

I have received several calls asking about the story of the mosques in Bhamdoun and Sidon which I mentioned in my previous article. Bhamdoun, a Christian village on the top of Mount Lebanon, was a very popular and endearing place for Kuwaiti tourists. Among the first vacationers there was the late Abdullah Al-Othman. Because there was no mosque, and building a mosque in a divided sectarian state is no walk in the park, visitors to Bhamdoun would have to travel to Beirut for Friday prayers. According to the records and the testimonies of his contemporaries, Al-Othman's donations reached across the social spectrum, never differentiating between Islamic and Christian communities. This spirit of tolerance helped send a clear message that the mosque he intended to construct was not going to be a source of sectarian threats to the people of the region. This resulted in the construction of the Bhamdoun mosque which opened with a ceremony attended by the grand clerics representing the Islamic and Christian communities of the area. As for Sidon Mosque, the land was located on top of a hill owned by a Lebanese Christian with the intention of using the land to build a church. However, what he heard and saw of the late Abdullah Al-Othman's donations to the Christian orphanages and places of worship, he was inspired to donate the land for the construction of a mosque. Al-Othman accepted the gift on the condition that he could purchase the land for a nominal price as a mosque cannot be built on gifted land. So the deal was closed, the mosque was built, and it still stands there today. The message behind this is that religious tolerance and acceptance of others is the solution.