim history on the temple platform or in Jerusalem.

1967 when East Jerusalem fell to Israeli hands General Uzi Narkiss is said to have been approached but refused to blow up the Dome of the Rock.

1967 Israel razed the Maghrebinian Quarter immediately in front of the Western wall to open place for a large plaza.

Since 1968 Israeli archeological excavations under the Haram are claimed to harm and possibly destabilize the structure of the Islamic buildings on top of it.

In 1969 an Australian with fundamentalist Christian background set the Al-Aqsa mosque on fire to free the way for the rebuilding of the temple.

1981 an American-born Israeli entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque and started firing randomly, killing two worshippers.

The problem of the State of Israel and Jerusalem confronting the Muslim World today has neither precedent nor parallel in Islamic history. The Muslim world has often tended to regard it as another instance of modern colonialism or a repetition of the Crusades. But the problem obviously can no longer be solved in terms of "we" and "them".

For some Muslims the answer is simple - Muslims must regain the rule over Jerusalem.

"Ultimately if the entire world truly strives for peace in the city of al-Quds, Muslims must retake the upper hand and regain its rule, as they alone would provide continuously the guarantee of freedom of worship and safety for the citizens of the City and they will re-implement Umar's Covenant for a third time. Only then will al-Quds be, as it is meant to be, a City of Peace."

(Mohammed Abdul Hameed Al-Khateeb. Al-Quds. The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions. London: Ta Ha Publishers 1998 – cf. Appendix, no. 5)

Other voices emphasize the need for a reconciliation and a balance of claims.

"The Abrahamic tradition to which we are the heirs reminds us of our distinctive identities, as well as our shared heritage. The shared heritage and belief in one God summons all believers to be peace-makers. We should affirm the holiness of Jerusalem for all three faiths and recognize the rights of all to worship in their own way. We should affirm that claims made in the name of tradition cannot exclude or nullify the claims of others. We must also affirm the sanctity of every individual's life, integrity, and property and condemn all violence and violations of human and national rights."

(Muhammad Hourani: A Muslim Approach to Dialogue in Jerusalem in the New Millennium. The Jerusalem Post Millenium Special. 2000 – cf. Appendix, no. 6)

والله أعلم

Wa Allah a'alam

And God knows best

Wilhelm Sabri Hoffmann
Email: sabri@wshoffmann.de

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1. Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) - Changing the Qibla

(2:142) The weak-minded among people will say, "What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have hitherto observed?" Say: "God's is the east and the west; He guides whom He wills onto a straight way."

Before his call to prophethood, and during the early Meccan period of his ministry, the Prophet - and his community with him - used to turn in prayer towards the Ka`bah. This was not prompted by any specific revelation, but was obviously due to the fact that the Ka`bah - although it had in the meantime been filled with various idols to which the pre-Islamic Arabs paid homage - was always regarded as the first temple ever dedicated to the One God (cf. 3:96). Since he was aware of the sanctity of Jerusalem - the other holy centre of the unitarian faith - the Prophet prayed, as a rule, before the southern wall of the Ka`bah, towards the north, so as to face both the Ka`bah and Jerusalem. After the exodus to Medina he continued to pray northwards, with only Jerusalem as his giblih (direction of prayer). About sixteen months after his arrival at Medina, however, he received a revelation (verses 142-150 of this surah) which definitively established the Ka`bah as the giblih of the followers of the Quc'an. This "abandonment" of Jerusalem obviously displeased the Jews of Medina, who must have felt gratified when they saw the Muslims praying towards their holy city; and it is to them that the opening sentence of this passage refers. If one considers the matter from the historical point of view, there had never been any change in the divine commandments relating to the giblih: there had simply been no ordinance whatever in this respect before verses 142-150 were revealed. Their logical connection with the preceding passages, which deal, in the main, with Abraham and his creed, lies in the fact that it was Abraham who erected the earliest structure of the temple which later came to be known as the Ka'bah.

(2:143) And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way,* so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you. And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed [for this community] the direction of prayer which thou [O Prophet] hast formerly observed: for this was indeed a hard test for all but those whom God has guided aright. But God will surely not lose sight of your faith-for, behold, God is most compassionate towards man, a dispenser of grace.

The "hard test" (kabirah) consisted in the fact that ever since their exodus to Medina the Muslims had become accustomed to praying towards Jerusalem - associated in their minds with the teachings of most of the earlier prophets mentioned in the Qur'an -and were now called upon to turn in their prayers towards the Ka`bah, which at that time (in the second year after the hijrah) was still used by the pagan Quraysh as a shrine dedicated to the worship of their numerous idols. As against this, the Qur'an states that true believers would not find it difficult to adopt the Ka`bah once again as their giblih: they would instinctively realize the divine wisdom underlying this commandment which established Abraham's Temple as a symbol of God's oneness and a focal point of the ideological unity of Islam.

(The Message of the Qur'an. Translated and explained by Muhammad Asad. Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus 1984 [1980])

"Narrated Al-Bara' bin 'Azib: When the Prophet came to Medina, he stayed first with his grandfathers or maternal uncles from Ansar. He offered his prayers facing Baitul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) for sixteen or seventeen months, but he wished that he could pray facing the Ka'ba (at Mecca). The first prayer which he offered facing the Ka'ba was the 'Asr (evening) prayer in the company of some people. Then one of those who had offered that prayer with him came out and passed by some people in a mosque who were bowing during their prayers (facing Jerusalem). He said addressing them, "By Allah, I testify that I have prayed with Allah's Apostle facing Mecca (Ka'ba)." Hearing that, those people changed their direction towards the Ka'ba immediately. Jews and the people of the scriptures used to be pleased to see the Prophet facing Jerusalem in prayers but when he changed his direction towards the Ka'ba, during the prayers, they disapproved of it."

(Sahih Bukhari)

2. Surah Al-Isrâ (The Night Journey)

Because of the mention of the children of Israel in verses 2-8 and 101-104, some of the contemporaries of the Prophet used to designate this surah by the title of Banu Isra'il ("The Children of Israel"); most of the classical commentators, however, prefer the title Al-Isra'.

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE DISPENSER OF GRACE:

(17:1) LIMITLESS in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem] - the environs of which We had blessed - so that We might show him some of Our symbols: for, verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing.

"The Inviolable House of Worship" (al-masjid al-haram is one of the designations given in the Qur'an to the Temple of the Ka'bah, the prototype of which owed its origin to Abraham and was "the first Temple set up for mankind" (3:96), i.e., the first ever built for the worship of the One God. "The Remote [lit., "farthest"] House of Worship", on the other hand, denotes the ancient Temple of Solomon - or, rather, its site - which symbolizes here the long line of Hebrew prophets who preceded the advent of Muhammad and are alluded to by the phrase "the environs of which We had blessed". The juxtaposition of these two sacred temples is meant to show that the Qur'an does not inaugurate a "new" religion but represents a continuation and the ultimate development of the same divine message which was preached by the prophets of old.

Although the term ayah is most frequently used in the Qur'an in the sense of "[divine] message", we must remember that, primarily, it denotes "a sign [or "token"] by which a thing is known" (Qamus). As defined by Raghib, it signifies any perceivable phenomenon (irrespective of whether it is apparent to the senses or only to the intellect) connected with a thing that is not, by itself, similarly perceivable: in brief, a "symbol". Hence, the expression min ayatina may be suitably rendered as "some of Our symbols", i.e., insight, through symbols, into some of the ultimate truths.

(17:2) And [thus, too,] We vouchsafed revelation unto Moses, and made it a [source of] guidance for the children of Israel, [commanding them:] "Do not ascribe to any but Me the power to determine your fate,

The conjunctive particle "And" which introduces this verse is meant to show that the mystic Night Journey - and, by implication, the subsequent ascension as well - were experiences of the same high order of divine grace as the revelation bestowed upon Moses. The Qur'an mentions in 4:164 that "God spoke His word unto Moses", i.e., directly (takliman); see also 7:143-144, and especially verse 144, in which God says to Moses, "I have raised thee above all people ... by virtue of My speaking [unto thee]".

(17:3) O you descendants of those whom We caused to be borne [in the ark] with Noah! Behold, he was a most grateful servant [of Ours]!"

(17:4) And we made [this] known to the children of Israel through revelation: "Twice, indeed, will you spread corruption on earth and will indeed become grossly overbearing!

(17:5) Hence, when the prediction of the first of those two [periods of iniquity] came true, We sent against you some of Our bondmen of terrible prowess in war, and they wrought havoc throughout the land: and so the prediction was fulfilled.

(17:6) And after a time We allowed you to prevail against them once again, and aided you with wealth and offspring, and made you more numerous [than ever].

(17:7) [And We said:] "If you persevere in doing good, you will but be doing good to yourselves; and if you do evil, it will be [done] to yourselves." And so, when the prediction of the second [period of your iniquity] came true, [We raised new enemies against you, and allowed them] to disgrace you utterly, and to enter the Temple as [their forerunners] had entered it once before, and to destroy with utter destruction all that they had conquered.

(17:8) Your Sustainer may well show mercy unto you; but if you revert [to sinning], We shall revert [to chastising you]. And [remember this:] We have ordained that [in the hereafter] hell shall close upon all who deny the truth.

(The Message of the Qur'an. Translated and explained by Muhammad Asad. Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus 1984 [1980])

3. Inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock

Inscription on the Outer Face of the Octagonal Arcade

South: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God alone, without partner. Say: He is God, One, God, the Everlasting, who has not begotten and has not been begotten. He is without equal. [Qur'an, Surah 112] Muhammad is God's messenger, may God bless him.

Southwest: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God alone, without partner. Muhammad is God's messenger. God and His angels send blessings on the Prophet.

West: O you who believe, send blessings on him and salute him with all respect. [Qur'an Surah 33:56] In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God alone. Praise

Northwest: to God who has not taken a son and who doesn't have any partner in dominion nor any protector out of humbleness. Magnify Him greatly. [Qur'an Surah 17:111] Muhammad is God's messenger.

North: May God, His angels and His messengers bless him and God grant him peace and mercy. In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God alone, without partner.

Northeast. To Him belongs dominion and to Him belong praise. He gives life and He makes to die; He is powerful over all things. [conflation of Qur'an 64:1 and 57:2] Muhammad is God's messenger, may God bless him and accept his intercession on the day of resurrection for his community.

East: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God alone, without partner. Muhammad is God's messenger, may God bless him. There built this dome the servant of God

Southeast: 'Abd al-Malik, commander of believers, in the year seventy-two, may God accept it from him and be pleased with him. Amen. Lord of the worlds. Praise to God.

Inscription on the Inner Face of the Octagonal Arcade

South: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. There is no god but God alone, without partner. To Him belongs dominion and to Him belongs praise. He gives life and He makes to die; He is powerful over all things. [conflation of Qur'an 64:1 and 57:2] Muhammad is God's servant and His messenger.

Southeast: God and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O you who believe, send blessings on him and salute him with all respect. [Qur'an 33:56] May God bless him and grant him peace and mercy. O people of the book, do not go beyond the bounds in your religion,

East: nor say anything but the truth about God. The Messiah Jesus son of Mary, was only God's messenger, His word that He committed to Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him. So believe in God and His messengers. Do not say 'three'. Refrain,

Northeast: it is better for you. For God is one god. Glory he to Him - that He should have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. God suffices for a guardian [Qur'an 4:171]. The Messiah will not disdain to be

North: God's servant; nor will the angels who are stationed near to Him. Whoever disdains to serve him and waxes proud, He will muster them to Him, all of them. [Qur'an 4:172] O God, bless your messenger and servant, Jesus

Northwest: son of Mary. Peace be upon him the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive. That is Jesus son of Mary, in word of truth, about which they are doubting. It is not for God to take a son. Glory be to Him.

West: When He decrees a thing, he only says to it 'Be' and it is. God is my lord and your lord. So serve Him. This is a straight path. [Qur'an 19:34-36 paraphrased] God, His angels, and men possessed of knowledge and upholding justice bear witness that there is no god but He. There is no god but He

Southwest: the all-mighty, the all-wise. The true religion with God is Islam. Those who were given the book did not dissent except after knowledge came to them, when they became envious of each other. Whoever disbelieves in God's-signs, God will swiftly call to account. [Qur'an 3:18-19].

4. The Covenant of Umar

We heard from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ghanam [died 78/697] as follows: When Umar ibn al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, accorded a peace to the Christians of Syria, we wrote to him as follows:

In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate. This is a letter to the servant of God Umar [ibn al-Khattab], Commander of the Faithful, from the Christians of such-and-such a city. When you came against us, we asked you for safe-conduct (*aman*) for ourselves, our descendants, our property, and the people of our community, and we undertook the following obligations toward you:

We shall not build, in our cities or in their neighbourhood, new monasteries, Churches, convents, or monks' cells, nor shall we repair, by day or by night, such of them as fall in ruins or are situated in the quarters of the Muslims.

We shall keep our gates wide open for passersby and travellers. We shall give board and lodging to all Muslims who pass our way for three days.

We shall not give shelter in our churches or in our dwellings to any spy, nor bide him from the Muslims.

We shall not teach the Qur'an to our children.

We shall not manifest our religion publicly nor convert anyone to it. We shall not prevent any of our kin from entering Islam if they wish it.

We shall show respect toward the Muslims, and we shall rise from our seats when they wish to sit.

We shall not seek to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments, the *qalansuwa* [skullcap], the turban, footwear, or the parting of the hair. We shall not speak as they do, nor shall we adopt their *kunyas* [names of respect, like "father of ..."].

We shall not mount on saddles, nor shall we gird swords nor bear any kind of arms nor carry them on our persons.

We shall not engrave Arabic inscriptions on our seals.

We shall not sell fermented drinks.

We shall clip the fronts of our heads.

We shall always dress in the same way wherever we may be, and we shall bind the *zunar* [girdle] round our waists

We shall not display our crosses or our books in the roads or markets of the Muslims. We shall use only clappers in our churches very softly. We shall not raise our voices when following our dead. We shall not show lights on any of the roads of the Muslims or in their markets. We shall not bury our dead near the Muslims.

We shall not take slaves who have been allotted to Muslims.

We shall not build houses overtopping the houses of the Muslims.

- When I brought the letter to Umar, may God be pleased with him, he added, "We shall not strike a Muslim."

We accept these conditions for ourselves and for the people of our community, and in return we receive safe-conduct.

If we in any way violate these undertakings for which we ourselves stand surety, we forfeit our covenant [*dhimma*], and we become liable to the penalties for contumacy and sedition.

Umar ibn al-Khattab replied: Sign what they ask, but add two clauses and impose them in addition to those which they have undertaken. They are: "They shall not buy anyone made prisoner by the Muslims," and "Whoever strikes a Muslim with deliberate intent shall forfeit the protection of this pact."

(from Al-Tartushi, Siraj al-Muluk, 11. century)

5. Contemporary Muslim Argument for Regaining Rule over Jerusalem

We can conclude from this study that the Jews historically have no right in al-Quds and Palestine as a whole. Previously Canaanites lived in Jerusalem over hundreds of years earlier than the Jews.

Religiously, the Children of Israel could not be the true inheritors of al-Quds as they rejected Musa and refused to obey him. When Musa commanded them to enter the land, they refused by saying, 'Go you, and your Lord, and fight you two, while we sit here (and watch),' (Surah 5 [al-Ma'idah]: 27). Their entire history, as found in the Bible and their own historical and mythological works, is that of repudiation of some of the Prophets and murder of others, culminating in their rejection of Yahya and Isa, peace be upon them, and sealed with their refusal to accept the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, even though the Jews of the time recognised him and were, indeed, waiting for his arrival.

Therefore, from the evidence discussed in this work the rightful inheritors of al-Quds are the Muslims who affirm all of the Prophets without distinction and follow His Orders and beware of His prohibitions. Evidentially, history bears witness that Muslims alone guarantee freedom of worship to all faiths, whilst providing safety for all citizens of al-Quds. In the past when Jews ruled over Jerusalem they banned Christians from entering the city. However, at present the massacres in al-Aqsa mosque and al-Khalil mosque (Hebron) are further evidence of Jewish failure to guarantee the safety of worshippers.

Demolishing non-Jewish homes also demonstrates conclusively that Jerusalemites are denied freedom to live in their own city.

As for the Christians, when the Crusaders captured al-Quds they massacred seventy-thousand of its inhabitants who were mostly Muslims but included Christians and Jews as well. The Crusaders converted the Dome of the Rock into a church by placing a Cross on top of it, and they used al-Aqsa Mosque as a stable to keep horses.

In contrast, when the Muslims first captured Jerusalem, Umar Ibn al-Khattab wrote a covenant which guaranteed the safety of Christians, their possessions and their freedom of worship. This document was truly a magnificent testimony to the highest qualities of the Muslims against which the tawdry documents on 'Human Rights' look decisively pathetic, particularly when shown against the records of abuses.

When Salahu'd-Din captured Jerusalem from the Crusaders he re-implemented Umar's covenant in spite of the brutal excesses of the Christians. Ultimately if the entire world truly strives for peace in the city of al-Quds, Muslims must retake the upper hand and regain its rule, as they alone would provide continuously the guarantee of freedom of worship and safety for the citizens of the City and they will re-implement Umar's Covenant for a third time. Only then will al-Quds be, as it is meant to be, a City of Peace.

(Mohammed Abdul Hameed Al-Khateeb. Al-Quds. The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions. London: Ta Ha Publishers 1998)

6. Contemporary Muslim Argument for Dialogue in Jerusalem

Let me elaborate on the importance of Jerusalem to Muslims. For us, Jerusalem is the Dome of the Rock, Al-Aksa Mosque and Al Burak, where the Prophet Muhammad kept his horse during his nocturnal journeys. Jerusalem also contains 34 mosques, 27 of which stand within the walls of the Old City and are visited daily for prayer. Jerusalem also contains many houses belonging to Sufi orders, practitioners of Islamic mysticism, the graves of 24 Muslim leaders and 15 Muslim graveyards. Jerusalem has been a part of Muslim history and identity from the very emergence of Islam until today. Its many meanings for us include victory, defeat, sacrifice, and continuity.

...

One major obstacle to the peaceful coexistence of Palestinians and Jews in this country lays in the fact that every holy place is of great significance to both Islam and Judaism, and yet each religion claims exclusive rights over these sites. The conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians is not only over a small piece of land which each claims as its own, but over the historical-religious basis of both nations.

...

Islam did not seek to deny the validity of the other monotheistic religions. Other people were permitted to have different beliefs and attitudes. In fact, many Koranic verses deny the prophet the right and authority to force his values upon others, because the issue of faith is in the hands of God, and God alone has the power and the right to judge people. Furthermore, Muhammad was asked to behave with utmost magnanimity toward those who opposed his new religion, and to separate himself from them in a peaceful way.

The multiplicity of religions and nations in the world is no coincidence; it is a manifestation of the Lord's desire for pluralism. God created man and woman, the different people and the different tribes, so that they would get to know one another and work together in order to spread the Divine word - the word of monotheistic belief. Accordingly, the Koran demands that dialogue be held among the different religions in order to build the foundations of peace.

I therefore turn to my Muslim colleagues and ask them to join in the dialogue of peace. In a world that has become a global village, and in the era of electronic communications, there is no place for a policy of "we and them." In our worldwide village, there is no room for the dichotomy of Dar el-Islam and Dar el-Harb - the world of peace and the world of war - which existed in constant conflict with each other.

...

In Jerusalem, both sides must strive for a peace based on justice, not one maintained by military force. A just peace will encompass economic, educational, and social development for all, as well as a joint effort to preserve this holy place, which is one of the many blessings of God.

In order to achieve such peace, it is not enough merely to listen to each other and to understand each other's fears; we must find and focus on signs of hope that will help us to transcend those fears.

Although we live side by side in Jerusalem, we do not actually live together. Each side has its share of fear and suffering, but we must stop blaming each other. We must look to our shared religious values to overcome our differences, even as we remain deeply committed to our respective traditions.

The Abrahamic tradition to which we are the heirs reminds us of our distinctive identities, as well as our shared heritage. The shared heritage and belief in one God summons all believers to be peace-makers. We should affirm the holiness of the Jerusalem for all three faiths and recognize the rights of all to worship in their own way. We should affirm that claims made in the name of tradition cannot exclude or nullify the claims of others. We must also affirm the sanctity of every individual's life, integrity, and property and condemn all violence and violations of human and national rights.

Finally, we must pray that Jerusalem always remain a place of reconciliation and dialogue so that its unique character may nurture and sustain peace, love, and solidarity among all the families of the earth.

(Muhammad Hourani: A Muslim Approach to Dialogue in Jerusalem in the New Millennium. The Jerusalem Post Millenium Special. 2000)

<http://www.info.jpost.com/2000/Supplements/Millennium/encountersindex.html>