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Jerusalem in Islamic fundamentalism

David Zeidan

KEY WORDS: Jerusalem, apocalyptic, nationalism, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah.

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him; but the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews.

(Sahih Muslim, 6985)

In traditional Islam, Jerusalem is never given equality with Mecca. There is a clear hierarchy of holiness in which Mecca is first and Jerusalem third:

Prayers in Al-Masjid al-Haram are equivalent to 100,000 prayers, and prayers in my Masjid [in Madina] are equivalent to 1,000 prayers, and prayers in Bait ul-Maqdis are equivalent to 500 prayers. (Muhammad, in Tabarani, quoted in 'Palestine in Islamic Faith', *HAMASONLINE*)

The emergence of radical apocalyptic Islamic fundamentalism¹

Introduction

The Arab defeat in the 1967 Six Day War shocked the whole Muslim world, and was a catalyst for the development of Islamic fundamentalism. By the 1990s Islamism had become the dominant worldview among the Arab masses. Islamist discourse demands the establishment of Islamic States under Shari'a Law, and projects the image of all Muslims, but especially the Palestinians, as victims of history and of a Jewish-Christian conspiracy.²

Traditionally Muslims saw Christians as the main enemy and danger to Islam because of the power of the European Christian nations. Jews, though contemptible, were too weak to present any danger. However, since 1948 and especially since 1967 there has been a clear shift toward a perception of the Jews as the greatest enemy of Islam. The imposition of Jewish rule over Muslims, Muslim

1 David Cook, 'Taking the Apocalyptic Pulse of Muslims in Israel and Egypt'; 'Islam and Apocalyptic', Center for Millennial Studies webpage.

2 Yvonne Haddad, 'Islamists and the "Problem of Israel"', *Middle East Journal* 46:2 (1992), 265-85.

land and Muslim Holy sites is a desecration and an unbearable reversal of roles.³ Few in numbers, they must have satanic powers behind them to have achieved such success against Muslims, and especially to have taken Jerusalem and its holy sites. Fundamentalists now scour Muslim texts for anti-Jewish passages.

A flood of Muslim apocalyptic material signifies the emergence of radical apocalyptic-messianic groups. Most Islamist radical groups use apocalyptic material. This can be seen in the Hamas Charter, in Palestinian Jihad pamphlets and in Hizbullah and Salafi/Jihadi materials. The Islamist apocalyptic discourse has also entered the Muslim mainstream and its religious establishment.

Eschatology appears to play an increasingly important part in fundamentalist Islamic discourse. Most Islamists accept the traditional Sunni or Shi'a eschatological teachings on the signs of the end times; the appearance of the Antichrist (*al-dajjal*), the coming of the *Mahdi* or the return of the hidden Imam to set up a righteous rule on earth.⁴ However, some groups are more heavily influenced by Islamic eschatology, and perceive their activities as part of the end-time scenario. Jerusalem and its Muslim holy sites has become central to this discourse.

Classical Muslim apocalyptic

Classical Muslim apocalyptic literature was based mainly on Hadith texts, collected and systematised. Early messianic apocalypse included material circulated by the Umayyads and the Abbasids to legitimise their rules by giving them a messianic tinge. Current rulers were often identified as the Mahdi. Later moral apocalyptic collections promoted the ideal righteous society by highlighting current evil practices as symptoms of the end times. Many collections did not attempt to show any political relevance to their own generations or to work the material into apocalyptic history. Rather they had the moralistic goal of frightening Muslims in order to lead them back to the right path of piety.

Traditional Islamic apocalyptic presented collections of eschatological texts, mainly for moral purposes, as a call for repentance. Jews and Jerusalem were very marginal to such collections, as very few passages on the end times actually dealt with Jews. Jerusalem, however, and not Mecca or Medina, has always been

3 Yossef Bodansky, 'Islamic Anti-Semitism as a Political Instrument', Houston, The Freeman Center for Strategic Studies, 1998, www.freeman.org/m_online/jan98/bodansk.htm

4 Najeh Ibrahim, Asim Abdul-Maajid and Esaam ud-Din Darbaalah, *In Pursuit of Allah's Pleasure* (London: al-Firdous, 1997). The authors, who are close to the Egyptian al-Jihad movement, include in their declaration of faith (*aqeedah*) the following items: 'We have no doubt that the awaited Mahdee (or rightly-guided Imam) will come forth from among the *Ummah* of the Prophet at the end of time (on earth). We believe in the Signs of the Hour, the appearance of ad-Dajjal (false-Messiah or Antichrist), the descent from heaven of ôlsa, son of Mary, the sun rising from the West, the emergence of the Beast from the earth, and other signs mentioned in the Qur'an and the authentic Hadeeth of the Prophet.'

accepted as the city most associated with Dajjal, Jesus and the Mahdi.⁵ Some contemporary Muslim scholars still engage in such moralistic compilations. Thus Sheikh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani's *The Approach of Armageddon? An Islamic Perspective* (Washington, Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2003) offers a vast collection of more than 290 pages without even mentioning Jews or Jerusalem.

New Islamic apocalyptic, preoccupied with Jews and Jerusalem

The attitude towards Jews and apocalyptic has changed dramatically, especially since the Six Day War of 1967. Islamists had to present a theological alternative to the secular programme for dealing with the Jewish State of Israel and its successes. While sharpening all the traditional Muslim anti-Jewish rhetoric they moved to an apocalyptic view of the way in which Israel will eventually be defeated in the end time scenario. The new Islamist messianic apocalyptic End-Time discourse follows a linear eschatological programme. Israel's successes against Muslims are explained using an Islamic eschatological framework. Eschatology squares the theological circle as it interprets the rise of Israel in apocalyptic terms as fulfilment of God's plan for the end times, while revealing that it will ultimately be defeated. Current events and personalities have all been prophesied, and fit neatly into an end-time scheme. Various scenarios are created in which Muslims fight and defeat Israel, and there is much speculation about the appearance of the Mahdi, the Dajjal and Jesus. This is evinced in numerous books and pamphlets, and on hundreds of Internet sites.

This modern Muslim apocalyptic material differs from the classical system, and is based on new premises. The traditional apocalyptic rarely quoted the Qur'an, was based mainly on Hadith, and was mainly moralistic. Israel and the Jews have now moved to centre stage, and the modern Islamic apocalyptic is convinced that the Qur'an explains and predicts everything relating to the Jews, to the Holy Land, to the founding of the State of Israel, to Jerusalem and to the final Muslim victory. Islamists have selected a few relevant Hadith from among thousands, and one or two Qur'an verses, and have turned them into the centre piece of their end time vision. From the many Hadith on 'The Hour' they have selected the Hadith on Jews hiding behind trees and stones, and Muslims killing them. This has become vastly popular and widely quoted across the Muslim world. For Islamists it testifies that the contemporary conflict with Israel was foretold by Muhammad, that God and nature will fight for the Muslims, and that Muslim victory is assured.⁶ The end of the world is imminent, and there is a search among current events and personalities for signs of the end time. The return of Jesus to fight the anti-Christ, *Dajjal*, and his supporters (mainly Jews) is at the centre of Muslim eschatology.

5 David Cook, 'Studies in Muslim Apocalypse', 172-82.

6 Gershom Goldenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle For the Temple Mount* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), vi.

Jerusalem is at the heart of Islamic apocalyptic drama because of source texts linking it to the eschatological end. According to some the Dajjal reigns in Jerusalem, the Mahdi and Jesus defeat him there, the Ka'ba will come from Mecca to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is then depicted as the site of the last judgement and the resurrection.

A surprising element of the new Muslim discourse is that it uses western concepts which dominate its end time scenarios.⁷ Muslim sources are reinterpreted and merged with non-Muslim interpretive systems. There are three sources for the modern Islamist apocalypse:

- Classical Muslim traditions
- Evangelical Biblical pre-millennialism and apocalypses
- Western anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

A new coherent combination of these three elements forms a powerful discourse that seems satisfactorily to explain current world developments to many Muslims. The scenarios are heavily influenced by the Biblical books of Revelation and Daniel, and by evangelical Christian dispensational exegesis. Many such works are actually commentaries on the Bible (paradoxically deemed to be corrupt), with an occasional quote from the Qur'an and Hadith. Obscure passages in Qur'an and Hadith are identified with specific current events to prove that the Last Days have arrived. Round *hijri* dates are given symbolic meaning (the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 occurred during the last year of the *hijri* fourteenth century, as did the apocalyptic revolt of Juhaynam al-Utaybi in the main mosque in Mecca). The final process has begun, and God's programme is being fulfilled.⁸

The main message is that the present conflict is the harbinger of the final redemption, that Muslim victory is assured, and that God and nature will fight on the Muslim side. Muslims, God's party, will prevail in the last battle.

This apocalyptic discourse diminishes the sense of humiliation felt at defeats by Israel, and gives comforting assurance that the contemporary conflict with Israel was foretold at the dawn of Islam. Muslims are not arrayed against a tiny despised Jewish State, but against a demonic Satanic force commanding the allegiance of millions worldwide, a worthy opponent. Temporary defeats are thus made understandable and bearable. Despair at present weakness and humiliation is replaced by hope based on the predictions of an apocalyptic ultimate humiliation and destruction of the USA (which is likened to the Qur'anic city of 'Ad), and of Israel.

7 David Cook, 'America, the Second 'Ad: Prophecies About the Downfall of the United States', Boston, Center for Millennial Studies, University of Boston, <http://research.yale.edu/ycias/database/files/MESV5-5.pdf>, 150-193.

8 David Cook, 'America, the Second 'Ad', 150-193; Timothy Furnish, 'Mahdism in the Sunni World Today', *ISIM Newsletter*, 4. 99, 22.

The Islamisation of Palestinian nationalism and the internationalisation of the conflict.⁹

Palestinian nationalism early on focused on Jerusalem (and especially al-Aqsa), as a unifying symbol of great mobilising utility and claimed it as the capital of any future Palestinian state. Arafat repeatedly invoked Jerusalem and al-Aqsa as Palestinian national symbols, calling for a *jihād* to retake them and establish Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state.¹⁰ However in the early years of the PLO, national motifs were at the centre of the discourse. After the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, his linking of the sacred Muslim city, Jerusalem, with the Palestinian struggle, captured worldwide Muslim attention and garnered worldwide Muslim sympathy and support.¹¹

The Islamisation of the conflict

Islamism came to the fore in Palestinian nationalism during the first Intifada (1987-1993), when first Islamic Jihad and then Hamas competed with the PLO for control of the insurgency and of the Palestinian street. In contrast to the accepted pan-Islamic stand of most Islamist movements that saw nationalism as contrary to Islam, Hamas appropriated Palestinian nationalism (*wataniyya*) as an integral part of Islam, using the sanctity of al-Aqsa, Jerusalem and Palestine to Islam as justification.¹² Their fight for Palestinian liberation is however linked to a pan-Arab and ultimately to a pan-Islamic vision of a renewed universal Islamic Caliphate. Hamas and Jihad did not enter power-sharing structures with the PLO, but preferred to compete with it for influence as they rejected its acceptance of the two-state solution. Hamas would like to replace Fatah and the PLO as the ruling Palestinian movement using its military wing and its charitable network as an alternative “state in the making”, and it has steadily encroached

9 Hamas Charter, ‘The Charter of Allah: the Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)’, translated and annotated by Raphael Israeli, Jerusalem, Harry Truman Research Institute, The Hebrew University. See also ‘The Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)’, in Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000), 175-200.

10 Examples: ‘We shall march to Jerusalem – Arafat’, BBC NEWS, 15 April 2004; ‘Arafat names Jerusalem as capital’, BBC NEWS, 6 October 2002.

11 Khan, Muqtedar M.A. ‘Religious, secular divide: Arafat’s religious legacy’, *Science & Theology News*, www.stnews.org/archives/2005_january/edit_religious_0105.html

12 Jean-Francois Legrain, ‘Palestinian Islamisms’ in Marty & Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 423-27.

on their power.¹³ Palestinian society is inherently more religious than Israeli society, and the Palestinian Authority saw itself forced to compete with the Islamist movements by increased manipulation of Islamic discourse, rhetoric and symbols. A central theme became the liberation of Jerusalem and its Islamic shrines, mainly the al-Aqsa mosque. The radical Fatah fighting unit, the Tanzim, was renamed the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, cooperated with Hamas and Jihad, and engaged in suicide bombings, previously the sole preserve of the radical Islamist movements.¹⁴

Following the Six Day War, the sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam has assumed mythical proportions. This was further strengthened by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 which adopted Jerusalem as a mobilising unifying political symbol for all Muslims in its efforts to establish Iranian hegemony on the Islamist movements. Jerusalem as symbol was transmitted to the Lebanese Shi'a Hizbullah who claim that their struggle in Lebanon is merely a stage on the road to redeeming Jerusalem.¹⁵

The struggle has been transformed from a temporary territorial and national conflict between Palestinians and Israelis that could be resolved by political negotiations and compromises, into an eternal and absolute religious war between Islam and Judaism in which compromises are not permitted. The Islamisation of the conflict has transformed it from a local, regional conflict, into an international and global struggle. Islamisation is meant to harness the great potential of the whole Muslim world in aid of the Palestinian cause.¹⁶ Islamisation is presented as a two-stage process: first eliminate the state of Israel and, second, establish an Islamic state. First struggle against the Jews, then against Palestinian secular forces.¹⁷

While Palestinian Islamic fundamentalists are ideologically opposed to and compete with Palestinian secular nationalism, they have had to incorporate Palestinian nationalism, and Islamise it in order to widen their constituency

13 Halevi, Jonathan D. 'Is Hamas Preparing to Inherit the Palestinian Authority?', *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, 3:14 (7 January 2004). However, following the agreement between the Palestinian factions, brokered by Egypt (17 March 2005), to a temporary ceasefire with Israel, Hamas and Jihad also agreed to join in a new PLO to be set up by the end of 2005. This would signify a new move of Hamas to enter the Palestinian mainstream political process and become a political party, hoping to build on its increased popularity and win a majority of the votes (Amnon Regular, 'U.S. cautiously welcome factions' agreement to extend calm', *Ha-aretz*, 18 March 2005).

14 Frisch, Hillel & Smuel Sandler, 'Religion, State, and the International System in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', *International Political Science Review*, 25:1 (2004), 77-96.

15 Esther Webman, 'Anti-Semitic Motifs in the Ideology of Hizbullah and Hamas', Institute for Counter-Terrorism, www.ictorg.il/article/anti-semitism2.htm

16 Yvonne Haddad, 'Islamists and the "Problem of Israel"', *Middle East Journal* 46:2 (Spring 1992), 265-85.

17 Ahmad S. Moussalli, 'Islamist Perspectives of Regime Political Response: the Cases of Lebanon and Palestine', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Summer 1996.

and appeal to a larger proportion of Palestinians. Palestinian Islamists and nationalists are united in their view of Jewish rule as unbearable oppression and humiliation, and in their opposition to being dominated by non-Muslims and non-Arabs. Palestinian Islamists have Islamised the Palestinian identity of land and people, while introducing national elements into their pan-Islamic ideology. Palestine has been sanctified by reference to Islamic sources and traditions. Hamas, for instance, in its Charter defines itself both as an Islamic movement, part of the universal Muslim Brotherhood, and as a distinctive Palestinian movement. It has embraced Palestinian national symbols and endowed them with Islamic meaning.¹⁸

The national fight against Israel has also been transformed by its Islamisation into an apocalyptic war of the end times. Palestine, Jerusalem and the al-Aqsa mosque are presented as holy, belonging to all Muslims in the world, and it is thus the obligation of all Muslims to wage *jihad* for their liberation from the Jews.¹⁹ Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah offer apocalyptic interpretations and motivations as evidenced by their pamphlets, literature and media productions.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad's ideology on the sanctity of Jerusalem

Palestinian Islamic Jihad Brochure: makan Al-Quds fi al-qur'an al-karim wal-sunna al-nabawiyya al-sharifa

(Sura17, al-Isra', vv.1,4)

1. Glory to (Allah) Who did take His Servant for Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did Bless in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the one Who heareth and seeth (all things)

4. And We gave (clear) warning to 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)!

1. The sanctity of Jerusalem is raised to equal that of Mecca.
2. God has ordained special holiness on the *haram* in Mecca and on al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. God links both in Sura al-Isra' by a special inextricable holy link (bond).
3. Both are therefore holy to God, to Muhammad and to the Muslims.
4. In the Qur'an, Jerusalem and Palestine are no less important than the

18 Meir Litvak, 'Islamization of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas', The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, www.dayan.org/d&a-hamas-litvak.htm

19 'Imam of London Central Mosque, Said Radhwan: We Must Wage Jihad', *MEMRI TV Monitor Project*, 28 August 2004.

haram mosque in Mecca, Muslims are under the same obligation to defend both, and fight *jihad* for preserving their sanctity.

5. Sura al-Isra' was revealed in Mecca, while the Muslims were weak and oppressed. It promised that the Muslims would gain dominion over both the polytheistic temple of the *ka'ba* in Mecca and over the people-of-the-book temple in Jerusalem. Both sacred sites were ordained by God to be liberated from the unbelievers and placed under Muslim rule for ever.
6. The 'twice' relates not to Babylon and Rome (as understood by most traditional Muslim interpreters), but to the first Muslim conquest under Umar and to the second in our days when Jerusalem and al-Aqsa will be liberated from Israeli rule. According to this interpretation, Surat al-Isra' predicts the annihilation of Israel.
7. From this interpretation it is clear that God has promised the Muslims the final victory over Israel. It is God's end time programme and it will be fulfilled in due time. The Holy Mosque in Jerusalem will once again be completely under Muslim rule and linked to Mecca.

Hizbullah and Jerusalem

Hizbullah see themselves as a pan-Islamic movement representing the whole Muslim *umma* in the Lebanese context. While Iran represents the 'head' of this movement, Palestine and Jerusalem symbolize its body. Jerusalem is not just a Palestinian symbol, but the pan-Islamic 'sacred religious symbol of the *umma*', the cause and responsibility of all Muslims. Hizbullah annually celebrates 'Jerusalem Day', inaugurated by Khomeini in 1980. Palestine, the land which contains Islamic sanctuaries, becomes the possession of the whole *umma*. The only acceptable fate for Jerusalem is its liberation from Israeli control by a pan-Islamic 'Jerusalem Army'.²⁰ Israel itself must be 'obliterated from existence'.²¹ The struggle in Lebanon is merely a stage on the road to the liberation of Jerusalem. Two Hizbullah units were named for Jerusalem: the Jerusalem Brigade in Ba'albek and the Division for the Liberation of Jerusalem.²² Hizbullah's long-cherished dream is the liberation of Jerusalem and of all Palestine from Israeli control through the obliteration and annihilation of Israel. The conflict is not one of borders but of existence.

Jihad against Israel is therefore obligatory and permanent. Hizbullah is engaged in an ongoing campaign to delegitimise Israel, and to prevent any normalization of relations with it. In accordance with its millenarian beliefs, Hizbullah is sure that finally the Hidden Imam will lead the Prophet Jesus in prayer at

20 Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 72f.

21 'Fadlallah Role Profile: Sheikh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah', <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hizballah/Fadlallah-Muhammad.html>

22 Esther Webman, 'Anti-Semitic Motifs in the Ideology of Hizballah and Hamas', *Institute for Counter Terrorism*, www.ictorg.il/article/anti-semitism2.htm

Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque 'where there will be no Jews, no star of David, or a usurper entity'.²³

*Elements of the Islamisation of Palestinian nationalism*²⁴

1. Stress on the Islamic sanctity of Jerusalem and Palestine. Jerusalem belongs to Allah, Muhammad and God's community (the Muslim *umma*). Jerusalem is Islamic, Arab and Palestinian and cannot be divided. Palestine is Arab and Muslim and must not be divided. Palestinians can't sign away the property of the whole Muslim *umma*. A religious duty is laid on every Muslim to fight for Jerusalem and Palestine.²⁵
2. Multiplying the Islamic sanctity of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Haram al-Sharif and especially the al-Aqsa mosque are at the centre of the struggle as they symbolise the essence of Islam, its holiness and sanctity as arrayed against evil Jewish claims. The sanctity of Jerusalem is attested by its special link to Muhammad in the *isra'* and *mi'raj* as well as by being the first *qibla*. God chose al-Aqsa to be linked to Muhammad and reveal him as the greatest prophet. No other city has such a specific special link to the prophet. Jerusalem is the heart of the Islamic world. Maintaining the Islamic-Arabic character of East Jerusalem serves as the ideological nexus of both movements. God's side will ultimately triumph, and holiness and sanctity will be restored. It is a duty on all Muslims to maintain Islamic Jerusalem, defend it and be martyred for its liberation.²⁶ Hamas elevates Jerusalem as the central point of Palestine, the Arab and the whole Muslim world. In the utopian Islamic Caliphate it strives for, Jerusalem, not Mecca, will serve as the capital for Islam and the Muslims all over the world.²⁷ Hamas also places Jerusalem and al-Aqsa at the centre of the struggle, calling on all Muslims worldwide to join in their liberation.²⁸
3. Basing Palestinian national claims on the Qur'an: the divine geography and status of Jerusalem and Palestine are given by the Qur'an. The Qur'an fixed Jerusalem as a reliable link, (*irtibat wathiq*) for all Muslims. The Qur'an linked Jerusalem to Mecca and Medina as the three Muslim holy cities.
4. A stress on the sanctity of Palestine as a holy Islamic land. Any area associated with the divine revelation is a religious trust and its Muslim oc-

23 Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah Politics and Religion*, 161-67.

24 Meir Litvak, 'Islamization of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas'.

25 Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, 'Defending Jerusalem: A Sacred Duty', IslamOnline; Osman, Khalil, 'Ulama Meeting in Beirut Reaffirms *Ummah's* Commitment to Fight Against Zionism', *Muslimmedia International*, 1-15 February 2002.

26 Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, 'Defending Jerusalem: A Sacred Duty'; Osman, Khalil, 'Ulama meeting in Beirut reaffirm *Ummah's* commitment to fight against Zionism'.

27 Mahmud al-Zahhar in *al-Hayat* (London) 1994, quoted in Meir Litvak, 'The Islamization of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas', 13.

28 'Political bureau chief of the Hamas Khaled Mishaal's statement', *HAMASONLINE*, www.hamasonline.com/indexx.php?page=Hamas/interviews/Khaled_2

cupants the guardians of this trust. The Islamic definition of holiness prohibits the transfer of religious properties to non-Muslims.²⁹ Palestine is linked with Islamic revelation from Adam to Muhammad, as it is the land of the prophets sent with the message of Islam. David and Solomon created Islamic states in Palestine. Therefore it must be ruled only by those who uphold Islam and its law.³⁰ Palestine as a land conquered by Muslims, is a holy *waqf* for all Muslims until the end of time (although this is true of any other conquered land), it cannot change its ownership. Palestine is the final repose of Muslim scholars, clerics, and learned sheikhs who devoted their lives to serve Islam – so all of Palestine is a religious trust. Al-Aqsa is holy, the land surrounding it (Palestine) is holy and blessed by God. The sanctity of Palestine is also proven by various names given to it in Islamic sources and traditions: the Blessed Land, the Holy Land, the Land of *ribat* and *jihad*, Land of the First *Qibla*, Land of the Gathering and Resurrection, etc.

5. To some Palestinian Islamists, Jerusalem has now become as holy and important to Islam as Mecca. It is eternally linked to Mecca and equal to it in holiness. Jerusalem combines the merits of this life and the hereafter, and is even superior to Mecca and Medina which will both be brought to Jerusalem on the Day of Judgement. Some take the linking of Jerusalem to end time eschatology to indicate that it will outlast Mecca and the *Ka'ba*. A few passages on Jerusalem in the source texts are searched out and systematised and linked to Palestinian nationalism.³¹ Jerusalem is at the heart of the conflict, the central cause for the whole *umma*, and first on the list of priorities for all Muslims. Jerusalem will be the capital of the renewed universal Islamic Caliphate.³²
6. The Islamisation of Palestinian history by the development of an Islamist version of it. Palestine has been an Islamic land since the time of Adam, and particularly since Abraham, the first monotheist, who built al-Aqsa mosque. Its ancient inhabitants were Palestinian Arabs, and their acceptance of Islam guaranteed their religious right to the country for ever. Palestine also symbolises the eternal conflict between Islamic civilization that accepts God's sovereignty, and western civilization that denies it.³³
7. A clear shift toward the perception of Jews (not just Israel) as the great-

29 Ghada Hashem Talhami, 'The Modern History of Islamic Jerusalem: Academic Myths and Propaganda', *Middle East Policy*, 7:2 (February 2000).

30 'Palestine in Islamic History', HAMASONLINE, www.hamasonline.com/index.php?page=Palestine/palestine_in_islamic_history

31 Ghada Hashem Talhami, 'The Modern History of Islamic Jerusalem: Academic Myths and Propaganda', *Middle East Policy* 7:2 (February 2000).

32 Mahmud al-Zahhar in *al-Hayat* (London) 1994, quoted in Meir Litvak, 'The Islamization of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas', 13.

33 'The Real Nature of the Conflict', HAMASONLINE, www.hamasonline.com/index.php?page=Palestine/the_real_nature_of_the_conflict

- est enemy and the rise of Islamic Judeophobia. Traditionally, Christians were seen as the main enemy. This has now changed. Israel, by conquering Palestine and Jerusalem and by being an independent Jewish state on formerly Muslim land, defies Islam and the Muslims. The Jews must have satanic powers behind them to have conquered Jerusalem and its Islamic holy sites. The Hamas Charter hardened the conventional tone among Arab nationalists against the Jews.
8. Hardening the political stance towards Israel. Palestinian Islamists refuse any compromise solution over Israel. The struggle is in essence a religious one between Judaism and Islam and there is no possibility of peace. Jihad is the only way to solve the problem of Israel – by destroying and eliminating it. The liquidation of Israel is a Qur'anic duty. Muslim Palestinians must destroy Israel and set up an Islamic Palestinian state with Jerusalem as capital.³⁴ Any agreements with Israel can only be temporary (*hudna*), undertaken because of Muslim weakness, and only until Muslims are strong enough to resume the struggle.³⁵
 9. Stress on suicide bombing as legitimate martyrdom. Sermons and leaflets propagate martyrdom operations (suicide bombings) as legitimate acts of jihad in accordance with shari'a. Palestinians, including women and children, are encouraged to volunteer for such missions. The eternal rewards of *istishad* are graphically enumerated.³⁶
 10. Maintaining the wretched status of Palestinian refugees assumes a religious Islamic *raison d'être* in addition to mere political legitimations. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi issued a *fatwa* forbidding any homeless Palestinian refugee from accepting compensation for lost lands and homes. No generation can make decisions that will compromise the rights of future generations. The land of Islam is not for sale and no compensation can recompense for its loss.³⁷

*Delegitimisation of all and any Jewish claims to the Holy Land and to Jerusalem*³⁸

1. Denial of any historical link between the Jews and the Holy Land, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. There is no historical continuity between the modern Jews and the biblical Jews. There is no evidence of a Jewish temple or a Jewish Kingdom. The Biblical account is forged and corrupted. Jewish

34 Ahmad S. Moussalli, 'Islamist Perspectives of Regime Political Response: the Cases of Lebanon and Palestine', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Summer 1996.

35 Itamar Marcus, 'PA Islamic Incitement', updates from AIJAC, 9 July 2001.

36 Steven Stalinsky, 'Palestinian Authority Sermons 2000-2003', *MEMRI Special Report*, No. 24, 26 December 2003; Khalil Osman, 'Ulama Meeting in Beirut Reaffirms *Ummah's* Commitment to Fight Against Zionism'.

37 Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, 'Defending Jerusalem: A Sacred Duty', IslamOnline.

38 Raphael Israeli, *Fundamentalist Islam and Israel*, The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993), 74f.

- claims are but myth and legend, with no historical or archaeological facts to support them. Any archaeological evidence to a Jewish presence in the Land, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount is denounced as forgery. Modern Jews are usurpers.³⁹
2. Even those who accept historical Jewish links to Jerusalem, its high degree of sanctity for Jews, and its central position in Jewish apocalyptic concepts, state that the Jewish claims are invalid, and only the Islamic claims have validity. This conclusion is based on the claims that Jewish salvation history is exclusively national, while Islam's is universal; that only Islam is acceptable to God; and that Judaism was once a form of Islam with universal vision of justice, but has been corrupted in becoming Judaism, in rejecting Christ and Muhammad, thus negating and invalidating its claims.⁴⁰
 3. The original inhabitants of Palestine and its adjacent lands were Palestinian Arabs. Jerusalem was founded by Arabs and has always been inhabited by Arabs. Jews have no historical rights in Jerusalem and Palestine.⁴¹
 4. Islamic apocalyptic of the Final Hour is used to serve Palestinian political goals. Islamic apocalypse offered a means by which the Palestinian crisis could be framed, contextualised and understood. As the hour approaches, Muslims and Jews will be arrayed 'east and west', interpreted as east and west of Jordan, hence in the Holy Land. The West includes Europe and the US allied to Israel. Traditional Islamic eschatological themes of Gog and Magog, the One-eyed Man, the Gharqad tree, and the Hour, are revitalised and politically manipulated. Eschatological scenarios are used to shape and intensify the *intifada*.
 5. Vilification of the Jews in order to delegitimise their claims to an independent state. They are not true inheritors of Jerusalem because of their rejection of Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus and the cross are transformed into symbols of Palestine crucified by the Jews.⁴² Anti-Semitic concepts and conspiracy theories are widely adopted by Islamists and nationalists. The Hamas Charter adopted anti-Semitic charges based on the forged Protocols of the Elders of Zion concerning a Jewish conspiracy for world domination and the destruction of Islam. Denigration of Zionism as racist and criminal is used in order to delegitimise its claims to the Land and to Jerusalem.

39 'Jerusalem, the Old City', Al-Quds University, Jerusalem; 'Al-Aqsa at Risk... Shelled by LAW Rockets and Threatened With Harming and Destruction', Palestinian National Authority, 11 April 2004.

40 Mohammad Abdul Hameed Al-Khateeb, *Al-Quds: The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions*, London, Ta Ha, 1998, 'Conclusion'.

41 Mohammed Abdul Hameed Al-Khateeb, *Al-Quds: The Place of Jerusalem in Classical Judaic and Islamic Traditions*, 188.

42 Bat Ye'or, 'Eastern Christians Torn Asunder', www.islamreview.com/articles/easternchristiansprint.htm

The emergence of Jerusalem as a pan-Islamic unifying symbol

Following the Israeli conquest of Jerusalem in 1967, Jerusalem emerged as a unique unifying symbol for all Arabs and Muslims, a symbol which bridges all political and religious cleavages. It is a concept capable of mobilising the Muslim masses, and has been manipulated as a rallying point for Islamist ideology as well as for state political purposes.⁴³

The organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)

The arson attempt by an Australian Christian in al-Aqsa in August 1969 was seen by many Muslims as the biggest assault on Islam since the abolition of the Caliphate. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, called for an urgent conference, and the Saudi and Moroccan kings became the sponsors of a conference of Muslim heads of state which was convened in Rabat in September 1969. This was followed by several other conferences out of which the Organization of the Islamic Conferences (OIC) emerged, dedicated to the pan-Islamic liberation of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was elevated to become the unifying symbol of a Muslim world plagued by rivalries and conflicts. 'The problem of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) is the *raison d'être* of the emergence of the OIC, and it has remained its single dominant obsession... Only the Al-Quds issue itself was sufficiently strong and grave to impel the Muslims to unite'.⁴⁴

The OIC also symbolized the emergence of Wahhabi Saudi Arabia with its oil riches as a main force in world Islam.⁴⁵ A main objective of the OIC is to support the Palestinian struggle and to coordinate efforts to safeguard the holy places in Jerusalem. Its real headquarters are to be in Jerusalem – Jeddah is a temporary arrangement. Seven of the OIC organs deal exclusively with Palestine and Jerusalem. The OIC 4th Foreign Ministers Conference in Benghazi in 1973 declared *jihād* for the liberation of Al-Quds, and the name of the Palestine fund was changed to 'Jihad Fund for Palestine'. This was followed by a drive to delegitimise Israel, and the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. Jerusalem was to be capital of a free Palestinian state. In 1980 the OIC again called for a *jihād* to save Jerusalem. The OIC's aggressive drive tried to convince the world that Al-Quds was not just an Islamic cause, but a religious issue in the broad sense. The OIC contributed much to the trend to make Jerusalem the one most important issue for all Muslims worldwide.

43 Esther Webman, 'Anti-Semitic Motifs in the Ideology of Hizballah and Hamas'.

44 Sa'ad Khan, *Reasserting International Islam: A Focus on the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Other Islamic Institutions* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 107-108.

45 Sa'ad Khan, *Reasserting International Islam*, 11-21.

Summary: Islamist attitudes to Israel and the Jews⁴⁶

1. Jealousy, rejectionism, and supersessionism – in opposition to Jewish exceptionalism. The Jewish right to the Land and to Jerusalem was conditional. It was lost due to their unbelief and corruption. The Jews are no longer included in the covenant. The Jews are eternally rejected and under God's punishment, cursed until the Last Day because of their numerous acts of *shirk*, *kufri*, and *dhulm*. Denial of any Jewish connection to the Temple Mount.⁴⁷ Jews have no future as a nation, their only hope is to accept Islam.⁴⁸ No people are more cursed than the Jews who have lost 'all the factors of survival and existence' because of God's wrath.⁴⁹
2. Islam is the sole inheritor of God's election, covenants, promises, the Holy Land and Jerusalem.
3. Disqualify the Bible and its claims and replace them by Islamic claims for a special place in God's economy. The divine pledge of the Bible to Israel is a myth.⁵⁰ The Torah was rewritten to exclude Ishmael from the covenant. Axiomatic premise that Islam is the final religion, the Qur'an the final revelation, the Bible has been corrupted. Invalidation of the Jewish claims includes the invalidation of the whole Bible and of any related Christian claims.
4. For Muslims to recognise the Jewish State is *kufri*, a rejection of the Qur'an, a betrayal of Allah and of Muhammad.⁵¹
5. Shame and humiliation at having such a despicable enemy. Islamic honour demands that Muslims face a worthy enemy. It is a disgrace for the Islamic *umma* to be a rival to the weak and cowardly Jews. The Jewish victories and the loss of Muslim Holy places to Jewish domination brought a terrible

46 Imran N. Hosein, 'The Dilemma of Recognising Israel', Tanzeem-e-Islami, www.tanzeem.org/resources/articles; Abid Ullah Jan, 'The Destiny of Israel', Tanzeem-e-Islami, www.tanzeem.org/resources/articles; Shahal Hameed, 'The Biblical Roots of the Palestinian Problem', IslamOnline.net, www.islamonline.net/English/Contemporary/2003/12/Articles1.shtml; Khurshid Ahmad, 'Israel, Pakistan and the Muslim World', Isharat from 'Tarjuman al-Qur'an', September 2003, Jama'at-e-Islami, Pakistan, www.jamaat.org/Isharat/ish0903.html

47 Abid Ullah Jan, 'The Destiny of Israel', Tanzeem-e-Islami, www.tanzeem.org/resources/articles; Shahal Hameed, 'The Biblical Roots of the Palestinian Problem', IslamOnline.net, www.islamonline.net/English/Contemporary/2003/12/Articles1.shtml; Itamar Marcus, 'PA Islamic Incitement', Updates from AIJAC, 9 July 2001.

48 Ahmad Shafaat, *Islam, Christianity and the State of Israel As Fulfilment of Old Testament Prophecy*, 71-74.

49 Shaykh Abul-Waleed Al-Ansari, 'The Termination of the Zionist Entity: A Qur'anic Fact', *HAMASONLINE*, www.hamasonline.org/index.php?page=Qassam/termination_zionist_entity

50 Khurshid Ahmad, 'Israel, Pakistan and the Muslim World', Isharat from 'Tarjuman al-Qur'an', September 2003. Jama'at-e-Islami, Pakistan, www.jamaat.org/Isharat/ish0903.html

51 Imran N. Hosein, 'The Dilemma of Recognising Israel'.

shame on Muslims and on Islam which calls for revenge and can only be wiped out by the annihilation of the enemy. 'The *umma* is a worthy rival to America, Europe, Russia, China, Japan – the great powers. Islamic *umma* is not weak! It came out of Arabian peninsula and conquered Rome and Persia! Was leading power in world for over 1,000 years. It is a disgrace (shame, humiliation) for Islamic *umma* to be a rival to Jews! *Umma* is a rival to America, Europe, Russia, China, Japan – combined!'⁵² Jews are known for their cowardice and desire for life and are an unworthy opponent for the powerful *umma*. The conflict with the Jews over Jerusalem and the holy sites is the greatest challenge and threat facing Islam. It is an eternal religious struggle with cosmic implications, part of the eternal struggle between good and evil, in which the Jews represent the satanic forces, and Muslims represent God's camp.

6. Islamists deny the traditional protection given to Jews (and Christians) as *ahl al-dhimma* who are now redefined as combatants and infidels (*harbiyyun, kafirun*). Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a leader and ideologue of the *neo-tawhid* movement that advocates global *jihad* in his book *Democracy is a Religion* denies the traditional protection given by Islam to Jews and Christians. They are redefined as combatants and infidels because of their endorsement of democracy, an innovation that contradicts Islam and is a new heretical pagan and secular religion, legitimising the rule of the masses rather than God.⁵³
7. Religious war against Jewish aggressors can only be implemented by a *jihad* to restore the Holy Land and the Holy Places as well as to restore lost honour. Loss of Muslim land and honour is a sufficient cause for *Jihad*. Defilement of the Holy Places, especially Jerusalem, magnifies the need for *Jihad* to purify the sacred sites from defilement by Jewish infidels. It is impermissible to let God's enemies defile Jerusalem.
8. There are no innocent Jewish civilians in Palestine. The land is a war zone, and all Jews in it are legitimate targets.⁵⁴

Two contradictory claims:

- The Jews of today are the same as the Jews of the Bible and of Muhammad's time, who rejected God's prophets and gained God's wrath for ever, thus invalidating the conditional covenant. The Jews opposed Muhammad and Islam from the beginning of his mission. The Jewish tribes in Medina are prototypes of all Jews in all times.

52 Hizb al-Tahrir leaflet, 'The Muslim Ummah will never submit to the Jews': Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's Al-Manar Television*, Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004.

53 Jonathan D. Halevi, 'Al-Qaeda's Intellectual Legacy: New Radical Islamic Thinking Justifies the Genocide of Infidels', www.sullivan-county.com/immigration/rob_imm.htm

54 'Fadlallah Role Profile: Sheikh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah', <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hizballah/Fadlallah-Muhammad.html>

- The Jews of today are not descendants of the ancient Jews, but a mixture of Kazars and other nationalities and races, thus they are not heirs to the promises of God to ancient Israel.⁵⁵ However, the ancient Canaanites and Philistines are the ancestors of the present day Palestinians, who are thus the original owners of the land. In addition, as Muslims, they are part of the chosen *umma*, partakers of covenant. The Hebrew prophets, Jesus and his apostles, were all Muslims and Arab Palestinians.

*Example, the Hamas Charter and the Jews*⁵⁶

In the Hamas Charter there are three main strands:

1. Jews as eternal enemies of Islam are under God's curse and wrath. Israel, simply by virtue of being Jewish and having a Jewish population, defies Islam and the Muslims (article 28). Islam must eliminate Israel. Old Muslim anti-Jewish traditions based on Qur'an and Hadith are used as in the Foreword to the Charter. The Charter includes modern racist western anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, quoting the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (article 32). Jews lurk behind all the evils in the world: capitalism, usury, the French & Russian revolutions, Freemasonry, Rotary Clubs, Lions Club, *Bnai Brith*, WWI and the abolition of the Caliphate, the Balfour Declaration, the League of Nations, and the United Nations. All these have been used to destroy Muslim and Arab unity (articles 22, 28, 32). The Charter invokes the Hadith of the Hour 'The Hour will not come until Muslims will fight Jews', thus turning the fight against Israel into an apocalyptic war of the end times (article 7).
2. Palestine as a land taken by Muslim conquest is *waqf* for all Muslims until the end of time (article 11).
3. Jihad is the only way to solve the problem of Israel – by destroying and eliminating it. The struggle is in essence a religious one between Jews and Muslims. There can be no possibility of peace (articles 12, 13, 15).

In other publications, Hamas offers an interpretation of Qur'anic passages that claims the destruction of Israel is both prophesied and certain. Its temporary success is a God-willed trial and test for Muslims, which will end in victory and honour. 'The termination of this state [Israel] is announced in the Book of our Lord and proclaimed by our Prophet *sallalahu 'alayhi was sallam*.' Using Sura 17, verses 4-8 as the foundation text, the Hamas writer explains that after twice rebelling against God and being punished by him in the destruction of their Temple, the Jews committed mischief for a third time by rejecting and

55 Khurshid Ahmad, 'Israel, Pakistan and the Muslim World'. Isharat, from *Tarjuman al-Qur'an* (Pakistan: Jama'at e-Islami, September 2003), www.jamaat.oeg/Isharat/ish0903.html

56 Hamas Charter, 'The Charter Of Allah: The Platform Of The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)'. See also: 'The Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)', in Shaul Mishal & Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision Violence and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 175-200.

resisting Muhammad and God punished them again by Muhammad's victories over the Jewish tribes of Medina and Khaibar. It is clear from other verses that God will bring a final punishment and destruction upon the Jews at the hand of Muslims for their continual rebelliousness and corruption.⁵⁷ According to this leaflet, the Jews are characterised as:

- i. Spreading mischief and corruption.
- ii. Having incurred God's curse and wrath more than any other nation.
- iii. Being people of disobedience, transgression and indignity.
- iv. Being cowardly and weak.
- v. Having an inordinately strong attachment to this life.
- vi. Being always divided and in disagreement among themselves.

Finally the leaflet looks at various Hadith about the Hour which it interprets as confirming by the mouth of Muhammad himself the ultimate victory of the Muslims over the Jews in the last battle.

Main elements of the Islamic apocalyptic sequence⁵⁸

1. Jews and Israel have been granted temporary power and success as a stage in their final judgement. They are brought back to the Holy Land for the final punishment and humiliation ordained by God. Destruction is Israel's God-appointed destiny. Israel will defy the world, rebuild the temple, establish itself as a ruling world power. To the Jews it will appear to be a return to their Golden Age. The Anti-Christ (Dajjal) deceives the Jews into believing that God has restored them to the Holy Land and to Jerusalem, while he is actually leading them into a divine trap from which there is no escape.
2. Jerusalem and the Holy Land are central as Dajjal and the Jews are established there in preparation for the end time battles.
3. The Dajjal: Speculation on the appearance of the Dajjal, Jesus and the Mahdi is intense. Dajjal appears to empower Jews and the Christian West. He will gain control of most of the world by evil conspiracies and satanic power. Dajjal may be Jewish, a demonic person or an evil system, that is already alive and working. He rules Israel directly and it accomplishes his goals in the world.
4. Jews rule the anti-Muslim coalition for Dajjal, who will order them to blow up the Dome of the Rock and build a new Temple. Jews (and allied Christians) will be glad to obey as they would feel a great humiliation should the Messiah (Jesus) return and not find the Temple rebuilt. Israel with US help materialises the dream of Greater Israel.
5. The return of Jesus to fight the anti-Christ, followed by the appearance of the Mahdi. A great apocalyptic war takes place in Jerusalem. Dajjal leads Israel, the Jews and the West in the battle against the Muslims under Jesus and the

57 Shaykh Abu al-Waleed al-Ansari, 'The Termination of the Zionist Entity: A Qur'anic Fact'.

58 David Cook, 'America, the Second 'Ad: Prophecies about the Downfall of the United States', 150-93.

- Mahdi. The Mahdi moves against Jerusalem, while the West seeks to protect it. In the final battle the Jews are defeated and parts of Jerusalem are destroyed.
6. Jesus and the Mahdi emerge victorious. Dajjal's armies are slaughtered in Jerusalem. The Mahdi purifies Palestine and Jerusalem from the Jews. The Muslims conquer all Israel and go on to conquer Europe (where they destroy the idolatrous Vatican) and the US.
 7. Israel is destroyed and the Jews are killed. The Mahdi rebuilds Jerusalem and makes it his capital. Further wars occur as the Mahdi conquers all remaining states in the world, and establishes the universal rule of Islam.
 8. Gog and Magog arise and threaten the Mahdi as they overrun the world towards Syria. Jesus appears to kill the Dajjal and destroy Gog and Magog. He also destroys any remaining Jews and other enemies.

Contemporary Islamist anti-semitism

While this paper is concerned with fundamentalist views of Jerusalem, Islamist views on Jerusalem cannot be separated from the tremendous surge in Islamic anti-Semitism (or Judeo-phobia). Anti-Semitism has become a marker of most fundamentalist movements who, as a result of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, have imbibed much of modern Western racist anti-Semitism in addition to the traditional anti-Jewish strand of Qur'an and Hadith. Anti-Semitism seems to have infected the mainstream across the Muslim world, in part as a result of the invective of Sayyid Qutb.⁵⁹

Qutb used racist stereotypes and forgeries of Western anti-Semitism, such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (translated into Arabic and widely distributed in the Muslim world).⁶⁰ As a result, Islamic fundamentalism today sees itself involved in a cosmic struggle against 'the Jews' and has developed a comprehensive new concept of Muslim-Jewish relations.⁶¹

Islamism imported wholesale modern European racist anti-Semitism and added it to the traditional more limited anti-Jewish teachings of Qur'an and Hadith. Modern Islamist anti-Semitism is total, uncompromising and radical. Most Muslims now accept that the Jews control the West and are out to control the world. The Jews are responsible for all troubles that have befallen Muslims throughout history.

Conclusion

The growing influence of religious fundamentalisms among Israelis and Palestinians has transformed the conflict from a secular-nationalist struggle to a

59 David Zeidan, *The Resurgence of Religion: A Comparative Study of Selected Themes in Christian and Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 259f.

60 Sayyid Qutb. *Milestones*, (American Trust Publications, 1990), 94-96.

61 Ronald L. Nettler. 1987. *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews*, Foreword & x.

'harder', more inflexible religious battle. For both fundamentalisms, Jerusalem and its holy sites (especially the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif) have assumed central symbolic status as the main national and religious identity markers and as the key to eschatological redemption. As the shift to apocalyptic messianism accelerated, so did the significance of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif grow and the rival claims become more strident and uncompromising. While Jewish messianic fundamentalists ignore the centuries of Muslim presence in and control of Jerusalem and its religious significance for Muslims, Islamist Palestinians deny any link whatsoever between Jerusalem and Jews and delegitimise all Jewish historical and biblical claims. For both, the Temple Mount area has become the central holy site and ideological doctrine, and its control the most important task.

Because the process of redemption is seen as linear and irreversible, each side is sure of ultimate victory guaranteed by God, established in their sacred source texts, and to be fully implemented at the appearance of the Messiah/Mahdi. The activist nature of fundamentalism, which makes it an imperative to prepare the way for the final unfolding of history, makes the conflict more intractable, as both endeavour to change the status quo in their favour and physically change the character of the holy sites and the holy city. The Temple Mount /Haram al-Sharif site itself becomes a weapon, a source of divine power and energy, needed to be controlled to ensure the final act.

One important conclusion is that the radical movements in many ways are mirror images of each other, using similar arguments, clothed in their specific religious vocabularies, to justify their programmes. The family resemblances are surprising. Both movements see themselves as vanguards of God's chosen covenant people, fighting satanic enemies, cooperating with God in preparing the way for God's ultimate Kingdom in a process clearly prophesied in their sacred texts and predetermined by God. While setbacks and delays are to be expected, the ultimate victory of God's party is assured, as is the total destruction of Satan's. Both see Jerusalem and its holy sites as central to God's eschatological plan and a key to its success, and are therefore determined to control it, defend it, and purify it at any cost. Both movements form the major obstacles to any negotiated peace treaty based on compromise, as they utilise violent destabilising incidents to shock the respective sides into halting the process.

Both movements have been empowered by the convergence of their interests with those of important secular political players, and have mounted determined drives to infiltrate and gain control of the political power centres. Any real hope for peace and compromise would depend on the secular authorities distancing themselves from the radical messianic movements, delegitimising their ideologies and violent methods, and placing them under strict observation and control to prevent them acting as spoilers in the search for peace. This is true especially in all that concerns the central and most sensitive question of the final status of Jerusalem.

Whether such a disengagement is possible, given the strength of the messianic movements, especially of the Islamist organisations (Hamas and Jihad

in the Palestinian areas, is open to question. However, if this does not happen, it would seem that only a cataclysm of apocalyptic proportions, like the second world war and the destruction of the Nazi empire in Europe, can have the effect of dislodging and marginalising radical messianist doctrines now widespread within the majorities of the populations, limiting their political influence, so opening the door for new solutions.

Abstract

Since the Six Days War a radical Islamic fundamentalist opposition to Israel has emerged which interprets the conflict in apocalyptic terms as paving the way for the End. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 heightened this process. Jerusalem has gained a central significance that it did not previously have for Islam. *Jihad* against Israel becomes obligatory and permanent with the aim of nothing less than the liquidation of Israel.

Holy Land, Holy City: Sacred Geography and the Interpretation of the Bible

Robert P. Gordon

What connections exist between the physical geography of Israel and the spirituality of biblical faith? How was the physical space conceived as sacred space? In a wide-ranging study Professor Robert Gordon leads the readers from the the Garden of Eden to Jerusalem, from Genesis, through the Psalms and the Gospels to Revelation, and onwards through the patristic period, the Middle Ages and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He shows how the topography of Jerusalem and its environment have been used in diverse ways in the spirituality of Jews and Christians over the centuries.

Robert P. Gordon is the Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St Catherine's College. He is also the author of a commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel.

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