

## **The Significance of Jerusalem in Islam An Islamic Reference**

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Israel, now, is taking steps and practical measures every day by which it is trying to determine the future of Jerusalem well in advance, and to impose a policy of faits accomplis to consolidate its control over the city. In this context, the Israeli authorities are making intensive and urgent efforts to zionise the city and give it a Jewish character and appearance. Their rushed measures to bring about demographic changes in the composition of the population in Jerusalem, to strengthen the process of colonial settlement, and build settlements in and around it are simple examples of their attempts to change Jerusalem's identity, its character, and the nature of its civilisation and its population.

The "Jerusalem 3000" celebrations organised by the Israeli Municipality of Jerusalem are designed to affirm a claim to permanent, exclusive Israeli control of the city. The celebrations for what they called "three thousand years of David's city" are an attempt to lend their state historical legitimacy. History has proven that there can never be peace nor stability without justice.<sup>1</sup> The road to peace starts in Jerusalem and the solution of the issue of Jerusalem is the key to a just peace in the region.

The history of Jerusalem is an ancient one whose roots go back into the depths of time. Its land is one of humanity's oldest homelands, both in prehistoric times and in successive historic ages. It has witnessed numerous civilisations and God favoured it above all other parts of the Earth. It was, for example, one of the first places in the world in which there was monotheism, with divine messages being revealed. Noble prophets and messengers of God walked on its soil and the

Archangel Gabriel brought them word of the divine will for mankind. On the soil of Jerusalem they preached the monotheistic faith. Feelings often run high over Jerusalem. It has always been and will continue to be a major concern for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The history of Jerusalem has suffered distortion, falsification and alteration. Most of our historical researches, specifically those related to the history of Jerusalem before the Islamic conquest, are limited to biblical and orientalist studies.<sup>2</sup> The orientalists tend to underestimate the relevance of the Qur'an and Hadith to the thinking of the Muslims, and may indeed regard allusions to the Qur'an and the Prophet as merely a sort of general piety with little direct bearing on the postures and politics of the Muslims vis-a-vis Jerusalem. I shall, however, quote extensively from the Qur'an and the Traditions which were vividly present in the discussion and writing of the Muslims. Hence, this study is an attempt to offer an Islamic reference to the Islamic perspectives on Jerusalem. It depends mainly on Islamic sources, such as the Quran and the commentaries on it, as well as books of the Prophet Muhammad's traditions, Islamic historical sources and other sources or secondary references. As such, I hope it will be a useful compendium of source material on Jerusalem and a valuable guide to the reader, academic and non-academic, interested in Islamic Jerusalem.

Throughout this article I have chosen to use "Mushaf al-Madinah An-Nabawiyah, The Holy Qur'an and the English translation of its Meanings and Commentary", which has been revised and edited by the Presidency of Islamic Research, Ifta, call and Guidance in Saudi Arabia. When translating from Arabic into English an attempt has been made by the author to strike a balance between the strength of expression in the original and its exact meaning.

It should be noted that this study is not a study of the history of Jerusalem. This paper is an attempt to offer an Islamic reference to the conceptual framework within which the Muslims approached Jerusalem. It will attempt to answer such questions

as why the Muslims concerned themselves with this land and whether there is, in their view, any distinction between Jerusalem and the rest of the Arab and Muslim lands. In short, this study deals with the reasons for Muslims' having close links with Jerusalem, their intense concern for it, and their action to save, care for and preserve it, by demonstrating Jerusalem's special character, moral qualities and status in Islam.

I have endeavoured - in my interpretation, analysis and clarification of this history - to concentrate on, and look with complete openness at, the main events and focus on them all rather than confining myself to a part of them. I have also tried to take a comprehensive, realistic view of these events. I have followed a scientific historical methodology, and dealt with subjects according to the historical course of events, so as to be able to analyse causes, factors, circumstances and historical data. The study is divided into two sections: the status of Jerusalem in Islam and the manifestations of this status.

## **THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM IN ISLAM**

Jerusalem is regarded as a distinctive - perhaps the most distinctive - place on the Earth, quite different from any other place. This is because God has set it apart from all other places on Earth, especially honouring and glorying it. God has mobilised the souls, feelings and emotions of believers, attached their hearts to Jerusalem and made them yearn towards it. Jerusalem has been linked to the faith of the Muslims, and it has come to represent a living image in their minds as a result of the numerous verses revealed about the Holy City in the Quran, and because of the frequency with which the Prophet Muhammad spoke about it, enumerating its virtues and special features.

### **The Blessed Land**

One of the most comprehensive, of these virtues mentioned in the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad's tradition is that al-Sham (historical Syria) in general and Palestine in particular is regarded as a blessed land:

1. About the Prophet Abraham, the Holy Quran states: "But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lut (and directed them) to **the land which We have blessed for the nations**". (21: 71)
2. "(It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon, to his order, **to the land which We had blessed**: for We do know all things". (21: 81)
3. "Between them and **the Cities on which We had poured Our blessings**, We had placed Cities in prominent positions, and between them We had appointed stages of journey in due proportion: travel therein, secure, by night and by day". (34: 18)
4. "And We made a people, considered weak, inheritors of lands in both East and West, - **lands whereon We sent down Our blessings**". (7: 137)
5. "Glory to (Allah) who did take His Servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the **Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless**". (17: 1)
6. It is related that the Prophet Muhammad said: "God has blessed what lies between Al-Arish and the Euphrates, and has made Palestine particularly holy."<sup>3</sup>

Blessedness, here, as scholars have stated, is both physical and moral. Physical blessedness is represented - for example - in its exceptional strategic geographical location, the variety of its geographical features, and its numerous fruits. Its moral blessedness is represented - for example - in the fact that angels descended there and that the prophets preached and were buried there. It is the land where noble prophets such as Jesus, David and Solomon were born, grew up and had their missions, or to which other prophets migrated, like Abraham and Lot, or where they were buried, as in the cases of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. It is the land where the Prophet Muhammad prayed with the other prophets, as their Imam in Al-Aqsa Mosque on the night of his night journey and ascension, as Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal related in his Musnad, quoting Ibn Abbas.

It is also the place where angels descended. Gabriel used to descend there from Heaven bringing divine instruction to God's prophets and messengers, so they would preach to humanity. Other angels used to descend there as messengers to carry out a specific task. For example, the Quran states: "Has the story reached thee, of the honoured guests of Abraham? Behold, they entered his presence, and said: Peace! He said: Peace! Unknown people. Then he turned quickly to his household, brought out a fatted calf, and placed it before them. He said, will ye not eat? He conceived a fear of them. They said, fear not, and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge...". (51: 24-28)

In brief, the Prophet Muhammad described this moral blessedness, according to Al-Tirmidhi in his Sahih, quoting Zaid Ibn Thabit Al-Ansari, in the following words: "I heard God's Messenger say, 'How blessed is Syria (al-Sham)! How blessed is Syria!' 'And how is that, O Messenger of God?' People asked him. 'Those angels of God have spread their wings over Syria,' he answered".<sup>4</sup> "The prophets built Jerusalem," Ibn Abbas added. "And the prophets lived in it. There is not an inch in Jerusalem where a prophet has not prayed or an angel has not stood."

Among the aspects of this blessing, both physical and moral, and the monuments to it, are: the place where the Prophet Abraham migrated, the Holy land, the land of the night journey and ascension, the land to which Muslims first turned when praying, a land for sacred struggle for God's cause, a land of promise, the centre for the future Islamic Caliphate, and the place where people will be raised from the dead and assembled on the Day of Judgement.

### **One: The Place where the Prophet Abraham Migrated**

In the time of Canaanite sovereignty over Palestine, the Prophet Abraham (who was an Amorite from the Arabs who established the Babylonian state in Iraq) migrated to it when his people wanted to kill him. He left his country, Ur in Iraq, around

1805 BC, together with his nephew Lot and others, to try to spread his message. This is clear from verses in the Holy Quran and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, including the following:

1. "We said, O Fire! be thou cool, and safety for Abraham!. Then they planned against him: but We made them the greater losers. But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lot (and directed them) to the land which We have blessed for the nations". (21: 69-71)
2. "But Lot believed him, he said: I will leave home for the sake of my Lord". (29: 26)
3. Abu Dawud quoted Abdullah Ibn Umar as saying, "I heard God's Messenger say, 'There will be migration after migration. The best of the inhabitants of the Earth will live in the place where Abraham migrated, and the evil inhabitants will remain elsewhere on Earth'.<sup>5</sup>

## Two: The Holy Land

Namely, the purified land, because it was purified from idolatry and made a dwelling-place for prophets and believers, their shrines and burial places. This description is contained in Quranic verses and traditions of the Prophet, including the following:

1. The Holy Quran quoted the Prophet Moses as saying to his people, after their departure from Egypt: "O my people! Enter the holy land". (5: 21)
2. Ibn Asakir quoted Mu'adh Ibn Jabal as saying: "The holy land lies between Al-Arish and the Euphrates.

It has also been called the holy land because of the Islamic holy places that it contains, like Al-Aqsa Mosque, which Islam regards as one of only three places desirable to visit. Al-Bukhari and Muslim, in their Sahih collections of the Prophet's traditions, quoted Abu Hurayra as saying that God's Messenger said: "Set out deliberately on a journey only to three mosques: this mosque of mine (in Madina), the Sacred Mosque (in Makka), and Al-Aqsa Mosque."<sup>6</sup> In another tradition, he

described the virtue of living near Al-Aqsa Mosque and praying in it. Al-Tabarani and Al-Bazzar quoted Abu al-Darda' as saying that the Prophet Muhammad had said: "A prayer in the Sacred Mosque is worth 100,000 prayers, a prayer in my mosque is worth a thousand prayers, and a prayer in Jerusalem is worth five hundred prayers" compared to any other mosque.<sup>7</sup>

The history of Al-Aqsa Mosque, according to one of the Prophet's traditions (Hadith), goes back to the time of Adam when he first built the Aqsa Mosque after 40 years of building the Ka'ba in Makka. Abu Dharr stated: "I asked God's Messenger about the first mosque on Earth. 'The Sacred Mosque' (in Makka), he answered. 'And then what?' I asked. 'Al-Aqsa Mosque,' he said. 'And how long was it between them?' I asked. 'Forty years,' the Prophet replied.<sup>8</sup> Then it was renovated - the first time - by the Prophet Jacob, and then - for the second time - by the Prophet David. The building was completed by the Prophet Solomon. Ka'b Al-Ahbar - who was one of the great Jewish scholars in pre-Islamic times and then became a Muslim - mentioned that "Solomon built Jerusalem on ancient foundations." Al-Zarkashi wrote on page 30 of his book *A'lām Al-Masajid* that "Solomon renovated Al-Aqsa Mosque, he did not found it."

### **Three: The Land of the Night Journey and the Ascension *Al-Isra'* and *al-Mi'raj***

The Prophet Muhammad travelled to Jerusalem by night from Makka (the Sacred mosque), and ascended from there to the highest heavens. Jerusalem was the centre point for his earthly journey (the night journey) and the heavenly one (the ascension). It was the place where his night journey ended and his ascension began. As the Quran states:

1. "Glory to (Allah) who did take His Servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless". (17: 1)

2. During the ascension, in which the Prophet saw Gabriel in his original form, "For indeed he saw him at a second descent, near

the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary. Near it is the Garden of Abode. Behold, the Lote-tree was shrouded with what shrouds. (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong! For truly did he see, of the signs of his Lord, the Greatest!". (53: 13-18)

#### **Four: The Land of the First Qibla (Direction of Prayer)**

The Muslims used to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed. This continued for 16 or 17 months, until the direction of prayer was changed from Jerusalem to the Ka'ba, in the middle of the month of Sha'ban, or possibly during Rajab, in the second year after the Prophet migrated to Madina. The Quran states: "We see the turning of the face (for guidance) to the heavens: now shall We turn thee to a Qibla that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque: wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction". (2: 144)

#### **Five: The Land of Steadfastness and Sacred Struggle *Ribat* and *Jihad*:**

There are many traditions of the Prophet Muhammad to the effect that a person who lives in Jerusalem is like one who struggles or is garrisoned there for God's cause. These include:

1. Mu'adh Ibn Jabal quoted the Prophet as saying: "O Mu'adh! God Almighty will enable you to conquer Syria after my death, from Al- Arish to the Euphrates. Their men and women will be garrisoned until the Day of Judgement. Whoever from among you chooses one of the coasts of Syria or Jerusalem is in the sacred struggle (jihad) until the Day of Judgement".
2. The Imam Ahmad related in his Musnad that Abu Umama Al-Bahili quoted the Prophet as saying: "A group from my community (Umma) are still knowledgeable about the truth, they are vanquishing their enemy, and those who disagree with them cannot harm them until Almighty God's command comes to them. They are thus." "O Messenger of God," he was asked, "where are they?" "In and around Jerusalem," the Prophet replied.<sup>9</sup>

3. With regard to the decisive battle on the banks of the River Jordan, Ibn Hajr Al-Asqalani related that Abu Idris Al-Khawlani heard from Nahik Ibn Surim Al-Sakuni that the Prophet Muhammad said: "You will fight the pagans until the remnant of you fights on the River Jordan, you to the east of it and they to the west of it." Al-Saukuni said that he did not know where on earth the River of Jordan was at that time<sup>10</sup> This means that this battle which the Prophet foretold will take place on the two banks of the River Jordan. The Muslims' camp will be on the East of the river, where the state of Jordan now is, and the other forces will have their camp west of the river, namely in Palestine.

### **Six: The Land of Promise<sup>11</sup>**

God has promised His servants who believe in Him and do good that they will defeat their enemies, will be established firmly and will be appointed to rule Jerusalem. The Quran says in this connection:

1. "And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Book, that twice would they do mischief on the earth and be elated with mighty arrogance (and twice would they be punished). When the first of the warnings came to pass, We sent against you Our servants given to terrible warfare; they entered the very inmost parts of your homes; and it was a warning (completely) fulfilled. Then did We grant you victory over them: We gave you increase in resources and sons, and made you the more numerous in manpower. If ye did well, ye did well for yourselves; if ye did evil, (ye did it) against yourselves. So when the second of the warnings came to pass, (We permitted your enemies) to disfigure your faces, and to enter your Temple as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction all that fell into their power". (17: 4-7)

2. "And We said thereafter (after Moses) to the Children of Israel, dwell securely in the land (of promise): but when the second of the warnings came to pass, We gathered you together in a mingled crowd". (17: 104)

3. "Shame is pitched over them (like a tent) wherever they are found, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men; they draw on themselves wrath from Allah. And pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution". (3: 112)
4. "Behold! thy Lord did declare that He would send against them, to the Day of Judgment, those who would afflict them with grievous chastisement...We broke them up into sections on this earth". (7: 167-168)
5. "Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the land". (21: 105)
6. "Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion-the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace". (24: 55)

### **Seven: The Centre for the Future Islamic Khilafa<sup>12</sup>**

Jerusalem is the centre and headquarter for the future Islamic Khilafa (Caliphate) at the time when sufferings and strife intensify at the end of time. On this subject, the Prophet Muhammad stated:

1. Imam Ahmad quoted Ma'qal Ibn Yasar as saying that the Prophet had stated: "Tyranny will not be long in appearing after I am gone. Whatever tyranny appears, a like amount of justice will go, until people are born under tyranny who have never known anything else. Then God will bring justice, and whatever justice comes, a like amount of tyranny will go, until people are born under justice who have never known anything else."<sup>13</sup>
2. Imam Ahmad quoted al-Nu'man Ibn Bashir as saying that the Prophet had stated: "Prophethood will last with you for as long as God wants it to last. Then He will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be a rightly guided succession (Khilafa) according to the method of prophethood, and things will be as

God wishes them to be. Then He will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be a voracious kingdom, and things will be as God wishes them to be. Then He will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be a forceful kingdom, and things will be as God wishes them to be. Then He will end it if He wishes to end it. Then there will be a Khilafa according to the method of Prophethood." Then he fell silent.<sup>14</sup>

3. Ibn Asakir quoted Yunus Ibn Maysara Ibn Halbas as saying that the Prophet had stated: "This matter (namely the Khilafa) will be after me in Madina, then in Syria, then in the Jazira, then in Iraq, then in Madina, then in Jerusalem. If it is in Jerusalem, its home country is there, and if any people expel it, it will not return there for ever."<sup>15</sup>

4. Imam Ahmad, Al-Hakim and Abu Dawud quoted Abdullah Ibn Zughb Al-Ibadi who heard from Abdullah Ibn Hawwala Al-Azdi that: "The Prophet put his hand on my head, and then said: 'Ibn Hawwala, if you see that the Caliphate has taken its abode in the holy land, then the earthquake, the tribulations and great events are at hand, and the Last Hour on that day will be closer to people than my hand is to your head."<sup>16</sup>

5. Ibn Sa'd quoted Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Abi Amiyra al-Muzani, "There will be an oath of allegiance according to guidance in Jerusalem."<sup>17</sup> In the past, the Caliph was acknowledged by the taking of the oath of allegiance by the members of the Muslim community. According to this Hadith the Muslim community would take the oath of allegiance to a Caliph in Jerusalem.

### **Finally: The Land where the Dead Will be Raised and Gathered**

This terminology can be found in many of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, including:

1. Imam Ahmad in his Masnad quoted Maymuna daughter of Sa'd, a client of God's Messenger, as having said, "O Prophet, give us a pronouncement (fatwa) about Jerusalem." "The land where they will be raised and gathered," he answered.<sup>18</sup>

2. The Quran says: "And listen for the Day when the Caller will call out from a place quite near". (50: 41) Commentators say that the nearby place from which the Israfil will blow his trumpet is the rock in Jerusalem. In this land people will be gathered on the Day of Judgement, according to theological scholars.

To sum up, the Muslims' devotion to Jerusalem is not a result of earthly or colonialist aims, or a material desire to expand their rule and domination, nor is it based on false racist nationalist claims. It is this combination of special moral qualities that constitutes the main and fundamental reason and the motivation for Muslims to be extremely concerned for Jerusalem, and to work to save and preserve it throughout the ages.

### THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS STATUS

This special status of Jerusalem has been expressed and apparent in the concern shown by the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and followers to save it, preserve it and care for it to the utmost extent, in the following ways:

1. By establishing spiritual importance in the miracle of the night journey and ascension experienced by the Prophet Muhammad on 27 Rajab two years before the Hijra.<sup>19</sup> In the word of the Qur'an, "Glory to (Allah) who did take His Servant for a Journey by night **from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless**". (17: 1) Thus the Sacred Mosque of the Ka'ba in Makka was closely linked with Al-Aqsa Mosque, and Jerusalem and its surrounding area were linked with the Muslims' creed and hearts.

This happened at a harsh and critical time when the Prophet and the oppressed Muslims were enduring all kinds of injury and persecution, especially after the death of his beloved, caring and trusting wife Khadija; and his protector and guardian uncle Abu Talib. The Prophet had also gone to Taif to seek help from Tha'qif. He despaired of any good from Tha'qif, because they incited their fools and slaves to insult him, shout at him and throw stones at him, injuring his feet so that they bled. He turned to God with the words, "O God, I complain to You of the

feebleness of my strength, the scantiness of my resources and the ease with which people humiliate me. O most merciful of the merciful, You are the Lord of the oppressed, You are my Lord. To whom do You entrust me? To a distant one who glowers at me? Or to an enemy to whom you have given power over me? If You are not angry with me, I do not care, but Your strength is more generous for me. I seek refuge in the light of Your countenance for which the darkness becomes radiant, and through which the affairs of this world and the next become good, that You may not be angry with me or Your wrath descend on me. You have the right to blame me until You are satisfied, and there is no Power or Might except in You."<sup>20</sup>

So, after his disappointing visit, Muhammad met with a new prophetic experience. In Jerusalem he met with the prophets where he led them in prayer.

## **2. The Prophet Muhammad's letter to Heraclius**

In Dhu'l-Hijja of the year 6 AH (627 AD), after the truce of Hudaibiya, the Prophet Muhammad sent several letters to kings calling on them to embrace Islam.<sup>21</sup> These included his letter to the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. According to some accounts, Heraclius had left Homs on his way to Aelia (Jerusalem) to give thanks to God for his victory over the Persians, in which he recovered the Holy Cross from them.<sup>22</sup> When Heraclius arrived in Jerusalem and performed his prayers and vows, the Prophet's envoy Dahiya Ibn Khalifa Al-Kalbi Al-Khazraji came to him, and handed him the Prophet's letter, which he read out and translated to him. Heraclius was not angry, and replied to the letter politely.

The Prophet's letter to Heraclius read: "In the name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful. From Muhammad the Messenger of God to Heraclius the greatest of the Byzantines: peace be on him who follows guidance. Adopt Islam and be saved. Adopt Islam and God will give you your reward twofold, and if you turn back, the ploughmen will blame you."<sup>23</sup>

Some versions relate that when Heraclius wanted to leave Syria for Constantinople, he assembled the Byzantines and suggested following Muhammad. When they refused, he suggested paying him the Jizya tax. When they refused, he suggested making peace with him and giving him southern and eastern Syria, while Heraclius would keep the remainder.<sup>24</sup> When they had refused everything that Heraclius suggested, "he set off until he approached Al-Darb, turned towards northern Syria, and then said: 'Farewell, land of (southern) Syria.' Then he ran until he reached Constantinople."<sup>25</sup>

3. The Prophet Muhammad gave good tidings that Jerusalem would be conquered by the Muslims, including the following statements:

- a. His statement to Shaddad Ibn Aws that "*Al-Sham* will be conquered, and Jerusalem will be conquered, and you and your sons will be Imams there, If God wills".
- b. His statement to Awf Ibn Malik: "Count six things, Awf, between now and Judgement Day. The first is my death ..., and the second the conquest of Jerusalem ...".

The Prophet Muhammad turned his attention to saving and conquering Jerusalem from early on. The preparations for the campaign to conquer Jerusalem, through action to safeguard the edges of Syria from the danger of the Byzantines and to destroy their prestige. This occurred through three events in the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, which were: the battle of Mu'ta<sup>26</sup> in 8 AH (629 AD), the raid on Tabuk<sup>27</sup> in 9 AH (630 AD), and Usama Ibn Zaid's mission in 11 AH (631 AD). These three events, led, through their combined effects, to the following results:

- a. They showed the Muslims the way to spread the message of Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula.
- b. They destroyed the prestige of the Byzantines.
- c. They prepared the way for spreading the message of Islam in *al-Sham*, where they were preliminary steps on the way to the great campaign which was directed at *al-Sham* and saved Jerusalem.

4. The campaign to conquer Jerusalem which was launched by Abu Bakr<sup>28</sup>, and crowned with the conquest of Jerusalem by Umar Ibn Al- Khattab in 15 AH (636 AD), was a radical turning point in the history of the Islamic Arab East.

After Umar Ibn Al-Khattab arrived in Jerusalem, he agreed with its inhabitants on surrender terms and wrote for them the famous peace document which is known as Umar's Assurance. In this he guaranteed them their persons, property, churches and crosses. Through his Assurance, Umar granted them religious liberty, and the freedom to remain there or leave. He also preserved their holy places.

**The following is the text of Umar's Assurance of Safety to the People of Aelia (Jerusalem):<sup>29</sup>**

"In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate. This is the assurance of safety(aman) which the servant of Allah, [the second Caliph] Umar [Ibn al-Khattab], the Commander of the Faithful, has granted to the people of Aelia [Capitolina]. He has granted them safety for their lives and possessions; their churches and crosses; the sick and the healthy of the city; and for the rest of its religious community. Their churches will not be inhabited nor destroyed [by Muslims]. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their possessions will be confiscated. They will not be forcibly converted, nor any one of them harmed. No Jew will live with them in Aelia. The people of Aelia must pay the poll tax like the people of the [other] cities, and they must expel the Byzantines and the robbers. As for those who will leave [the city], their lives and possessions shall be safeguarded until they reach their place of safety; and as for those who remain, they will be safe. They will have to pay the poll tax like the people of Aelia. Those of the people of Aelia who would like to leave with the Byzantines, take their possessions, and abandon their churches and crosses will be safe until they reach their place of safety. Those villagers (ahl al-Ard) who were in Aelia before the killing of so-and-so may remain in the city if they wish, but they

must pay the poll tax like the people of Aelia. Those who wish may go with the Byzantines, and those who wish may return to their families. Nothing will be taken from them until their harvest has been reaped. The contents of this assurance are under the covenant of Allah, are the responsibility of His Prophet, of the Caliphs, and of the Faithful, if [the people of Aelia] pay the poll tax according to their obligations. The persons who attest to it are: Khalid Ibn al-Walid, Amro Ibn al-Asi, Abd al-Rahman Ibn Awf, and Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan. This assurance was written and prepared in the year 15 [A.H.]" (636A.D.)

Umar Ibn Al-Khattab did not oppose a provision in his Assurance - as requested by the inhabitants of Aelia - that "none of the Jews should live in Aelia with them." This guarantee was in conformity with the Jews' position in Jerusalem, which had been decided since the Emperor Hadrian issued his decree in 139 AD forbidding the Jews to enter Jerusalem, live there, come near it or even look at it from afar.

Umar renewed the decree of Hadrian, but allowed them concessions, that they could look on, and visit the city. This they did, and according to Encyclopedia Judaica (article on Jerusalem) seventy Jewish families were allowed to live there. Umar's ruling insured that, during the period when it applied, Jews had no sovereignty over Jerusalem. It certainly seems that it was not long after the beginning of Muslim rule that Jews did settle in Jerusalem again after 500 years of prohibition.

The Muslims did not take Jerusalem away from the Jews, or conquer it when Jews were living there. The Muslims received it from the Romans. History confirms that the Jews, as other groups and peoples, entered Jerusalem for a period of time and then left it. Their city disappeared conclusively, having been destroyed at least three times since the Prophet Solomon. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city, and the Temple, around 586 BC. Then the Romans destroyed the city twice and effaced even its name. Titus destroyed the city and burnt the Temple around 70 AD, as did Hadrian in 135 AD.

### **The Status of Jerusalem after Umar's Conquest**

Since 'Umar's conquest of Jerusalem, it has acquired a purely Islamic character. Its taxable land has become land of Islamic charitable trusts through generations of Muslims, which cannot be ceded, sold or mortgaged. As Al Mawardi has stated:<sup>30</sup>

A. "Land which the Muslims conquer by force: this becomes "Dar Islam" (Islamic territory) whether Muslims live there or pagans are allowed back to it, because the Muslims own it. It may not be ceded to pagans, so that it may not again become Dar Harb (an abode of war)."

B. "Land which the Muslims conquer peacefully: "By this peace it becomes charitable trust (waqf) property for Dar Al Islam, and may not be sold or mortgaged. The land tax is a rent which does not cease if (the inhabitants) become Muslims, and it is levied if the land is transferred to other Muslims."

Before land in Palestine became an Islamic charitable trust following Umar's conquest, part of it became a charitable endowment in the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime. Solid evidence, including information attributed to the Prophet himself<sup>31</sup> indicates that land in Hebron was the first Islamic charitable endowment in Palestine, indeed the first charitable endowment in Islam. The Prophet endowed it to the companion Tamim Ibn Aws Al-Dari, his brothers and successors until the Day of Judgement. Tamim was the first inhabitant of Palestine to be converted to Islam. By making this endowment to him, the Prophet was in fact staking Islam's claim to legitimate ownership of Palestine. Accordingly, a Muslim believes that Jerusalem does not belong to the Palestinians or Arabs only but to all Muslims and that "giving up any part of Palestine is like giving up part of its religion".<sup>32</sup>

5. The building of mosques, foremost of which is Al-Aqsa Mosque - in 18 or 21 AH - on the orders of Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. This was followed by Abd Al-Malik Ibn Marwan beginning the construction of the present Al-Aqsa Mosque - on the site of the mosque which Umar Ibn Al-Khattab had ordered

to be built - and whose construction was completed by his son Al-Walid in 90 AH (708-709). The Muslims considered Al-Aqsa Mosque as symbolic of the Islamic nature of the land.

6. The soil of Jerusalem has mingled with the blood of a large number of the Prophet Muhammad's companions, who died as martyrs on its blessed ground, and who helped to save it, care for it and preserve it.<sup>33</sup> A large number of the Prophet's companions also set out on journeys to visit Jerusalem. These included Umar Ibn Al- Khattab, Amro Ibn Al-Asi, Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, Abu Ubayda Amir Ibn Al-Jarrah, Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Awf, Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan, Abu Umama Al-Bahili, Suda Ibn Ajlan, Iyad Ibn Ghanam, Yazid Ibn Abi Sufyan, Abdullah Ibn Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, Abu Dharr Al-Ghafari: Jund Ibn Junada, Abu l-Darda': Uwaymir Ibn Malik, Ma'adh Ibn Jabal, Salman Al- Farisi, Abdullah Ibn Salam, Abu Hurayra: Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Sakhr, Abu Mas'ud Al- Ansari: Uqba Ibn Amr, Abu Jum'a Al-Ansari: Habib Ibn Siba', Abu Rayhana: Shim'un Al-Ansari, Al-Rashid Ibn Suwayd, Tamim Al-Dari, Fayruz Al-Daylami, Dhu l-Asabi' Al-Tamimi, Abu Muhammad Al- Bukhari: Mas'ud Ibn Aws, Abdullah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Umm Haram, Wathila Ibn Al-Asqa', Mahmud Ibn Al-Rabi', Salam Ibn Qaysar, Usayf Ibn Al-Harith, Umm Al-Mu'minin Safiya Bint Huyay Ibn Akhtab, Bilal Ibn Rabah, Ka'b Al-Ahbar, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Awf Ibn Malik Al-Ashja'i, Adbullah Ibn Amro Ibn Al-Asi, Murra Ibn Ka'b, Abdullah Ibn Abi l-Jahm Al-Qurashi Al-Adawi, Bashir Ibn Aqraba, Abu Ayyub Al-Maliki, Hisham Ibn Al-Asi, Khalid Ibn Sa'id Ibn Al-Asi, Sa'id Ibn 'Amir, Mashruq Ibn Fulan Al-Akki, Alqama Ibn Mujazzaz, Alqama Ibn Hakim, Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, Uthman Ibn Talha Al-Abdari, al-Fadl Ibn Abbas, and Ikrima Ibn Abi Jahl.

The graves of some of the companions can still be seen in Jerusalem, like those of the two companions Ubada Ibn Al-Samit (who died in 34 AH/ 654-655) and Shaddad Ibn Aws Ibn Thabit Al-Ansari (who died in 58 AH/ 677-678)<sup>34</sup> in Al-Rahman cemetery in Jerusalem, or that of Tamim Al-Dari in the northern part of Bayt Jibrin near Hebron.

7. A large number of followers, theologians and ascetics travelled to Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> Some of these left their countries of origin, to live near Al-Aqsa Mosque. Among the followers (Tab'in) who settled in Palestine and Jerusalem were Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Sirj Al-Firyabi, Ruh Ibn Zamba' Al-Judhami, Abdullah Ibn Muhayriz, Jubayr Ibn Nafir, Umm Al-Darda' the Younger: Hujayma Bint Huyay (Abu l-Darda's second wife), Raja' Ibn Haywa, and Ibrahim Ibn Adham. Among those who died there are Ubada Ibn Nusay Al-Kindi, (who died in Tiberias), Al-Hasan Ibn Waqi' (who died in Ramleh), Thawr Ibn Yazid Al-Kayla'i (who died in Jerusalem), and Adam Ibn Iyas (who died in Asqalan).

8. Religious schools, teaching hospices, and lodging quarters for theological scholars who thronged Al-Aqsa Mosque for worship, to acquire blessings, as visitors, or to write and teach, like Hujjat Al-Islam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali. He visited Jerusalem in 489 AH/ 1095, stayed there, and wrote his most famous book, Ihya' Ulum Al-Din. During his time there were more than 630 theologians in Jerusalem. Among the leading personalities who visited or studied in Al-Aqsa Mosque in the second century AH were the Quranic commentator Muqatil Ibn Sulaiman, the Syrian Islamic law scholar Imam Al-Awza'i, Sufyan Al Thawri the Imam of the inhabitants of Iraq, the Imam Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd Ibn Abd Al-Rahman Al-Fahm, the Imam Al-Shafi'i, Waki' Ibn Al-Jarrah Ibn Malih. Scholars specialising in the Prophet's traditions who visited Al-Aqsa Mosque in the first and second centuries AH included Muhammad Ibn Hatim Ibn Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Karim Al-Ta'i, Abu l-Hasan Al-Tusi, Abdullah Ibn Fayruz Al-Daylami, and Malik Ibn Dinar. Theological scholars who visited Jerusalem in the fifth century AH included the Imam Abu Bakr Ibn Al-Arabi Al-Andalusi Al-Ishbili, the Imam Abu l-Faraj Abd Al-Wahid Ibn Ahmad Al-Shirazi, then Al-Maqdisi Al-Ansari Al-Hanbali, the Grand Mufti. Theological scholars of Jerusalem include the Imam Al Hafiz Abu l-Fadl Muhammad Ibn Tahir Ibn

Ali Ibn Ahmad known as Ibn Al-Qaysarani, and Abu l-Fadl Ata' Al-Maqdisi the Shafi' legal expert.

9. Theological scholars refer to these special qualities and status of Jerusalem when exhorting Muslims to remain in it, discouraging them from leaving it, establishing them in it, defending it and repelling aggressors from it. The fine qualities of historical Syria (al-Sham) and its people were one of the main factors used by the theological scholar Ibn Taymiya in exhorting the Muslims to attack the Tatars, commanding them to stay in Damascus, forbidding them from leaving it to go to Egypt, in his appeal to the Egyptian army to come to Syria and in making the Syrian army stand firm there.<sup>36</sup>

10. In order to help provide scholarly information, and express enthusiastic feeling towards the blessed land, a number of books and theses on the noble qualities of Jerusalem have been written, including the following:

- (a) Baha Al-Din Ibn Asakir (died 670 AH), Al-Jami' Al-Mustaqsa fi Fada'il Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa.
- (b) Musharrif Ibn Al-Marja Ibn Ibrahim Al-Maqdisi, Fada'il Al-Quds wal-Sham.
- (c) Abu l-Faraj Ibn Al-Jawzi (died 597 AH), Fada'il Al-Quds.
- (d) Al-Qadi Amin Al-Din Ibn Al-Hasan Ibn Hibatullah Al-Shafi'i (seventh century AH), Al-Uns fi Fada'il Al-Quds.
- (e) Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Abd Al-Hadi Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi (died 744 AH), Fada'il Al-Sham.
- (f) Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Hilal Ibn Surur Al-Maqdisi (died 765 AH), Muthir Al-Gharam bi Fada'il Al-Quds wal-Sham.
- (g) Nasir Al-Din Al-Rumi Al-Halabi (died 948 AH), Al-Mustaqsa fi Fada'il Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa.

After studying the various Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions and the Islamic history of Jerusalem, one cannot deny its extreme importance and significance to every Muslim.

In conclusion, a researcher may note that the history of Jerusalem, according to the Muslim historians, has passed through four distinctive and obvious ages:

1. The age of formation and construction: 2500-1184 BC, from the time that the Canaanites settled there until it underwent an invasion from overseas (by groups of the Philistines), and another invasion at the same time from the direction of the desert (the Jews).
2. The age of strife, troubles and disturbances: 1184 BC-636 AD, from the end of the age of formation and construction to the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem.
3. The age of construction and development: 636-1917, from the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem until Britain issued the Balfour Declaration and occupied Jerusalem after that.
4. The age when strife, troubles, destructive and savage wars returned: 1917 to the present day.

Thus conspiracies, wars and destructive and savage battles were only, according to Muslim accounts, stilled in Jerusalem after the Islamic conquest in the time of Umar Ibn Al-Khattab. Everyday life in the Islamic age - the age of construction and development - was marked by stability. During it people enjoyed security, safety and peace - with the exception of the period of the Crusades (1099-1187). There was scholarly activity on a wide scale. It was a period when schools, mosques and hospitals were founded. It was a centre of learning from which a large number of scholars graduated. It enjoyed the care of the Khalifas and the Muslim rulers.

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- 1 Karen Armstrong, "Sacred Space: the Holiness of Islamic Jerusalem" *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies* (Winter 1997, 1:1), pp. 7-8.
  - 2 "It is quite hard for those who have grown up in culture, strongly influenced by one of them to stand away from their heritage and to take an objective look at the issue; indeed, a reading of the available literature on Jerusalem might well lead one to believe

- that it is impossible. Nevertheless, it is worth trying.... Seeking to establish a widely accepted common ground of historical understanding is not just an academic exercise, for the past is constantly invoked in situations of conflicts to justify present practice and future objectives of nowhere is that more true than Jerusalem". *The question of Jerusalem: Historical perspectives*, CAABU briefing, No. 40, November 1995, p.1.
- 3 Ala' al-Din Ali al-Mutaqi Ibn Husam al-Din al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Umal fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa al-Af'al* (Mu'asasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1979), pp. 303-304; see also Ibn Asakir, *Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq al-Kabir* (Dar al-Masiyrah, Beirut, 1979), part one, p.35.
  - 4 Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah* (a-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut), 2nd edition, part two, p.5, Hadith No. 503.
  - 5 Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud* (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut), part three, p.4, Hadith No. 2482.
  - 6 Ahmad Ibn Ali Ibn Hijr al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari Li Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (al-Maktabah al-Salafiyah, Cairo), part three, p.63; and part four, pp.73,241.
  - 7 Ibid, part three, p. 97.
  - 8 Imam Muslim, *Sahih Muslim wa al-Jami' al-Sahih* (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 1978), 2nd edition, part one, p.370.
  - 9 Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* (al-Maktab al-Islami Lil Tiba'a wa al-Nashir, Beirut), part five, p.269.
  - 10 Ahmad Ibn Ali Ibn Hijr al-Asqalani, *al-Isaba fi Tamiyyz al-Sahaba* (al-Maktabah al-Tijariyah al-Kubra, Cairo, 1939), part three, p.545.
  - 11 See Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, *Al-Bisharat Al-Nabawiya bil-Khilafa Al-Islamiya Al-Qadima* (Dar al-Hasan, Hebron, 1991), pp. 23-33.
  - 12 Ibid, pp. 33-48.
  - 13 Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* part five, p.27.
  - 14 Ibid, part four, p.273.
  - 15 Ibn Asakir, *Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq al-Kabir* part one, p42.
  - 16 Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* part five, p.288; see also Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud* part three, p.19.

- 17 Ala' al-Din al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Umal fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa al-Af'al* part 14, p.148, Hadith No. 38199.
- 18 Muhammad Nasir Al-Din Al-Albani, *Takhrij Ahadith Fada'il Al-Sham wa Dimashq li 'l-Rab'i wa ma'hu Manaqib Al-Sham wa Ahlihi li Shaikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiya* (Al-Maktab Al-Islami, Beirut, 1403 AH), Fourth Edition, pp.14-16.
- 19 Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sira Al-Nabawiya* Part Two (Dar Al-Rayan lil-Turath, Cairo, 1987), pp. 47-53; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Sira Al-Nabawiya* Part Two (Dar Ihya' Al-Turath Al-Arabi, Beirut), pp.93-112.
- 20 Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sira Al-Nabawiya* p. 68.
- 21 Southern and eastern Syria consisted of Palestine, Jordan, Damascus, Homs and anything that side of Al-Darb. On the other side of Al-Darb was northern Syria.
- 22 Such as his letters to Chosroes, Al-Muqawqis, the Amirs of Oman, Yamama, Bahrain and others.
- 23 The Persians defeated the Byzantines to start with, then Heraclius hit back and defeated Chosroes in 625 AD. The Qur'an states in this context: "The Romans have been defeated in a land close by but they (ever) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious within a few years". (30: 2-4) Abul-Hasan Al-Nadawi, *Al-Sira Al-Nabawiya* (Al-Maktaba Al-Asriya, Sidon, 1981), p. 329, reads: "These verses from Surat Al-Rum were revealed in 616 AD, and Heraclius' victory over the Persians was in 625 AH."
- 24 Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, *Tarikh Al-Umam wal-Muluk* (Dar Al-Kutub al -Ilmiya, Beirut, 1988), Part Two, 2nd Edition, p. 130.
- 25 Ibid, Part Two, p. 131. See also Ibn Kathir, *Al-Sira Al-Nabawiya* Part Three, pp. 505-506.
- 26 The village of Mu'ta lies 12 kilometres south of Karak.
- 27 Tabuk lies between Madina and Damascus, 700 kilometres from Madina and south-east of Aqaba. The raid on Tabuk is also known as the raid of the hard time, because the Muslims had a hard time due to heat and drought, although it happened in the season when fruit ripens.
- 28 The Battle of the Yarmuk on 27 Jumada al-Thani 13AH (634AD).
- 29 Al-Tabari, *Tarikh Al-Umam wal-Muluk* Part Two, p. 449. Al-Tabari's text of the Islamic Assurance of Safty to the People of

Jerusalem was published for the first time by the Islamic Research Academy (IRAP) in 1995 as a calligraphic poster in Arabic and English (size 83 x 51 cm). The Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem on 1 January 1953 published a copy of an original manuscript in the Byzantine Library at Al-Fanar in the administrative district of Istanbul, which it claimed was Umar's Assurance. (Library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, Document No. 552.) It should be noted that this researcher is currently preparing a historical study which includes a technical historical examination of this document to determine whether it is true or forged, by means of criticism both of the document in general and of its content, as accepted in the methodology of historical research.

30 Abu al-Hasan Ali Ibn Habib Al-Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam Al-Sultaniya* (Mustafa Al-Halabi Press, Cairo, 1958), pp. 136 -137.

31 See Shaikh Muhammad Bakhit Al-Muti'i, *Copy of the Ruling by His Eminence Shaikh Muhammad Bakhit Al-Muti'i, former Mufti of Egypt, on the Waqf of the Prophet's Companion Tamim Al-Dari and his successors, issued on 7 Rajab 1350, No. 275, p. 99, Part 7* (Islamic Vocational Orphanage, Jerusalem, 1984); Muhammad Ibshirly and Muhammad Dawud Al-Tamimi, *Awqaf wa Amlak Al-Muslimin fi Filistin* (Centre for Researches in Islamic History, Arts and Culture, Istanbul, 1982), which contains an investigation and presentation of one of the land registers in the Ottoman state in which all the Muslims' waqfs and properties in the five provinces of Palestine: (Jerusalem, Gaza, Safad, Nablus and Ajlun) were registered. These had been kept in Turkey since the tenth century AH (the sixteenth century AD), that is, since the Ottoman conquest of Palestine in 922 AH (1516 AD) in the time of Sultam Selim I, in the Ottoman Records House of the Turkish Prime Minister's office in Istanbul. See, also, Najm Al-Din Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Ghayti, *Al-Jawab al-Qawim an al-Su'al al-Mut'alliq bi Iqta' al-Sayyid Yamim* (investigation by Hasan Abd Al-Rahman Al-Silwadi) (Islamic Research Centre, Jerusalem. 1986), pp. 44-45.

- 32 Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Questin: 1928-1947* (Tauris Academic Studies, London, 1998), p10.
- 33 See the names of some of the Prophet's companions who entered Jerusalem in: Arif Al-Arif, *Al Mufasssal fi Tarikh Al-Quds* (Al-Andalus Library, Jerusalem, Shawwal 1380\April 1961), Part One, pp. 95-100; Mujir Al-Din Al-Hanbali, *Al-Uns Al-Jalil bi Tarikh Al-Quds wal-Khalil* (Al-Muhtasib Bookshop, Amman, 1973), Part One, pp. 260-267. The number of those who entered Jerusalem with Umar is estimated at about 4,000 companions.
- 34 The Prophet Muhammad told Shaddad Ibn Aws: "Syria will be conquered, and Jerusalem will be conquered, and you and your offspring will be Imams there if God wills."
- 35 See the names of some of the leading followers, scholars and ascetics who settled in Jerusalem in: Arif Al-Arif, *Al Mufasssal fi Tarikh Al-Quds*, pp.102-104; Mujir Al-Din Al-Hanbali, *Al-Uns Al-Jalil bi Tarikh Al-Quds wal-Khalil*, pp. 285-302.
- 36 See Muhammad Nasir Al-Din Al-Albani, *Takhrij Ahadith Fada'il Al-Sham*, p. 69.