

Jerusalem as a Uniting Factor for Muslims and Christians: Historical and Scriptural Grounds

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Abstract

Jerusalem is perhaps the only city in the world that is considered historically and spiritually significant to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim people alike. This paper therefore seeks to examine the reasons why Jerusalem should serve as a uniting factor for Muslims and Christians. For this purpose, it traces the historical and spiritual connections of Muslims and Christians to Jerusalem. Furthermore, scriptural teachings on Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths were examined. This research work is purely from written sources, which comprise of books, journals, and websites, as well as the Glorious Qur'an and the Holy Bible. The paper reveals that both Muslims and Christians have solid historical and spiritual connections to Jerusalem. It was evident that both the Qur'an and the Bible preach Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths, which is applicable to the people of Jerusalem. The paper recommends that, if both Muslims and Christians, as a matter of fact, adhere strictly to the scriptural teaching on Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths there will be peace in the region. It also concludes that Jerusalem embraces the holiest places in Islam and Christianity and is a symbol of brotherhood, solidarity and national unity between Muslims and Christians.

Introduction

Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem belong to one nation. Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem have always formed one body and one family whose sole aim is to defend Jerusalem, its sanctities, Islamic and Christian heritage and civilizations.

The first Islamic-Christian encounter in Jerusalem was in the seventh century when the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Arab Damascus Sofronious met with the Caliph of the Muslims Umar bn Al Khattab, who opened Jerusalem¹. Patriarch Sofronious welcomed Umar, as did the masses of Christian Jerusalemites. They both entered the Church of the Resurrection and expressed the strong solidarity that unites Muslims and Christians within one nation. The legacy of Umar is not merely a historical document, but a reassertion of the relationship between Muslims and Christians. It is a testimony to the importance of the Arab Christian presence in Jerusalem, which dates back to before Islam and will continue to exist.

There is no doubt that there are profound and fundamental differences in faith between Islam and Christianity. However, in spite of the differences, both believe in one God, the Creator of the Universe, and that He is the real God whom they all worship. Muslims and Christians worship one God, despite differing practices and interpretations of how to worship Him. Muslims and Christians cooperate and unite in their stand to defend Jerusalem. Jerusalem embraces the holiest places in Islam and Christianity and is a symbol of brotherhood, solidarity and national unity for Muslims and Christians. Jerusalem's message is peace, brotherhood and solidarity². Therefore, those who talk about conflicts, civilizations and religions admire Jerusalem and see how civilizations, cultures and religions can cooperate and not clash or necessarily be the cause of conflicts.

Jerusalem has never witnessed any form of sectarianism in spite of many attempts by the occupation to plant the seeds of sectarianism. The Islamic-Christian alliance has even been strengthened by the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of Zionists, the enemies of humanity and spiritual values. The Zionists have failed to change the demography of Jerusalem and its Arab character. They do not want cooperation between Muslims and Christians and they oppose unity. However, their attempts to divide and conquer have failed: Mosques and Churches are in harmony, and the Crucifix and the Crescent embrace each other³.

When the blessed *Aqsa* Mosque caught fire and the martyrs were falling to their deaths, Muslims and Christians were in the field together⁴. When the Church of the Resurrection was being attacked, everyone was fighting side by side against aggression⁵. Jerusalem is a symbol of national unity. Jerusalem's message to the Arab nation from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf is to unite in order to be strong, to save Jerusalem from the jaws of occupation.

Jerusalem

The Temple Mount also known as Mount Moriah and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary *al-haram al-qudsī ash-sharīf*, is a religious site in the Old City of Jerusalem. Due to its importance for both Judaism and Islam, it is one of the most contested religious sites in the world. The Al-Aqsa Mosque *Masjid Al-Aqsa*, "farthest

mosque", is part of a complex of religious buildings in Jerusalem known as either the Majed Mount or Al-Haram ash-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) by Muslims, and as the Temple Mount by Jewish people.

The Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism. Jewish Midrash holds that it was from there that the world expanded into its present form, and that this was where God gathered the dust he used to create the first man, Adam⁶. The Bible records that it was there that God choose to rest his Divine Presence, and consequently two Jewish Temples were built at the site⁷. According to Jewish tradition, the Third Temple will also be located here, and will be the final one⁸. In recent times, due to difficulties in ascertaining the precise location of the Mount's holiest spot, many Jews will not set foot on the Mount itself.

In Islam, the site is revered as the destination of Islamic prophet Muhammad's journey to Jerusalem, and the location of his ascent to heaven⁹, and is also associated with other local Muslim figures of antiquity¹⁰. The site is the location of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the oldest extant Islamic structure in the world¹¹.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque is the largest mosque in Jerusalem. About 5,000 people can worship in and around the mosque¹². It showcases a mixture of styles including Crusader work from when the Crusaders held Jerusalem, during which the mosque was used as a palace and called the Temple of Solomon, in the belief that the mosque was built on the site of the original temple. Al-Aqsa has been at times the target of attacks by Jewish extremists, but most attempts were averted by Israel's security services¹³. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority claim sovereignty over the site, which remains a key issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Jewish-Christian Spiritual Connection to Jerusalem

To understand the Jewish-Christian connection to Jerusalem one must begin with the Bible. From a Jewish-Christian perspective, the area of special holiness is Mount Moriah, today known as the Temple Mount. This area is located beneath the platform on which the Muslim Shrine, the Dome of the Rock, now stands. In the Jewish Bible, Jerusalem has many names: Salem (*Shalem*), Moriah, Jebuse (*Yevuse*), Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*), and Zion (*Tziyon*). The most common term for the city, *Yerushalayim*, is mentioned 349 times in the Bible, while *Tziyon* is mentioned an additional 108 times¹⁴.

The earliest mention of the site is Genesis 4:18, when Abraham interacts with Malchizedek, King of Shalem. According to Jewish tradition the story of the Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19) also takes place in the "land of Moriah" on the site of the present-day Temple Mount. Abraham chooses the site specifically because he sensed how God's presence is strongly connected to this site. In the *Kabbalah*, the Jewish metaphysical tradition, the rock of Mount Moriah is known as the "*Even Shetiyah*" the foundation Stone. This is the metaphysical center of the universe, the place from which spirituality radiates out to the rest of the world¹⁵.

Later patriarchal stories in Genesis are also connected with the site:

- 1 When Isaac goes out into the fields to pray prior to meeting Rebecca for the first time (Genesis 24:63-67), he is standing on Mount Moriah.
- 2 Jacob's dream of the ladder to heaven with the angels ascending and descending (Genesis 28:10-22) takes place on this site.

We see from here that for thousands of years, the Jewish people have always associated Mount Moriah as the place where God's presence can be felt more intensely than any other place on earth. That is why, for the Jewish people, the Temple Mount is the single holiest place. This connection is still very much alive and well in contemporary Jewish practice:

- When the Jewish people pray three times a day, they always turn toward Jerusalem. (Someone praying in Jerusalem faces the direction of the Temple Mount.)
- Jerusalem is mentioned numerous times in Jewish daily prayers and in the "Grace after Meals."
- The Passover Seder is closed with the words "Next Year in Jerusalem." These same words are invoked to conclude the holiest day of the Jewish year, Yom Kippur.
- The Jewish national day of mourning, Tisha B'Av, commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples.
- During a Jewish wedding ceremony, the groom breaks a glass as a sign of mourning to commemorate the destruction of the two Temples that stood on Mount Moriah. The breaking of the glass is accompanied by the recitation of part of Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest Joy."
- Religious Jewish people often keep a small section of one wall in their house unplastered and unpainted, as a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple.
- It is strongly associated with the Biblical prophets David, Solomon, Elijah and Jesus.

Also, Jerusalem has always been significant to Christians because of the places there where Jesus ministered and, most importantly, where he died and rose again¹⁶. This is the obvious and simple significance of Jerusalem to the Christian world. This is why Helen, mother of Constantine, built churches there in the 4th century that commemorated these events in the life of Jesus and is why Christians from every denomination on earth visit Jerusalem and these very churches and sites¹⁷.

Jewish-Christian Historical Connection to Jerusalem

The early history of Jerusalem is also rooted in the Bible. In addition to the events already mentioned, the Book of Joshua (Chapter. 10) describes how Adoni-Tzedek, the Canaanite king of Jerusalem, wages war against the Jews.

During the approximately 400-year period from the entrance of the Jewish people into the land, through the period of the Judges, Jerusalem remained a non-Jewish city¹⁸. It

was not until the reign of King David (ca. 1,000 BCE) that Jerusalem was captured from the Canaanites (2-Samuel 5) and converted into the political/spiritual capital of the Jewish people. (Archaeologists agree that the original Canaanite city and the City of David was located in what is now the Arab village of Silwan, a few meters south of the "modern" walls of the Old City.)¹⁹

King David purchased the peak of Mount Moriah (2-Samuel 24:18-25) as the site for the future Temple and gathered the necessary building supplies. The Book of 1-Kings (ch. 6-8) describes in great detail how David's son, King Solomon, built and dedicated the Temple: "And it came to pass after the 408th year after the Children of Israel left Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel... that he began to build the house of the Lord" (1-Kings 6:1).

Solomon's Temple is also known as the first *Beit HaMikdash* (the First Temple). While all archaeologists agree that it stood on Mount Moriah, probably on the site of the present Gold Dome of the Rock, its exact location is unknown²⁰.

Four hundred and ten years after its completion, the Temple was utterly destroyed by the Babylonians when they besieged Jerusalem and no trace of it remains. After the Babylonian destruction, most of the Jewish population of Israel was forcibly exiled from the land. This forced exile on the Road to Babylon is mentioned in the famous verse from Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion."

Fifty years later, after Babylon was captured by Persia, the Jewish people was allowed to return to Jerusalem. Under the leadership of Zerubavel and Nechemiah, they rebuilt both the Temple and walls around the city (Nehemiah 4-6).

During both the First and Second Temple periods, the Temple was the central focus of the Jewish world both in Israel and the diaspora. The worldwide Jewish population paid for its upkeep. The Kohanim (priests) and Levites served in the Temple, and three times a year during the holidays of Passover, Sukkot and Shavuot all Jews were commanded to come to Jerusalem and visit the Temple²¹.

This rebuilt temple is known as the Second Temple (*Bayit Sheni*). It stood for 420 years on the same site as the First Temple, on Mount Moriah. The Second Temple was remodeled several times, but reached its most magnificent form during the reign of King Herod the Great (37-4 BCE)²². The great Jewish historian, Josephus, who lived during the end of the Second Temple period, gives detailed descriptions of both Herod's construction and the layout of the Temple compound²³ (see "Antiquities" ch. 15 and "Jewish Wars" ch. 5).

The Second Temple period ended with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. It is possible that people tried to rebuild the Temple at later periods, but they were never successful, and for over 600 years the site of the Temple Mount lay in ruins. The only remains are the massive retaining walls that encompass Mount Moriah, built by Herod to support the platform on which the Temple stood²⁴.

Muslim Spiritual Connection to Jerusalem

Indeed, Jerusalem's multifaceted meaning is the reason behind the interest of Jerusalem to Muslims all over the world, as well as in the land of Palestine as a whole. The city has strong evocative and emotional associations and has its own place in the hearts of Muslims. It is considered the third-holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. It derives its religious prominence from being the first *Qibla*, the initial direction towards which the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community turned their faces in prayer²⁵. The direction was changed a year and a half later to Mecca by "divine command." Jerusalem also derives its significance Islamically from its association with Prophet Muhammad's miraculous nocturnal journey to the city and then his ascension to Heaven. This event is mentioned in the Qur'an chapter, 17 verse 1,

"Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*), the precincts of which We have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs." ²⁶

It is then specified in the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad, that the Al Aqsa Mosque is indeed located in Jerusalem:

Narrated Jabir bin 'Abdullah: That he heard Allah's Apostle saying, "When the people of Quraish did not believe me (i.e. the story of my Night Journey), I stood up in Al-Hijr and Allah displayed Jerusalem in front of me, and I began describing it to them while I was looking at it." ²⁷ Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 58, Number 226.

In another Hadith he says

"No journey should be undertaken to visit any mosque but three: this mosque of mine, al-Masjid al-Haram and Masjid al-Aqsa." Narrated from Abu Hurayrah²⁸

It was confirmed that,

"The most holy spot [al-quds] on earth is Syria; the most holy spot in Syria is Palestine; the most holy spot in Palestine is Jerusalem [Bayt al-maqdis]; the most holy spot in Jerusalem is the Mountain; the most holy spot in Jerusalem is the place of worship [al-masjid], and the most holy spot in the place of worship is the Dome"²⁹

In the nocturnal journey (*al-Isra' wal Mi'raj*), according to Muslim tradition, Muhammad was transported one night on a winged horse space (Al-Buraq) from Mecca to Jerusalem where he led Abraham, Moses, and Jesus in a prayer. Afterwards, Muhammad ascended to the heaven accompanied by the archangel Gabriel. In this journey of ascension, Muhammad passed through the seven heavens where he encountered earlier Prophets. The Dome of the Rock is the site from which

Muhammad ascended. Although some critics argue that Muhammad's journey was spiritual and not physical, this journey has a three fold significance:

First, it linked the city of Jerusalem with Islam in its very early days, in addition to the Chapter that refers to Jerusalem as the first *Qibla*.

Second, it inspired the Muslims with a bulk of lore, so much so, that Muslims all over the world celebrate that occasion every year.

Third, it ushered in a new era in the life of the city because, from then on, the Muslims considered it their holy duty to protect it from the encroachment of the Byzantines and the Persians who were non-Semitic people³⁰.

In addition, it is believed that Qur'an chapter 43 verse 44 was revealed in Jerusalem: "Ask those of our messengers We sent before thee Have We appointed apart from the All-Merciful, gods to be served?"³¹

Omar Ibn al-Khattab, the second Muslim caliph, accepted in person the capitulation of Jerusalem which was under Byzantine rule. Omar had also located the Rock, the place hallowed by the Prophet's nocturnal journey, and before leaving Jerusalem, he built a Mosque close to the Rock. Furthermore, a number of the Prophet's companions visited the city and at least one of them resided and died there. From this humble beginning to the rise, some fifty years later, of great monuments of Muslim architecture, Jerusalem's place as the third holy city in Islam was finally established. Its Roman name was dropped and it became al Bait al-Muqaddas (the Holy House), in apposition to *al-Bait al-Haram* (the Sacred House), the appellation of Mecca. A variant of the name was Bait *al-Maqdis* or simply *al-Quds* (the Holy City). Later it became *al-Quds ash-Sharif* (the Holy and Noble City).³²

The religious significance of Jerusalem and its function as a source of religious legitimacy were also highlighted during both the Umayyad and Abbasid rules. Mu'awiyah, the first Umayyad caliph, for example, proclaimed himself caliph in Jerusalem, rather than in Damascus, his capital.

Under Mu'awiyah's successor, Jerusalem became virtually the religious capital, since Mecca and Medina were in the hands of his rivals. Even when Mecca and Medina came under their control, the Umayyad caliphs' continued to pay equal respect to Jerusalem. The Abbasid caliphs paid Jerusalem a similar regard, and the city remained equally significant to successive Muslim rulers, up to the Mamelukes and the Ottomans who also accorded the city religious status equal to that of Mecca and Medina. But despite its religious significance, Jerusalem was never the capital of Islam. The selection of the seat of the Islamic Caliphate was a matter of strategy; otherwise Mecca should have been the choice³³.

Muslims Historical Connection to Jerusalem

Historically speaking, Jerusalem has generally been a site for Muslim pilgrimage, prayer, study or residence. Al-Aqsa Mosque was a particular seat of learning. Muslim scholars came to Jerusalem from distant lands. "Just as it is true to say that the first

textbook in Islam was the Qur'an, so it is true to say that the first school was the mosque³⁴.

Muslims believe in all the Jewish and Christian prophets and Holy Scriptures. The Jewish and Christian legacies are an integral part of the Muslim legacy. Synagogues and churches are God's shrines and their adherents are the people of the book, not heathens or unbelievers. But Muslims, on the other hand, believe that Islam, more than Judaism or Christianity, afforded the city the most tolerant period because of Islam's nature being the religion of all prophets, from Abraham to Muhammad³⁵.

The Muslims ruled Jerusalem for thirteen centuries from the middle of the seventh century (638 A.D.) to the beginning of the twentieth century (1917) with the exception of about 103 years of Crusader domination. The passage of time, and certain events, served to enhance Jerusalem's position in Islamic tradition and history. One such event is the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders in 1099 which interrupted the Muslim rule of the city. Palestinian and Arab Muslims dwell a great deal on this holy war waged by the Crusaders against non-Christians, Muslims and Jews. This war – in which all non-Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem were wiped out, their property looted, and their houses occupied – is considered one of the most significant events to have shaped the Muslim outlook towards the Christian- Western world as a whole. It has yet to be ascertained if any roots of the current wave of Islamic fundamentalism actually lie in the Crusaders' war which marked open hostility between the Muslim and Christian/Western worlds.

In 1187 Saladdin, a Muslim leader, reconquered and recovered Jerusalem. This recovery of Jerusalem "figures larger in Islamic history than its first acquisition by 'Umar five and a half centuries before."³⁶ The coincidence of Saladdin's entry into the city with the anniversary of the Prophet's nocturnal journey was regarded by Muslims as providential. The current Israeli occupation of Jerusalem (since 1967) is viewed by Palestinians and Muslims alike in magnitude to the Crusades: "By occupying Palestine, the modern Crusaders have earned the enmity of all Arabs; by seizing Jerusalem, that of all Muslims. Are the modern Crusaders bent on forcing history to repeat itself?"³⁷

Scriptural Teachings on Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths

1 Love, Unity and Tolerance Themes from the Qur'an and Hadith:

Instructing the Muslims to treat their Christian neighbours with kindness, the Qur'an says:

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), the Christians and the Sabians, anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord. For them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve (Qur'an 2:62).

Reminding Muslims that they should not take extreme positions over their differences with others, Allah says: "If your Lord had so wished, He could have made mankind one people" (Qur'an 11:118; see also Qur'an 5:51)

The Glorious Qur'an urges admonition, not intimidation and affirms that Muslims should leave those who reject the message. They should not attempt to punish them but instead they should leave them for Allah to punish:

Give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. Thou art not one to manage men's affairs. As for those who reject your admonition, (leave them alone) Allah will punish them severely (not you) (Qur'an 88: 21-24).

Again the Qur'an attests categorically that Muslims should not compel anybody to embrace Islam: Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error (Qur'an 2: 256).

According to the Qur'an, a Muslim should not be the first to attack others. He must not be an aggressor; neither must he continue the fight after the aggressor has stopped the attack:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for Allah does not love transgressors..... But if they stop, (then you too must stop) Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful (Qur'an 2: 190-192)

Religious tolerance is advocated either when non-Muslims attempt to draw Muslims to their religion or when Muslims face people of other religions in dialogue:

Say Oh you unbelievers, I will not worship what you worship. You also will not worship what I worship. Neither will I worship what you worship. For you be your religion and for me mine (Qur'an 109: 1-5)

The Qur'an teaches forgiveness: (Allah forgives and loves) those who avoid great crimes and shameful deeds, and forgive even when they are angry (Qur'an 42: 37)

It places huge reward on forgiveness and reconciliation:

...But if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah; for Allah loves not those who do wrong (by seeking vengeance at all cost Qur'an 42: 30).

Aware that Muslims would be tempted to be hostile towards those who do not share their faith, Allah instructed Prophet Muhammad to tell the Muslims to forgive such unbelievers and not to attempt to fight them over what they believe in but rather to leave them to Him for necessary action:

Tell those who believe (O Muhammad) to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of Allah. It is for Him (Allah) to recompense (for good or ill) each people according to what they have earned. (Qur'an 45: 14).

The Qur'an asks Muslims to forgive Christians "and overlook" their trespasses (Qur'an 2: 109). It also urges them to forgive and ignore those who reject their calls:

If you call them to guidance, they hear not. You will see them looking at you, but they we not. Forgive them and enjoin what is right. But ignore the ignorant. (Qur'an 7: 198-199)

To encourage the spirit of forgiveness in Muslims, Allah says He forgives all sins:

Say: O my Servants who have transgressed against their own souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins. He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 39: 53)

Islam is so forgiveness-compliant that the Qur'an affirms that even the angels in heaven pray that Allah should forgive home sapiens ... (Qur'an 42: 5). Allah also warns Muslims not to justify themselves as saints who are above sin: Justify not yourselves, He (Allah) knows best who it is that guards against evil (Qur'an 53: 32)

Allah also enjoins Muslims to repay evil with goodness:

Goodness and evil can never be equal. Therefore repel evil with what is better (which is goodness). Then will he between whom and thee there is hatred become as he is thy intimate friend. (Qur'an 41: 34)

The Qur'an affirms that Allah loves those who control their anger and those who forgive people and ranks them alongside those who spend in the way of Allah:

As for those who spend in the way of Allah whether in prosperity or in adversity, and those who restrain their anger and pardon men, Allah loves those who do good. (Qur'an 3: 134)

In the *hadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), a man came to the Prophet saying, "Advise me". The prophet replied, "Never be angry". He repeated again, "Advise me" and the prophet repeated his admonition, "Never be angry"³⁸. On another occasion the Prophet also warned that anger often leads to regret"(Bukhari). The beginning of anger manifests like madness but it ends in regret" (Bukhari).

Advocating peaceful co-existence while at the same time condemning violent propensities, the prophet said, "Be peaceful, and beware of violence"³⁹. He also cursed extremists: "The curse of Allah is on extremists, i.e. those who are hardliners in matters of religion"⁴⁰,

Pursuing moderation as the ideal ideology in Islam, he said, "We are a moderate people" (See Qur'an 2: 143). Muhammad preached kindness to all men on earth, not to Muslims alone: "Be kind to those on earth, and those in heaven will be kind to you" (Bukhari).

He also added: "Allah will not show mercy to those who fail to show mercy to People" (Bukhari). He preached piety and forgiveness: "Fear Allah wherever you may be. Treat people well and repay evil with goodness" (Bukhari). Anas bin Malik reported a Hadith in which the Prophet advocated love: "None of you is a believer until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself" (Muslim).

He also encouraged good-neighbourliness: "Whoever fills his stomach but ignores his hungry neighbour is not a good Muslim"⁴². He laid emphasis on the unity of mankind regardless of race, colour, religion or social background: "You are all from Adam and Adam was made of dust"⁴³.

We may now take a quick look at such teachings from the Bible, the Christian Religious Book.

2 Love, Unity and Tolerance Themes from the Bible:

Jesus taught his followers patient perseverance even in the face of persecution: Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness. Blessed are you when men insult you on my account (Mathew 5: 10-11).

He also forbade anger, "Every man who is angry with his brother shall be judged." (Mathew 5: 22).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Apostle Paul recognized the fact that man can be provoked and that it is natural to be angry. But he warned:

Be angry but do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil (Ephesians 4: 26-27)

Jesus himself taught his followers to love their enemies, saying:

Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, so that you can be sons of my Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good; and sends doom rain on the just and the unjust (Mathew 5:43-45).

He also instructed them to love their neighbours:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10: 27)

The love theme is most predominant in biblical teachings. To demonstrate good-neighbourliness, Jesus gave the parable of the good Samaritan. A man was attacked by robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and lay critically ill. A priest who was passing by ignored him. So did a Levite. But a kind Samaritan who also passed by gave him first aid treatment and took him to a nearby inn where he spent money on him until he recuperated (Luke 10: 29-37). Jesus had earlier instructed thus, "...Whatever you wish that men would *do* to you do so to them..." (Mathew 7:12). Apostle Paul posits:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13: 1-3).

Expanding further on the qualities of love, Paul says:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful: it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (Corinthians 13:4-7).

Reminding mankind *that love* must be endless and that we must never be hired of giving love, Paul adds.

Love never ends, as far as prophecies, they will pass away: as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away ... so faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13: 8-13)

Even at the point of imminent death, Jesus still preached the gospel of peaceful coexistence. When he was surrounded by his captors, one of his admirers drew his sword and cut off the right ear of the high priest's slave. Instead of applauding his bold action, Jesus reprimanded him, saying:

Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think I cannot appeal to my Father and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so? (Mathew 26: 51-54)

To inculcate the spirit of forgiveness, Jesus took the severed ear of his 'enemy' and miraculously put it back in its original place (Luke 22: 51)

Apostle Paul enjoined forgiveness of one another:
Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you. so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3: 12-14)

Jesus had earlier given a condition for forgiveness thereby making it imperative:

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Mathew 6: 14-15).

In his letter to the Romans, Apostle Paul forbade vengeance:

Repay no man evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you. Live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, leave it to the wrath of God; for it *is* written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay. says the Lord. No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink, for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head". Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 13: 17-21).

Demonstrating great respect for the sanctity of human life, Jesus forbade the killing of a human being by another; "Do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness..." (Luke 18:20).

Above are idealistic principles of the two religions: Islam and Christianity: peace-loving, welfaristic, idealistic, democratic, liberalistic, human-friendly and progressive. How could Jerusalem Muslims and Christians have gone for so long in spite of the hating, killing, maiming and burning from their occupiers and oppressors?

Every available evidence points to the non-compliance of many of the adherents of the two religions to the teachings of their scriptures and their Prophets. For instance, the Prophet condemned violence and urged peaceful coexistence While Jesus called for love for one's neighbour, but do the people in Jerusalem embrace this?

Conclusion

In this paper, it was revealed that both Islam and Christianity have solid historical and spiritual connections to Jerusalem. It was also evidently clear that both the Qur'an and Bible preached Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths, which is

applicable to the people of Jerusalem. No doubt that there are profound and fundamental differences in faith between Islam and Christianity, but it is believed that in spite of the differences, both believed in one God, the Creator of the Universe, and that He is the real God whom they all worship. Muslims and Christians worship one God, despite differing practices and interpretations of how to worship Him. The paper recommended that, if both Muslims and Christians as a matter of fact, adhere strictly to the scriptural teachings on Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faithfuls there would be peace in the region. The paper concluded that Jerusalem embraces the holiest places in Islam and Christianity and is a symbol of brotherhood, solidarity and national unity between Muslims and Christians. Therefore, those who attribute conflicts and wars to clash of civilizations and religion should take a critical look at Jerusalem City and relish how civilizations, cultures and religions can cooperate and not clash, as the majority of people may think.

Notes and references

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Jerusalem as a Uniting Factor for Muslims and Christians: Historical and Scriptural Grounds. Kamal-Deen Olawale Sulaiman. Published: 1 September 2014. by The International Academic Forum (IAFOR). in IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities. IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities , Volume 2; doi:10.22492/ijah.2.1.04. Publisher Website. Jerusalem - its name resonates in the hearts of Christians, Jews and Muslims alike and echoes through centuries of shared and disputed history. Known in Hebrew as Yerushalayim and in Arabic as al-Quds, it is one of the oldest cities in the world. It has been conquered, destroyed and rebuilt time and again, and every layer of its earth reveals a different piece of the past. While it has often been the focus of stories of division and conflict among people of different religions, they are united in their reverence for this holy ground. At its core is the Old City, a maze of narrow alleyways and historic architecture that characterises its four quarters - Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Armenian. It is surrounded by a fortress-like stone wall and home to some of the holiest sites in the world. Furthermore, scriptural teachings on Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths were examined. This research work is purely from written sources, which comprise of books, journals, and websites, as well as the Glorious Qur'an and the Holy Bible. The paper reveals that both Muslims and Christians have solid historical and spiritual connections to Jerusalem. It was evident that both the Qur'an and the Bible preach Love, Unity and Tolerance among Religious Faiths, which is applicable to the people of Jerusalem. Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem belong to one nation. Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem have always formed one body and one family whose sole aim is to defend Jerusalem, its sanctities, Islamic and Christian heritage and civilizations. Jerusalem has for most of its history been an undivided city. Though it has been ruled by Jews, Romans, Various Caliphates, Crusaders, Mamelukes, Ottomans and the British. Muslims generally had no issue with the city when it was ruled by a Muslim power. The split between the Jordanians and Israelis as a result of war was an historical aberration and lasted less than 2 decades before the Israelis won back control when the surrounding Arab powers foolishly tried to destroy them. International law recognises so many spoils of war in practice one must wonder how they can dispute Israeli ownership.... There are good scriptural grounds to believe that the land belongs to the Jews. Jerusalem is also very important and historically significant site for Christians. Founder of Christianity Jesus Christ who is also a prophet of Islam was born and crucified and resurrected from Jerusalem. So it is a holy pilgrimage site for Christians. Then Christians and finally 3rd important site for Muslims. Temple Mount is a sacred site for Jews. It is where Jewish prophet Solomon built his kingdom. It is the 'Kaba' / 'Mecca' for Jews. They pray towards the direction of Temple Mount (Located in Jerusalem). Jerusalem is also very important and historically significant site for Christians. Founder of Christianity Jesus Christ who is also a prophet of Islam was born and crucified and resurrected from Jerusalem. So it is a holy pilgrimage site for Christians.