

AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM FOR JEWS

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Session 3: The development of the caliphate and of divisions

Jerusalem and the arrival of Islam

Yaqubi, *History*, II, 161, 167 (ninth century)

On his return into Jordan, Abu Ubaydah besieged the people of Aelia [= Jerusalem], which is the Holy House. They prolonged their resistance and Abu Ubaydah wrote to Umar to inform him of the delays and of the patience of the people of Aelia. Some say that the people of Aelia requested of him that it be the caliph himself who concluded peace with them. Abu Ubaydah assured himself of their sincerity by demanding of them promises by a solemn treaty; and he then informed Umar, who left for Syria after naming Uthman ibn Affan as his deputy in Medina. ...Umar came to the region of Damascus, then he went to the Holy House, took it without struggle and sent the inhabitants the following written message: 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is a writing of Umar ibn al-Khattab to the inhabitants of the Holy House. You are guaranteed your life, your goods, and your churches, which will be neither occupied nor destroyed, as long as you do not initiate anything blameworthy.'

Jamâl ad-Din Ahmad, *Muthîr al Ghirâm* (1351), trans. G. Le Strange, 1890

On the authority of Al Walîd ibn Muslim, it is reported as coming from a Shaikh of the sons of Shadâd ibn Aus, who had heard it from his father, who held it of his grandfather, that 'Umar... said to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: 'Conduct us to the Mosque of David.' And the Patriarch agreed thereto. Then 'Umar went forth girt with his sword, and with him four thousand of the Companions who had come to Jerusalem with him... And the Patriarch walked before 'Umar among the Companions, and we all came behind the Khalif. Thus we entered the Holy City. And the Patriarch took us to the Church which goes by the name of the Kumâmah ['the dunghill'], and said he: 'This is David's Mosque'. And 'Umar looked around and pondered, then he answered the Patriarch: 'You lie, for the Apostle described to me the Mosque of David, and by his description this is not it.' Then the Patriarch went on with us to the Church of Sihyûn (Sion), and again he said: 'This is the Mosque of David'. But the Khalif replied to him: 'You lie'. So the Patriarch went on with him till he came to the noble Sanctuary of the Holy City, and reached the gate thereof, called [afterwards] the Gate Muhammad. Now the dung which was then all about the noble Sanctuary had settled on the steps of this gate, so that it even came out into the street in which the gate opened, and it had accumulated so greatly on the steps as almost to reach up to the ceiling of the gateway. The Patriarch said to 'Umar: 'It is impossible to proceed and enter — except crawling on hands and knees.' Said 'Umar: 'Even on hands and knees be it.' So the Patriarch went down on hands and knees, preceding 'Umar, and we all crawled after him, until he had brought us out into the Court of the Noble Sanctuary of the Holy City. Then we arose off our knees, and stood upright. And 'Umar looked around, pondering for a long time. Then said he: 'By Him in whose hands is my soul! — this is the place described to us by the Apostle of Allah.'

Qur'an 17: 1

Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night journey from the sacred mosque to the remote mosque [*al-masjid al-aqsa*] of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

Dome of the Rock, inscription

... O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning God save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His Word which He conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not say 'Three' - Cease! (it is) better for you! - God is only One God. Far be it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And God is sufficient as Defender. The Messiah will never scorn to be a servant to God, nor will the favoured angels. ..

Qur'an 19: 34-36

Such is Jesus, son of Mary; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute. It beseems not God that He should take to Himself a son, glory be to Him; when He has decreed a matter He only says to it 'Be', and it is. And surely God is my Lord and your Lord, therefore serve Him; this is the right path.

The development of the caliphate and opposition to it

Hadith of the pond of Ghadir al-Khumm

[Muhammad said]: Whomsoever's *mawla* I am, this Ali is also his *mawla*. O God, befriend whomsoever befriends him and be the enemy of whomsoever is hostile to him.

The Twelve Imams accepted by 'Twelver' Shi'ites

No.	Name	Dates	Significance
1	Ali	600-61	Fourth caliph; killed by a Kharijite
2	Hasan	624-80	Ali's son; abdicated in favour of Mu'awiyya
3	Husayn	626-80	Ali's son; killed at Karbala by Umayyad forces
4	Ali ibn Husayn	658-712	Ali's son; lived quietly, poisoned by Umayyads
5	Muhammad al-Baqir	677-732	Son of Ali ibn Husayn; legal scholar; poisoned by Umayyads; his brother Zayd starts breakaway branch
6	Jafar al-Sadiq	702-65	Son of Muhammad al-Baqir; established Shi'ite school of jurisprudence; developed Shi'ite theology
7	Musa al-Kazim	744-99	Son of Jafar-al-Sadiq; his brother Ismail claims the imamate, starting the Ismaili branch
8	Ali al-Rida	765-817	
9	Muhammad al-Taqi	810-35	
10	Ali al-Hadi	827-68	
11	Hasan al-Askari	846-74	
12	Muhammad al-Mahdi	868-unknown	Went into 'occultation' in 874; is expected to return and establish justice on earth

Hadith quoted by al-Mawardi (d. 1058), *The Rules of Governance*

- The Prophet said: 'He who obeys me, obeys God; he who disobeys me, disobeys God. He who obeys the ruler, obeys me; he who disobeys the ruler, disobeys me.'
- You will hear and obey the prince, even if he beats your back and steals your property.

- They [the rulers] will be judged for what they do, and you will be judged for what you do.
- Whoever abandons the ruling power and separates from the general body of believers, then dies, dies a pagan.

Three models of leadership

1. Kharijites: ‘president’ or ‘shaikh’ model’: leader can be anyone, but must be deposed if he is immoral
2. Shi’ites: ‘prophet’ model: leader must be from Muhammad’s descendants (*ahl al-bayit*), and cannot be removed
3. Sunnis: ‘king model’: leader must be from Quraish tribe and cannot be removed (though in practice this developed into a dynastic model)

TIMELINE

570-632	Life of Muhammad
632-4	Reign of Abu Bakr
634-44	Reign of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (murdered)
638	Capture of Jerusalem
644-56	Reign of ‘Uthman ibn Affan (murdered)
656	First <i>fitnah</i> : ‘Ali wins Battle of the Camel
656-61	Reign of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (murdered)
661-80	Reign of Mu’awiyya (first Umayyad caliph)
680	Second <i>fitnah</i> : Murder of Husayn ibn ‘Ali at Karbala
692	Construction of Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem
740	Zayd ibn ‘Ali, Shi’ite leader, leads unsuccessful rebellion
750	End of Umayyad dynasty; succeeded by Abbasid dynasty
765	Split between ‘Twelver’ and ‘Ismaili’ Shi’ites
1258	End of Abbasid dynasty

Further reading

David Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Islam*, London: Phoenix, 2000.

Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2009.