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The Muslim Perspective of Jerusalem

by a CMM affiliate

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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? –Romans 10:14

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



For many years I lived in Amman, Jordan, about 50 miles from Jerusalem. A few times when weather conditions were perfect, we could stand atop Mt. Nebo and view the towers of Jerusalem—some 25 miles away! After many visits to Jerusalem, my heart still leaps when entering its confines. There is no place on earth like it.

Our CMM affiliate has written an excellent lead article on *The Muslim Perspective of Jerusalem*. Read it carefully and you will learn things you never knew about the holy city.


Most of us would not know that Muslims view Jerusalem as *waqf* territory. Our author writes, “When Muslims first erected their shrine and mosque on the Temple Mount in the seventh century, they dedicated these structures to God in the form of a trust called *waqf*. When Muslims dedicate any land or building to God in this way, it is a perpetual arrangement. In other words, ‘once a mosque, always a mosque.’ Because violating this trust would dishonor God, Muslims will give their lives to protect it.”

The generally accepted definition of the Arabic word *waqf* is, “A charitable endowment often intended for the upkeep of a religious building, educational establishment or hospital.” Once an entity has been donated,

or otherwise handed over to an Islamic endowment *waqf*, it is irrevocable.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of political negotiations over the city of Jerusalem, Muslims are religiously hard-pressed to discuss territory they consider as *waqf*—lands and buildings that have been dedicated to God. In negotiations over Jerusalem, two points about *waqf* are paramount to Muslims: (1) To violate the trust of anything *waqf* is to dishonor God, and (2) *Waqf* is a perpetual arrangement, disallowing any change of status.

The next time you hear about Israeli/Palestinian negotiations, remember that Jerusalem will always be the last item on the agenda. The reason? It is the most complicated component of the overall process. No Muslim leader can simply abandon the holy precincts of Jerusalem for political expediency. It is a far deeper issue—with no simple solution.

I close with a passage of scripture about Jerusalem: *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels. For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say ‘Peace be within you.’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity* (Psalm 122:6-8). 



Muslim World News



Iran

An Iranian convert to Christianity was kidnapped from his home in north-eastern Iran and stabbed to death, his bleeding body thrown out in front of his home a few hours later. Ghorban Tori, 50, was pastoring an independent church of convert Christians in the town of Gonbad-e-Kavus. Within hours of the November 22 murder, local secret police arrived at the pastor's home, searching for Bibles and other banned Christian books in the Farsi language. According to one source, during the past eight days representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) have arrested and severely tortured 10 other Christians in several cities, including Tehran.—*Compass*

Nigeria

Pastor Zacheous Habu Bu Ngwenche may find himself back in police detention if he does not produce a convert from Islam abducted from his house by Muslim militants. The 31-year-old pastor of Foursquare Gospel Church in Akwanga, in central Nigeria's Nasarawa state, was arrested twice in 2005 for harboring a Muslim who converted to Christianity. After the second arrest, he spent seven days in a cell in Lafia, the state capital. Muslim militants pressured police into arresting him the second time even after officials had confirmed that Bature Suleimanu Idi had not been coerced

into leaving Islam and converting to Christianity. "I have now been told to produce the Muslim convert, even when the police know that it is the Muslims that abducted Idi," Ngwenche said. "My fear is that he will be killed."—*Compass*

Pakistan

During Friday prayers last week in Pakistan's Punjab province, Muslim clerics flanked by government officials demanded the public execution of a Christian accused of blasphemy. An Islamist group leader has since called for a nationwide protest tomorrow urging the execution of Yousaf Masih, a Christian accused of burning pages from the Qur'an three weeks ago. The accusations triggered Muslim violence in the Punjabi town of Sangla Hill, resulting in four destroyed churches. Eyewitnesses have said they saw a Muslim who owed Masih a large amount of money throw a burning match into the room where the Qur'an was. Sangla Hill police have arrested and tortured four of Masih's six brothers, prompting the alleged blasphemer to give himself up in exchange for their release.—*Compass*

Egypt

Under threat from Egypt's security police for holding services at his house church, a Protestant pastor has been run down by a taxi in Cairo and died of internal bleeding and a broken

skull. Pastor Ezzat Habib, his son Ibram Habib and a friend were crossing the street in Cairo's Matereya district on the evening of October 23 when a parked taxi pulled into the street and hit them from behind. The pastor, 58, was immediately taken to a local hospital, where he underwent surgery the following morning but died later that day. The incident culminates two years of harassment in which Pastor Habib was jailed and tortured.—*Compass*

Indonesia

Indonesian Christians are in shock as details emerge of two vicious attacks on a Christian couple and three teenagers in the town of Palu, Central Sulawesi. Motorbike riders shot a man and woman at close range shortly after they left a Saturday church service on November 19. Palu is near the town of Poso, where machete and shooting attacks have killed four teenage girls and seriously injured two others in the past month. The victims of the shooting were identified as Novlin Pallinggi, 37, and her husband Pudji Laksono, 45. Pallinggi remains hospitalized in critical condition, while Laksono is stable. In the same town on November 18, two women and one man were attacked with machetes, killing one of the women. Government officials have so far refused comment on the religious affiliation of the three victims.—*Compass*

Without question, one of the greatest controversies in the world rages over Jerusalem, a city held sacred by the three monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Most Christians understand why Jerusalem is important to them and Jews, but they question the Muslims' claim to the holy city. Since Muhammad ministered in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, what connection do Muslims have with this city in Israel? There are three major reasons why Muslims feel connected, not only to Jerusalem, but also to Palestine.

The Religious Perspective

Muslims believe they share the same God and prophets with Judaism and Christianity. The Qur'an centers on the God of Abraham, and refers by name to at least 25 common prophets, such as Noah, Job, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus. The mission of these men was often based in Palestine, and for some, specifically Jerusalem (known to Muslims as *Al-Quds*, The Holy, or *Bait-ul Maqdis*, The House of the Holy [One]). The Qur'an refers to Palestine as the land which God "blessed for the nations" (21:71,81) and the Holy Land (*al ard al muqaddas*) which He prescribed for Moses and his people (5:21). The Qur'an also talks about "the place of prostration/worship" (*al masjid*) of the Jews which was destroyed a second time (17:7). Muslims have traditionally understood this to be the Temple in Jerusalem.

Because of the status of Solomon's Temple, Muslims have regarded Jerusalem as a holy place. In fact, the present day Temple Mount (*Haram ash Sharif*) is their third holiest site, after Mecca and Medina. The ancient site of the Temple of Solomon gained prominence after the alleged "night journey" of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, from Mecca to Jerusalem, based on the following Qur'anic verse:

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

The word mosque comes from *masjid*, which means, "place of prostration" or a place of worship. The furthest place of worship blessed by God which the Muslims knew about was Solomon's Temple. Therefore, they understood this Qur'anic verse to speak of a night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem. This "furthest place of worship" became more significant because Muslims believe their prophet continued his "night journey" from this Temple site into heaven to

speak with God. This brings us to the historical aspect of Jerusalem and Islam.

The Historical Perspective

When the prophet of Islam died in 632 AD, his successors felt compelled to spread the message and rule of Islam throughout Arabia and beyond, including Palestine and Jerusalem. Jerusalem had already experienced the cultural and religious erosion of foreign occupation, especially when the Romans took control and eventually destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. In the fourth century, following his conversion to Christianity, Emperor Constantine Christianized Jerusalem and made it the center of Christian pilgrimage. Then in the seventh century, Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph of Islam, led his armies into Syria and Iraq and overpowered Palestine and Jerusalem. The Christian Byzantine patriarch of Jerusalem handed Umar the keys of the city with the agreement that Christians would be allowed to continue to worship in their churches. According to tradition, upon entering the city, the first thing Umar did was to search for the site of Solomon's Temple, because supposedly, his prophet had ascended to heaven from there. He found the bedrock of the Temple (1 Chronicles 21:18-22:1 and 2 Chronicles 3:1) and erected a makeshift mosque in its vicinity. About 50 years later, Muslims built the beautiful Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat as-Sakhra*), an octagonal structure (not a mosque) enshrining the bedrock; and a permanent mosque named *Al Aqsa*. Both of these stand today as a testimony to the sanctity Muslims ascribe to this site.

Later, during the Great Crusades (11th-13th century), control of Jerusalem exchanged hands several times between the Muslims and the Christians. Eventually, Jerusalem fell to the Muslims and remained in Islamic control until the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the close of World War I. Jerusalem then passed through the hands of the British Mandate of Palestine into Jordanian control until Israel seized control of all of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of 1967. Though Israel now possesses all of Jerusalem, it has handed the administration of the Temple Mount, with its Islamic buildings, to a Muslim Council headed by a Grand Mufti (an Islamic religious leader), with the understanding that Jews would be allowed to pray at the West Wall (Wailing Wall).

When Muslims erected their shrine and mosque on the Temple Mount in the seventh century, they dedicated



ective of Jerusalem

these structures to God in the form of a trust called *waqf*. When Muslims dedicate any land or building to God in this way, it is a perpetual arrangement. In other words, “once a mosque, always a mosque.” Because violating this trust would dishonor God, Muslims will give their lives to protect it. No doubt knowledge of this trust and awareness that Muslims throughout the world regard the *Haram ash-Sharif* (Temple Mount) as a holy Islamic site has prevented Israel from removing these buildings. Now to the third issue.

The Ideological Perspective

During the expansion of Islam, whenever Muslims seized control of foreign territories, they felt obliged to govern these territories according to Islamic law based on the Qur’an and the Hadith. Fundamentalist Muslims (those wanting to return to the seventh century practices of their prophet) claim that the only hope for the salvation and survival of the world is the rule of God as revealed in Islamic Law. In fact, they teach that it is God’s will for the whole world to be controlled by Islamic Law administered by God’s servants. Furthermore, fundamentalist Muslims see themselves as the only people who can legitimately call themselves “God’s servants,” because they believe that they alone are striving to establish a true religion and government based on “God’s Law.” They disqualify the Jews because of their idolatry following the reign of Solomon and then their rejection of the prophet of Islam. Muslims also disqualify Christians because of their deification of Jesus and their Trinitarian doctrine, which violates the Muslim concept of the absolute oneness of God.

Jerusalem is a holy city in the Holy Land, and because fundamentalist Muslims believe they alone qualify as God’s servants, they believe they are the administrators of the holy sites and owners of the land. They believe they inherited Palestine and its holy sites in the seventh century and they should control and eliminate un-Islamic influences.

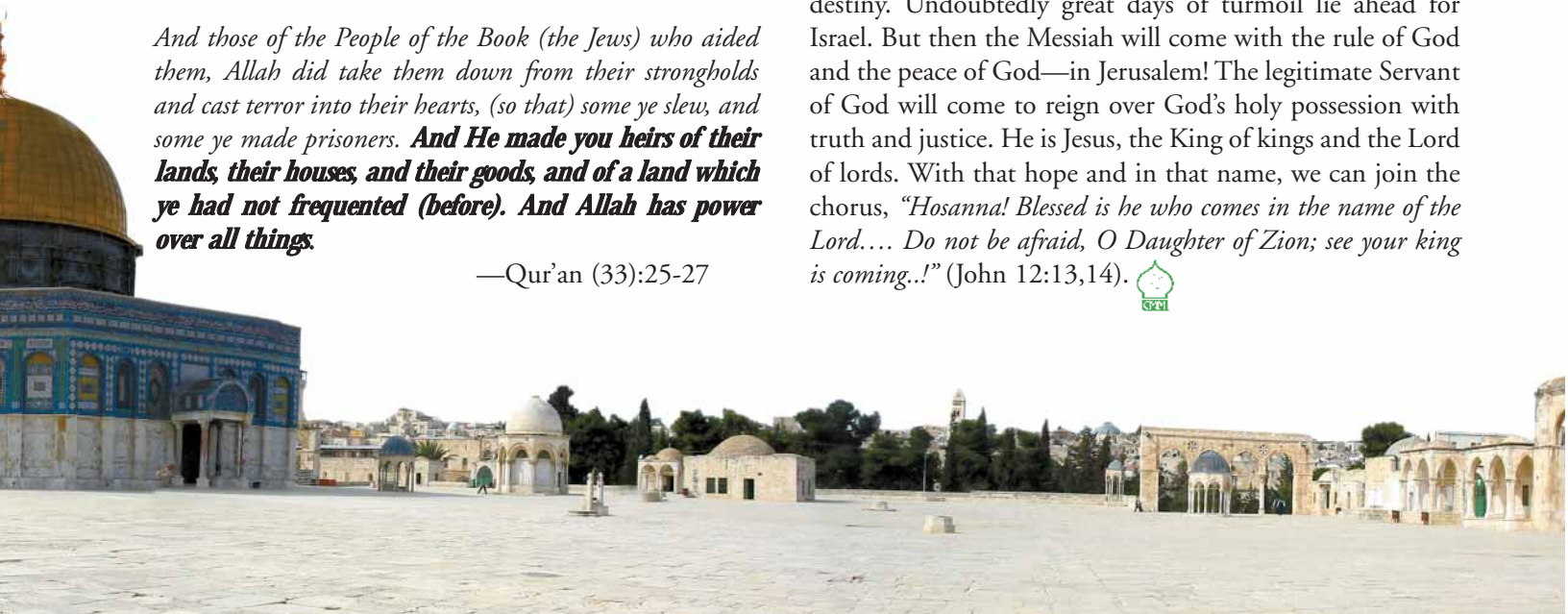
*And those of the People of the Book (the Jews) who aided them, Allah did take them down from their strongholds and cast terror into their hearts, (so that) some ye slew, and some ye made prisoners. **And He made you heirs of their lands, their houses, and their goods, and of a land which ye had not frequented (before). And Allah has power over all things.***

—Qur’an (33):25-27

As we look into this more closely, we realize the fundamentalist Muslims’ animosity toward the West and its allies is a matter of ideology. For example, they view democracy as a threat to Islam because democracy espouses a rule of the people as opposed to the rule of God. Thus, it is no secret that fundamentalist Muslims view Israel as a major threat to the Muslim community of the Arab Middle East. They regard Israel as a secular democracy and a puppet of the “Great Satan” democracy, the United States. No doubt, the existence of a Jewish state (or any other non-Islamic state) in the heart of the Arab world is viewed as an encroachment upon God’s territory. To allow people in a secular democracy to mock God and defy God with lifestyles that violate God’s laws—and to allow this to take place in the Holy Land—is intolerable for the fundamentalist Muslim. For him, the Holy Land (Palestine) must be rid of such “blasphemy” and be ruled by a theocracy.

For fundamentalist Muslims, the Palestinian issue is not a homeland issue; it is a deep issue of religious ideology that bears eternal consequences. For them, shared sovereignty with Israel over Jerusalem is an unacceptable compromise with evil. Such a position means continued conflict, for Israeli fundamentalists will certainly not yield control of the Temple Mount either. In the natural there appears no hope of resolving this problem. Prayer for peace in Jerusalem seems only a futile exercise that becomes fainter and fainter as the days of bloodshed extend. But, there is most definitely hope. That is why we must continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

How ironic that hidden in the beautiful Arabic calligraphy design of the Dome of the Rock are Qur’anic verses that reveal the term *Al-Masih*, [the Messiah]—a term common to all three of the monotheistic communities. God has left a witness for the hope that is in us. Yes, there is hope for Jerusalem—hope for all those whose eyes are fixed upon her destiny. Undoubtedly great days of turmoil lie ahead for Israel. But then the Messiah will come with the rule of God and the peace of God—in Jerusalem! The legitimate Servant of God will come to reign over God’s holy possession with truth and justice. He is Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. With that hope and in that name, we can join the chorus, “*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.... Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see your king is coming..!*” (John 12:13,14).



Country Focus...

Somalia

Population: 10 million

Religions: Muslim 99.9%, Christian 0.1%

Official Language: Somali, Arabic

Peoples: Somali 97%, Bantu 1.6%

Somalia is located on the Horn of Africa with coastlines on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. A subsistence pastoral economy dominates, with most people eking a living from camel or cattle herding with very limited farming.

After independence from Britain and Italy, the northern and southern sections united as Somalia in 1960. A corrupt and a repressive dictatorship was brought down in a bloody civil war in 1991, bringing the country to destitution.

Subsequent clan warfare caused appalling famine and destruction from 1991 to 1993. With almost the entire nation on the brink of starvation and anarchy prevailing, U.S. and U.N. troops intervened, restoring only a small degree of stability.

Religious freedom is limited with almost no exposure to the gospel.



Unreached People Group...

Juba Somali

Location: western border of Somalia

Population: 800,000 in Somalia

Religion: Muslim (Shafiite) 99.9%

Language: Af-Maay (Tiri)

Most of the Juba Somali live along the western border of Somalia where they inhabit the fertile regions around the Wabi Shebele tributary. This part of Africa is known for its agriculture. The Juba Somali farmers grow wheat, vegetables and coffee. In addition, they cultivate melons, dates, mangoes and pomegranates.

The Juba Somali in Somalia are virtually all Muslim, and at present there are very few believers in their communities. Neither the entire Bible nor Christian broadcasts are available in their language, and no missions agencies are currently working among them. Evangelization will be challenging due to their lifestyle and religious belief system.

**Pray
that...**

...God will send laborers to work among the Juba Somali of Somalia.

...Christian literature and radio broadcasts will be available to them.

...God will raise up prayer warriors who will faithfully intercede for the Juba Somali people.



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, March 3, 2006. Please pray

...for the continuing civil war in Darfur, Sudan. Up to 2 million people have been driven from their homes.

...for new followers of Jesus Christ in Egypt. Pray they will stand firm against intense family pressure.

...for private Christian schools across the Muslim world. Pray they continue to maintain their reputation and use their position for the glory of God.

Friday, March 10, 2006. Please pray

...for the many who will be going on short-term missions trips to Muslim countries this summer.

...for the provision of gifted expatriate pastors in Qatar. Pray that they nor key lay leaders will be deported.

...for Christian converts in Bangladesh. Despite the most difficult of circumstances, pray that God would guide and place His hand of protection on them.

Friday, March 17, 2006. Please pray

...that the Church in Europe will be emboldened to stand strong in the face of the Islamization of Europe. The patterns of migration and demographics show that Europe has the potential to become a Muslim-majority region.

...for Christians in Malaysia who are affected by the laws of this Muslim nation.

...that teens in the Middle East will be influenced by the new television programming being prepared for them by SAT-7.

Friday, March 24, 2006. Please pray

...that King Abdullah of Jordan will give further protection and legal recognition to Christians

...for small Christian house groups in Djibouti. Their meetings are under constant surveillance.

...for those who are ministering to drug users in Pakistan. Pray that the love of the Lord will shine through their lives.

Friday, March 31, 2006. Please pray

...for the negotiation proceeding between India and Pakistan concerning Kashmir. Pray for protection against Islamic terrorism and heavy-handed Indian Army punitive measures.

...for the only evangelical church in Gaza, Palestine. Please pray for the protection of the pastor and his family.

...for the crisis in the Russian republic of Dagestan. In the first half of 2005, there were 70 Islamic terror attacks. Citizens of 52 countries have either been killed or kidnapped as part of the terrorist movement. Pray for the few local believers.

**I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. –1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV**



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, April 7, 2006. Please pray

...that the Church in the Middle East will grow this year, not shrink. Christians are migrating at an alarming rate from Middle East countries because of fear and persecution.

...for the repeal of blasphemy laws in Pakistan. The laws are consistently used to incite anti-Christian violence.

...for strength and courage for persecuted Christians in Yemen. Several converts from Islam have been beaten, interrogated and imprisoned in recent months.

...for missionaries struggling as they witness to the Uyghur Muslim peoples of China.

Friday, April 14, 2006. Please pray

...for the many female viewers of SAT-7 programs. Pray that they may be encouraged in their everyday lives.

...for three Indonesian women sentenced to three years in prison for the “Christianization” of several Muslim children attending a Sunday school class.

...for Christians in Saudi Arabia. The U.S. State Department is again not placing Saudi Arabia on its list of countries that violate religious freedom. Christians in Saudi Arabia face constant danger.

Friday, April 21, 2006. Please pray

...concerning reports of renewed Taliban violence in Afghanistan. There are concerns that Taliban members will target Christian outreaches in an effort to re-establish themselves.

...for the millions of Arabs tuning in to Christian programs every day. Pray that God will minister to each through the different types of programs.

...for earthquake relief efforts continuing in Pakistan's Kashmir region. Pray that the Church will leave a wake of grace everywhere it goes in this unreached area and the gospel might take root in the lives of these devastated Muslims.

Friday, April 28, 2006. Please pray

...for Christians in Iran. President Ahmadinejad recently declared in an open meeting with Iran's 30 provincial governors that he intends to stop Christianity in Iran.

...that nationals in Afghanistan who are sharing the gospel in spite of persecution will remain faithful and obedient in the midst of the harassment. Pray that many Muslims will be brought to faith through diligent witness.

...pray for political leaders of the Muslim world. Pray that God would intervene directly in the lives of key officials, opening windows for the gospel of Jesus Christ.